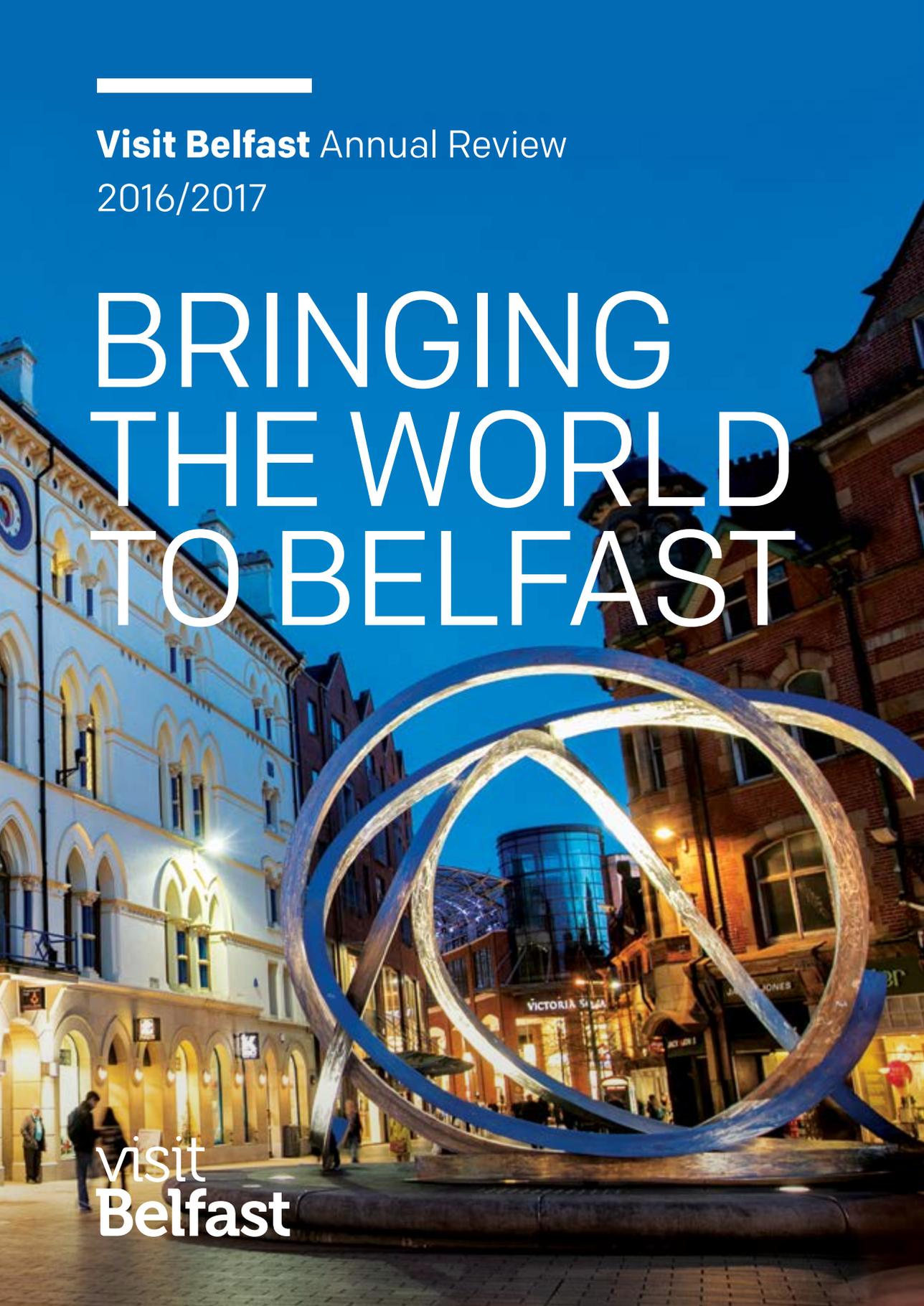

Visit Belfast Annual Review
2016/2017

BRINGING THE WORLD TO BELFAST

visit
Belfast





04	BRINGING THE WORLD TO BELFAST Foreword from Visit Belfast Chair Howard Hastings
06	SUCCESS IN EVERY AREA Overview from Visit Belfast Chief Executive Gerry Lennon
08	THE YEAR IN NUMBERS
10	WORKING TOGETHER Visit Belfast partnership
12	MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS Marketing campaigns, web and digital, publications and PR
18	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Business Tourism, Leisure Trade and Cruise
28	HOTEL INVESTMENT
30	VISITOR SERVICING
36	THE YEAR THAT WAS
40	SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS
42	VISIT BELFAST BOARD



Bringing the world to Belfast

Visit Belfast Chairman
Dr Howard Hastings OBE



Visit Belfast's mission is clear... to bring the world to Belfast. As the city region's Destination Marketing Management Organisation (DMMO), we achieve this through our sales, marketing and visitor servicing activity which impacts across the city break, cruise, business tourism and group tour markets. I'm pleased to report that in 2016/17, Visit Belfast's efforts generated:

- 540,000 bed nights
- 143,000 cruise visitors
- 750,000 visitor enquiries

These outputs delivered an economic impact of £122m – a significant return of £1:32 on the combined investment of Visit Belfast's budget of £3.6m.

As a DMMO, a key aim of Visit Belfast is to increase the economic benefit that tourism contributes to the city economy. 2016 saw 1.5m overnight trips made to Belfast, generating £334m, and supporting nearly 18,000 jobs*. This means that Belfast delivered almost a third of all overnight trips and nearly 40% of overnight visitor income to Northern Ireland, showing that **Belfast is increasingly driving and supporting the regional visitor economy.**

Nearly three-quarters of overnight trips (72%) were made by visitors from outside Northern Ireland, reflecting the international stand-out Belfast provides for Northern Ireland. The attraction of the Belfast brand, combined with the success of cooperative sales and marketing activity, is increasing the number of leisure and business visitors from our key markets in Great Britain,



£334m

tourism spend



1.5m

overnight trips to Belfast



Best TIC

award for 12th time



72%

of overnight trips made
by visitors outside NI

Republic of Ireland, Europe and farther afield.

May I take the opportunity to thank all our funders and industry partners whose collaborative investment and support has enabled this collective success: Belfast City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, 500+ businesses including our strategic partners Translink, Diageo NI, Value Cabs, Victoria Square and Belfast One and corporate partners Titanic Belfast, Hastings Hotels, the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall and Flybe. This has been a true 'Team Belfast' effort.

It is essential that those who visit become ambassadors for Belfast. Customer care and visitor

satisfaction is the responsibility of everyone, and something I'm glad to say we're excelling in – Best TIC award for the 12th time for the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, the World's Leading Visitor attraction in Titanic Belfast and a growing list of international accolades, including being named among National Geographic's top places to travel for food, Belfast has emerged as a 'capital of cool' in the eyes of the World.

Tourism is key to developing a sustainable, resilient and buoyant economy. Local and central government must continue to invest in and support the industry if we are to reach the ambitious target, set out in the Belfast Agenda, of doubling the value of overnight tourism to Belfast by 2021. The industry has already set the wheels in motion, embarking on the most significant

expansion of hotel capacity in the city's history. The challenge for 'Team Belfast' will be generating the extra demand required to fill the city's additional capacity, and that's where marketing investment becomes even more critical.

I truly believe that this is Belfast's time to shine, and Visit Belfast is passionate about working collaboratively with industry, local and central government to deliver targeted marketing and sales, and effective visitor servicing that bring the best return on investment. I'm confident that this 'Team Belfast' ethos will make Belfast's ambition of doubling the tourism economy a reality.

Success in every area

Visit Belfast Chief Executive
Gerry Lennon



Throughout 2016/17, Visit Belfast partnered with 500+ tourism partners and the public sector to deliver a compelling mix of marketing, sales and visitor servicing platforms across the business and leisure sectors, contributing £122m in to the local economy and a return on investment of £1:32.

Our sales and marketing activity brought people from across the world to Belfast, generating 540,000 bed nights; and once here our visitor servicing team engaged with over 750,000 tourists, to ensure they made the most of their precious time here.

The strategy of marketing Belfast as a city break, conference, day, cruise ship and group tour destination plays to the city's strengths, including Titanic Belfast, the Game of Thrones

phenomenon and the reopening and extension of the Belfast Waterfront. Promoting a balanced portfolio of leisure and business tourism products and services to our key segments has delivered the optimum customer mix for Belfast. Meanwhile, investment in the city's tourism infrastructure and products continues apace, offering even more and better reasons to visit.

The Visit Belfast model is a collaboration between the public and private sectors, providing a flexible and agile vehicle to promote the city near and far, working with airlines, conference venues, tour operators and accommodation providers, across marketing campaigns, sales missions and digital communications. This model is the very definition of collaboration and cooperation, delivering value



£122m

economic benefit



540,000

bed nights



750,000

visitor enquiries



143,000

cruise visitors

for money for the public sector, and reducing duplication by pooling marketing and visitor servicing resources.

A busy year

The 2016 European Championships presented a once in a lifetime opportunity to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland to thousands of football fans in Paris, embracing both digital and traditional methods of communications and visitor servicing.

An opportunity to host the 2017 IDF World Dairy Summit arose in 2016, which the Belfast team successfully bid for and won. This conference alone will bring 1,000 international delegates to the city and generate an estimated economic benefit of £1.9m.

Our autumn-winter marketing campaign encouraged people from across the Island of Ireland to 'Find your Belfast'. Generating 350,000 hotel bed nights the campaign provided a welcome uplift in visitors from the Republic of Ireland over a crucial trading period.

Hotel occupancy continued to reach new heights (in 2016, annual room occupancy was 79.5%), balancing increases in both weekday and weekend demand generated from leisure and business visitors. Meanwhile, we also welcomed 143,000 cruise visitors who provide significant business for our visitor attractions, tours operators and retailers. All of this, crucially, supports employment, and in 2016, Belfast's tourism industry supported one-third (around 18,000) of all Northern Ireland's hospitality jobs.

The tourism economy has risen year-on-year, thanks to the industry's commitment and growing confidence to invest in their own products and services, continued investment from the public sector in the city's tourism infrastructure and investment by both the public and private sectors in Visit Belfast's activity. Without this support, Visit Belfast would simply not be able to deliver the cooperative marketing, sales and visitor servicing activities that have been so successful this year.

As we move into the next phase of Belfast's tourism journey it's this commitment to partnership, collaboration and team ethos that will ensure that Belfast achieves our ever-growing and challenging tourism aspirations and ambitions.

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2016/17 was another year of success, with Visit Belfast delivering in every area. Here are some of the highlights.



£1:32

Return on Investment



2m

Visitors to our website and 1.4m social media engagements.



77

CONFERENCES

Generating almost 95,000 bed nights contributing £42 million to local economy.



754,338

Visitor enquiries resulting in over £15 million gain for the local economy.



140m

'Opportunities to See' a positive story about Belfast around the globe through active PR and marketing.



£122m

Economic impact to the local economy.



445,036 Bed nights

From 12 campaigns, generating £58 million for the local economy.



93%

of Visit Belfast partners satisfied with their partnership.



143,000

Cruise visitors on 83 ships.

Working together

A photograph of two chefs in a kitchen. They are wearing white chef coats and black and white striped aprons. The chef on the left is pouring something from a metal pot into a white bowl. The chef on the right is looking down at a plate of food. There are three copper pendant lights hanging over the counter.

Visit Belfast's public-private partnership model delivers real results for the city. Together, we are increasing visitor numbers and spend to the city region, supporting jobs and giving value for money for public and private sector partners.

Visit Belfast provides our partners with platforms to market the city to visitors in key markets in the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe, and while they are here through the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre. Our partnership approach provides cohesion for the marketing of the city, as well as integrating budgets and delivering value for money and return on marketing investment.

Our research shows that this approach works. In our most recent annual satisfaction survey, 93% of partners were satisfied with their partnership (up from 89% in 2015/16), with 92% saying that their partnership represented value for money (up from 83%).

93%
satisfaction

92%
good value for money

TEAMWORK THAT DELIVERS

Our gratitude goes to our funders, corporate and strategic partners,
and our 500 + industry partners for their continued support.

Funders and supporters:



Belfast
City Council



tourism
northernireland

Strategic partners:



Translink

DIAGEO
NORTHERN IRELAND



VALUE CABS
(028) 90 80 90 80



**VICTORIA
SQUARE**
BELFAST

**BELFAST
ONE** BUSINESS
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT

Corporate partners:



HASTINGS
HOTELS



TITANIC
BELFAST

flybe.



BELFAST
WATERFRONT



ULSTER
HALL

Regional tourism partners:



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council



LCCC
Lisburn &
Castlereagh
City Council

Other key partners:



Tourism Ireland
Marketing the island of Ireland overseas



Invest
**Northern
Ireland**



**Northern Ireland
Executive**
www.northernireland.gov.uk



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Marketing Communications

Visit Belfast's Marketing and Communications team provides the 'shop window' through which Belfast is promoted to leisure and city break visitors. Through web and digital platforms, targeted marketing campaigns, publications and public relations, we highlight the best of Belfast, turning prospective visitors into tourists.

Campaigns

Over the course of the financial year, Visit Belfast activated 12 marketing campaigns, generating 445,000 hotel bednights and an economic benefit of £58m. These campaigns were spread across a number of geographic markets; six targeted the Great Britain market – in key direct access areas like London, Glasgow and Edinburgh; three campaigns targeted direct access cities in Europe – Amsterdam, Milan and Paris; and the final three campaigns targeted the domestic and ROI markets.

Visit Belfast worked closely with many partners to activate these campaigns, including carriers such as Aer Lingus, Flybe, KLM, Stena Line and P&O, local tourism industry partners, Belfast City Council, and Tourism Ireland.

You can read more about our multi-channel 'Find Your Belfast' campaign on page 16.

Belfast Plus

Recognising Belfast's role as a gateway to Northern Ireland, and the fact that visitors to Northern Ireland do not restrict themselves to administrative boundaries, Visit Belfast worked closely with

regional tourism partners Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council to promote products in the Greater Belfast area. 'Belfast Plus' provides dedicated web pages, blogs, e-zines, social media content, and more to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more in Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Web and digital

Online channels continue to grow in popularity, and Visit Belfast's website provides visitors with all the information they need for a great stay in the city. In 2016/17, visits to visitbelfast.com totalled almost 2m, equating to over 5m page views. The content supplied on visitbelfast.com varies across event listings, partner listings, hotel offers and visitor information about the city. Content marketing, social media, marketing campaign activity and search engine optimisation all help drive traffic to the website.

Social media

Visit Belfast grew its social media following to more than 287,000 this year. More than 4,000 posts across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram generated 1.4m online engagements (clicks, shares, likes etc.) – a 100% increase on the previous year.





12

marketing campaigns



445k

bed nights



£58m

economic benefit



5m

page views



1.8m

emails sent



230

e-zines





287k

social media followers



4k

social media posts



100%

increase in social media posts from last year



Email marketing

With a subscriber database of over 100,000 email addresses, Visit Belfast sent 1.8m emails in 2016/17. This was across 230 e-zines covering hotel offers, events, and tourism industry developments.

Public relations

Visit Belfast's PR team was directly involved in 391 press articles across print, broadcast and online media, generating more than 140m opportunities to see a positive story about Belfast. This included coverage in the Sunday Times, the Guardian, BuzzFeed, Condé Nast Traveller and National Geographic.

Campaigns in action

#FindYourBelfast

'Find Your Belfast' spanned both the autumn season and the crucial Christmas trading period, targeting the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland markets, promoting the best of Belfast's events, food and drink, night life and retail. 'Find Your Belfast' acted as an invitation to visitors to discover for themselves what Belfast has to offer.

Thanks to support from partners Belfast City Council, Belfast One, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Victoria Square, Castle Court, Hastings Hotels and Translink, Visit Belfast was in market across the Island of Ireland with close to half a million pounds' worth of campaign activity from September 2016 through to January 2017.

The success of the 'Team Belfast' approach, utilising public and private sector buy-in, can clearly be seen by the multi-million-pound economic return generated for the city which was achieved by the commitment of our industry partners and funders who backed and shared in these collaborative, promotional campaigns.

Across a focused, five-month period, Visit Belfast's activity delivered more visitors for the city, a rise in those who stayed overnight or longer, and, crucially, much greater spending in our hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, shops, in our transport facilities and world-class visitor attractions.

While the majority of campaign resources were focused on the domestic market, a strong Euro against the pound prompted Visit Belfast, with the support of the local tourism industry, to react to this unique opportunity by campaigning in the ROI, reminding our audience of the abundance of events, things to do, great food and value for money to be found in Belfast. Our ability to react quickly led to the development of a multi-channel campaign communicated across outdoor, radio, TV, email communications, digital display, social media (paid and organic) and a leaflet distributed through transport hubs and a direct mailing.



£43m

economic impact



350,000

hotel bed nights



71m

opportunities to see
across media and
digital channels



Find unmissable events & festivals

#findyourbelfast

Find Your Belfast
this Autumn

visit Belfast.com



#FindYour Belfast
this Christmas

Find more to share at Victoria Square

visit Belfast.com



Find Your Belfast
this Christmas



#FindYour Belfast
this Christmas

Find that one thing you can't get anywhere else

visit Belfast.com



#FindYour Belfast



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Visit Belfast's Business Development Team is responsible for bringing conference, cruise and travel trade business to the city. The team adopt a targeted and sector-focused approach to all sales activity and this has ensured excellent results.



A Landmark Year

This year was an important year for business tourism in Belfast and Northern Ireland, with the reopening of the Belfast Waterfront. You can read more about the city's new state-of-the-art conference facility on page 22.

Over the course of the 12 months, Visit Belfast secured 77 conferences for Belfast, which will generate an estimated 95,000 bednights and £42m for the local economy.

Trade Shows

In 2016/17 Visit Belfast partnered with Tourism Ireland

to attend three major European and international events for conferencing: IMEX America, IMEX Frankfurt and IBTM Barcelona.

Visit Belfast also attended events run by Tourism Ireland in a number of key cities, including London where Visit Belfast had a presence at the 'Ireland Meets the West End' event in November 2016. This gave Belfast exposure to 41 top British meetings and events professionals, with the aim of growing business tourism from Britain to the island of Ireland.

Visit Belfast hosted its own stand at Confex and The Meetings

Show in London and also hosted private dinners at each including one where special guest and Belfast local, Eamonn Holmes helped promote Belfast as a key destination.

Connect16 – the first business tourism showcase of its kind - was a key event in 2016. Held in Dublin, it was a showcase for global meeting organisers and corporates who are involved in organising events in Ireland. Clients were invited to experience the latest in technology, product, venues and hotels on offer on the Island of Ireland.

Corporate Roadshow (April 2016)

This week long roadshow focused on the NI Year of Food and Drink. Bringing a flavour of Northern Ireland to the GB, the team visited over 100 of the UK's top agents over four days, combining networking with sales presentations, hosted meals and even a 'gin journey'® in the city of London Distillery.

Event Highlights 2016/17

More than 74 conferences were held in Belfast in 2016/17. These are just a few of them:

- Association of Surgeons of GB and Ireland (ASGBI) Annual International Surgical Congress
- World Credit Union Conference
- European Federation for Animal Science
- British Orthopaedic Association Conference
- European Association of Zoos and Aquaria Conference

Ambassadors

Conference tourism brings important mid-week and year-round trade to the city's hotels, conference venues, restaurants and visitor attractions, complementing Belfast's growing leisure market.

While these conferences are undoubtedly the result of hard work from the tourism industry in the city, and an increasing portfolio of products that make Belfast a destination of choice, what many don't know is that some 75% of this year's conference wins were secured with the help of the Belfast Ambassador Programme.

This network of over 1,000 local professionals work in partnership with Visit Belfast to bid for national and international conferences. Spanning all sectors – from agri-food to oncology – these experts in their fields have helped the city secure millions in business tourism revenue.

This year, we recruited 94 new ambassadors, and 58 of the 77 conferences that were confirmed during the year were secured with the help of an ambassador.



Big Wins

77 conferences were secured for Belfast during this year. Below are just a few of them.

OCTOBER 2017
£1.9m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

1,000

Delegates
IDF World Dairy Summit

DECEMBER 2019
£2.2m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

1,500

Delegates
British Ecological Society
Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 2017
£1m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

700

Delegates
European Conference on
Personalised Medicine

OCTOBER 2018
£1m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

700

Delegates
European Symposium on
Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP)

MARCH 2019 & 2022
£2.7m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

1,400

Delegates
Microbiology Society
Conference 2019

JUNE 2019
£1.4m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

1,500

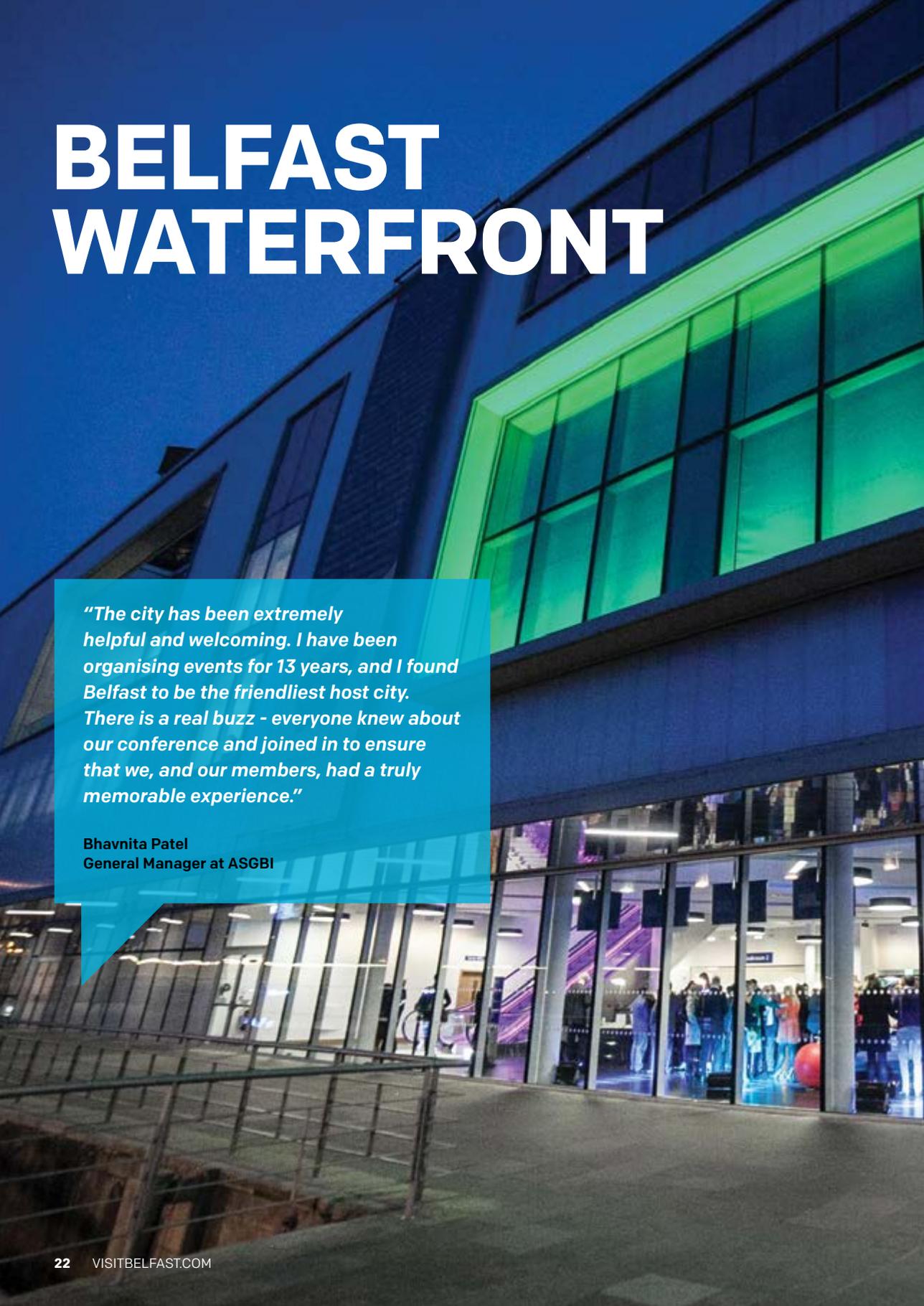
Delegates
College of Occupational
Therapists

JUNE 2018
£1.9m ECONOMIC BENEFIT

1,000

Delegates
WHO Healthy Cities

BELFAST WATERFRONT



"The city has been extremely helpful and welcoming. I have been organising events for 13 years, and I found Belfast to be the friendliest host city. There is a real buzz - everyone knew about our conference and joined in to ensure that we, and our members, had a truly memorable experience."

Bhavnita Patel
General Manager at ASGBI



A 'WATERSHED' YEAR FOR BUSINESS TOURISM

Reopened in May 2016, the new Belfast Waterfront provides Belfast with a 7,000m² events space, capable of hosting up to 2,000+ delegates across a wide range of conferencing, meeting, exhibition and flexible breakout spaces.

After years of selling the venue 'off-plan', 2016 was the year that Visit Belfast, and our partners at Belfast Waterfront were able to demonstrate that Belfast has the capability to host large-scale conferences and events in this multi-purpose venue.

The £29.5m extension project was jointly funded by Belfast

City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund, under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland, and administered by Tourism Northern Ireland.

The first conference to take place in the newly reopened venue was the Association of Surgeons of GB and Ireland (ASGBI) Annual International Surgical Congress, and since then, the Belfast Waterfront has hosted many key events, including World Credit Union Conference, which generated £3.7m for the local economy in July.



Visit Belfast Chair Howard Hastings and Chief Executive Gerry Lennon with Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Chair Ellvena Graham, Chief Executive Catherine Toolan and Belfast Waterfront Board Members, Alan Dixon, Patrick McClughan, Simon Goldrick and Robert Holt.

Leisure Trade

178

leads generating:



5,600

day visitors

Belfast has been increasingly establishing itself on the tourism map, no less so than with inbound travel trade from across the world. Travel trade plays an important role in driving accommodation sales and occupancy and delivering significant footfall to the city's attractions, tours and activity providers.

Visit Belfast's travel trade focus in 2016/17 was threefold:

- Meeting the trade in North America, ROI, GB and Europe
- Growing our database, profiling and segmenting each operator to better understand each business, its clients and how we can assist them to bring more visitors to Belfast and spend more time here.
- Identifying travel trade who currently bring business to ROI, but not NI, then developing relationships with these operators in order to identify suitable itineraries for their clients

Sales activity included account management, attending trade shows and exhibitions, sales calls, familiarisation (fam) trips, research and market intelligence, and product updates with



9,100

overnight visitors



£1.9m

value



15,000

bed nights

Tourism Ireland trade teams. Additionally, as part of 2016's World Travel Market, Visit Belfast hosted a private drinks reception which brought together key international buyers and the Belfast trade.

Getting the message out

2016/17 saw Visit Belfast introduce monthly travel trade e-zine communications to nearly 30,000 travel trade contacts around the world. Regular e-zine communication keeps Belfast front of mind to these operators, ensuring their knowledge is in depth and up-to-date.

Together with Tourism Ireland, we worked on a successful series of webinars, being particularly well received by travel agents and operators in North America.

Trade shows and workshops

Visit Belfast partnered with Tourism Ireland to attend:

- Ireland Workshop, Amsterdam
- German B2B Workshop
- Celtic Connections (Glasgow)
- Nordic Trade Workshops
- Canadian Roadshow

Other shows and workshops:

- Explore GB (Visit Britain)
- Britain and Ireland Marketplace (ETOA)
- Global European Marketplace (ETOA)
- Meet The Buyer (Tourism NI)
- Coach & Group workshop (Tourism NI)
- Discover Northern Ireland Workshop (UK Inbound)

Cruise Belfast

On the crest of a wave

Cruise tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing tourism sectors and has become an important element of Belfast's tourism mix, attracting significant numbers of day visitors to Belfast and Northern Ireland, including considerable numbers of international and first time visitors. This adds to an increasingly buoyant tourism economy in the city region between April and September.

The UK is the largest cruise market outside North America. Cruise Belfast is a unique partnership between Visit Belfast and Belfast Harbour, providing a joint sales and marketing platform to promote Belfast as cruise port of call and tourism destination. Marketing and sales activity focuses on retaining and expanding on current and long-standing relationships with cruise lines and operators, as well as converting new sales leads into solid bookings in order to achieve further growth. As part of the partnership, Visit Belfast manages all the on-the-day visitor servicing activity down at the port, the aim being to enhance the welcome and maximise the visitor experience. This includes having staff and volunteers available on the quay side, coordinating the shuttle bus service, providing a daily what's on guide, and an entertainment programme for larger ships.

Cruise Belfast welcomed 83 cruise ship visits in 2016. The record number of cruise calls, brought a record number of cruise passengers to Northern Ireland: 143,000 cruise visitors in total, confirming that cruise tourism is truly on crest of a wave.

Cruise operators including Fred Olsen, Princess, Celebrity, P&O and Azamara now include Belfast on their British Isles or Northern Europe cruise itineraries.

Belfast's success as a cruise destination runs parallel to the increasing attractiveness of the city region. This has been helped by considerable investment in tourism infrastructure and products, which has greatly improved the tourist offer we now have. Over the years, Cruise Belfast has developed close relationships with shore excursions companies and ground handlers appointed by the cruise line to maximise the opportunities for cruise passengers to explore Belfast and beyond, benefiting the wider Northern Ireland tourism economy.

Cruise Belfast continues to target further growth in cruise calls. Ongoing investment which continues to increase the variety of things to do, allows us to encourage repeat cruise visits as well as win first time visitors.



£5.9m
estimated value

2015



116,792

2016



143,491



Hotel Investment Driving City Development

Affordable and improving air access, investment in world-class attractions and experiences, and concerted tourism marketing is resulting in an increasing number of visitors coming to Belfast, many needing a bed to spend the night in.

Tourism's success has seen hotel demand grow year-on-year – in 2015 and 2016 hotel room sales exceeded 1m rooms per year for the first time, and in the 2016 calendar year, annual room occupancy was at 79.5%. Room sales were at such a high level that for three months of 2016, monthly room occupancy exceeded 90%, while eight out of 12 months surpassed 75%.

Tourism is now recognised as one of Belfast's key economic drivers. Belfast City Council's community planning document, The Belfast Agenda, sets ambitious targets for growth, including the doubling of tourism revenue by 2021. Investment in Belfast's tourism infrastructure therefore couldn't be more obvious and more welcome, with a number of city centre development sites allocated to new hotel development, adding to the recent completion of the Belfast Waterfront expansion and the opening of HMS Caroline.

Local hoteliers are at the centre of tourism investment: in 2016/17, the Beannchor Group - owners of the 5-star Merchant Hotel - opened the stylish 43-room Bullitt Hotel, whilst the Loughview Leisure Group embarked on an expansion programme that will add 55 rooms to the boutique Ten Square Hotel, kick-starting an unprecedented period of hotel development in the city's history.

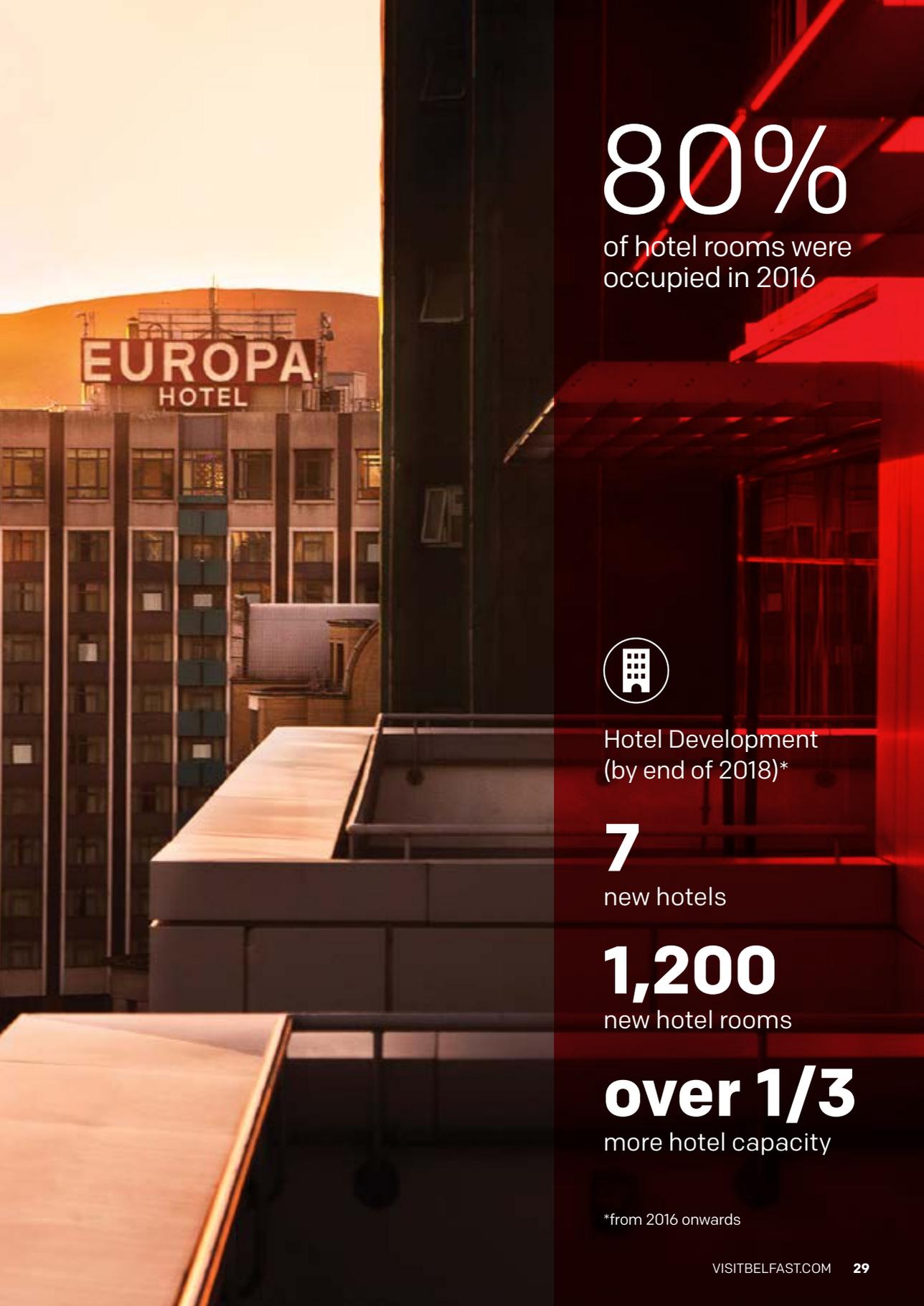
September 2017 will see the opening of the much-anticipated Titanic Hotel, transforming the former Harland & Wolff headquarters and historic Drawing Offices into a luxury 119-room hotel.

Five hotels will add almost 1,000 new rooms in 2018 alone. Recognised brands AC Marriott, Hampton by Hilton and Maldron will be added to the city's accommodation portfolio. In addition, the city will welcome Signature Living Group's George Best Hotel on Bedford Street and Hastings Hotels will unveil the new 304-room Grand Central Hotel.

With ever more reasons to visit, potential tourists will have an increasingly wide range of top-class accommodation to welcome them to Belfast.

"The city's renaissance has been led by investment in tourism and higher education"

**Deloitte Belfast
Crane Survey 2017**



80%

of hotel rooms were occupied in 2016



Hotel Development
(by end of 2018)*

7

new hotels

1,200

new hotel rooms

over 1/3

more hotel capacity

*from 2016 onwards



"This place is a must for any visit to Belfast. Should you require anything from bookings, information, to directions, it is all here. You can pick up pamphlets yourself, or speak with the knowledgeable staff. I was in Belfast for three days and must have gone in here multiple times for various enquiries."

Seanetta from Edinburgh
TripAdvisor review

VISITOR SERVICING

Delivering a first-class experience

Visit Belfast's Visitor Servicing team is the tourism industry's front line, providing visitors with all the information and advice they need to get the most out of their stay in Belfast, with the aim of extending their stay and increasing tourism spend in the city region.

During 2016/17 the three Visitor Information Centres (VIC) – Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, (VBWC) Belfast International Airport (BIA) and George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) dealt with over 750,000 enquiries - approximately a third of all enquiries handled through the 31 VICs in Northern Ireland, resulting in £15.2m additional revenue being generated for the local economy.

Service with a smile

Through our visitor satisfaction survey, we found that 74% of VIC visitors were first time visitors to Belfast this year, with 71% of those surveyed saying that a visit to a VIC would make them more likely to visit somewhere they had not thought of before. Furthermore, 84% said it would encourage them to repeat their visit to Belfast and NI.

This survey also measures customer satisfaction, and all three VICs scored very highly in 2016/17 (82% very satisfied and 18% satisfied).

Award-winning

The Visit Belfast Welcome Centre was awarded the title 'Best Visitor Information Centre of the Year' at the NI Travel and Tourism Awards for the twelfth time in 2016, as

well as receiving a certificate of excellence from TripAdvisor.

Gateway City

Belfast is often the first stop on a trip to Northern Ireland for visitors, so Visit Belfast's VICs play an important gateway role, handling over 207,000 gateway enquiries in 2016/17. New routes and increased traffic to both airports contributed to this 11% increase on last year.

This year, more self-service touchscreens were added at both the newly-opened Eastside Visitor Centre and at the Discovery Point in Titanic Belfast, providing visitor information, event details, offers and social media from Visit Belfast partners. These added to touchscreens already available at the airports, at both of Belfast's main train stations and at the Applegreen services on both the M2 and M1.

Outreach Activity

Beyond the VIC network, the Visit Belfast visitor servicing team provides support and welcome at major events, conferences and cruise ships, handling a total of over 90,600 off-site enquiries during 2016/17.

Our visitor servicing activity even

extended internationally this year, with Visit Belfast staff and volunteers travelling to Paris to be part of Place de l'Europe during Euro 2016. You can read more about this on page 32.

Industry engagement

Regular concierge e-zines, familiarisation visits to other attractions and four seasonal 'What's On' and 'What's New' briefings in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre aim to help improve destination and product knowledge for front-of-house staff.

In summer 2016, we introduced 'Pop in and See' visits, delivering eight such events throughout the year. These events offer a quick and easy way for partners to see and experience new products or popular city centre attractions without committing to a half or full day away from their place of work.

Volunteer programme

2016/17 also saw the introduction of Visit Belfast's volunteer programme. A team of eight volunteers were recruited to assist the visitor servicing team across a wide range of activities from cruise ship servicing to welcoming inaugural flights at both airports.



DARE TO DREAM

With football fever at a high across Europe and all eyes on Northern Ireland at their first major tournament in 30 years, 30,000 fans and tourists in Paris had the chance to discover the very best of Belfast and Northern Ireland during Euro 2016.

Visit Belfast, with funding support from the Northern Ireland Executive, followed the Green and White Army to Paris to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland as part of 'Place de l'Europe'.

The event offered each of the 24 nations competing in the Euro 2016 tournament, including other UK countries England and Wales, as well as the Republic of Ireland, the chance to engage with thousands of visitors and fans in the grounds of the City Hall in the French capital.

The exterior of the Northern Ireland pod was painted by local artist Marian Noone (aka Frizz), and featured a 'mini Causeway' of tables and stools made to look like the basalt stones of the Giant's Causeway, designed by local TV prop designer Andrew McIntyre.





“Place de l’Europe provided us with an unprecedented and exciting opportunity to be part of Euro 2016 and engage directly with 30,000 European visitors and football fans, providing an immersive experience that we hope will encourage them to visit Belfast and Northern Ireland.”

Gerry Lennon
Visit Belfast Chief Executive

The country’s football heritage was reflected by a range of ‘corner flag’ interpretive panels, each one dedicated to a particular Northern Ireland footballing giant or football fact – from the penalty kick being invented by Armagh-man William McCrum, to the successes of the Belfast-boy himself, George Best.

The Belfast and Northern Ireland ‘pod’ in Paris allowed visitors to immerse themselves in 360° virtual reality technology, giving them the opportunity to experience some of the sights and scenes a visit here would bring. Through the specially designed ‘Explore Belfast and Northern Ireland’ app – available in French, English, Spanish, Italian and German – and virtual

reality viewers inspired by Google Cardboard, visitors were given a taste of the best of Belfast and Northern Ireland, enjoying a virtual tour around the city and beyond.

As well as the virtual reality app, which featured additional CGI content that brought the stories and unique aspects of the region to life, the interior of the pod also featured videos showcasing the iconic landscapes of Northern Ireland and the exciting energy of Belfast city.

Visit Belfast staff, volunteers and partners were on-hand to demonstrate the app and sell the destination to all our prospective visitors, engaging with almost 30,000 people during the tournament.



The British Ambassador to France came by for a visit to the Belfast and Northern Ireland pod.



The year that was...

2016/17



April

With a focus on the NI Year of Food & Drink, our week-long corporate roadshow brought the best of Belfast to key clients and conference organisers across Great Britain.



May

Targeting visitors in the Netherlands, and promoting the KLM route from Amsterdam, Belfast featured as destination of the month on CityZapper, a unique travel guide app, as part of a digital campaign activated by Visit Belfast in partnership with Tourism Ireland.



June

Visit Belfast set off for Paris to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland to football fans, tourists and Paris locals during the European football championships. Around 30,000 people experienced a virtual trip to the destination thanks to our innovative Go Explore app.

October

The Belfast Ambassador Awards celebrated the successes of Visit Belfast's Ambassador Programme, shining a light on local experts and advocates who worked to bring important conference business to the city.



November

Belfast Restaurant Week campaign activity, which took place in October to celebrate the NI Year of Food & Drink, generated 6.3m impacts across media and digital channels.

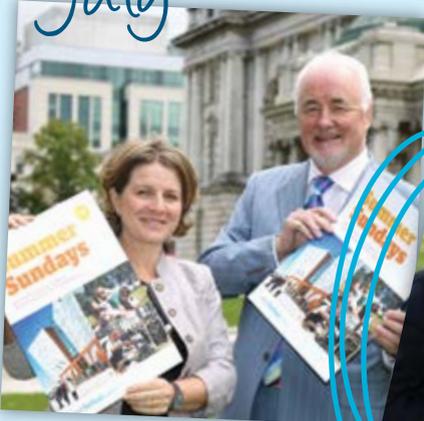


December

Our 'Find Your Belfast' campaign extended to include the festive season. Combined with autumn's 'Find Your Belfast' activity, we generated £58m in economic benefit for the city. You can read more about this campaign on page 16.

Working with Tourism NI, we promoted the best of Belfast at the weekend with our 'Summer Sundays' campaign.

July



August

Cruise season was well underway, and the busiest week of the season saw more than 15,500 cruise visitors come to the city in just one week from 6-12 August.

September



Visit Belfast's AGM took place in the newly-reopened National Football Stadium at Windsor Park, with Economy Junior Minister Alasdair Ross and manager of the Northern Ireland football team Michael O'Neill in attendance.



The last of our 'Pop in and see' events and industry fam trips, which give front-facing tourism staff the chance to experience attractions around Belfast and beyond, took place in the Ards and North Down and Lisburn and Castlereagh Council areas, as well as at the Belfast Cathedral.

Together with our partners, Visit Belfast team members attended Seatrade and Explore GB - two important industry trade shows for the cruise and leisure markets respectively.

March

January

After Titanic Belfast was crowned the World's Leading Tourist Attraction at the World Travel Awards, we activated a five-month long campaign in Dublin Airport promoting the accolade and encouraging visitors to come north to Belfast, reaching an average of 500,000 arriving passengers per month.

February



What the Press say...

Over the year, Visit Belfast worked with local, national and international media to generate positive coverage about Belfast to audiences around the world.

"Putting its troubles behind it, the Northern Irish capital is a different city these days. Yes, you can still tour those murals, and find fiddles played in ancient, stout-stained boozers. But now a weekend there is also about gleaming new galleries, a hot indie scene and artisan food markets. Belfast has come a long way..."

Rob Crossan
Sunday Times

"Belfast is a buzzing city with a colourful history, and some of the friendliest people I've met."

Hayley Lewis
A Lovely Planet blog

"I spent 48 hours in Belfast, exploring the sights, sounds, flavours and history of a city that's little known, but full of so much to do and learn that it needs to be on your travel list."

Elle Croft
A Bird in the Hand Travel

"Having emerged from a dark past with its stout spirit intact, Belfast is now one of Europe's coolest alternative destinations."

Steve McKenna
Qantas Airlines

"...there's so much more to this city with its fleet of Barbie pink buses...and it's hard to believe that there are still so many southerners who have never been."

Muriel Bolger
Irish Daily Mail

"Belfast is famous for its tumultuous past, but Northern Ireland's capital city has so much more to offer. We loved our first taste of Belfast, and you will too."

Daryl & Mindi Hirsch
2foodtrippers blog

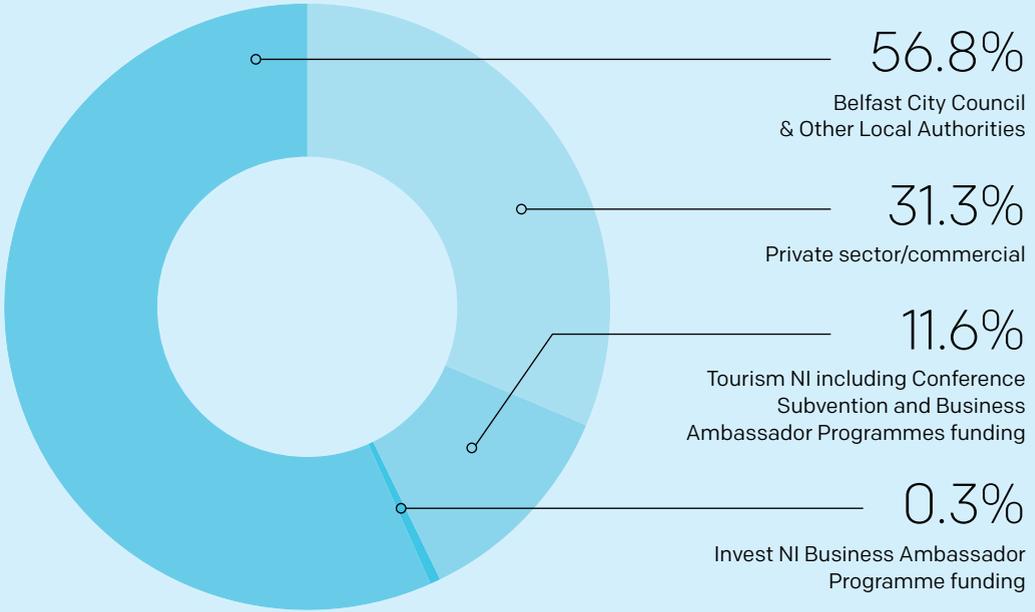
Summary of Accounts

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £	
INCOME			NOTE
Belfast City Council & Other Local Authorities	2,054,399	1,987,462	1
Private sector/commercial	1,131,757	975,506	2
Tourism NI including Conference Subvention and Business Ambassador Programmes funding	417,495	389,804	3
Invest NI Business Ambassador Programme funding	12,500	6,250	4
Total Income	3,616,151	3,359,022	
EXPENDITURE			
Marketing and Sales	2,367,239	2,033,291	
Visitor Servicing	910,472	932,632	
Overheads and Admin	338,440	393,099	
Total Expenditure	3,616,151	3,359,022	

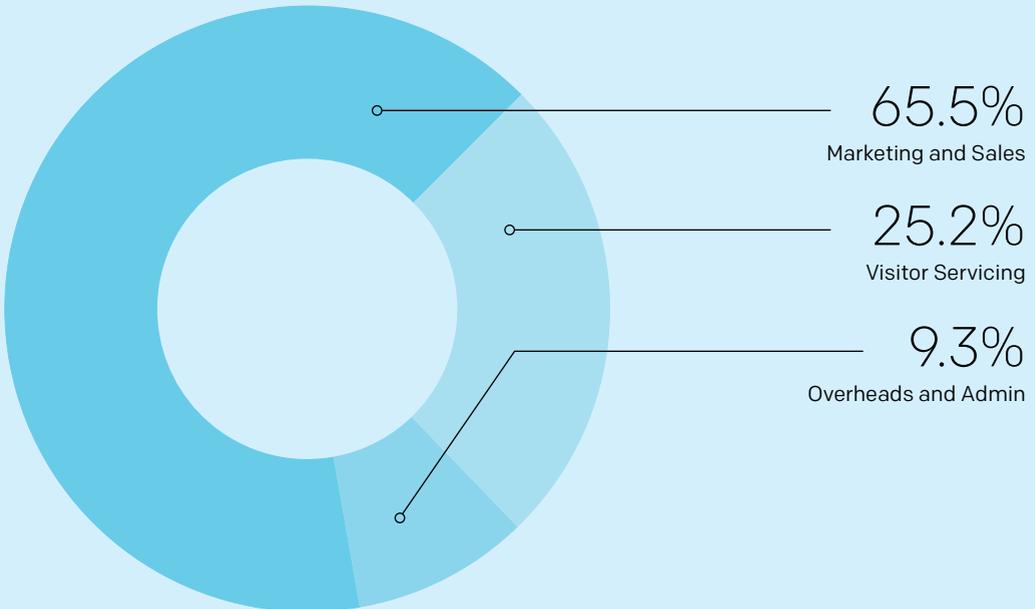
NOTES

1. Additional ad hoc marketing activities requested by Belfast City Council during 2016/17.
2. Includes income from joint carrier campaigns, sponsorship, commercial and industry partnerships and retail, ticketing and other commercial opportunities in our Visitor Information Centres.
3. Funding for Business Tourism and Visitor Servicing activities.
4. Programme jointly funded by TNI and Invest NI.

INCOME 2016/17



EXPENDITURE 2016/17



Board Members 2016/2017





1. **Gordon McElroy** Chair Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce (June 2016)
2. **Harry Connolly** Fáilte Feirste Thiar
3. **Robert Davis** Wine Inns
4. **Kathryn Thomson** National Museums Northern Ireland (October 2016)
5. **Paul Grant** Stena Line
6. **Cllr Deirdre Hargey** Belfast City Council
7. **Dr Howard Hastings** Hastings Hotels Chair (March 2016)
8. **Andrea Hayes** Flybe
9. **Tim Husbands MBE** TBL International Vice Chair (April 2016)
10. **Isabel Jennings** Queen's University Belfast
11. **Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown** Belfast City Council
12. **Ivan McMinn** Danske Bank
13. **Norman Maynes** Translink
14. **John Moore** SS Moore
15. **Cllr Arder Carson** Belfast City Council
16. **Ald Guy Spence** Belfast City Council
17. **Mark Walker** Hilton Hotels
18. **Michael Williamson** ASM Chartered Accountants

Board Observers:

- Donal Durkan** Belfast City Council
- Lisa Toland** Belfast City Council
- Clare Mullen** Belfast City Council
- Naomi Waite** Tourism Northern Ireland
- Vanessa Markey** Tourism Ireland



visit Belfast

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