

Best Practice 2: Belfast City Council Cultural Tourism Strategy, Northern Ireland, UK

Scale: Urban (city wide)

Stage of Tourism Development: Beginning

Main Objective: Destination promotion

Categories of effects:

Effects on Urban Governance

- Sustainable partnerships (public/private co-operation)
- Stakeholder participation

Effects on quality of Life

- Social life, local values and traditions
- Cultural practices and representations (cultural events)
- Urban economy

Belfast is one of the first cities in Europe to specifically target the cultural tourism market and attempt to assert its position as a cultural tourism destination. The city recognises the contribution that this sector could make to improving the international reputation not just of the city but the whole region of Northern Ireland, and also in the potential benefits to be gained socially, culturally and economically. These aims were an important part of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) 2008 bid. Although the bid was unsuccessful, the bidding process triggered several key elements – joint working, cross community discussion and a coming together of the city’s cultural resources. As a result, the decision was quickly taken to continue to harness this effort in order to produce a strategy for developing and promoting Cultural Tourism. Building upon the multi agency steering group set up to devise the bid and led by Belfast City Council, a methodology was devised for effectively taking the ECOC bid and turning it into a strategic cultural tourism plan. This consisted of the following steps a) Desk research on best practice within the UK, Ireland and rest of Europe, b) hosting a programme of key informant interviews c) hosting workshops for representatives of both public and private sectors d) joint seminars between the steering group and European experts e) focus group market research, f) analysis of information and development of strategy, and g) preparation of an action plan for implementation. The strategy document adopted in 2003, was prepared following an extensive programme of consultation - with political parties, the tourism and cultural sectors, and many other relevant groups. The document provides the strategic context, defines the implementing strategy and actions arising, identifies the resources required; research monitoring and evaluation steps and sets out the overall action plan. There is no doubting Belfast’s commitment to becoming a significant European cultural tourism destination. Although the ECOC process was first viewed as the main means of achieving this target the process itself became the reward for Belfast – providing impetus, direction and a policy framework for successfully managing urban cultural tourism. Belfast’s cultural tourism strategy is now widely regarded as best practice within Europe.

Source: PICTURE case study.

Link:

<http://www.belfastcapitalcity.com/documents/documentdetails.asp?id=10>