

Empowering partnership and driving tourism



Dr Howard Hastings OBE Visit Belfast Chairman

£328m tourism spend

1.5m overnight trips to Belfast

72% of overnight trips made by visitors outside NI

Belfast's tourism industry continues to go from strength to strength, energising and reimagining the city in the eyes of visitors, investors and its resident population.

Our successes, and those of Belfast, have been down to the growing confidence in investing in our tourism offering and crucially working together in promoting the city. This investment not only brings economic dividends but it has the ability to raise the city's profile positively in a truly global space, whilst engendering a sense of civic pride. And thanks to the recent accolades from international travel giants Lonely Planet and National Geographic Traveller Magazine, our sales and marketing activity has been enhanced many times over, providing something 'money just can't buy'.

Visit Belfast's successful and long established partnership model has one core purpose - to grow the visitor economy by driving visitor demand to Belfast - with nearly 1.5m trips generating over 5 million bed nights and tourism revenue of £328m in Belfast in 2017, tourism is now centre stage in supporting the aspirations of the Belfast Agenda: where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy; where Belfast is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive; and where Belfast

is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable destination.

Over the last 12 months, I have been especially impressed by the productivity and diversity of the team's efforts in getting the most out of finite resources, getting the right balance across the organisation's three key business functions: marketing, business development and visitor servicing whilst providing marketing platforms that are both value for money and results driven - this annual review clearly demonstrates these results and Visit Belfast's contribution to growing the city's visitor economy and its continued success in collaboration.

May I thank the team but also those who work with Visit Belfast in achieving the tourism growth over the last year and more: Belfast City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and our 500+ tourism partners including our strategic partners Translink, Diageo NI, Value Cabs, Belfast One and Victoria Square and corporate partners Titanic Belfast, Hastings Hotels, Belfast Waterfront and Queen's University Belfast - team works!

Working together to generate economic benefit



Gerry Lennon CEO Visit Belfast

£127.5m

475,684

bed nights

844,497

visitor enquiries

200,000 cruise visitors

Teamwork, collaboration, partnership – these encapsulate what Visit Belfast is all about. But it's the sales, marketing and visitor servicing platforms across the leisure and business tourism sectors that turn teamwork into results – results that saw Visit Belfast, with our partner businesses, deliver £127.5m to the local economy.

As a 'City on the Rise', we continue to promote Belfast as an exciting city break, group tour, conference, day trip, and cruise destination with the aim of providing a balanced mix of customers for our partner businesses, across the week and across the year, adapting to market opportunities as they arise.

Visit Belfast's sales, marketing and visitor servicing activity yet again met, or in many areas, exceeded the ambitious targets set in our 2017-18 Business Plan. This annual review provides the detail of our combined efforts which include:

- 9 marketing campaigns in ROI, GB and Europe that generated
 372,775 leisure bed nights
- 76 conference wins which will generate 102,909 conference bed nights over the next number of years
- Cruise sales and visitor servicing activity to support 117 cruise calls in 2018 that will bring

- 200,000 passengers and crew
- 844,497 visitor enquiries handled across our 3 VICs
- 2m visits to visitbelfast.com

These outputs in tandem with the efforts and commitment of the wider tourism industry not only generate economic benefit but they crucially support and create much needed jobs for our residents.

The global accolades and awards that both the city and Visit Belfast received last year is affirmation that Belfast is on the tourism map, for business, cruise and leisure tourism. It's truly an exciting an opportune time for the city region and we, with our partners, are committed to seeing tourism increase its contribution to the region's growth and prosperity.

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2017/18 was another year of success, with Visit Belfast delivering in every area. Here are some of the highlights.

£1:33

Return on investment





visitors to visitbelfast.com

76
Conference wins

contributing £45.3m to the local economy





844,497

Visitor enquiries

delivering an economic benefit of £17.1m

54m

Opportunities

to see a positive story about Belfast



£127.5m

economic impact





475,684

Bed nights
from marketing and sales activity

92%

were satisfied with their partnership of Visit Belfast during 2017/18





200,000 cruise visitors on 117 ships

TEAMWORK THAT **DELIVERS**



Visit Belfast's relationships and engagement with its tourism partners is key to its ongoing success and continues to deliver real results for the Belfast tourism industry. The public-private partnership model provides marketing and sales activities for partners large and small, importantly generating tourism spend to the local economy and supporting a growing number of hospitality, tourism and retail jobs.

From marketing campaigns in key out-of-state markets including the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe, conference and travel trade sales missions and inbound activity to digital platforms within the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, our value for money platforms provide credible returns on investment by our funders, stakeholders and partners.

Since 1999, in tandem with the City's tourism growth, Visit Belfast's industry partners have increased - we want to thank our strategic and corporate partners along with our 500+ industry partners that represent the whole tourism and hospitality industry for their continued buyin and support.

Visit Belfast

visitbelfast.com

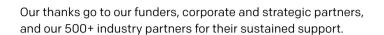
/visitbelfastcity wisitbelfast

92%

were satisfied with their partnership of Visit Belfast during 2017/18

95%

of partners surveyed said they would retain their membership



Funders and supporters:





Strategic partners:











Corporate partners:









Regional tourism partners:





Other key partners:









Visit Belfast's Marketing & 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.



9marketing campaigns

327,755 bed nights

£56.6m overnight and day spend

EXPLORE
CITY
SIGHTS

EXPERIENCE
UNFORGETTABLE
NIGHTS

Find your befalled the advance. Trace the legand of Turnic or succeer
the lear of Game of Thomas. Find you should be 10 June 10

Campaigns

Over the course of the financial year, Visit Belfast delivered 9 marketing campaigns, generating 372,755 bed nights and a tourist spend of £56.6m. These campaigns were spread across a number of direct access markets in London, Manchester, Cardiff, Amsterdam, Berlin and the island of Ireland market.

Visit Belfast worked closely with many partners to deliver these campaigns, including Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, air and sea carriers and industry partners.

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 continues to work closely with our two regional tourism partners Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council to promote tourism products in the Belfast City Region. Promoted under the banner of 'Belfast Plus', the partnership promotion provides dedicated publications, editorial features, web pages, blogs, e-zines, social media content and digital campaigns that encourage visitors to stay longer and explore more in Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Web and digital

Online channels continue to grow and Visit Belfast's website provides visitors with all the information they need. In 2017/18, visits totalled almost 2m, equating to over 5m page views. The continuously updated content on visitbelfast. com includes event listings, product listings, hotel offers and essential 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 327,000 this year. More than 3,200 posts across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram generated over 1.4m online engagements (clicks, shares, likes etc.)

Email marketing

With a subscriber database of over 100,000 email addresses, Visit Belfast sent over 2m emails in 2017/18 promoting hotel offers, experiences, events and tourism news. This was across almost 200 **327,000** social media followers

3,200 social media posts

1.4m online engagements

e-zines covering hotel offers, events, and tourism industry developments.

Public relations

319 articles about Belfast and Visit Belfast were published or broadcast across the world, generating 54m opportunities-to-see a positive story about the city. These included articles in the Wall Street Journal, National Geographic Traveller, Sunday Times, the Scotsman, and the Irish Sun.





5m page views

visitBelfast.com

visitbelfast.com is the official visitor website for Belfast and a key resource for visitors to the city.

The new visitbelfast.com website went live in March 2018, featuring a modern and fully responsive design suitable for mobiles, tablet devices and PCs. The website now provides a personalised online experience and makes a range of recommendations of things to do in the city based on a user's unique behaviour, location and interests.

visitbelfast.com reaches a local, national and international audience. Top international website traffic comes from USA, France, Canada, Germany, Australia, Spain, the Netherlands and Italy. There are five additional micro language visitor websites being developed for those who speak French, German, Italian, Spanish or Chinese.

The website can also be translated into 100+ languages using the automated translation tool.









Belfast has an dynamic new

brand. An attitude and identity to capture the world's imagination and help people appreciate that Belfast is special; a unique city of doers and dreamers, a mix of tough and tender, gritty and glamorous. For too long we've been held back but now we're ready to surge forward, to relish change, to be positive and reach outward.

Belfast is energy unleashed

We're ready for visitors, for investment, for students, for new citizens, for fresh challenges. We're ready to tell our story to the world. And It's just impossible to do justice to the scope, depth and richness of our city with a traditional brand identity so we now have a comprehensive, highly flexible system of typefaces, colour fades, energy lines, authentic images, bold words and at its heart; Starburst. A spirited shape that takes its inspiration from a satellite view of Belfast, with the dramatic indent where the lough flows in to meet the historical heart of the city. We are a richly diverse city and so's our new brand identity.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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

Over the course of the 12 months, Visit Belfast secured 76 conferences for Belfast, which will generate an estimated 102,909 bed nights and over £45.3m generated to local economy.

76 conferences secured

102,909 estimated bed nights

£45.3m generated for local economy



Business Development Activity

Visit Belfast's business tourism team generated £22m worth of new leads for Belfast and submitted conference bids worth £115m in economic impact. Visit Belfast appointed a new in-market sales representative based in London in October 2017 to build Belfast's client network, market presence and develop new business development opportunities in Great Britain. The team represented Belfast and Northern Ireland at major international industry events including IMEX America, IMEX Frankfurt and IBTM Barcelona.

In London, Visit Belfast hosted team Belfast at the major trade shows International Confex and The Meetings Show. The team also led a number of regional sales missions and client calls during the year, with 274 sales calls completed and 125 clients hosted on site visits and Fam trips.



1,100

Delegates / Routes Europe



700

Delegates / Association of Breast Surgery



950

Delegates / International Pragmatics



1,250

Delegates / IDF World Diary Summit



800

Delegates / Pfizer National Conference



1,000

Delegates / 1st European Alliance for Personalised Medicine

Belfast Ambassadors

Through its Ambassador programme, Visit Belfast researches Belfast academic, medical and business leaders, who are active within their professional networks and global organisations, who can help to bring conferences and meetings to Belfast.

An Ambassador is an expert who can advise Visit Belfast on the world-class research, academic excellence, networks and local business eco-system with international 'stand-out' within their sector which could be leveraged to attract prestigious conferences to Belfast.

Visit Belfast manages the Belfast Ambassador Programme, which is funded by Tourism NI, Belfast City Council and Invest NI to support local professionals to bring their conference or meeting to Belfast. It is a prestigious network of 1,200 professionals across key sectors from life/health sciences to agri-food which has helped to generate over £151m in economic impact in the past five years.

Ambassador Highlights

Over 75% of conferences brought to Belfast have been supported by a Belfast Ambassador. In 2017/18 Visit Belfast recruited 79 new ambassadors. Key wins involving Belfast Ambassadors during the past 12 months included:

International Paediatric Brain
Iniury Society Conference (IPBIS)

Baker Tilly Mooney Moore National Sales Conference

Chartered Insurance Institute
Conference

Conference on Radio Effects on Advanced Medicine

Paediatric Cardiology Network Conference





"Attracting conferences, meetings and business events to Belfast and Northern Ireland not only generate tourism revenue, but also deliver in the longer term. Showcasing the region as an attractive place to visit, meet, work, and do business enhances our international profile and helps secure investment which creates and sustains jobs."

Alastair Hamilton Chief Executive, Invest NI



241 leads generating:

3,084 day visitors

9,295 overnight visitors

8.53

28,149
bed nights

Visit Belfast's leisure trade focus 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 leisure 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 trips, research and market intelligence, and product updates with Tourism Ireland trade teams. Additionally, as part of 2017's World Travel Market, Visit Belfast hosted a private drinks reception which brought together key international buyers and Visit Belfast partners.

Getting the message out

2017/18 saw Visit Belfast further develop its leisure trade e-zine communications to 20,000 leisure 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 and Canada.

Trade shows and workshops

Visit Belfast partnered with Tourism Ireland to attend:

- Flavours of Ireland London
- World Travel Market London
- Celtic Connections (Glasgow)
- Nordic Trade Workshops

Other shows and workshops:

- Explore GB (Visit Britain)
- Britain and Ireland Marketplace (ETOA)
- Global European Marketplace (ETOA)
- Coach & Group workshop (Tourism NI)
- Holiday World Dublin

VISITOR SERVICES

Visit Belfast's Visitor Servicing team is the tourism industry's front line, providing conference, cruise and leisure visitors with all the information and advice they need to get the most out of their stay in Belfast.







844,497 enquiries

£17.1m

During 2017/18 the three Visitor Information Centres (VIC) – Visit Belfast Welcome Centre (VBWC), Belfast International Airport (BIA) and George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) dealt with 844,497 visitor enquiries – approximately a third of all enquiries handled through the 31 VICs in Northern Ireland, resulting in £17.1m in additional revenue being generated for the local economy.

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 245,241 gateway enquiries in 2017/18. New routes, additional cruise ships passengers and strong growth across all three VICs attributed to this growth.

Service with a smile

Through our visitor satisfaction surveys, we found that 70% of VIC visitors were first time visitors to Belfast this year, with 76% 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, 89% said that it would encourage them to repeat their visit to Belfast and NI.



Satisfaction levels with our services were very high with 83% very satisfied and 17% satisfied.

Award Winning

The Visit Belfast Welcome Centre was awarded 'Best Visitor Information Centre of the Year' at the NI Travel and Tourism Awards for the thirteenth time in 2017, as well as receiving a Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor.

Outreach Activity

During 2017/18, the Visit Belfast visitor servicing team provided support and welcome at major events, conferences and cruise ships, handling a total of 91,971 off-site enquiries. In addition to providing a warm welcome to passengers and crew from 94 Cruise ships and five Navy ships, the Visitor

servicing teams delivered pop-up Visitor Information Points at key city events including; Routes Europe Conference in April, the Women's Rugby World Cup and the Under 19 UEFA Women's World Cup in August, and the BBC Good Food Show in November

Industry Engagement

Regular concierge e-zines, familiarisation visits to other attractions, eight 'Pop in and See' events, and four seasonal 'What's On' briefings in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre all contributed to improving the destination and product knowledge for concierge, reception and front of house staff across the city.

Volunteer Programme

Visit Belfast's Visitor Programme has

been running since 2016, originally with a team of eight, the volunteer numbers have increased to twelve during 2017/18 providing visitor servicing support across a wide range of activities.

China Ready

In March 2018 Visit Belfast became the first VIC in Ireland and the first city destination in Ireland to become 'China Ready' and accredited through COTRI China Outbound Research Institute. To achieve this accreditation, all customer-facing Visitor Servicing staff undertook the COTRI 'China Welcome' programme, Union Pay payment processing, a Visit Belfast WeChat social media account, and also produced signage, new maps and City Guides in Mandarin.









"I would thoroughly encourage event organisers to put Belfast on their list of destinations as we delivered a fantastic event"

Steven Small Brand Director Routes

Welcoming Europe to Belfast

In April, Belfast welcomed over 1,100 delegates to the city for the 12th Routes Europe conference. Routes Europe is the largest regional gathering for all aviation based companies. It is a forum for aviation professionals to meet and plan the future of European air services. Delegates enjoyed three days in Northern Ireland participating in over 5,000 one-to-one meetings and attending networking events in Belfast City Hall and Titanic Belfast. Visit Belfast helped to co-ordinate the bid to bring Routes Europe to Belfast as part of a Northern Ireland wide partnership including the Department for the Economy, Invest NI, Tourism NI, Belfast City Council, Tourism Ireland, Belfast Waterfront, Belfast International Airport, George Best Belfast City Airport and City of Derry Airport. During Routes, Belfast International Airport announced 8 new European routes as a direct result of conversations had in the lead up to the conference.

The innovative approach to deliver Routes Europe in Belfast was recognised with a prestigious national ABPCO (Association of British Professional Conference Organisers) award for Best Industry Partnership.

Steven Small, Brand Director of Routes commented: 'Working with Team Northern Ireland in the planning and delivery of Routes Europe in Belfast was a pleasure. We experienced a professional and knowledgeable team of people who went the extra mile for us across all aspects of the event, and this was evident in the fantastic feedback we had from our delegates. I would thoroughly encourage event organisers to put Belfast on their list of destinations as we delivered a fantastic event.'

CRUISE BELFAST

Cruise tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing tourism sectors and has become an important element in 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.

Cruise Belfast

Belfast Harbour visit Belfast

Cruise ships calling at Belfast including cruise passengers and crew:

Cruise Belfast Partnership

Cruise Belfast is a strategic partnership between Visit Belfast and Belfast Harbour, 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.

Supporting relationships with shore excursions companies and ground handlers appointed by cruise lines to maximise the opportunities for cruise passengers to explore Belfast and beyond, benefiting the wider Northern Ireland tourism economy.

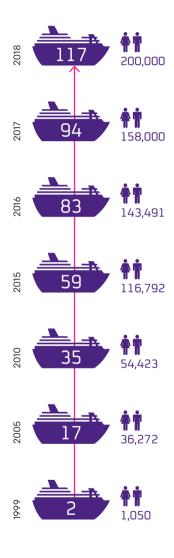
Key Highlights 2017/18:

Cruise Belfast welcomed 94 cruise ship visits in 2017. The record number of cruise calls brought a potential 158,000 cruise visitors in total.

Pre-season bookings for the 2018 season will see the record broken again, with 117 cruise ships due to dock in Belfast carrying an estimated 200,000 cruise visitors.

Belfast Harbour and Visit Belfast hosted a Cruise stakeholder briefing event to kick off the 2017 season and highlight opportunities for local partners.

In 2017, a number of new ships including MV Columbus, Corinthian and the Aegean Odyssey added Belfast to their itineraries and during the year Disney Cruises announced that one of their world-famous cruise ships will call to Belfast for the first time in 2019.



Awards & Accolades

Rising Star

National Geographic Traveller

"There's a great enthusiasm, urgency, vitality and life in Belfast."

AWARDED NOV 2017



#1 REGION

Best Region to Visit

Lonely Planet

Lonely Planet describes the city as 'vibrant' with 'its eyes firmly fixed on the future', which is clearly evidenced by our world-class tourist attractions, a growing portfolio of hotels, fantastic food and drink, and a welcome like no other which attract millions of visitors each year.

BESTETR

AWARDED OCT 2017

Best Industry Partnership

Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO)
Annual Excellence Awards

"Working with Team Northern Ireland in the planning and delivery of Routes Europe in Belfast was a pleasure. We experienced a professional and knowledgeable team of people who went the extra mile for us across all aspects of the event, and this was evident in the fantastic feedback we had from delegates."

AWARDED DEC 2017

Masters of Marketing Gold

Marketing Week Masters of Marketing

Visit Belfast really delivered a conceptual shift in the perception of Belfast, showed an agile mind set and had a really compelling return on investment, with a great demonstration of economic impact for the city.



AWARDED OCT 2017

Best Marketing Campaign

Women in Business Awards 2017

Awarded to 'Find Your Belfast' campaign.

AWARDED OCT 2017

Best Tourist Information Centre

Northern Ireland Travel and Tourism Awards

Awarded to Visit Belfast Welcome Centre.

AWARDED OCT 2017

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.





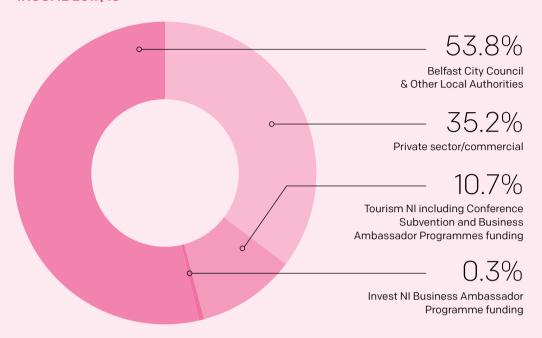
Summary of Accounts

	2017/18 £	2016/17 £	
INCOME			NOTE
Belfast City Council and other Local Authorities	2,046,567	2,054,399	1
Private sector/commercial	1,340,874	1,131,757	2
Tourism NI including Conference Subvention and Business Ambassador Programmes funding	408,552	417,495	3
Invest NI Business Ambassador Programme funding	9,375	12,500	4
Total Income	3,805,368	3,616,151	
EXPENDITURE			
Marketing and Sales	2,448,856	2,367,239	
Visitor Servicing	966,188	910,472	
Overheads and Admin	390,324	338,440	
Total Expenditure	3,805,368	3,616,151	

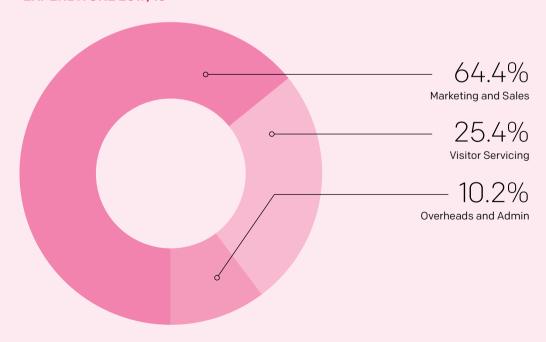
NOTES

- 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

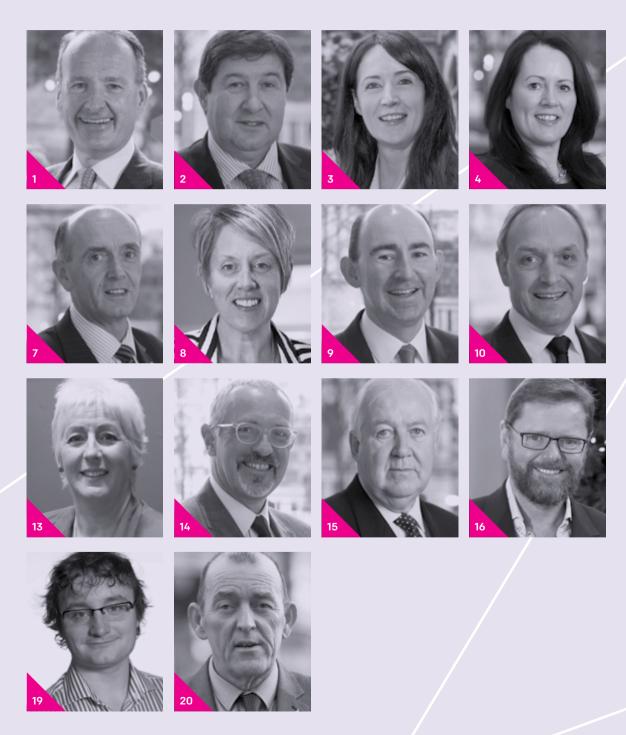
INCOME 2017/18



EXPENDITURE 2017/18



Board Members 2017/2018















- 1 Howard Hastings Hastings Hotels (Chairman)
- 2 Michael Williamson ASM Chartered Accountants (Chair, Audit, HR & Finance Committee)
- 3 Isabel Jennings Queen's University Belfast (Chair, Operational Committee until May 2017)
- 4 Andrea Hayes
- 5 Michelle Greeves President Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (from June 2017)
- 6 Harry Connolly Fáilte Feirste Thiar
- 7 Ivan McMinn
- 8 Kathryn Thomson National Museums NI
- 9 Mark Walker Hilton Northern Ireland
- **10 Norman Maynes** Translink (Chair of Operational Committee from September 2017)
- 11 Paul Grant Stena Line
- 12 Robert Davis Wine Inns Ltd
- **13** Angelina Fusco Tourism NI Board Member (joined October 2017)
- **14 Tim Husbands** Titanic Belfast (Vice Chair until December 2017)
- **15 John Moore** SS Moore Ltd (until August 2017)
- 16 Gordon McElroy President Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (until June 2017)
- 17 Cllr Deirdre Hargey Sinn Féin
- 18 Cllr John Hussey DUP (joined June 2017)
- 19 Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown Alliance Party
- 20 Clir Arder Carson Sinn Féin

Board Observers:

Donal Durkan Belfast City Council Lisa Toland Belfast City Council John McGrillen Tourism NI (joined December 2017) Naomi Waite Tourism NI (until October 2017)



visit Belfast

Visit Belfast

9 Donegall Square North Belfast BT1 5GB Northern Ireland

+44 (028) 9023 9026 visitbelfast.com

