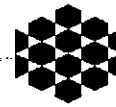


From the Office of the Minister



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Daithí McKay MLA
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15
December 2011

Dear Mr McKay,

Thank you for your supplementary question on Tuesday 22 November 2011 during DETI oral question time. In relation to question 6 AQO/826/11-15 you commented:

“The Minister will be aware that the Titanic ported not only in Belfast but in Cobh, County Cork. Will she explore what work can be done with Cork County Council and the Dublin Government to ensure that the product in Belfast is signposted in Cork? What work of mutual benefit can be done in both areas?”

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board’s Republic of Ireland office is delivering a wide range of marketing and promotional activity across the Republic of Ireland on an ongoing basis to promote the story of Titanic in Belfast and encourage visitors to come and explore the birthplace of the ship. This is particularly important in 2012 when the new Titanic Belfast visitor attraction is opening, and a huge Titanic Belfast Festival 2012 is planned within the *ni2012: our time, our place* programme.

Earlier this year the office ran a radio competition on Today FM. The promotion took place on the Ian Dempsey breakfast show from 9th – 13th May 2011. The show attracts 166,000 listeners each day in the Republic of Ireland. The objectives of the promotion were to promote the centenary anniversary of the building of Titanic in Belfast (Titanic Made in Belfast) and promote the new Titanic building and Belfast commemorations in April 2012. A number of press releases have also been issued throughout the year, competitions and familiarisation trips have also taken place, all in a bid to make the Republic of Ireland consumer aware of the significance Belfast plays in the Titanic story. A Titanic media familiarisation trip took place in May/June of this year with key Republic of Ireland media.

The NITB Republic of Ireland Manager and NI2012/13 Manager have met with Irish Rail to discuss various marketing opportunities across the network and in particular in the capital and in Cork. This marketing activity will include promotions/stand presence at train stations including Cork, where visitors who may have explored the Titanic story in Cobh could be enticed to come to Belfast and further explore the story in its authentic setting, where there is a large range of Titanic visitor experiences, products and attractions. This is currently being explored and developed.

The main NITB marketing campaigns for 2012 will also extensively promote the Titanic product in the Republic of Ireland with TV, radio, outdoor, press, and online activity and an anticipated £4m spend across the year will ensure the Republic of Ireland market is exposed to the Titanic product along with all the other exciting events happening in 2012.

Cobh has appointed a Titanic 100 Project Director in the run up to the centenary of the maiden voyage and discussions are ongoing with him about promotional opportunities for Belfast in Cobh and vice versa. Good relationships have been developed over the past year by NITB and opportunities will continue to be explored.

In addition, a Titanic Cities group was formed in 2009 involving Belfast, Cobh, Liverpool, Southampton and Cherbourg. The partners in this group entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in order to explore partnership benefits and interests with a view to providing a fitting commemorative programme for the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic. By sharing resources and expertise, the cities aim to maximise on resources, and deliver economies of scale, by identifying marketing and promotion opportunities across cities where possible. These opportunities can be as obvious as carrying literature in each other's attractions, to jointly developing events and performances, where it could provide a platform to showcase all the performance locations.

The group comprises of representatives from each city council and therefore for Belfast, Gerry Copeland from Belfast City Council is the main representative. However in order to ensure that marketing and cross-promotion activities are identified and pursued, Siobhán McGuigan from NITB has also been engaged with this group from its inception.

All these options are being explored and dialogue is frequent. It's heartening to see how the cities involved are keen to work together where possible and a real sense of togetherness has already been forged.

A Titanic Cities website has also been created to give all the cities the opportunity to provide information on their Titanic product and experience, as well as cross-promote all the cities' offerings. The website address is <http://titaniccities.org.uk>.

Rest assured that every opportunity possible is being considered to promote the Titanic experience in Belfast in the Republic of Ireland, to increase visitor numbers and spend in 2012 and beyond, not least to ensure that we maximise on the significant investment in our significant Titanic-related tourism infrastructure over recent years. This is a great opportunity and will be a great time for Belfast. We are making sure that we continue to make the right links with other Titanic cities to ensure that we all make the most of this for Belfast and Northern Ireland, as well as for our partner cities which includes Cobh.

I will arrange for a copy of the letter to be sent to the Speaker's office and that a copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

*Yours sincerely,
Arlene Foster*

ARLENE FOSTER MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade & Investment