

Filling the niche for a one-stop production shop

Northern Ireland is a virtually untapped market when it comes to convention and supporting trade show exhibitions, which have the potential to boost the local economy through domestic and business tourism.

That's the view of David Warwick, the Managing Director of Warwick Corporate Events (WCE) — a unique one-stop shop for all your convention, conference and exhibition needs.

The company was established 25 years ago in England but after working extensively in Northern Ireland, David recognised a niche in the market and now has an office in the centre of Belfast.

WCE provides a design, build and events management service from the original concept, right through to the event itself. This process includes choosing the right location and theme, contract negotiation, music and entertainment, audiovisual services, health and safety planning, transportation, administration and on-site management.

Due to WCE's unique structure, the company's in-house resources ensure they can provide clients with all requirements for a convention, corporate conference or exhibition — from set building and staging to rigging, lighting and sound.

From video presentations to large-scale projection, up to 20 meters x 6 meters, WCE has it covered.

David and his team have a wealth of experience when it comes to organising successful events. Past successes include London Fashion Week and Imperial College, London's Summer Ball as well as a litany of events in NEC in Birmingham, London Excel, Harrogate Conference Centre, The SECC Glasgow and EICC, Edinburgh.

The most recent success locally was Business Tourism which was held in January in the Odyssey Arena and attracted delegates from around the world.

Managing director David said that after working on conferences in Northern Ireland for several years, he identified a niche in the market for a company, which was capable of providing all aspects of

the supply chain. He said: "Northern Ireland has little heritage of running large scale convention business, something the region is crying out for. We offer vast experience to the region following years of successful events through out Europe.

"When I decided to open an office in Belfast, it was based on a number of reasons. We also knew we would need to build relationships, confidence and trust. Something we have achieved due to the welcoming and open-armed attitude of the Business Tourism industry in Northern Ireland.

"WCE offers the entire supply chain.

"We get the specification from the client and supply everything in-house, from the exhibition shell schemes, PowerPoint production, stage furniture, right down to the electrics."

"We understand the process of putting a conference or exhibition together, we understand the brief and then see it through to the final product, a successful event.

"If we were not here on the

'The feedback I get is that Belfast is a world-class destination'

ground, we wouldn't have that competitive advantage. But we are here now, so we just keep on pushing to win that business for the region.

"In addition, it's not a case of taking the money made here and taking it back to England. If local suppliers are used, the money stays in Northern Ireland."

He said: "If I have a client in England who is thinking of coming to Belfast to hold a conference for the first time, they can tell me how many people they are expecting and what they require then I can suggest a venue and we can take it from there."

David also spoke of the far-reaching benefits large conferences have for the local economy.



David Warwick at St George's Market, fashion-show venue

"Conferences generate revenue for other areas as clients spread their money around. They go to restaurants; they stay in hotels, use taxis and go shopping."

Since setting up in Northern Ireland, David has worked on a number of conferences, including the "Early Years" conference run by an American organisation, held in the Europa Hotel last summer.

"Several hundred delegates attended from all over the world and for most of them, it was their first time in Northern Ireland. People find that there is a huge amount of passion amongst the people here. The feedback I get is that Belfast is a world-class destination with world-class services. It is a virtual-

ly untapped market, which has the potential to generate a massive amount of money for the local economy. There is such a great desire here to make things happen."

For more information on WCE, go to www.wce.co.uk or email irelandsales@wce.co.uk

Warwick Corporate Events' next showcase will be on the weekend of March 23 and 24 when the team will transform St George's Market in Belfast into a fashionista's paradise for the Magners Light Spring in to Summer exhibition.

Tickets for this award-winning fashion show, which are priced at £10 in aid of the Marie Curie Foundation, are available by logging on to www.ticketmaster.co.uk