

**George Best Belfast City Airport Press Release 16th January 2017**

**BELFAST CITY AIRPORT OFFERS £30K MARKETING PRIZE TO NI’S ‘BEST’ FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCT**

***Airport partners with Food NI and Derry City and Strabane District Council for competition to celebrate legacy of NI Year of Food and Drink***

George Best Belfast City Airport has partnered with Food NI and Derry City and Strabane District Council to launch the search for Northern Ireland’s *Best* local food and drink product – offering a staggering prize of £30,000 free marketing support and brand visibility at the airport for the winner.

The competition is open to food and drink producers based in Derry City, the Strabane area and across Northern Ireland, with the £30,000 prize including £20,000 of branding on site at Belfast City Airport and £10,000 of online support through the airport’s digital channels.

To take part in the competition, producers should submit their entries via email to cortney@lighthouseni.com by 3rd March, 2017, with Derry City and Strabane District Council and each of the other 10 local councils then selecting three products from each area to progress through to the next stage of the competition.

The chosen products will then feature on the airport’s Facebook page, with the most popular from each council progressing to the final. This will take the form of a tasting session judged by a panel of food and drink experts.

Katy Best, Commercial and Marketing Director at Belfast City Airport, commented:

“The continued growth of our local food and drink trade is hugely important to the Northern Irish tourism industry and the airport is a committed champion of our local producers. We are very pleased to partner with Food NI on this exciting initiative to continue the success of the NI Year of Food and Drink.

“With 2.67 million passengers from all over the world travelling through the airport each year, the winning producer will have full exposure to a fantastic level of footfall and visibility. We would urge all companies, no matter how big or established they are, to enter.

“The competition will help to significantly raise the profile of all the shortlisted products, not just the winner, and we are working closely with all local councils to ensure the geographical reach of the competition extends right across Northern Ireland.”

The £20,000 of free advertising on offer at the airport will be on a number of formats within the terminal, while the £10,000 of digital support will include activities such as email solus campaigns and social media take overs.

Michele Shirlow, CEO of Food NI, said:

“This competition is a fantastic opportunity to shine a spotlight on some of our most talented and exciting food and drink producers, who are vital to Northern Ireland’s hospitality sector. Our local products are world class and last year they really began to receive the recognition they deserve, both nationally and internationally, through the NI Year of Food and Drink.

“In 2017, we are reflecting on the tremendous impact the NI Year of Food and Drink has made. The initiative is expected to have generated around £40 million of advertising globally – and around four times what we set out to achieve.

“This competition is a way of building on the legacy of 2016 as we aim to make Northern Ireland a ‘go to’ food destination over the next three to four years.

“The prize of £30,000 in marketing offered by Belfast City Airport is huge and will make a real impact on the business of the winning company. We are extremely grateful to the airport for its support and would encourage all producers to apply - and help secure high levels of visibility for their products.”

Mary Blake, Tourism and Development Officer at Derry City and Strabane District Council, said:

“The council recognises what a fantastic opportunity this is for local producers - our region boasts some incredible produce and the airport’s marketing support would make a huge impact on businesses in our area.

“We look forward to receiving entrants from the Derry City and Strabane District Council area and would like to thank Belfast City Airport and Food NI for providing this great opportunity.”

For more information on how to enter, and to download an entry form, please visit [www.belfastcityairport.com](http://www.belfastcityairport.com)/foodni

The George Best Belfast City Airport can also be found on Facebook (George Best Belfast City Airport) and Twitter (@BelfastCity\_Air).

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For further information, please contact Flora Delargy, Lighthouse Communications at flora@lighthouseni.com