

Belfast Culture Night 2009

What is Culture Night

For one night only, arts and cultural organisations will open their doors to the general public and offer an evening of free entertainment, discovery and adventure. Offices, artists' studios and workshops, historic buildings, churches and many more will invite the outside world to find out what they do, and to enjoy free performances, events, talks and tours. Outdoor areas and even pedestrianised streets will be animated and turned into performance spaces. Belfast Culture Night will be a great night out for all the family, particularly during such hard economic times, as all events are free!

Where and when

The first Belfast Culture night will serve as a pilot for the city, and will take place in the arts and cultural flavoured Cathedral Quarter and beyond, including Custom House Square, the space outside the Waterfront Hall, Writers Square & Boyce Park. This area is perfect for a pilot as it is compact, city central, neutral and accessible. It contains a large number of very active arts organisations, as well as many pubs and restaurants. In addition, there is already strong support for a Culture Night within the area. We hope to attract 50+ organisations to take part in the first year. The first Belfast Culture Night is planned for Friday 25th September 2009, to coincide with a series of Culture Nights taking place in other European cities. We would expect our programme of events to run from ~~3pm to 9pm~~ (-5pm to 10pm?) approximately. If the pilot is successful, the intention is to roll it out in 2010 to include other cultural institutions and quarters across Belfast.

Background

The first Culture Night took place in Copenhagen in 1998, and has grown annually to become a key cultural event for the city, with 500 events happening in 300 venues, and more than 60,000 people taking part. Other cities across Europe now have their own annual Culture Nights, including Paris, Berlin, Rome and Dublin. In 2008 over 100,000 participated in Dublin's Culture Night. It has been proven that the Culture Night model provides massive opportunities for civic involvement and celebration, and generates significant economic benefit and cultural tourism opportunities.

Objective

Belfast Culture Night aims to provide a free, city centre based, family focused, arts and cultural event that brings together arts and cultural providers, the hospitality industry and local businesses.

Benefits to Belfast

- raise public awareness of Belfast as a thriving cultural centre
- attract positive media coverage for arts and culture in Belfast
- advance BCC's aim of developing cultural tourism activity and enhancing the quality of the visitor experience
- drive footfall into Cathedral Quarter and Laganside area such as the space outside Waterfront Hall, Writers Square, Custom House and into many other cultural spaces
- raise the profile of individual arts and cultural organisations, and give them a platform to showcase their work to new audiences
- encourage partnerships between cultural organisations, hospitality sector and other local businesses

- encourage arts organisations to look at new ways of engaging with audiences and visitors, which could be included in new and on-going tourism initiatives
- generate spin-off economic activity for local businesses.

Proposal

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has already offered £25,000 towards the project. We propose that Belfast City Council becomes a co-sponsor and contributes match funding of £25,000 which will give us a minimal working budget to deliver a basic Culture Night model. The estimated costs are below.

Who does What

A Belfast Culture Night committee has developed this proposal and will oversee the management of the event. Committee members include Sean Kelly (Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival), Kieran Gilmore (Open House Festival) and Patricia Freedman (Cathedral Quarter Steering Group).

Each participating arts and cultural organisation will commit to holding a free event - something a bit different, preferably participatory, such as a workshop, open house, meet-the-artists, 'behind the scenes' look, reading/open rehearsal, exhibition, talk or discussion, guided tour, film, or any combination of the above. The details of their organisation and event will be listed in a printed programme. On the night all event locations will be identified with posters and balloons. The streets will be animated with family-friendly performances and illuminated with creative lighting displays which highlight Cathedral Quarter's historic buildings and streetscapes.

An Event Co-ordinator, answerable to the committee, will be employed on a short term contract to manage the day to day activities of the event including:

- promote the event to Cathedral Quarter organisations to encourage participation
- broker partnerships with sponsors and between cultural organisations
- develop and carry out a marketing campaign including an event launch, website, posters, programmes and maps
- programme street animation and outdoor events
- coordinate volunteers.

Costs

Event Manager, fixed price contract, mid-May to mid-October	10,000
Desk costs and line management	2,000
Print, publicity, marketing, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50,000 brochures, 48 pages ▪ Posters ▪ Billboards 	15,000
Distribution	2,500
Equipment, lighting, projection	5,000
Programming costs, outdoor events, street animation	15,000
Materials, volunteer costs, etc.	500
Total	50,000