

Belfast Stories Working Group

Wednesday, 24th April, 2024

MEETING OF THE BELFAST STORIES WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOETLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bunting, de Faoite, Duffy and Maghie.

In attendance: Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director;
Ms. E. Henry, Strategic Lead;
Ms. N. McElroy, Programme Support Assistant;
Mrs. L. Holmes, Marketing & Communications
Coordinator; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd January, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Progress since the Last Meeting

The Chairperson welcomed Mr D. Berlin, Snohetta Architects, and Mr. P. Crowe, Todd Architects, to the meeting.

Together, Mr. Berlin and Mr. Crowe outlined that they were both excited to be partnering as the integrated design team for the major project. The Members were advised that the RIBA Stage 1 report had been submitted and that they were collectively working towards RIBA Stage 2, which was the concept design stage. It was envisaged that RIBA Stage 2 would be completed by the end of 2024.

It was reported that Ralph Applebaum Associates (RAA) had been appointed to lead on the development of the interpretive masterplan and content and stories related design for the whole site. The Members were advised that RAA was one of the world's

largest museum exhibition design firms, who had recently worked on the newly opened International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Members were advised that Gleeds, a property and construction consultancy, had been appointed to oversee the project management and design assurance.

The Programme Director and the Strategic Lead provided the Working Group with an overview of the engagement programme and targeted initiatives which would be undertaken in respect of story gathering. The Members were provided with an overview of the story gathering pilot project and of the successful Stories Network which had been held on 13th March, 2024.

During discussion, a number of Members stated that community consultation was key and the Strategic Lead outlined that they had been engaging with stakeholders across the city including neighbouring groups in Carrick Hill and the Shankill.

The Strategic Lead provided the Working Group with an overview of Augment the City, a project to explore the potential of immersive technology to effectively facilitate the gathering and holding of first person stories for future curation, presentation and publication.

It was reported that up to 1,200 jobs, direct and indirect, could be supported as a result of the project, including during construction. A Member requested that officers would work with their colleagues in the Economic Development Unit to ensure that the opportunities were communicated to those in the employment academies and through local schools, universities and colleges.

The Programme Director outlined that skills audits considering opportunities in construction, tourism and hospitality, and creative and digital technologies were being completed by the Belfast Region City Deal team. The Members were advised that officers were mindful to ensure that support was being considered in terms of neighbourhood tourism capacity building.

In response to a Member's query, the Strategic Lead reported that an important aspect of the wider benefits of Belfast Stories was the social value opportunities, including better jobs and skills, building ethical and resilient supply chains and promoting wellbeing for citizens. The Working Group was advised that an independent evaluator would support the Belfast Stories team to ensure an ongoing review of the benefits and outcomes with an evaluation report due by the end of 2024.

The Working Group thanked the officers and Mr. Berlin and Mr. Crowe for the update.

(Mr. Berlin and Mr. Crowe left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

Members' Communications Toolkit

The Members were presented with a draft Communications Toolkit, as had been requested at the meeting on 23rd January, 2024. The purpose of the Toolkit was so that Members could communicate the Belfast Stories project in a succinct way.

A number of Members stated that the section with the Frequently Asked Questions, at Appendix 2, was particularly useful.

The Working Group noted the contents of the Communications Toolkit and agreed to forward any feedback or questions which they felt should be included to the Belfast Stories team.

Noted.

**Next meeting(s) - including discussion
on a Members' Study Visit proposal**

The Programme Director advised the Working Group that the Belfast Stories Team proposed to arrange a 3 day and 2 night study visit to a variety of venues, possibly in Manchester, Liverpool and Chester, for the end of August, 2024.

The Working Group agreed, in principle, and agreed that the dates of the study visit would be agreed with the Chairperson and circulated in due course.

The Working Group further agreed that its next meeting would take place on the "Brink!" site, to be held at the end of July.

Chairperson