

# **Belfast Stories Working Group**

Wednesday, 14th November, 2024

## **MEETING OF THE BELFAST STORIES WORKING GROUP**

**HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Chairperson); and  
Councillor McKeown.

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

### **Election of Chairperson**

The Working Group agreed that Councillor Smyth be elected to serve as Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in June 2025.

(Councillor Smyth in the Chair.)

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Duffy.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 24th April, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

## **Liverpool Study Visit Report**

The Programme Director provided a summary of the key learnings from the Study Visit to Liverpool that the Working Group had undertaken.

The Working Group highlighted the successful branding of Liverpool and the valuable visit to the International Slavery Museum which looked at the aspects of historical and contemporary slavery.

The Programme Director described Liverpool's breadth of offer and cultural attractions and pointed out that the relationship with Liverpool's cultural sector would be maintained.

Noted.

## **Progress update since last meeting**

### **Programme Update on Key Milestones**

The Programme Director reminded the Working Group that Belfast Stories would be a destination to show the world the value of the city, its people and their Belfast stories. A place that would help to orientate visitors, where city lines became story lines and a place that would encourage people to explore the communities of Belfast. She highlighted that this would be the story of the city in the richest possible detail, told by those who knew it best.

The Strategic Lead described the following benefits of the project:

#### **1. Better together**

Quality public space to enjoy and explore, where visitors would recognise themselves, their heritage and their sense of community. Belfast Stories would bring people together;

#### **2. Welcoming all**

A new visitor attraction that helped people orientate themselves and better understand the city they have come to see and experience. Belfast Stories would enhance the city's reputation as a visitor destination; and

#### **3. Inspiring creativity**

A creative hub in which to meet, learn and collaborate enabling people of all ages and background to become involved in one of the fastest developing sectors of the economy.

She summarised the illustrative draft plans of what Belfast Stories might look like, which included public spaces, visitor experiences, creative hub, food stories and administration areas.

She advised that the Belfast Stories project would represent everyone by Inclusive growth; Social impact; and Sustainability.

Noted.

### **Lack of Quorum**

The Chairperson's attention was drawn to the fact that, due to Member who had left the meeting, the meeting was now inquorate.

The Chairperson, being the only Member in attendance, agreed to continue to meet informally, and to receive the further update for information purposes.

### **Engagement Update including Public Consultation Plan**

The Creative and Strategic Lead advised that this second public consultation would be launched on Tuesday, 19th November.

She explained that the purpose of consultation was to: Continue to promote the project, raise awareness and gain buy-in; Make sure that Belfast Stories was for everyone – including completion of an equality impact assessment and a rural needs impact assessment; and gain feedback on current concept designs and plans that would inform the next phase of the project. She highlighted that the primary focus would be the overarching concept, the facilities mix, and the visitor experience including the Interpretive (stories) Masterplan and visitor journey.

She stated that the consultation activity and materials would be developed around five key areas or project ambitions:

- Be somewhere that Belfast people were proud of (something new);
- Regenerate the city centre and support the city's development including neighbourhood tourism;
- Provide open outdoor space, accessible to all (courtyard/roof);
- Provide facilities, activities, events, programming (creative hub); and
- Be a trusted storyteller - gathering and presenting stories.

She highlighted that the consultation material would include a Members' toolkit and the consultation would include the following events:

- Events with local communities – including those in the vicinity of the site;
- Creative projects including Belfast 2024, Our Stories Festival 21st-24th November;
- Targeted events for priority groups and Section 75 – EQIA;
- Community stakeholder events with local partners;
- Partnership sessions with strategic partners;
- Pop up hubs in city centre and neighbourhoods;
- General Public events and activities;
- Your Say – Online consultation hub;
- Political Engagement;
- Northern Bridge Research Project focusing on young people 14-18 years; and
- Consumer testing with Tourism NI.

The Programme Director confirmed that any assistance from Members in relation to community engagement would be welcomed.

She advised that the project was currently at the Concept Design Stage of the RIBA Stages and Programme timeline.

The Chairperson noted the update and welcomed the consultation opportunity.

Chairperson