



Subject:	Draft response for DFC consultation on Museums Policy
Date:	10 June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Keith Foster , Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager Culture, Tourism & Events

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: Note the contents of report and agree the draft response to the consultation laid out in Appendix 1
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that the Department for Communities has opened a public consultation to inform the development of a new ten-year Museums Policy, replacing the existing 2011 policy framework.</p> <p>The Department for Communities is developing a new Museums Policy for Northern Ireland as part of the wider Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme. The policy is intended to provide a strategic framework for investment, development and support for the museums sector over the next ten years.</p> <p>The consultation focuses on a draft vision, alongside a set of proposed policy aims structured around people and communities, places, and partnerships, and underpinned by the themes of strengthening, connecting and innovating across the museums sector.</p> <p>The proposed policy recognises the role of museums in preserving and interpreting heritage, supporting wellbeing, contributing to economic development, and engaging communities through participation and storytelling.</p> <p>Consultation Scope The consultation seeks views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a proposed overarching vision for the sector, • twelve draft policy aims structured across key themes, and • a number of identified challenges and opportunities including sustainability, skills development, partnership working and audience engagement. <p>Strategic Importance to Belfast Museums and heritage assets play a significant role within Belfast’s wider cultural and economic landscape. They contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place-making and city regeneration, • tourism and visitor experience, • community engagement and participation, • and the preservation and interpretation of the city’s diverse histories and identities. <p>Alignment with Council Priorities Officers have ensured that the draft response reflects and reinforces existing Council priorities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Cultural Strategy and associated action plans, • the development of Belfast as a cultural destination, • neighbourhood tourism and local storytelling, • and the strategic development of Belfast Stories. <p>Key Themes in Draft Response The Council’s draft response highlights several cross-cutting priorities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of local museums in supporting neighbourhood tourism and dispersing visitor activity, • the need for sustained investment in heritage preservation, including both tangible and intangible heritage,

- the value of collaborative partnership working across local government, cultural organisations and communities,
- the role of museums in animating spaces and supporting vibrant civic life, and the opportunity to align policy with major cultural infrastructure initiatives

Members are advised that the formal consultation response mechanism is structured as a series of online questions, primarily requiring scaled responses (e.g. from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”) with limited opportunity for detailed narrative responses.

In line with the approach previously agreed by Committee in responding to strategic consultations, including the Council’s response to the Arts Council Northern Ireland draft strategy, officers are proposing to submit:

- the required online questionnaire responses; and
- a supplementary covering letter outlining the Council’s broader strategic position and key policy messages in more detail.

This approach will ensure that Belfast City Council’s response is both compliant with the formal consultation format and sufficiently robust in articulating the Council’s ambitions and perspectives.

Financial and Resource Implications

No specific financial or resource implications.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The Department for Communities has undertaken the appropriate equality screening and impact assessment as part of the consultation process. The Council’s response supports the principles of inclusivity, accessibility and equitable participation in cultural provision.

4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Draft Belfast City Council Response to Consultation & associated cover letter</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft Museums Policy</p>
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