



Subject:	Events Update
Date:	August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture & Tourism

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">to provide a programme update on the 2025 Belfast Maritime Festival.to provide members with an update on Halloween
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">note the contents of the Maritime Programmeconsider and approve funding to Bid One for Halloween activity
3.0	Main report
3.1	Maritime Festival 2025 Programme

	<p>Planning is well advanced for the Maritime Festival to be delivered across the weekend of the 6-7th September 2025. Officers continue to work with internal and external stakeholders on a range of matters to ensure the successful delivery of this signature project.</p>
	<p>Titanic Quarter is all set for a weekend of free fun from 11am-6pm each day. Organised by Belfast City Council's Events team, in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust, the Belfast Maritime Festival is also supported by Belfast Harbour, Titanic Quarter Limited, Titanic Belfast, Department for Communities, Tourism NI and the Odyssey Trust.</p> <p>People of all ages are invited to dive deep into a celebration of Belfast's rich maritime past and innovative future along the Maritime Mile – from Sailorstown/City Quays to HMS Caroline.</p> <p>Visitors can hop on board visiting ships docked at Queen's Quay and the Abercorn Marina, including the stunning Andalucía – a Spanish galleon replica. Sailability will also operate from the marina, offering accessible sailing, and educational tours.</p> <p>Queens Quay will also host Science Street, back by popular demand, transforming the waterfront into a space for hands-on learning and discovery – from marine biology and climate change to biodiversity. Close by is Kids Cove, where younger visitors will enjoy arts and crafts, circus and dance and pirate play time.</p> <p>'Maritime Presents Festival of Fools by the Sea' at the Arc; a mix of live street circus, theatre and walkabout animation. Close by the Nomadic, the Hamilton Dock Maritime Village will celebrate past and future with immersive technology, interactive exhibits and boat building exhibitions.</p> <p>The historic Slipways is the venue for a music programme & funfair with an extended Saturday evening programme (with headline Act 'Hothouse Flowers' backed by 'Honey Feet') delivered in partnerships with Maritime Belfast Trust. The Slipways Street Food Market is also located here, with regional producers showcasing and selling their goods supported by DAERA, through the NI Regional Food Programme (NIRFP).</p> <p>New to the programme for 2025, is 'City Sensations', an Accessible & Inclusive programme of activities held on the Antrim side of the river in the recently developed City Quays Gardens. Between City Quays and the footbridge, DRIFT, a legacy project from 2024, will be located at Donegal Quay. This unique floating installation will provide workshops.</p> <p>To compliment the musical offering at the Slipways, there will be three further performance spaces along the Maritime Mile, extending from Donegall Quay, to the Soundyard, and finally as far as HMS Caroline/Titanic Distillers.</p>

	<p>A Community Co-design project engaging Sailortown Regeneration, The Met and Passers by will provide programme enhancements in the form of public art, theatre or performance. There has also been ongoing engagement across the industry to showcase local offerings in conjunction with the overall festival programme. Our media partner Bauer Media Group will be on site with prizes, games and giveaways.</p> <p>Visitors attending the Belfast Maritime Festival are encouraged to walk, cycle, take the Glider from Belfast city centre directly to the Titanic Quarter, or travel by train to Titanic Quarter Halt. Cycle parking is available outside Titanic Belfast and at Belfast Bike docks at the SSE Arena and SS Nomadic.</p>
3.2	<p>Halloween</p> <p>Members will be aware of support that was offered to BID one to deliver Halloween activity in 2024 and a revised proposal has been submitted for 2025. 2024 activity delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monster Installations - 7 Giant inflatable monsters adorned prominent city buildings, drawing a remarkable 1 Million + total views and 500,000 reach across social media platforms. These installations encouraged footfall, inspired social media content, and instilled a sense of community pride. Local businesses such as Thompsons and Lush participated by creating complementary displays. • Pumpkin Patch- In collaboration with Belfast City Council, the Pumpkin Patch distributed 1,600 pumpkins and hosted approximately 5,000 visitors. The event was widely praised for its value and organisation. Attendees received maps and brochures highlighting other Halloween activities and attractions in the area. • Spooktacular Activity Centre - Located at 2 Royal Avenue, the centre hosted over 5,000 visitors throughout the weekend. Activities included pumpkin painting workshops, face painting, Halloween decoration creation, and a Creepy Crawly Farm featuring snakes and spiders. Quiet sessions each morning catered to children with additional needs, ensuring inclusivity <p>2025</p> <p>The proposal for 2025 is a continuation of this activity with an ask to uplift the proposed number of monster installations to 10. The Halloween offering, including the rooftop monsters and city-wide installations has the potential to be expanded further to bring a real sense of fun and animation across the city centre. This will not only enhance the visitor experience but also strengthens city vibrancy during a key festive period.</p> <p>The return of the pumpkin patch will again offer families an economical and engaging reason to come into the city. This type of activity encourages footfall and translates into spend across our retail and hospitality sectors, helping drive economic benefit while reinforcing the city centre as a welcoming, diverse family-friendly space for all.</p>

Monster Installations



- 10 Large, inflatable monsters placed on buildings throughout the City Centre.
- These award-winning installations are visually impactful, sharing, and proven to attract footfall in other cities.

Belfast One Pumpkin Patch – City Hall Grounds

- A two-day free ticketed event hosted at City Hall.
- Visitors will receive a pumpkin and be encouraged to visit 2 Royal Avenue, where they can decorate or carve at dedicated design stations and avail of activity similar to that delivered in 2024 – with 2 Royal Avenue becoming a dedicated ‘fun hub’ for the period
- This format encourages city movement and adds an interactive creative element to the overall experience.

Total costs to deliver extended monster installation and pumpkin patch including install, derig, insurances, event management, performers and staffing is estimated to be £80,000.

Members should note BID one are also seeking to deliver other activities including:
Cultural Engagement – Halloween Stories from Around the World & Living Window Animations

- Olive Tree House animated with projections acting out folk tales (e.g. Japanese yokai, Indian Diwali, Dia de Los Muertos).
- Window displays combine projection and theatrical storytelling.
- Performances run in loops across evenings.

Dia De Los Muertos Procession

- A twilight procession with music, dance and processional sculpture. The route for this could be in and around the Corn Market area.

BID one have advised that many businesses have expressed enthusiasm for getting involved again this year. They've made clear that investment from partners like Belfast City Council and Belfast One provides them with the confidence and support to contribute meaningfully to the event with their own in kind activation.

	<p>Outcomes & Impact For 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive city experience for families and residents through interactive, safe, and festive events. • Broader cultural engagement through stories and displays celebrating Halloween across global traditions. • Increased footfall across the City Centre during Halloween. • Support for local businesses through increased visibility and targeted promotions. • High social media engagement via visual installations and visitor content. <p>Funding of 50K would support the increased number of monster installations as proposed and the pumpkin patch, including the hub at 2 Royal Avenue, with BID one funding the remaining costs. This would be an uplift of last year's support of £40,000.</p> <p>Members had raised previously about potential for provision of support for Halloween activities in communities however capacity, timelines and resources has proved challenging in this area. Halloween activity can already be supported through the community festivals fund currently with one applicant being successful in receiving funding for activity with The Beat Carnival delivering Tales and Traditions: A Neighbourhood Festival of Global Halloween Heritage. The CFF grant is now closed and officers will continue to highlight that Halloween activity is eligible for future years.</p>
4.0	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p> <p>Financial resources will be met from within existing departmental budgets and from specified reserves.</p>
5.0	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.</p>
	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>