

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

9th March, 2022

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in hybrid format, both in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 9th March, 2022 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

RONAN CREGAN

Deputy Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Presentations**

- (a) Visit Belfast - Annual Business Plan 2022/23 (Pages 1 - 42)

3. **Restricted Items**

- (a) A Bolder Vision (Pages 43 - 72)
- (b) Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 2021/22 (Pages 73 - 82)

4. **Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) High Street Taskforce Update (Pages 83 - 160)

- (b) Blue and Green Infrastructure Funding (Pages 161 - 170)
- (c) Academy of Urbanism Congress (Pages 171 - 174)
- (d) Public Consultation on Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Routes (Pages 175 - 196)

5. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) Culture Work Programme 2022/23 (Pages 197 - 210)
- (b) Draft Music Strategy (Pages 211 - 250)



Subject:	Visit Belfast Business Plan 2022-23
Date:	9 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Senior Manager, Culture and 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to present the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2022/23 financial year and to set out the organisation's strategic development and operational delivery, focused on supporting tourism recovery. Members should note that Visit Belfast will be in attendance at the Committee to present the detail of its 2022/23 plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2022/23. The overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year has been taken account of in the revenue estimates that have already been approved by the Council. - Approve a multi-annual funding agreement for 2022-25 and agree a funding allocation of £1,997,465 for 2022/23, subject to the development of a funding agreement confirming priority areas of activity as outlined in the presentation and agreed targets. - Approve to inflationary increase of 2% in year 2 and year 3 of the funding agreement subject to satisfactory progress against targets and budget setting. - Approve renewal of Visit Belfast's Management Agreement with Council to operate Leisure Marketing, Business Tourism and Visitor Servicing in Belfast including operation of Welcome Centre at 8-9 Donegall Square North.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that Visit Belfast is the principal Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the city of Belfast. Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities in Belfast. It is a membership organisation with more than 500 member businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works, on behalf of its members, with a range of public and private partners such as the Belfast Chamber and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.
3.2	Visit Belfast targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICC Belfast to drive new business to the city. Before COVID-19 there had been significant growth and successes in this area with Belfast being recognised by the leading industry body as the Best Events Destination 2019.
3.3	Visit Belfast is a public/private partnership. Its current Chairperson is Kathryn Thomson, chief Executive of the National Museums of Northern Ireland. Belfast City Council has four Councillor representatives on the Board: Councillor Fred Cobain, Councillor Eric Hanvey, Councillor Paul McCusker and Councillor Séanna Walsh. Also represented on the board are members from the private, public and community sectors.
3.4	The tourism and hospitality industry in Belfast had been going from strength to strength as Belfast continued to drive the regional tourism economy; in 2019 (last published Local Government District tourism statistics by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency), Belfast hosted 1.9m trips accounting for one third of all tourism trips to Northern

	Ireland and tourism spend amounted to £417m, 40% of Northern Ireland tourism spend. By comparison data available for 2021
3.5	In advance of COVID-19 the trajectory had been positive with forecasts suggesting that the sector would account for around 15% of new jobs in the decade. This was further reinforced by the inclusion of tourism as a key growth sector in the City Deal. This acknowledged the fact that the sector was already a significant economic generator but recognised the need for significant additional investment in order to sustain growth. The council's Cultural Strategy "A City Imagining" also identified the importance of growing the city's sustainable cultural tourism offer through a creative approach that respects the city's heritage and communities.
3.6	Belfast City Council has also developed a 10-year vision for tourism in the city. This committee approved for this plan to complete a public consultation. Following the conclusion of this consultation in February 2022, final revisions are being made and a detailed action plan developed to be presented to Committee in April 2022.
3.7	It is in this context that Visit Belfast has set out their business plan to support the rebuilding of city tourism. Further details of activities that will be undertaken as part of this plan with associated targets will be set out in the presentation to the Committee and are included at Appendix A. In line with this new plan Visit Belfast are seeking the renewal of their Management Contract for a further 10 years alongside the proposal to introduce multi-annual funding with associated year on year key performance indicators. This would be subject to annual budget setting.
3.8	<p><u>Rebuilding City Tourism</u></p> <p>The new tourism plan for Belfast, <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>, recognises both the challenges to tourism recovery as well as the opportunities to rebuild tourism in such a way as to maximise the positive impact that it can have on the city. As the Destination Management (and marketing) Organisation (DMO) for Belfast, Visit Belfast have an important role to plan in realising a new vision for tourism. They have responded to this by setting out a new approach:</p> <p><i>"To create and service visitors for Belfast and Northern Ireland in order to generate economic benefit and inclusive growth, creating jobs and prosperity for the city region, enabling Belfast to become a more sustainable place to visit, meet and live in."</i></p>

3.9	This will require the ongoing adaptation and updating of their strategic planning and delivery recognising that the DMO must respond to the changing environment with a sensitivity to both economic and social context within which they work. This is evident in an increased focus on supporting local tourism and on sustainability.
3.10	Generating £417m tourism spend and supporting 10% of city jobs in 2019, Belfast's tourism growth and development have seen the city's tourism industry crucially emerge both as a key pillar of the city economy, and also of strategic importance to the wider visitor economy of Northern Ireland. As the regional driver for the Northern Ireland visitor economy, the Belfast City Region will play a significant and important part in any regional recovery plans.
3.11	<p>Even before Covid-19, consumers, key decision makers and policy makers were already starting to take an increasingly critical look at tourism. Global research undertaken amongst 706 destinations from 52 countries in 2021, highlighted that the pandemic has accelerated the need for destination stewardship, community alignment and digital conversion in order to lay the foundations for building a stronger, more resilient tourism sector in the coming decades. The research identifying three transformational opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Destination Alignment: aligning the public, private and civic sectors drives destination performance - Sustainable Development: destination and product development should marry people, planet, profit and policy - Values Based Marketing: a community's values, goals and creative energy are the new competitive advantage <p style="text-align: right;"><i>DestinationNEXT 2021 Futures Study</i></p>
3.12	<p><i>Tourism Outlook</i></p> <p>Despite the outlook being far from certain, tourism can contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the city with high potential to create jobs quickly and provide the economic impetus for a wider economic recovery.</p>
3.13	It remains unclear what the longstanding or permanent changes Covid-19 will cause the global tourism sector, growth is still expected in the medium term. The initial projection by UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation) that expected to see international arrivals begin to recover by the second half of 2021 estimating a return to 2019 levels within two to four years did not materialised due to the ongoing spread of the virus and new variants. However, even against this difficult backdrop Belfast was able to sustain some levels of activity with a focus

	on Great Britain and Republic of Ireland markets and this will continue as part of efforts to help support the short to medium to longer term recovery and growth projections.
3.14	The enforced pause on tourism operations, has provided the sector with the opportunity to align itself with city and regional plans aimed at not only economic recovery but longer term socio-cultural needs and climate action that in turn help improve the competitive positioning of Belfast in the international market place. Visit Belfast's business plan mirrors the Council's long term tourism plan to develop a regenerative model and to place tourism at the heart of recovery working with the tourism sector, businesses, organisations and policy makers.
3.15	In tandem with city tourism development plans, Visit Belfast is proposing to implement new and innovative approaches to its destination sales, marketing and communications and visitor servicing. This will be achieved by utilising the City's core values and place branding to reposition itself, promoting authentic Belfast experiences to enhance competitiveness in order to deliver growth that will benefit residents, businesses and visitors equally.
3.16	While the full impact of Covid-19 is as yet unknown, what is clear is that any city and regional recovery will need new and innovative approaches in an increasing complex set of market conditions.
3.17	<p><i>Indications of Recovery</i></p> <p>Trends that emerged from the Spring of 2021, following the lifting of restrictions that essentially closed the hospitality and tourism sectors for a second and elongated period, have been more positive than some may have expected and provide much needed confidence for longer term and more meaningful tourism recovery.</p> <p>The world-class competitiveness of the city region's product and experiences and collective marketing and sales efforts capitalised on the pent-up demand for travel, particularly from its key closer-to-home markets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear and immediate interest in finding out more about Belfast and what there is to see and do, with monthly web visits to visitbelfast.com exceeding 2019 levels since June and 190,000 enquiries handled by the visitor servicing team throughout 2021. - Hotel room occupancy exceeding 70% in the summer to near pre-pandemic levels thanks to strong interest from the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain – year end hotel room occupancy of 50% - 21 percentage points higher than forecasted earlier in the year.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 in 4 short breaks taken by ROI residents last summer were taken in Northern Ireland - Resumption of conferences and events brought 19 in-person and hybrid conferences to Belfast from August to December. - A welcome return of cruise tourism with 72 cruise arrivals from June to November bringing over 55,000 passengers to Northern Ireland. - City centre footfall at 77% of 2019 levels.
3.18	<p>Visit Belfast has considered their own strategic and operation plans in the context of the Council's tourism priorities as set out in <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow Belfast: The role of tourism is critical to city recovery. For Belfast this will mean the stabilisation of the tourism industry and the requirement for further growth. - Positioning Belfast: strengthening Belfast's positioning in domestic and international tourism markets - business and leisure - and as a gateway to the region. - Experience Belfast: increasing connectivity between existing and planned for tourism assets will improve the overall Belfast Experience, inspiring the visitor to stay longer, return and to recommend the city to others. - Sustain Belfast: The sustainable development of cities is not just a local imperative it is also a key motivation for the visitor.
3.19	<p>Priorities for Visit Belfast's business plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly deliver on the ambitions and priorities set on in <i>Make Yourself at Home</i> tourism plan for Belfast - Expand the city's tourism offer and stimulating consumer confidence in the urban area - Utilise the strength of the city brand and its equity to promote unique Belfast experiences - Sustain domestic tourism while supporting the safe return of international tourism - Support tourism businesses, protecting jobs and contributing to economic recovery - Achieve tourism growth from high value markets in a sustainable and inclusive way - Promote and stimulate stronger, fairer and more sustainable eco practices - Engage with local communities and amplify local experiences & stories - Utilise and invest in digital technology and communications to increase competitiveness - Commit to longer term initiatives including signature events, 2024 International Year of Culture and UNESCO City of Music

3.20	<p><u>Operational Targets for 2022-23</u></p> <p>Based on projected levels of recovery in 2022/23, Visit Belfast is proposing the following targets for 2022/23 as agreed by their board:</p> <table> <tr> <th>Total Output</th><th>Target</th></tr> <tr> <td>Leisure Tourism Bed nights</td><td>150,000 bed nights</td></tr> <tr> <td>Leisure Tourism Day trips</td><td>100,000 day trips</td></tr> <tr> <td>Business Tourism Bed nights</td><td>82,000 bed nights</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cruise Visitors</td><td>345,000 pax & crew</td></tr> <tr> <td>Visitor Enquiries</td><td>516,000 enquiries</td></tr> </table> <table> <tr> <th>Economic Impact</th><th>2022-23 Target</th></tr> <tr> <td>Leisure Tourism</td><td>£30m</td></tr> <tr> <td>Business Tourism</td><td>£40m</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cruise Tourism</td><td>£16m</td></tr> <tr> <td>Visitor Servicing</td><td>£11m</td></tr> </table> <table> <tr> <td>Visit Belfast Economic Impact</td><td>£97m</td></tr> <tr> <td>Budget</td><td>£3.6m</td></tr> <tr> <td>ROI</td><td>£1:27</td></tr> </table>	Total Output	Target	Leisure Tourism Bed nights	150,000 bed nights	Leisure Tourism Day trips	100,000 day trips	Business Tourism Bed nights	82,000 bed nights	Cruise Visitors	345,000 pax & crew	Visitor Enquiries	516,000 enquiries	Economic Impact	2022-23 Target	Leisure Tourism	£30m	Business Tourism	£40m	Cruise Tourism	£16m	Visitor Servicing	£11m	Visit Belfast Economic Impact	£97m	Budget	£3.6m	ROI	£1:27
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3.21	<p>In addition to delivery of key visitor servicing and marketing programmes Visit Belfast has also identified a number of change projects as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit Belfast to achieve silver level accreditation with Green Tourism - Aim to have 90% of hotel bedrooms certified with Green Tourism - Maintain top 20 ranking in Global Destinations Sustainability Index - Devise an impact measurement plan to measure the impacts of tourism beyond visitor numbers and visitor spend - Implement key aspects of the Northern Ireland Business Tourism Strategy - Aim to grow the capacity and skills of frontline staff in the City by enhancing Visit Belfast industry engagement programme - Review Visit Belfast IT infrastructure and develop IT strategy by Quarter 2 - Development and rollout of Visit Belfast podcast channel "Pure Belfast" - Investment and development in Visit Belfast website, city guide app and QR codes - Development of a digital city pass to support local attractions and experiences enhancing city connectivity - Ensure that VB Welcome Centre is accessible to all and modernise accessibility equipment 																												
3.22	<p>A detailed business plan has been submitted and reviewed by officers. The targets outlined will form the basis of key performance indicators for Council's 2022/23 funding agreement</p>																												

	<p>with Visit Belfast. Regular monitoring against targets will be included. It is proposed that the funding agreement should be for a 3 year period and that these key performance indicators should relate to the trajectory for recovery and align with implementation phases for Council's new tourism plan. This provides a basis for more effective monitoring of performance and will be subject to annual review and renewal with necessary break clauses included.</p>
3.23	<p>Visit Belfast's Management Agreement with Council to operate Leisure Marketing, Business Tourism and Visitor Servicing in Belfast including operation of Welcome Centre at 8-9 Donegall Square North is due for renewal in July 2023. It is proposed that this is renewed in 2022/23 in order to provide the necessary security to deliver long-term recovery plans.</p>
3.24	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>In the current financial year, Belfast City Council's funding arrangement with Visit Belfast is £1,997,465. An allocation of £1,997,465 has been set aside within the Departmental estimates for the financial year 2022/23. An inflationary increase is requested from Visit Belfast at a fixed rate of 2 per cent in year 2 and 3. This will be subject to successful performance in relation to key performance indicators and will be taken into consideration when budget setting for 23/24 and 24/25.</p>
3.25	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications. Visit Belfast also works with councils outside of Belfast, as part of the Regional Tourism Partnership.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>Appendix A: Visit Belfast Presentation of Business Plan 2022/23</p>



visit Belfast REBUILDING CITY TOURISM

Visit Belfast Business Plan

VISIT BELFAST

Public-Private Partnership

Kathryn Thomson	National Museums NI
Julia Corkey	ICC Belfast
Judith Owens	Titanic Belfast
Howard Hastings	Hastings Hotels
Caroline Young	QUB
Kevin Gamble	Féile an Phobail
Caroline Wilson	Taste & Tour NI
Uel Hoey	Belfast International Airport
Raymond Robinson	Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Michael Robinson	Belfast Harbour

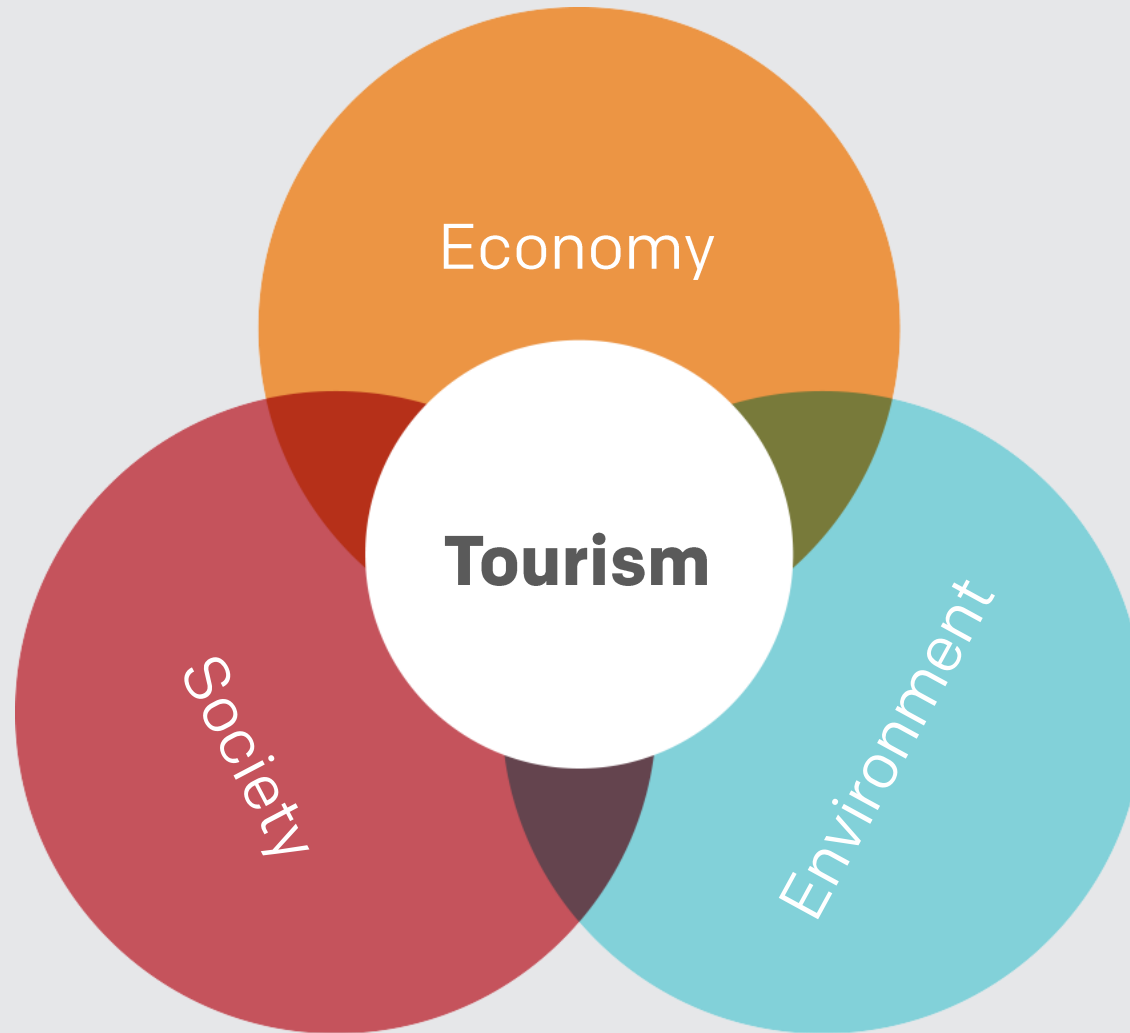
Peter Harbinson	Invest NI
Michael Stewart	BCTC
David Cowan	Translink
Chris Armstrong	Eastside Partnership
Marie-Thérèse McGivern	Maritime Belfast

Cllr Fred Cobain	Cllr Eric Hanvey
Cllr Paul McCusker	Cllr Séanna Walsh

Observers:
John Greer, BCC
Eimear Henry, BCC
John McGrillen, Tourism NI

NEW REGENERATIVE MODEL FOR TOURISM

Tourism is a force for good



Tourism is central to:

Building

a resilient economy

Delivering

Inclusive growth

Protecting

the environment

TOURISM KEY TO THE CITY'S WELLBEING

● **£417m**
Tourism Spend in 2019

● **21,863**
Tourism related jobs

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+50%

Biggest increase in visitor economy in NI (2015-19)

52%

NI hotel sales are in Belfast

96%

of cruise visitors to NI arrive into Belfast

90%

Business events in NI are in Belfast

1/3rd

NI tourism jobs are in Belfast

Belfast has a critical role for NI visitor economic recovery

NEXT GENERATION DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

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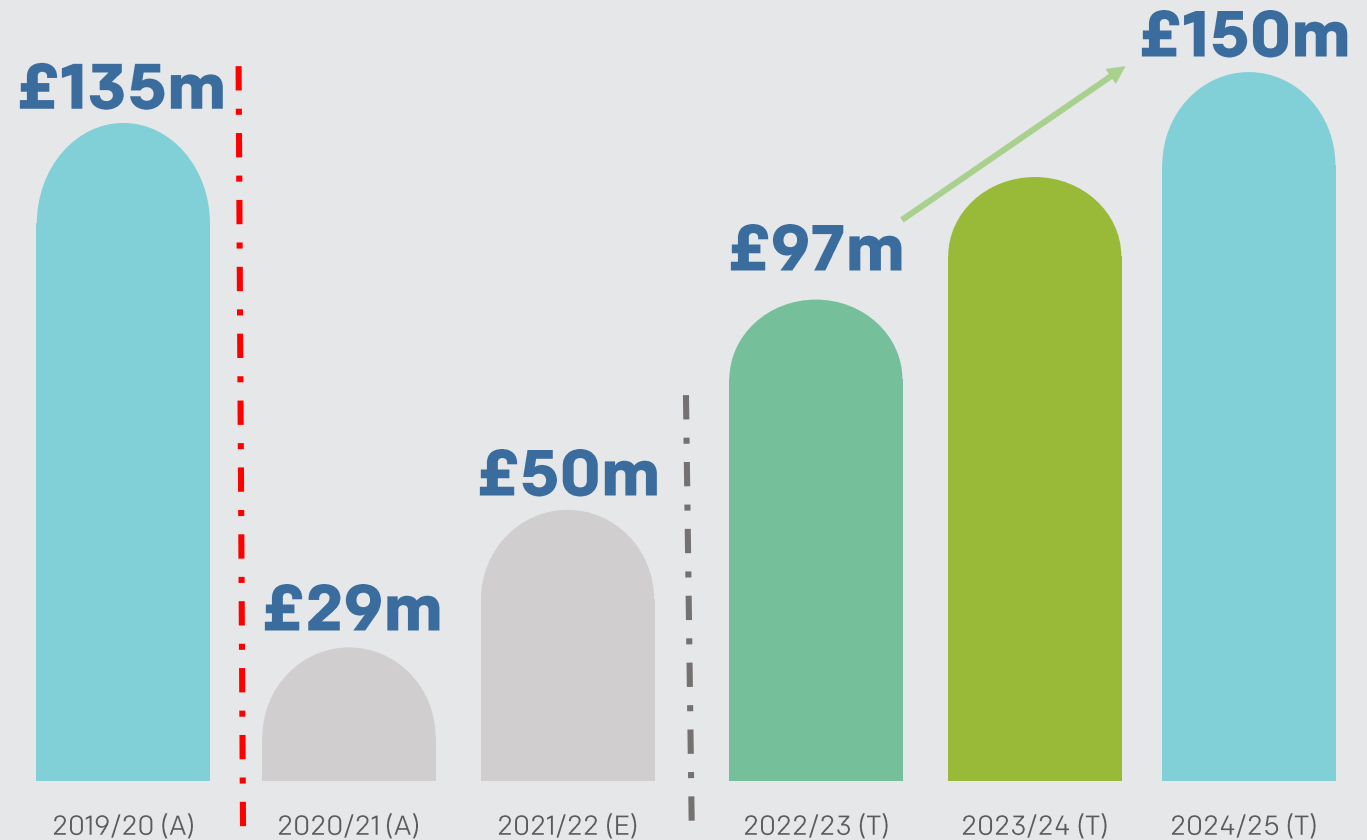


VISIT BELFAST

Rebuilding City Tourism

Page 14

- Demand Generation Projects
- Sustainability and transformational change
- Adapting to changing visitor behaviours and preferences
- Sustaining local businesses, communities
- Showcasing and supporting local producers, performers and cultural assets



Demand Generation

- 6 campaigns promoting city reopening, city assets and neighbourhoods (78.8m impact to date)
- Year-end hotel room occupancy 51% (above forecasted 29%), with peak occupancy levels in July (73.3%) and August (79.2%)
- £1m enhanced conference support scheme launched with TNI, BCC, D&SDC & Visit Derry
- NI Ambassador Circle launched with TNI, Invest NI, QUB, UU & Visit Derry

Assurance

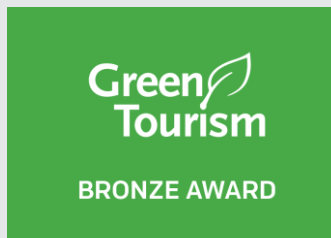
- Welcoming visitors safely back to Belfast: 230,000 enquiries
- Successful safe return of cruise in June: 72 ships safely welcomed
- 84% of industry partners retained
- 118 conferences booked between 2022 and 2029

Sustainable

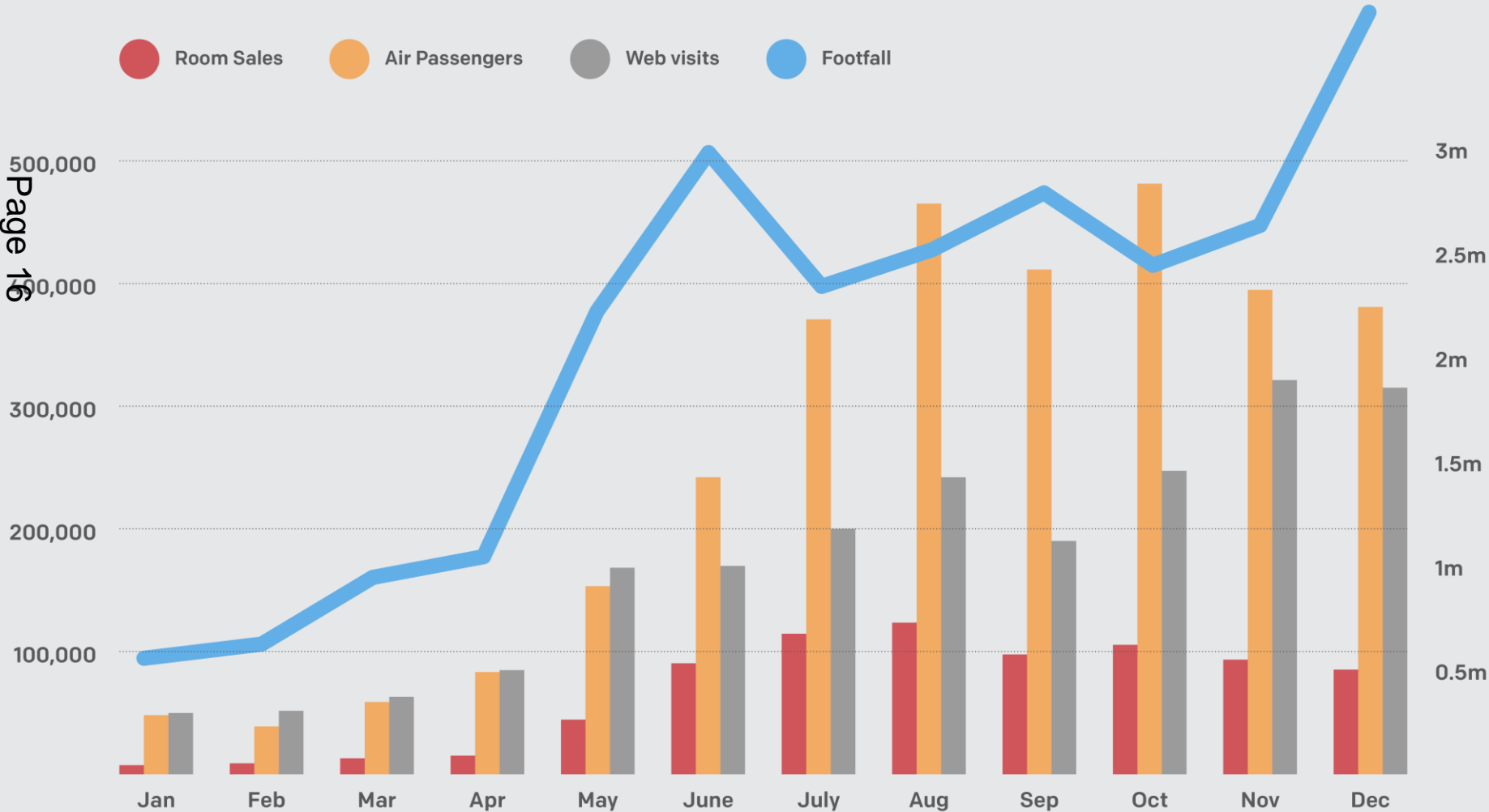
- Visit Belfast achieved Green Tourism Bronze certification
- 63 partners recruited for Green Tourism Scheme to date - on track for 100+ businesses
- Belfast 19th (out of 73) in Global Destinations Sustainability Index 2021 - 5th most transformed destination in 2021
- Sustainable Business Events Framework launched
- 30% of 2022 business events have a sustainability plan in place

Digital

- Web traffic restored to pre-pandemic levels
- New VBWC interactive screen upgrade
- Migration to MS365 facilitating cloud computing and secure working



2021: GREEN SHOOTS OF RECOVERY



2019	2021
Hotel room occupancy	
72.5%	51.0%
Hotel room sales	
1.4m	802k
City centre footfall	
38.8m	24.6m
No of cruise ships	
146	72
Air passenger transits	
8.7m	3.1m

2022: LOOKING BRIGHTER

75 Conferences

- 30,000 delegates
- 105,650 bed nights
- £38.1m spend

144 Cruise Calls

- 3280,000 pax/ crew
- £14.8m spend

Domestic and staycation trend set to continue
Capitalising on neighbourhood tourism,
Belfast stories and cultural destination

Belfast's primary markets
(GB/ROI) are growth markets
International access beginning
to reopen

- UNESCO City of Music
- Our Space in Place/ wider
Festival UK 2022 programme

Cultural Events & Milestones

- Building momentum to year-long
celebration of culture 2024 & Belfast
Stories 2027 e.g. the Fleadh

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Informing Visit Belfast Plans



THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT



Responsible &
sustainable tourism



Brexit



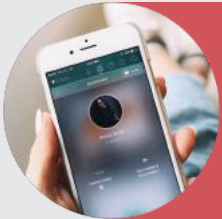
Restoring access
and connectivity



Changing consumer
values/consumption



Accessible
City



Digitalisation



City
& regional spread

VISIT BELFAST FOCUS

Scale of Ambition

- Visit Belfast targets in line with City and National ambition
- 2019 levels by 2024... doubling tourism revenue by 2030
- Visit Belfast activity will deliver on city wide and national strategies

Grow

- Short breaks, Conference and Cruise
- NI Business Tourism Strategy
- Ambassador Circle – collaboration across tourism, education, and economic development
- Collaboration: city and region brand synergy

Sustain

- Accelerate to regenerative tourism model - evidencing the positive impact of tourism in the community and environment

Position

- Strengthen Belfast's position in national/international leisure and business tourism markets
- Establish Belfast as an anchor destination on the island of Ireland
- Embrace gateway role to rest of NI
- Integrate and incorporate culture, events and stories
- Provide better data analysis

Enhancing Experience

- Connecting iconic visitor attractions with neighbourhood initiatives
- Love local to support city and community tourism
- BRCD: transforming our local economy with £1bn investment

SUSTAINABILITY & IMPACT

Accelerating toward a regenerative model for tourism

Phase One: 2021-22 Progress

Successfully embarked on our ambitious journey towards sustainability

- Visit Belfast Green Tourism certified and sustainability policy developed
- Green Tourism Programme launched with BCC (ICC Belfast, Belfast Zoo awards)
- Sustainability events framework/toolkit implemented

Phase Two: Key Priorities for 2022-23

Embedding sustainability right across the industry and visitor touchpoints:

- Improving Visit Belfast's Green Tourism accreditation from Bronze to Silver
- Maintain Belfast's Top 20 ranking in GDS Index and improve overall scores
- Achieve 90% of hotel partners Green Tourism certified
- Develop Impact Measurement Strategy and Plan to include social, environmental and economic indicators
- Pilot and develop Sustainability and Impact Plans for 2022 events

City-wide Partnership

Providing leadership and advocacy:

- Work with BCC to establish and launch the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board: tourism taskforce
- Present industry contribution toward net zero city aspiration / food waste and CSR projects

Building

a resilient economy

Delivering

inclusive growth

Protecting

the environment

SUSTAINABILITY & IMPACT ACTION PLAN



Increasing Handprint

- Enhanced volunteering scheme
- Exploring fundraising and CSR opportunities for events and visitors to support local charities and community projects
- Love Local promotion: encourage visitors to support local communities, neighbourhoods, talent, business
- Explore food donation process from conferences and hospitality sector to support those in need – BCC and industry
- Champion inclusivity, accessibility and diversity
- Develop impact and legacy plans for business events



Decreasing Footprint

- Development of cruise sustainability plan
- Exploration of carbon measurement, reduction and offsetting schemes
- Food waste reduction schemes – BCC & Industry
- 90% of hotel bedrooms to be Green Tourism certified through BCC scheme
- Online and F2F surveys to monitor sustainability choices of visitors
- Promote sustainable choices – active travel, soft mobility etc.
- Tourism & Industry support for Belfast Climate Plan & Net Zero

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

150,000
BED NIGHTS

100,000
DAY TRIPS

£30m
VISITOR SPEND

PRIORITY MARKETS/SEGMENTS

RESTORE

RECOVER

REIMAGINE

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NI

Aspiring Families
Social Instagrammers
Natural Quality Seekers

Rol

Active Maximisers
Open-minded explorers
Indulgent Relaxers (short term)

GB

Culturally Curious
Social Energisers

Scotland

Midlands

Wales

London

International

Culturally Curious
Social Energisers

Love Local - Hyper Local

Staycations
Be A Tourist at Home

Last Minute
City Breaks

Business Plus
Workcations

Travel Later

TOUCH POINTS & THEMES

A compass for marketing & communications



A City Imagining:
culture, art & UNESCO
city of music



Homespun Pioneers: local
people, culture & curated stories,
neighbourhood tourism



**Natural Gateway to City
Region:** seascapes, hills,
landscapes all around



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Food & Drink: uniquely
local, restaurants, markets,
distilleries & tastings



LGBTQI+: a welcoming
city that's accessible,
diverse & inclusive



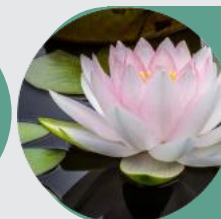
Maritime Powerhouse:
Titanic history, iconic
waterfront, Maritime Mile



Events & Festivals: Festival
UK 2022 / cultural milestones
to international events in 2024



City Plus: outdoor, nature city
plus activities, experiences &
family adventures



Health & Wellness:
retreats, remedies &
spa experiences



Sustainability: conscious
travel and meetings



Business Events: Life & Health Sciences,
Business & Professional Services, Tech,
Advanced Manufacturing, Food & Drink

MARKETING FOCUS & FRAMEWORK

2021-22

Page 26

'Back to Belfast' campaign series showcasing the city's resilience, welcome, access and innovation – agile response with phased approach to marketing

Targeted web and digital marketing-communications activity that highlighted authentic and uniquely Belfast experiences and attractions

Marketing activity that supports city businesses, assets and communities

Promoting at home travel experiences to maximise staycation and day trip market

'Uncover Belfast' Spring 2022 cultural (events & festivals) campaign in NI and ROI – building momentum towards Belfast's landmark events & celebration of culture

visitBelfast.com

Uncover Belfast Arts & Culture

Time to experience something new, right here, right now

#ComeOnIn

UNCOVER BELFAST CAMPAIGN

Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

#ComeOnIn

visitBelfast.com

Uncover Belfast Music

#ComeOnIn

Belfast Telegraph

Subscribe

Over 500 national and international artists, bands, and solo acts will be performing at the Belfast Music Festival, which will be held over the weekend of 10-12 June.



It's the best of the best, the best of the best, the best of the best.

Visit Belfast

@visitbelfast

17 Feb

The 2022 Belfast Festival returns this Thursday 17 Feb with an intention to be as of our 100th anniversary.



visitBelfast



Spring in Belfast

With longer and brighter days ahead, there's even more time to enjoy Belfast. Step into Spring with the beginning of Belfast's festivals and events in music, theatre, art or science! There is something for the whole family to enjoy!

Read More



Festivals & Events

Have a look at our Spring Festivals & Events taking place across the city

Read More



4 Corners Festival
20 January - 19 February
These events are designed to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in the city. The full line up includes art, drama, conversation, sport, prayer, and the ever-popular 'wonderful winter' over Belfast's common ground.

Read More



Lower Hall Contemporary Festival
1-5 February
Downtown Arts Programming & Consultancy has brought together the very best local, national and international talent from film, politics, academia, visual arts and music to give a uniquely modern twist to those from the Enlightenment.

Read More



Northern Ireland Science Festival
17 - 27 February
From laboratory to physics, ecology to geology, discover how you, the universe and everything in between behaves as the Science Festival returns with an interactive programme of over 120 public events.

Read More



Belfast's Children's Festival
4-13 March
A festival full to the brim with exceptional creative experiences for children, young people and the adults in their lives. Events take place both in and out of school time for schools, groups, and families to attend.

Read More

Féile na hEarrach
1 - 17 Mar 2022

Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

Celebrate local Irish culture and diversity this St Patrick's season, with an array of music sessions, gigs, illuminations, workshops and more taking place over 10 festival days in the city!

visitBelfast.com

#ComeOnIn

Belfast Children's Festival
4 - 13 Mar 2022

Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

Belfast will be full to the brim with exceptional creative experiences for children, young people and the adults in their lives, inspiring giant imaginations at the Belfast Children's Festival!

visitBelfast.com

#ComeOnIn

All Spring Festivals & Events

Discover the top 10 of festivals & events happening in Belfast and beyond. Find the whole family to enjoy. Read More

Read More



Brilliant Careers - A Festival of Jazz in Belfast
10 - 12 March
A festival of jazz in Belfast, featuring a series of events across the city, including a concert, a workshop, and a masterclass.

Read More



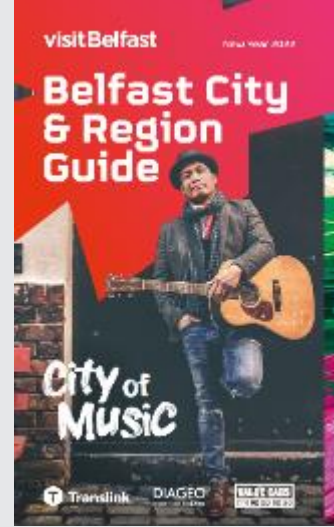
10th The North Street Art Festival
10 - 12 March
The 10th The North Street Art Festival will celebrate the city's vibrant art scene with a series of events, including a concert, a workshop, and a masterclass.

Read More



Belfast Children's Festival 2022
4 - 13 March
Belfast Children's Festival returns with a series of events, including a concert, a workshop, and a masterclass.

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Top 10 Family Fun Attractions in Belfast

There are plenty of entertaining experiences for the young (and the young at heart) when visiting Belfast. Here are our top 10 family fun attractions in Belfast.

1. Belfast Zoo
2. Ulster Museum
3. Belfast City Hall
4. Belfast Botanic Gardens
5. Belfast Harbour
6. Belfast City Walls
7. Belfast City Walls
8. Belfast City Walls
9. Belfast City Walls
10. Belfast City Walls

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Breakfast and Brunch in Belfast

Nothing starts a day better than a hearty breakfast or a delicious brunch. Here are our top 10 family friendly breakfast and brunch spots in Belfast.

1. The Breakfast Club
2. The Breakfast Club
3. The Breakfast Club
4. The Breakfast Club
5. The Breakfast Club
6. The Breakfast Club
7. The Breakfast Club
8. The Breakfast Club
9. The Breakfast Club
10. The Breakfast Club

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2 Royal Avenue

Experience the city through a specially curated programme of art exhibitions, local food and craft markets.

2 Royal Avenue is a vibrant and exciting space for the city. It's a place where you can experience the best of Belfast in one place. From art exhibitions to local food and craft markets, there's something for everyone.

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Free Things To Do in Belfast

There are plenty of free things to do in Belfast. Here are our top 10 family friendly free things to do in Belfast.

1. Belfast City Walls
2. Belfast City Walls
3. Belfast City Walls
4. Belfast City Walls
5. Belfast City Walls
6. Belfast City Walls
7. Belfast City Walls
8. Belfast City Walls
9. Belfast City Walls
10. Belfast City Walls

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2 Royal Avenue Events

2 Royal Avenue is a vibrant and exciting space for the city. It's a place where you can experience the best of Belfast in one place. From art exhibitions to local food and craft markets, there's something for everyone.

Read More

Sound Therapy for Kids
12 - 26 March
2 Royal Avenue
Join Teresa Ann from Thea's Little Light for an interactive 40-minute sound therapy workshop for kids. These workshops are for age groups 5 - 7 & 8 - 11 yrs.

Read More

Embrace the Change
28 March
2 Royal Avenue
A yoga workshop exploring Menopause with Jackie Shanley. Free refreshments will be provided during the workshop.

Read More

Tea Dances
28 February - 28 March
2 Royal Avenue
At Belfast Music's spring tea dances (the bugling, jigs, and strutting your vintage stuff, to name a few).

Read More

Piano at the Dome
28 February - 21 March
2 Royal Avenue
Chill out with a coffee and some music at Belfast's newest pop-up venue. Enjoy the musical talents of different musicians each fortnight.

Read More

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Half-Term in Belfast

Looking for things to do with the kids this half term? We've rounded up the top family events in Belfast and beyond to keep the little ones entertained. There's lots to see and do from all-time workshops, Science Festival events, indoor activities for rainy days and family friendly restaurants!

Family Fun - Belfast Plus
Discover family fun attractions in Lisburn and Castlereagh and Ards and North Down. See our top suggestions for a fun-filled day out.

Read More

Things To Do This Spring
Enjoy fun-filled family days this spring with these top ideas of places to go in Belfast and beyond. Make new memories with your loved ones.

Read More

Top Family Attractions
There are plenty of entertaining attractions for the young (and the young at heart) around Belfast including WB and Belfast Zoo.

Read More

Free Things To Do
Keep the costs down this half term with family friendly attractions and entertainment that are completely free of charge!

Read More

A screenshot of a Twitter post. The user is @irelandwithmichael, with a verified badge. The text of the tweet reads: "visitthefest Belfast Christmas markets in all their glory 🇬🇧🇮🇪". Below the text is a photo of a Christmas market stall. The tweet has 10 retweets and 10 likes. The reply section shows one reply from emilyjpalin: "is this outside city hall?". The tweet is tagged with various location and event hashtags: #cityhall #Belfast #BelfastChristmasMarket #NorthernIreland #Instanorthernireland #cityphotography #Belfastcity #visitBelfast #discovernorthernireland #northernirelandtourism #ireland #discoverireland #irelandtravels #instanireland #Boutique #experience #exploire #exploiremore #discoverireland #Christmas.

Visit Belfast @VisitBelfast · Feb 5

I here's lots going on at @HayaAvenue this weekend! So come on down, grab a coffee and enjoy a whole host of fun activities ☕🎨📺 See what's on: >> visitbelfast.com/?_royal-avenue...



[illegible]

Visit Belfast
Published by iStockphoto 21 December 2021

St George's Market, Belfast will be open this week for extended Christmas shopping hours so you can pep down and grab any last minute gifts and fresh Christmas dinner ingredients 🍷🍷

Wed 22 December – 10-6pm
Thurs 23 December – 10-6pm
Christmas Eve – 8-2pm... See more

Visit Belfast
Published by Hoopsuite - 19 February at 18:01 - 

Belfast is bustling with things to do this Spring! From music shows to festivals to seasonal celebrations, there is something on for everyone in the city! See what's on >>>
visitbelfast.com/belfast-city-centre-events

 [instagram.com/visitbelfast/](https://www.instagram.com/visitbelfast/) - photo by [evangelosthegreek](#)

Visit Belfast
Published by Hootsuite · 15 December 2021 · 🌐

Magical scenes at Belfast Castle last year 🏰

www.instagram.com/cinedroneri

64,053 People reached 1,701 Engagements — Distribution score [Boost post](#)

729 26 comments 89 shares

[illegible]

2022-23 CAMPAIGN APPROACH

Delivering integrated city marketing activity to restore, recover and 're'Imagine Belfast

Supporting four
strategic themes:

Grow Experience Position Sustain

Prioritisation of Domestic UK and Ireland Markets

Partnership effort, investment in consistent marketing and focus on ease of conversion are key.

UNESCO city of music, events and festivals, authentic food and drink, retail hub and world class attractions.

Belfast Brand / EAGS

Positioning Belfast as a cultural tourism destination on the island of Ireland and the **gateway to NI**, confounding expectations and rewarding curiosity. City and Region brand alignment.

Supporting Business Tourism

Marketing of Belfast as a leading destination for hosting business events.

Build, Nurture and Inspire

Creative and on-brand photography and videography, enhanced digital channel activity, authentic, local & cultural tourism experiences and events that motivate short break visits and day trips to the city.

Working with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and BCC to develop shared assets.

Always On Marketing

Off and on-line targeted and segmented communications activity: telling our stories, utilising themes, promoting city assets and neighbourhood areas as an integral part of our welcoming and inclusive city.

DIGITAL, COMMUNICATIONS & PR

Create authentic & credible visitor content across communications platforms

Investing in Digital

Keeping Belfast accessible and at the forefront of digital communications:

- website content
- visitor experience blogs
- apps and maps
- social media
- email marketing
- paid digital advertising
- VBWC islands

Stories & Themes

Recruit, collate and curate interesting stories that showcase Belfast through our people and our neighbourhood communities.

Development of user generated content so visitors can build and share their own Belfast and gateway experiences.

Live Content

Curated authentic content, delivering immersive moments, personalised experiences, authentic and trusted information that engages with all visitors at various stages of the purchase funnel.

Press & Media

Positioning Belfast as a welcoming cultural and tourism destination, promoting authentic urban and unique community experiences to our leisure and business tourism markets.

Generate media coverage through targeted press, media and influencer activity, locally, nationally and internationally.

Know Before You Go

Enhanced digital and PR strategies to keep Belfast on ***must do*** lists of international visitors given the slower return of these inbound markets. Further development of multilingual provision for online web and screen channels

DIGITAL CONTENT PLAN



Current objectives

- Utilise the strength of the city brand and EAGS
- Support domestic / UK and Ireland staycation and day trip markets
- Keep Belfast front of mind in International markets
- Amplify hyper-local experiences and community engagement
- Support tourism business, new initiatives and stimulate demand
- Promote inspiration, motivation consumer confidence
- Extend stays and repeat visits



Content themes

- Maritime Powerhouse
- A City Reimagining
- Food & Drink
- Homespun Pioneers
- LGBTQI+
- Events and Festivals
- Natural Gateway to City Region
- City Plus



Market focus

- Belfast and NI
- Island of Ireland and GB
- Direct Access International



Live content

- Spring Festivals and Events: culture/events programme e.g. Féile, 2 Royal Avenue, NI Science Festival
- Belfast Uncovered
- Beat of Belfast / City of Music
- Explore the Great Outdoors
- Urban Arts and Crafts
- St Patrick's Day
- Accessible Belfast



Planned content

- Enjoy our culture, music city
- Events e.g. Fleadh, CQAF, Our Place in Space
- The ultimate Belfast Staycation Guide
- Love Local e.g. Belfast Hills, City Cemetery, Belfast Castle, Connswater Greenway
- Green attractions for eco-friendly visitors
- Family fun: e.g. Belfast Zoo, Tropical Ravine, outdoors spaces
- Belfast on a budget, shopping, food and attractions

BUSINESS TOURISM

82,000
BED NIGHTS

£40m
ECONOMIC BENEFIT

FORWARD BOOKED CONFERENCES

(at 1 February 2022)

Year	Conferences	Delegates	Bed nights	Economic Impact
2022	75	30,414	105,650	£38.1m
2023	28	17,395	56,274	£24.0m
2024	8	5,908	17,499	£8.0m
2025	4	2,030	7,591	£3.3m
2026	1	1,100	3,300	£1.6m
2028	1	750	3,000	£1.4m
2029	1	1,300	5,200	£2.5m
Total	118	51,568	198,524	£79.2m

Driving Growth

Increasing spend and length of stay

- 2022 ahead of 2019 (£38.1m v £33.2m)
- 30,000 delegates generating 105,650 bed nights
- Campaign targeting business visitors to extend stay / return for leisure

Leverage the Ambassador Circle

- 79% of events to the city via Ambassadors
- Diaspora launch: invitation to bring their events home
- 5 sector advisory panels aligned to 10X Economic Vision for NI

Sales Acceleration plan

- £538m leads in city pipeline – conversion
- Leverage BCC/TNI Conference Support Scheme
- Corporate and Agency Strategy GB
- Corporate Scheme roll-out: £50 per delegate (TNI/DFE approval)

Maximising the Opportunity

Showcasing Belfast – live, work, study and invest

- Attracting events in key sectors to the city (10X)
- Global eco-system of a sector together in one place: **Belfast**
- More than tourism... economic development, research, education benefits

Business events as a force for good

- 118 forward booked conferences (£79.2m)
- CSR, Sustainability and Legacy plans
- Increase the handprint & reduce footprint

One Young World 2023

- Opportunity to position Belfast globally
- Opportunity of a lifetime for our young people
- Support BCC – industry engagement, volunteering, destination marketing and management

Ambassador Circle

Five Advisory panels – Aligned to 10X





visit
Belfast

Departs daily
9.30am & returns
6.30pm.

Pre-booking
essential

From £18

516,000
ENQUIRIES

£11m
ECONOMIC SPEND

VISITOR SERVICING & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

by
DEBORAH NEILL
NATURAL IRISH SOAP THERAPY

Handmade in Donaghadee

Contains skin loving ingredients - 100% natural origin.
Handmade in small batches to ensure freshness.
Scented with unique blends of pure plant essential oils.
Skin nourishing & moisturising with a high glycerine content.
Three types / flavoureds: rosemary/peppermint, eucalyptus & cedar oil.

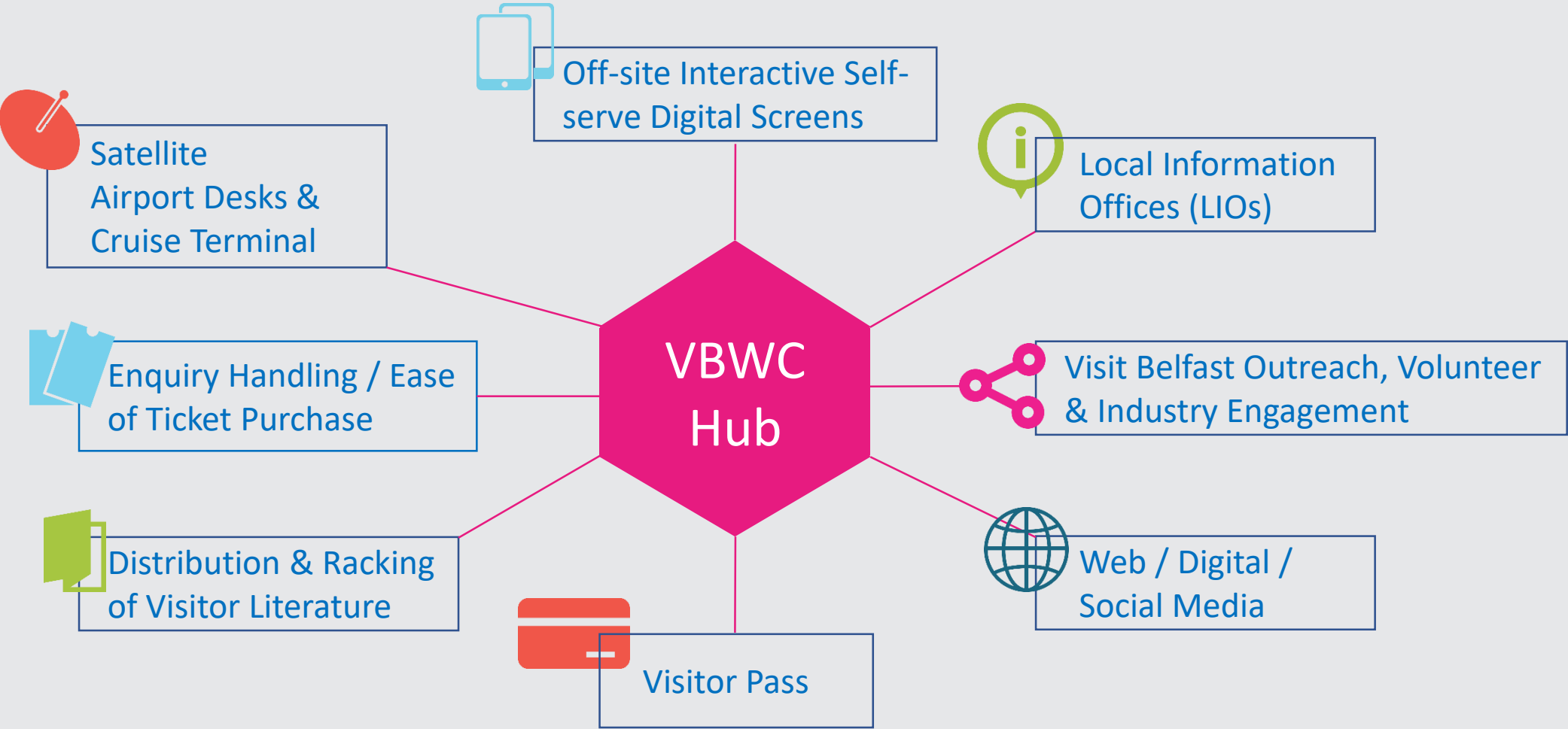
visitBel

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ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

And spreading the benefit of tourism

Page 38



Grow

Drive sales to local operators

Extend visitor stay/spend

Encourage repeat business

- 79% of visitors to Visit Belfast VIC's said that their visit would make them more likely to spend more in Belfast/NI
- 56% said that their visit would encourage them to stay longer
- 74% said that it would make them more likely to visit somewhere they had not thought of before
- 90% said their visit would encourage them to come back to Belfast/NI

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Enhancing the Experience

Provide a focal point to inform and engage visitors

Connecting hero anchor attractions and connecting smaller lesser known experiences

Promoting sustainable ways to explore the city

Develop new digital city pass

Accessibility

Helping make the city a safer inclusive area for all

All VICs to meet Access NI guidelines

JAM, BSL and Welcome All staff training

Capacity Building

Enhanced industry training programme *Get the Knowledge*

Invigorated Volunteer Programme

Citywide Box Office (festival, events, tours)

Position

City & City Region connectivity and gateway role

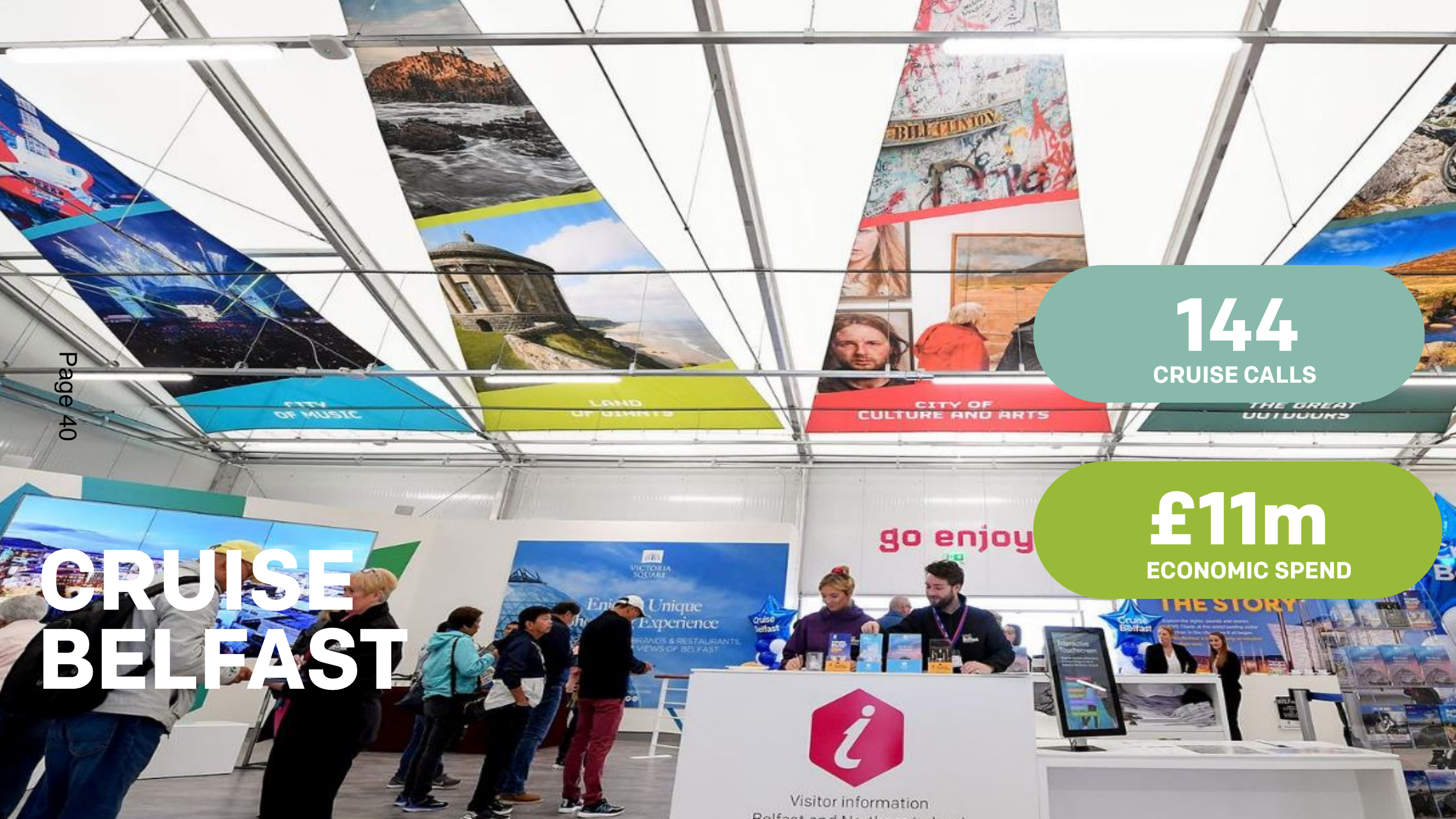
Showcasing culture, events and stories

Driving business to local tourism providers

CRUISE BELFAST

144
CRUISE CALLS

£11m
ECONOMIC SPEND



CRUISE BELFAST

destination management: delivering a world-class welcome

Safe Return of Cruise Tourism

Only port on the island of Ireland to welcome cruise

- Close collaboration with PHA, Port Health, BCC Emergency Preparedness Group to implement a robust Covid-19 Port Management Plan
- 72 ships welcomed in 2021
- Strengthened already strong relationships with cruise lines/operators

Benefits

- 85% first time visitors to Belfast/NI (84% international visitors)
- 76% said they would return
- 95% of cruise passengers disembark
 - 40% go on pre-booked excursion (of which 55% go into Belfast)
 - 55% independent (90% take shuttle/taxi into the city)
- Delivers footfall/spend to a wide range of attractions & experiences
- Supports and sustains tourism jobs: visitor servicing, guiding, transport, retail and hospitality
- Shore-side welcome showcases Belfast's vibrant music, dance and cultural scene found across the city

2022 Cruise Season

Potential to be the most successful cruise season ever

- 144 cruise calls – 328,000 cruise visitors
- 22 will visit on a Sunday, and 3 on a bank holiday
- 26 days with more than one ship in a day
- Ave. 5 ships per week
- 40% will stay in the city after 8pm

Key Activity:

- Maximise footfall/spend to tourism partners across Belfast and NI (optimise the economic benefit from the 144 calls)
- Ensure high visitor satisfaction levels as measured by the cruise lines
- Deliver targeted sales to increase future calls and attract new lines
- Develop suggested itineraries for shore-ex and itinerary planners
- Develop a cruise sustainability plan with Belfast Harbour

VISIT BELFAST



BCC 10-Year Tourism Plan

- 100% growth
- Grow, Position, Enhance and Sustain
- Deliver 3 catalyst legacy projects

visitBelfast

REBUILDING CITY TOURISM

Business & Operational Plan 2022-23

Visit Belfast Business and Operational Plan

- Key delivery partner and vehicle for BCC
- Aligned to city ambition and themes
- Delivering £97m to the local economy; a ROI £27:1
- BCC ROI £49:1 and leveraging £1:0.55
- Return tourism to pre-pandemic levels by 2024
- Supporting tourism businesses
- Sustaining local communities
- Creating social wellbeing

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	High Street Task Force Update
Date:	9 th March 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Deirdre Kelly, Programme Manager

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"/>
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 or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the High Street Task Force following the recent Call for Evidence exercise.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update in relation to the work of the High Street Task Force and the intention to launch a High Street Task Force report and recommendations following the recent Call for Evidence process. • Note the alignment of the High Street Task Force work to the strategic priorities of Council and this Committee. • Note the imminent publication of the Ministerial Advisory Group 'Living High Streets Craft Kit' and opportunity to use this approach of co design particularly in neighbourhood centres / arterial routes.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>High Street Task Force</u></p> <p>A High Street Task Force was appointed by Ministers in August 2020 to deliver the following agreed vision:</p> <p><i>“Sustainable city, town and village centres which are thriving places for people to do business, socialise, shop, be creative and use public services as well as being great places to live.”</i></p>
3.2	<p>A report was brought to this Committee on 10 November 2021 providing background to the High Street Task Force, with a further report presented to Committee on 8 December 2021 in relation to the High Street Task Force Call for Evidence. Council submitted an extensive response to this Call for Evidence (CfE) in December 2021, underpinning the Council's commitment to ensure the sustainability and vitality of our city centre and high streets, including arterial routes into and out of the city. A copy of the response is enclosed at Appendix 1.</p>
3.3	<p>The Plenary Sessions of the High Street Task Force has included representatives from trade unions, business, retail, hospitality and social enterprise umbrella groups, SOLACE, and local government departments. SOLACE representation at the High Street Task Force Plenary Sessions has been via Belfast City Councils Chief Executive and more recently the Council's Strategic Director of Place & Economy or Director of City Regeneration and Development.</p>
3.4	<p>Following the recent Call for Evidence a report with recommendations is currently being finalised by the High Street Task Force. The report is intended to represent a collaboration across various sectors including central and local government, businesses, academia and</p>

	the third sector and will summarise the findings, advice, and recommendations of the High Street Task Force.
3.5	The work of the High Street Task Force is very much aligned to the focus of this Committee including its priorities and Committee Plan, as well as alignment to other Council led programmes and priorities, the Community Planning Partnership -City Development Board priorities, the Councils Future City Centre Programme and specific programmes such as the Sustainable Business Destinations for arterial routes.
3.6	It is being proposed that the High Street Task Force report and recommendations is launched in week commencing Monday 21 st March 2022. It is intended to be presented to the Executive in due course for their consideration and at this juncture the report is being launched on the basis that it will subsequently require the full consideration of central and local government, businesses and other stakeholders. It is intended that the launch will include the two High Street Task Force Ministers, Junior Minister Middleton and Junior Minister Kearney, Seamus McAleavey, NI Council for Voluntary Action. The Council's Director of City Regeneration & Development has also been requested to participate in her role as the SOLACE representative on the High Street Task Force. This would however be on the basis that Councils will need to fully consider the recommendations within the report and respond to the Executive in due course.
3.7	<p><u>Ministerial Advisory Group: <i>Living High Street Craft Kit</i></u></p> <p>An approach to cross-sectoral co-design of high streets and town centres led by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture and the Built Environment (MAG) alongside a number of partners on the future of high streets and centres has resulted in the development of a <i>Living High Street Craft Kit</i>. The <i>Craft Kit</i> which is due to be published in the coming months provides an innovative way of considering our high streets and has been underpinned by a review of how high streets can be re-designed by communities and combine social, environmental, and economic insights to determine what should be done. This <i>Living High Street Craft Kit</i> approach has been considered by the High Street Task Force.</p>
3.8	Upon publication of the Craft Kit a further report will be brought back to Committee. There is an opportunity to utilise this Craft Kit approach of co design particularly in our neighbourhood centres / arterial routes. The work currently underway in terms of the

	Sustainable Business Destinations Programme is one example of how Council is already adopting the approach as envisaged in the Craft Kit.
3.9	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	Appendix 1: HSTF Call for Evidence BBC Response

**Belfast City Council
Response to The Executive Office
High Street Task Force, Call for Evidence 2021**

Contents

- **Call for Evidence Considerations, Questions and Responses**
- **Bibliography**

DRAFT

Theme 1: Partnerships

The HSTF will seek to encourage partnerships with public, private and third sector partners, locally, regionally and nationally. This could require the consideration of:

- Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities must put the health of village, town and city centres at the heart of decision making and deliver the best local outcomes, align policies and target available resources to prioritise town centre sites, encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity.
- Champions are needed to lead the way forward and to involve those who live and work in our town centres in the decision making.
- More coordination and joined-up working, partnership and reorganisation of the key statutory functions is needed to bring about effective change more quickly.
- Correct powers, appropriately devolved, need to be in place to deliver interventions.
- A recognition that this a long-term approach.
- Our councils have a key role in the localism agenda and the Executive need to consider the devolution of regeneration and other powers to them so that they can play a fuller role in the recovery process.
- We need interim solutions.
- We need to determine what has worked well and has not worked.

Theme 1: Questions and Responses

1. What are the key issues for partnerships?

High Streets and city centres are complex places, with the multiplicity of ownership, the multifunctionality of activity, their connections to surrounding communities. Whilst many of the challenges and opportunities facing our high streets will be similar, we cannot forget the uniqueness of place and a one-size-fits-all approach would not be appropriate. There needs to be a focus on **placed-based leadership** which has the flexibility to develop specific solutions to their unique circumstances, but with **the necessary powers, authority and resources to bring about transformational and sustained change.**

It is important that we take caution against setting up additional mechanisms or structures but rather utilise existing ones that are deemed appropriate, and consider the effectiveness of existing structures. The Council would highlight that under community planning, we have brought together inclusive and delivery focused partnership(s) to drive forward collaborative work on specific city priorities and challenges including 'City Development'. The future vitality, vibrancy and sustainability of the city centre and its connection to communities is a key priority area of focus (e.g. Belfast Future City Centre Programme), and on a wider city basis there is a focus on neighbourhood centres / arterial routes via targeted programmes such as supporting vibrant business destination programme.

A big problem is still the **fragmented nature of ownership of the high street**. Private and public partnerships are key and local authorities have a leadership and convening role around place. In this context, we would highlight the impact and agility of the partnership approach adopted to co-designing and implementing the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme within Belfast. We worked collaboratively across the public, private and community sectors, bringing together existing city centre groups and stakeholders (e.g. Belfast Chamber, Belfast Centre Management, BIDs and other business interests) with a shared focus and strategic intent. It is a network rather than a hierarchy whereby place leaders act together and have the ability to evolve and adapt as circumstances change.

Going forward we may draw upon the **Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) High Street Craft Kit** to ensure existing or future partnerships remain focused, co-produces its approach to revitalising the High Street and delivering place based specific interventions. However, we feel that this Craft Kit has more applicability for neighbourhood centres / arterial routes rather than the city centre. It will also be **imperative** that the High Street Craft Kit approach is **aligned to funding streams and a commitment by all partners to agile partnership working to deliver on the action plan and outcomes**.

We work closely alongside global and local experts, through the Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission chaired by Michael Lyons former chairman of the BCC, to co-design pragmatic proposals to press the reset button on how prosperity

and growth can be delivered within Belfast across wider region. The Commission has called for bold leadership and energetic efforts by the various agencies and governments who share an interest in the future prosperity of Northern Ireland. The Commission in its recently published report “**Reset for Growth**” **has called for a focus on a renewed city centre, with a resurgent connected and animated city core.**

Notwithstanding, key issues which need to be considered:

- **Better coordination between central and local government** is needed, together with a recognition that local government can be best placed to deliver and support local interventions.
- Need for **place-based leadership** which brings together key partners, interests and stakeholders with a focus on high street and how it connects to surrounding communities.
- **Alignment of policies/strategies and target available resources to prioritise the high street.**
- Whilst immediate and interim solutions is needed, important to recognise that a **long-term and sustained approach is required.**
- Ensuring the **necessary powers, appropriately devolved**, are in place to bring about effective change in a timely way.
- Consideration of **good practice and assessing how this may relate to Northern Ireland** and, in particular, Belfast city centre and the arterial routes / neighbourhood centres.

2. What powers should local partnerships have to make them more effective?

The Council asserts that this question is more about partnerships having the authority, adequate and sustained funding as well as access to the portfolio of place-making powers and functions necessary to enable immediate and sustained action to be taken and encourage a collaborative and co-designed approach to planning. The scope of the place-shaping powers which need to be available to council, and local partnerships, is covered in the next section.

3. What changes to legislation, policies, processes or procedures could transform partnerships on the high street?

There is no doubt that councils, and local partnerships, need legislative and policy changes to enhance their ability to address the immediate challenges and opportunities facing our high streets as well as to prepare long-term strategies to revitalise and transform city and town centres. The following sets out a number of key areas which need to be considered:

i. Funding

The Council would highlight the scale of commitment demonstrated through the £820 million 'Future High Streets Fund' and the £1.6 billion 'Stronger Towns Fund' put in place to support the high streets of over 200 towns within England, via councils. Similar investment programmes of scale, centrally funded, have been brought forward in the last 18 months in Wales and Scotland.

A similar level of investment or commitment is currently absent in Northern Ireland. Consideration needs to be urgently given to create a dedicated fund of scale which brings together multi departmental, council and other sources of funding into an aggregate multi-annual fund. Such a fund could be allocated and administered through councils and subject to all partners (including government departments) working to deliver an agreed solutions / action plans. This would enable emerging investment plans to be developed in accordance with local community planning, development planning and growth planning priorities for Belfast. Each place will require different solutions to their unique circumstances.

ii. Green financing

The Council would highlight the opportunities presented through adopting a green route to recovery and the transition to create a zero-carbon, smart ciity (and high street). There is a positive economic case for investing rapidly in the decarbonisation of the city centre as well as within our neighbourhoods, which will contribute to levelling up through significant investment in place-making. Unlocking this potential will require new models of co-ordinated delivery and combined financing from multiple sources. A range of new 'green finance' opportunities are

now becoming available to support green growth; with many cities seeking to innovate and support growth of our indigenous green tech sector as well as seeking to maximise foreign direct investment.

As part of the integrated solution / investment package government needs to accelerate our thinking around green finances and the integration of potential private finance into supporting Net Zero ambitions; creating local jobs, deliver clean and inclusive places to live, shop and visit (including our high streets). Adopting a place-based approach and encouraging a strong public and private sector partnering approach will require policy change and consideration given to new delivery models (e.g. special purpose vehicles, joint ventures etc).

iii. Increased financial powers for local government

Local political and business leadership will need to be at the heart of any transformation and revitalisation of the high street. It will be important that cities have the right fiscal powers to enable them to better align local, regional and national efforts to get better results. The Council believes that the work of the High Street Taskforce provides an opportunity for central government to work alongside local government, community and business partners, to bring forward a package of proposals including, for example, new borrowing powers; simplified loan and borrowing regimes; government incentives for business start-up and a common delivery framework for emerging funding programmes (e.g. Shared Prosperity Fund).

The Council would commend that consideration be given to **alternative taxation options** to complement the current funding model and provide new revenue raising powers for councils, such as: Tourism tax; vacant site levy; derelict land levy; internet transaction levy; and green policy related levies and taxes.

iv. Rates Reform

Councils want to see a rates system that is modernised, responsive to local needs, fair for all and promotes growth through incentives. We are calling for councils to have greater flexibility in the support they can offer local business and the local rate setting. This would give councils a more secure revenue stream which will keep up with demands and the financial pressures local government is facing.

It is important that taxation should be fair for both high street and online businesses. We therefore welcome the proposed digital services tax as a first step to taking measures on retailers who may not pay business rates on retail premises. The funds raised could then be used to fund local services.

v. Important place-shaping powers

The Council would contend that the 2015 reform programme did not go far enough and would call for a second tranche of reform to be brought forward including consideration given to accelerating the following.

- **Community planning:** Enhancing powers to require community-planning partners, across both tiers of government and other city partners to collaborate to deliver the outcomes and priorities articulated in community plans, will further promote well-being across the city. There should also be a duty on central government partners to support community planning and encouraging and enabling sharing resources. We would refer the High Street Task Force to build upon and accelerate best practice and learn from recent reports (e.g. Carnegie Trust's Embedding Well-being in Northern Ireland report) which has identified areas to further enhance the effectiveness of community planning. We would call upon departmental colleagues to work together to examine how important recommendations contained within the Embedding Well-being can be brought forward at pace.
- **Regeneration:** including the transfer of regeneration powers to local government. This would enable alignment with other council functions to encourage positive and sustainable development of the high street and communities across Belfast. **Compulsory purchase powers** are an essential tool for local authorities acquiring and assembling land as part of high street regeneration.
- **Planning:** Extended planning powers, particularly around spatial planning, would unlock more effective place shaping and sustained delivery of the physical aspects of any high street revitalisation programme. This would also support more effective approaches to statutory masterplanning and development partnerships with the potential to harness the full benefits of regeneration for local communities often blighted by inequalities. Broader responsibility in relation to built heritage should also be considered to provide for more efficient

consideration of both heritage and conservation as part of the planning processes.

- **Transportation** - Increased functions in relation to roads and transport in order to support place-making and regeneration would greatly enhance the role of the councils as custodian of place and local communities. While recognising that there is a strategic regional role in these areas for central government departments, we believe that there is scope for local government and departments to work together to ensure that these top level strategic plans can be tailored and varied to suit local issues within each council area.

Theme 2: Follow Best Practice

The HSTF approach to developing best practice is to assess good practice from other places and adapt this so that 'best practice' becomes a unique 'right practice' for our local high streets. This could require the consideration of:

- Looking at best practice locally, nationally and internationally.
- The importance of community planning, in which public sector organisations work in partnership with the private sector, local communities and the community and voluntary sector to identify and solve local problems, improve services and implement a shared vision for promoting the well-being of an area.

Theme 2: Questions and Responses

4. What is best practice for the management of the high street?

- **A definition of High Streets needs to be applied to an NI context.** While there are commonly accepted definitions of the components of a high street, city or town centre, no two high streets are the same. They are characterised on their diversity and complexity, in terms of scale, size, geography and catchment, function and form. **There is not a one size fits all approach for the management of the High Streets across villages to capital cities.** A **hierarchy of town centres** from cities to district towns to small villages should be considered. City centres have a significant regional role as investment attractors and hubs for employment. In particular the role of the **city centre in terms of an investment and employment hub, the benefits realised from city centre can be felt across the region in terms of contributing to growth ambitious, and within local neighbourhoods in relation to employment opportunities.**
- Whilst the global issues are largely similar, promoting localism, green spaces and adopted approaches as being developed through the joint BCC / DfI / DfC 'Bolder Vision', connectivity study can help to supplement a new sense of placemaking within Belfast City Centre and connecting to surrounding neighbourhoods. This approach is not exclusive to the city centre but its rather how the approach is to start with the city centre and ripple out, addressing severance to communities etc.

- 21st Century will require places and cities to change, to move from a car borne culture to places where people live closer to their main centres of work, supported by effective and efficient active and sustainable transportation links and a mobile technology culture. Communities must be engaged in a different way, including young and old people to create an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment. Young people will inherit the city and will make decisions for the older people living in it – especially with the projected demographics of an aging city.
- According to the UK High St's Taskforce, high streets and town centres have to be both vital (full of reasons for people to visit) and viable (attractive to both visitors and investors in the longer term as well as surrounding communities).

The Institute of Place Management identified the Top 25 Priorities that local place leaders should focus to enhance the vitality, viability and sustainability of the high streets and ensure it meets the needs of their catchment communities. These factors include:

Priority	Component Factors
1. ACTIVITY	Opening hours; footfall; shopping hours; evening economy
2. RETAIL OFFER	Retailer offer; retailer representation
3. VISION & STRATEGY	Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies
4. EXPERIENCE	Centre image; service quality; visitor satisfaction; familiarity; atmosphere
5. APPEARANCE	Visual appearance; cleanliness; ground floor frontages
6. PLACE MANAGEMENT	Centre management; shopping centre management; Town Centre Management (TCM); place management; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
7. NECESSITIES	Car-parking; amenities; general facilities
8. ANCHORS	Presence of anchors - which give locations their basic character and signify importance
9. NON-RETAIL OFFER	Attractions; entertainment; non-retail offer; leisure offer
10. MERCHANDISE	Range/Quality of goods; assortments; merchandising
11. WALKING	Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips; connectivity
12. PLACE MARKETING	Centre marketing; marketing; orientation/flow

13. NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL	Networking; partnerships; community leadership; retail/tenant trust; tenant/manager relations; strategic alliances; centre empowerment; stakeholder power; engagement
14. ACCESSIBLE	Convenience; accessibility
15. DIVERSITY	Range/quality of shops; tenant mix; tenant variety; availability of alternative formats; store characteristics; comparison/convenience; chain vs independent; supermarket impact; retail diversity; retail choice
16. ATTRACTIVENESS	Sales/turnover; place attractiveness; vacancy rates; attractiveness; retail spend; customer/catchment views; Construction of out-of-town centre
17. MARKETS	Traditional markets; street trading
18. RECREATIONAL SPACE	Recreational areas; public space; open space
19. BARRIERS TO ENTRY	Barriers to entry; landlords
20. SAFETY/CRIME	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting
21. ADAPTABILITY	Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; store/centre design; retail unit size; store development; rents turnover
22. LIVEABLE	Multi/mono-functional; liveability; personal services; mixed use
23. REDEVELOPMENT PLANS*	Planning blight; regeneration
24. FUNCTIONALITY	The degree to which a centre fulfils a role – e.g. service centre, employment centre, residential centre, tourist centre
25. INNOVATION	Opportunities to experiment; retail Innovation

Source: IPM

- The scale of the challenge the economy and society faces is unparalleled in recent times, and requires a wholly different approach and ambition. Large urban areas have been hit hardest by Covid-19 pandemic but are also the key catalyst to support recovery and renewal of place. There is no doubt of the impact of the pandemic on people's day-to-day lives, demonstrating that those living in cities and large towns had been hit hardest. The introduction of lockdowns saw a dramatic fall in mobility and public transport use, with office workers quickly shifted to working from home and a substantial move to online shopping. This adversely impacted upon the vitality and sustainability of the city centre; a legacy which will take significant collaborative focus and planning to overcome.
- Local leadership must be supported to play its full role in bringing centres back into activity and adapting to these longer term trends (NB. we would refer to the [‘The Future of Urban Centres’ report available @ corecities.com](https://www.corecities.com/publications/the-future-of-urban-centres)). The public

sector maintains a key role in this in terms of the work based population of the larger urban centres, providing flexibility for workforce but also in providing centres for collaborative work space supported by the promotion of active and sustainable transportation to remove the trend of returning via private vehicles.

- As city and town centres reopen, it is clear that COVID-19 has accelerated change in the high street by almost 10 years. Trends in retail that were already present (i.e. transition to online, convenience based shopping) had intensified with multiple retailers no longer being the dominant attraction in most city centres and so we have to redefine the high street. **For the city centre and local neighbourhood centres, in Belfast to survive post COVID, local leaders working in partnership with key stakeholders / businesses will collectively and collaboratively need to consider and redefine/diversify their purpose and is uniqueness. Council have identified the need to accelerate this through our Belfast Future City Centre Programme, and emerging Vibrant Business Destinations programme.** There is a need to make the arterial routes / neighbourhood centres, and the city centre be destinations of choice through promoting and enhancing their USPs for people and will require behavioural change. Consideration should be given to supporting local independents and first to market brands to fill the voids within the city centre and to provide unique visitor and experiential destinations in the city centre and arterial routes / local neighbourhood centres. Whilst we have a concerted drive to diversify our high streets, we must also ensure that existing retail is supported, and diversified uses complement the retail offer, to ensure its sustainability.
- COVID has aggravated the question of working from home. While there has been some return to the office as restrictions have eased, it is likely it will not return to pre-COVID levels with many businesses assessing the options now available to them with a range of jobs demonstrating they can be done as effectively from home (e.g. ICT sector) *NB. source UUEPC research on future remote working.* Most companies understand now that fixed costs can be reduced in a dramatic including, for example, potential reduction in required office space required, reduction in utility costs etc. Creating a wholly exclusive environment and eco systems including liveability and workability will support the success of our high streets and city centre.

- The recovery and renewal of the high street needs strong place-led leadership and collaborative action. There is a need to bring city stakeholders, business interests, communities and government together to transform the high street. Cities, High Street's and towns should have a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and shared vision to create a strong city centre and high street which is at the heart of their communities, with a unique sense of place and a strong identity. **This should be supported with targeted financial support to address the short / medium- and long-term interventions to address the issues that are prevalent within the city centres.** Council would propose that its Future City centre Programme forms a strong basis for a joint action plan that could be taken forward by key partners and the Community Planning Partnership (City development Board) could act as a key oversight mechanism for this partnership approach.

Regeneration & Connectivity	Business & Investment	City Centre Vibrancy	Position the City to Compete	Digital Innovation	Clean, Green & Safe (Multi-Agency)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the physical built environment to create vibrancy; sustain our economic recovery and support an inclusive, accessible and connected city centre. • Examples: • Major Regeneration Developments • City Centre Living • Connected Spaces & Places • Lighting & Tactical Regeneration • Connectivity & Active Travel • Culture & Built Heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support and sustain existing and new businesses, and attract new businesses. • Examples: • Business Support Programmes • City Investment Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage vitality, vibrancy and increased footfall; maximising our cultural and tourism offering. • Examples: • Animation & events, pop up activities. • Enhanced use of public realm & environmental improvements to encourage footfall and increased dwell time • Meanwhile use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build on our reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism and development. • Examples: • Renewed Ambition – public private partnership • Vacancy interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising and deploying digital technology and innovation solutions to position the city as a key location for innovation and support indigenous and new businesses to thrive and grow. • Examples: • Smart District • 5G and Wireless opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the city centre experience through a clean, accessible, safe and pleasant environment. • Examples: • Providing enhanced city cleansing regimes • Imaginative use of open & civic spaces particularly to support retail / hospitality sectors • Support the provision of parklets and greening the city initiatives

(Belfast Future City Centre Programme, Key Pillars)

- Belfast City Council's Future City Centre Programme aims to create a dynamic, vibrant and shared city centre where people will want to live, work and invest. It seeks to develop a 'City Centre Proposition' that provides "something different" to stand the best opportunity of future-proofing the city centre based on six pillars of work and underpinned by a sound evidence base to prioritise and track progress:
 1. **Regeneration & Connectivity:** Using the physical built environment to create vibrancy; sustain our economic recovery and support an inclusive, accessible and connected city centre.

2. **Business & Development:** To support and sustain existing and new businesses and attract new businesses.
 3. **City Centre Vibrancy:** To encourage vitality, vibrancy and increased footfall; maximising our cultural and tourism offering.
 4. **Position the City to Compete:** To build on our reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism and development.
 5. **Digital Innovation:** Maximising and deploying digital technology and innovation solutions to position the city as a key location for innovation and support indigenous and new businesses to thrive and grow.
 6. **Clean, Green & Safer City:** To enhance the city centre experience through a clean, accessible, safe and pleasant environment.
- The FCC programme provides a holistic approach to addressing the challenges facing the HSTF, including Clean, Green and Safe, Connectivity, targeted acquisition and addressing vacancy, vibrancy, positioning the city to compete and digital innovation. While no one aspect of the FCC will provide a long lasting and sustainable impact on its own, it will be the collective benefit of each of the strands, delivered under a combined programme that will see effective change in the City Centre. Within the FCC programme there is a targeted addressing vacant premises initiative which will seek to address challenges facing High Street regarding vacancies and well as city resilience issues when full impact of Covid19 is realised.
 - Council commissioned a “*Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Study and Action Plan for Belfast City Centre Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe Initiative*’.” The resulting Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe (CGIS) City Centre strategy and action plan will be embedded within an overall approach to the re-opening of the City Centre and the longer-term priorities within the Council’s Future City Centre Programme. It will also contribute to ‘A Bolder Vision for Belfast: Reimagining the Centre’, with an emphasis on ensuring there is a clean and safe lens applied to green and shared space projects and infrastructure.
 - Public/private investors and stakeholders must become more engaged and have ownership of the vision. There are key roles within this for city partners spanning across local government, with anchor institutions and engaging the private sector.

Belfast City Council has sought to harness this engagement via Community Planning, particularly through the City Development Board which has representation from across government departments, VCSE, anchor institutions and local development community. This structure provides a key vehicle for the delivery of a joined up action plan to deliver on outcomes.

- Tailored promotion and marketing addressing local needs as well as wider promotion for investment and development for example aligned to the Council's Future City Centre programme, Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations Programme (focused on arterial routes), Retail and Leisure proposition, Renewed Ambition Programme etc including attracting institutional investment.
- Council recently approved an approach to supporting arterial routes / local neighbourhood centres "Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations" an approach which has been developed to assist and support the delivery of area-based support for neighbourhood centres / arterial routes for local business associations to increase vibrancy and drive footfall.
- The city centre offer must be relevant, and a significant part must be community-led (a new localism), experiential and addressing local needs.
- Key to securing the long-term prosperity of the city's retail core is to ensure the right mix and retail offer is available and recruiting absent retailers within the retail segments which are underrepresented in Northern Ireland and indeed Ireland. In addition Belfast City Council has promoted and assisted in a number of meanwhile uses, in order to ensure this is sustainable we would encourage additional funding to support further interventions.

5. What expert help is needed to develop best practice?

Belfast City Council has been involved in developing a number of strategic interventions alongside key stakeholders for example as referenced in earlier response the Future City Centre Programme, and A Bolder Vision which seek to build and learn from best practice. A number of expert advisory groups we have been formed, which play a key role in advisory for example Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission, Climate Commission, Digital Commissioner etc.

The Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University was commissioned to undertake a series of workshops to support the development of a high street and town centre policy. Their report, 'The High Street 2030 Achieving Change' took a people and place-based approach to understand why some town centres/high streets thrive and others struggle.

The conclusion of the report was there was not a 'one fits all approach'. However, the report highlighted commonality in some fundamental principles that applied to all of their study areas and are as relevant now as we move forwards from Covid 19:

1. **Places need leadership and partnerships:** Place leadership needs to evolve and adapt as circumstances change. It is a network rather than a hierarchy - place leaders, acting together, achieve change.
2. **Places need to blend local and expert knowledge:** knowledge of local data and performance and working with experts is critical to making informed decisions. In too many cases towns make wrong choices, adapting something that has worked elsewhere when it may not be appropriate for their location. No one size fits all approach.
3. **Places need communication to flow:** Communication underlies and recreates the city brand and the perceptions of visitors, investors and residents. Good place leadership facilitates communication.
4. **Places need the input of their young people:** Our City Centre will soon be theirs. They have an abundance of enthusiasm we need to constructively and actively engage with them, involving them formally and informally.
5. **Places need to be served by place professionals:** place professionals from different backgrounds can provide the vision, leadership and knowledge required to create change.
6. **Collaborative place making** - creating a single voice: provide cross sector support to encourage collaborative place-making. Bring together all stakeholders.

In conclusion it is felt that the Assembly should retain leading specialist in the field to lead an overall project of High Street. This should be structured around a series of "task and finish" groups drawn from the community, business and academia. The

project should be professionally planned with a focus on outcomes within a strict timeline.

6. What changes are needed to legislation, procedures and processes to improve best practice and transform community planning on the high street?

Council understand there are a number of considerations required to legislation, procedures and processes to improve best practice and transform community planning on the high street:

Business rates is the primary source of income for the Council where 78% of our income comes from rates – 65% domestic, 35% non-domestic. In 2019, the Department of Finance via Land & Property Services (LPS) announced plans to undertake a full and comprehensive review of business rates in Northern Ireland. The onslaught on Covid 19 has held up further progress on this review.

The council recognises the importance of minimising the burden on the ratepayer and has set the district rate over the past number of years at below the rate of inflation. The council would welcome progressing further with the review and in particular the key issues highlighted for consideration in their response to the consultation to LPS in 2019:

Notably:

1. Consideration of local authorities being given the power to introduce reliefs to reflect the specific circumstances of their locality and local economy.
2. How the rating system can be aligned to support growing the economy.
3. How the rating system can be used to support city centre living such as relief for build-to-rent properties and purpose-built managed student accommodation.
4. Eliminating any form of tax avoidance or evasion.
5. Improving the collection and administration of rates.
6. The use of technology to maximise the collectable rates.
7. How the rating system can integrate the ability to pay and individual business circumstances as part of rates assessments.

8. Possibility of introducing new revenue raising powers such as:
 - vacant site levy
 - derelict land levy
 - internet transaction levy
 - green policy related levies
 - tourism tax
9. Conducting a fundamental review of reliefs, exemptions, and exclusions.
10. Introducing a business growth accelerator.
11. Reviewing the effectiveness of the rates hardship scheme.
12. How the rating system aligned to support specific sectors such as innovation, retail, and hospitality.

In relation to Community Planning, in Belfast, Council have led the community planning process. We worked with partners, including representatives from the statutory, business, higher education, and community and voluntary sectors, to develop a long-term plan to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the city. As highlighted previously, we believe that community planning provides a good platform to bring partners and stakeholders together with a clear focus on place including the High Street. We would recommend, however, that urgent consideration is given to refreshing the legislative basis of community planning in Northern Ireland to bring it more in line with other jurisdictions such as Scotland and Wales. There is a need to strengthen the role of central government in the process and encourage and enable community planning partners to commit shared resources to implement agreed programmes of activity to truly add value and unlock growth potential and ambitions to transform the high street.

Theme 3: Investment

The high street needs ways of dealing with investment that will support innovation, help renewal and create thriving high streets. Investment is not only needed for buildings and digital infrastructure, but also for developing people and communities. This could require the consideration of:

- More specific funding streams and schemes are required to promote and encourage residential living
- Funding streams and workforces should be aligned.
- Specific funding schemes to promote and encourage wider provision of community services.
- A better understanding and clarity on the availability of funding streams.
- Place-based budgeting.
- The residential Urban Development Grant scheme should be revived.
- More focused funding for village, town and city centre promotions.
- Incentives to deal with long-term vacancies.
- Clarity on priority investment area(s) is needed.

Theme 3: Questions and Responses

7. What are the key issues for investment?

The challenges facing city centres and high streets are complex, interacting with consumer demand and behaviours, therefore investment needs to focus on delivering outcomes and the vision for the place that stakeholders buy-in to.

Out of town retail investment has not been significantly adversely impacted by Covid and has continued to be popular with investors and occupiers. The below comments relate to intown retail, high street and shopping centres:

- The **reduction in rates** during Covid has assisted many businesses through a difficult time, however there continues to be long term issues with the costs of rates compared to rents and overall occupancy costs for retailers. The revaluation date of Oct 2021 may go some way to assist a rebalancing of rateable values.

- Occupier demand for many locations remains low, although some sectors of the market are showing good levels of interest, there remain some locations and unit sizes which experience low demand or an oversupply of space.
- **Diversification of the high street** looks to provide a wider offer to attract customers and increase footfall however restrictions on licensing and planning uses can sometimes mean that occupier demand cannot be satisfied and a more flexible system, while ensuring effective regulation, is required for High Streets to trial and embed the diversification of uses.
- **Footfall** numbers have not recovered to precovid levels. Belfast Bid One Footfall figures for 25th-31st Oct 2021 are 16% down on 2019 year on year figures.
- CVA and retail administrations have affected the returns for retail investors and fund managers, causing many to disinvest in the sector.
- Some parts of the Investment Market have lost confidence in the retail sector as assets have depreciated. This effects the owner's ability to raise capital or direct funds towards capital improvements. Valuations for retail have moved out with yields weakening.
- Changing trends in tenant leasing poses difficulties for retail investment and financing, i.e. increased demand for turnover rent and shorter leases. Flexibility in lease terms is welcome and can work well within a shopping centre or in large retail blocks under single ownership, however it is unaffordable and unfinanceable for individual asset owners who require a guaranteed, secure income stream to meet liabilities.
- Areas with high numbers of **long term vacancies** require significant infrastructure investment and structural change in order to reposition them. Investors who own in these areas may struggle with viability, financing, and funding. On this point Council would advocate for the accelerating of the introduction of the Dilapidation Bill to consolidate and enhance existing legislation to better allow Council to safely deal with dilapidated buildings and neglected sites in their areas.
- Delayed **Infrastructure improvements** can affect property owner's ability to let units and the confidence in the regeneration of these areas. Further intervention from the public sector may be required to address long-term vacancy and dereliction.

8. Is information on funding easy to find?

This depends on whether you are looking for private or public sector funding. The NI Grant Funding Hub provides an overview of grants available through Belfast City Council <https://www.belfastcity-grants.com/> and DFC publish updates on various grants through their website. Information is available to businesses across the region at: <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/>. It should be noted however, that these are not specifically targeted or developed for “High Streets” they offer a wide range of support, and there is merit in looking at a holistic and integrated funding mechanism. Belfast City Council Economic Development Unit provide a range of support tailored to the start up and growth side. Invest NI provide tailored support to assist private sector companies with advice, mentoring and finance, but **overall there is a lack of funding.**

9. Which of the following funds would support the development of the high street?

Pick as many or as few as you wish.

- a. High Street Transformation
- b. Residential Living
- c. Urban Development Grant
- d. Other (Please comment below)

The Council would recommend that given the scale and complexity of challenges facing the high street, that a package of funding streams, and supported by the necessary enabling powers – as referred to previously - should be brought forward.

- A. **High Street Transformation** – High Street Renewal Funding – targeted larger scale funding to make significant infrastructure and structural change and help assist viability for stalled city centre development schemes, with merit given in UK High Street Fund. City centre regeneration schemes, provide the basis and catalyst for mixed use development including city centre living for example Tribeca Belfast.
- B. **Residential Living** - Assistance to cover development viability and funding requirements and de-risk investment. The refocus of existing funds such as the Northern Ireland Investment Fund on residential could assist with gaps in affordable finance products in the market and viability. An increase in total funds

available could also assist large scale stalled development projects which will act as catalyst for other city centre regeneration. Dedicated Housing Investment Funds will be funds that provide financing through a range of innovative vehicles aimed specifically at bringing forward housing development at pace and addressing market challenges. The reintroduction of grants or tax incentives for LOTS and Heritage in Housing could assist with retail investment stabilisation through providing options to counter retail rental decline whilst increasing the city centre population and potential consumer numbers. Lessons learnt from the previous scheme should be considered.

C. **Urban Development Grant** – Consideration to reopening this Grant scheme which can act as an enabler for private sector development with viability issues. This has the potential to enhance existing Belfast City Council programmes of work for example Vacant Premises Programme within the city centre, and sustaining the Vibrant Business Destinations programme directed at arterial routes / local neighbourhood centres.

D. **Other-** the following section outlines additional areas for consideration.

- **Cultural & Events support fund** – important that we have the capability to make our High Streets more attractive and diversified in terms of the people's experience. Need to consider that funding or legislative changes may be required to help enhance the cultural mix and diversity of our High Streets (e.g. rates incentives, funding to deliver at scale),
- **Business incentive schemes** - such as rates incentives as per earlier questions and themes. Specifically that these are tapered off as the business is established, and done so in a manageable and measurable approach for example ring-fence to small businesses – means of supporting additional start-ups.
- **Enterprise Zones** - being designated with rates reductions and other financial incentives in order to assist with viability of development and attract inward investment. Reopening and providing additional financing to existing programmes may assist with moving this investment forward more quickly and productively.
- **High Street Fund** - Northern Ireland was expected a Barnett Consequential relating to the Chancellor's announcement of £675M for High Streets. This could be in the region of £25m over 5 years. As this was unhypothecated funding and

other priorities may have taken precedence. Clarification on how this money was distributed and what projects benefited from it would be welcome.

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Theme 4: Planning

In addressing planning for the high street, our challenge will be to contribute to the delivery of a fair and inclusive planning system for people, communities and businesses. This could require a review of the planning system, its impact on the high street and the consideration of:

- Village, town and city centre masterplans.
- Promoting a “Town Centre First” principle to encourage the public sector to continue to invest in town centres and help communities thrive.
- More flexible planning policies are required to enable repurposing.
- Strong diversification of town centres is needed to include, but not limited to: housing, community uses, leisure, offices and outdoor spaces.
- Actions are needed to address vacancy and dereliction on the High Street.
- A five-year moratorium on major out-of-town retail applications should be considered.
- A stricter “town centre first” approach, more Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and a joined-up approach to regeneration.
- An approach to increase population living and working in our high street.

Theme 4: Questions and Responses

10. Are you aware of village, town and city centre masterplans?

Yes, Belfast City Council have developed a number of Masterplans aligned to the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (Regeneration Policy for Belfast City Centre), to shape the development of our city centre eco system to create a more dynamic place to live, work, visit and invest which includes:

- Inner North West Masterplan – adopted by Department for Communities
- Belfast East Bank Development Strategy
- Linen Quarter Vision and Guidance

In addition to this the Department for Communities has developed the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown Masterplan and the Shaftesbury Square Masterplan. In addition to the city centre, and its masterplans with areas for targeted intervention there is a need to consider the arterial routes in cities to connect community

hubs/centres to the city centre to take a placemaking approach to creating vibrant and sustainable areas. These combined with significant masterplans from large scale development Masterplans including, City Quays, Waterside, Tribeca and Weavers Cross lay out a transformational package of regeneration and investment, however the appetite and support must remain to transform these masterplans into action plans with allocated funding/investment and realistic timeframes. The said schemes have the potential to create a catalytic impact on the city as a whole, creating conditions for the region's growth ambition to succeed.

11. What are the key planning issues?

- Planning issues are largely focused around the **vitality and viability** of our centres and ensuring that their evolving role is appropriately managed and supported within a clear hierarchy that addresses local needs.
- The biggest challenge for our city / large town centres is the **changing nature of retailing** (and, indeed, office / commercial space) alongside the need to find alternative complementary uses in centres, both as a focus / destination and to support ongoing demand / footfall.
- Planning can provide a **long-term approach to enable change through the Local Development Plan (LDP)** which incorporates local policies plans and masterplans that can help to rebalance the role of centres and the mix of uses appropriate to the role and function of the centre.
- Planning has an important role in **placemaking** including the shaping of public spaces and buildings through appropriate design.
- The LDP can help identify safe communal spaces that create healthier, safer and more cohesive communities.
- Long term planning through the application of sustainable principles can help address congestion and promote enhanced connectivity /accessibility.
- It can help achieve more sustainable development patterns including by promoting a broader residential offer within and adjacent to our centres with a mix of tenures and forms of accommodation.

- Planning can help to protect, support and enhance the economic role of centres by ensuring the critical mass of appropriate uses at accessible locations.
- Planning can help to **increase the role of the evening and night-time economy** which will contribute to the vibrancy of centres.
- **Out of town shopping / retailing i.e. outside the existing urban area should not be confused with out of centre i.e. outside of existing centres.** In a general sense retailing outside of the urban area including the open countryside is unsustainable and should be discouraged.

12. Would you support a temporary ban on out-of-town retail developments?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, for how long?

This is **not a binary issue** and it is not as simple as introducing all out bans that do not take account of the different forms of retail provision. Such an approach or proposition is overly simplistic. Large cities like **Belfast have a variety of centres. Belfast has a retail hierarchy which includes the city centre, district centres and local centres which all contribute to the wider retail and service offer.** The city centre itself has subcentres including the primary retail core and frontage areas. Each centre needs to be afforded an appropriate level of recognition and protection.

The emerging Local Development Plan will help to ensure that proposals for main town centres uses, including retail, are directed to the appropriate level of centre based on size, function and catchment.

There is a general issue around the ability of centres to compete equitably. Many out of centre and out of town shopping centres can offer free car parking at or near motorways or highly accessible location for cars. Charging for car parking at out of town locations either directly or through the taxation (rating) of parking spaces would help to redress this imbalance.

13. What changes to legislation, policies, processes or procedures could transform high street planning for the better?

The Belfast LDP is the primary policy mechanism available to Councils to protect and enhance the role and function of our centres. The Belfast draft Plan Strategy is at an advanced stage. The PAC completed the hearing sessions and a report from the Commission on that was sent to the Department on 29 September 2021. The expeditious adoption of this plan will have significant benefits in helping to protect our centres.

The draft Plan policies seek to:-

- Provide a range of uses appropriate to the role and function of a city centre which can realise ambitions for growth.
- Acknowledge the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary location for retailing in the region.
- Adopt a sequential approach to the identification of a hierarchy for retail and other town centre uses in decision making.
- Maintain and improve accessibility to and within the city centre by supporting connectivity and the consideration of accessibility to these and other services.
- Provide for an appropriate scale of retail and town centres uses in accordance with their scale, role and function.
- Support local economies by ensuring continued vibrancy and vitality alongside the scope to expand within defined areas.
- Develop a compact urban form that maximises opportunities in the city centre and wider urban area; and
- Provide a focus for economic development.

Theme 5: Public Realm

The Public Realm is defined as the space around, between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, squares, parks and open spaces. These are the everyday spaces that we move through and socialise within and the places where we live, work and play. This could require the consideration of:

- Creating better ways of delivering Public Realm that are cleaner and greener.
- Public Realm “smart” towns with green spaces that are decluttered, eco-friendly, sustainable and better connected.
- Promoting high-quality design to ensure that our town centres provide sustainable, attractive, accessible and safe environments.
- Town centres should be clean, vibrant and attractive if visitors are to be encouraged to visit and stay.

Theme 5: Questions and Responses

14. What are your views on the high street environment?

A quality urban environment is a critical component of a successful high street, that can make a tangible contribution to the ‘health’ of a place, by enabling safe and easy access and providing an environment that tangibly supports a range of activities and uses, while contributing to character and intangible qualities that simply make a place attractive and pleasant for people to live and visit.

While interventions in the public realm should adhere to common principles and objectives, a high street environment should reflect local character, and a bespoke approach to the design of public realm should be taken that creates a genuine sense of place, avoiding a ‘design by numbers’ approach.

The relationship between the high street environment and the range of uses in a city centre is more important the ever, with growing understanding of the value of quality streets and spaces that create a point of difference and reflect both form and function of a place. There are opportunities to reimagine the relationship between internal and external space, including through business spill-out activating and animating streets

and spaces. While the pandemic has forced this agenda, there is potential long term benefit for businesses and other city stakeholders, but a considered placemaking approach will be required across local government and central government departments. That responsibility for the high street environment is shared across multiple agencies has a significant impact on both design/delivery and maintenance/stewardship of public realm in Belfast.

15. What could be done to change the perception of the Public Realm?

The public realm in Belfast is perceived by many as generally tired, very poor in some parts of the city, and in need of investment. While improvements have been delivered via the BSA programme and other individual schemes, many streets are in poor condition, reflecting a lack of investment in Belfast, particularly given the extent of public realm schemes delivered across large and small towns throughout Northern Ireland during the last 10-15 years. However, there is perhaps an **opportunity to deliver more transformational change across the city centre than may have been possible even 5 years ago, given the appetite for change among city stakeholders regarding issues such as pedestrianisation, active travel, greening, and the value of external space from both a civic and commercial perspective.**

In terms of changing perceptions, there is a need to ensure high standards of maintenance and stewardship of existing public realm, alongside the development of new schemes. Recent surveys and engagement with stakeholders indicate a need to review resource allocation to maintenance, which also suffers due to fragmented responsibility across local and central government bodies. In addition, with a number of major public realm schemes currently in development (BSA 3 & 5), there is a need for agreement between Belfast City Council, DfI and DfC regarding future maintenance requirements, which represent significant costs to the public purse. **With a major issue in Belfast being a shortage of quality open space, and an ambition to ‘green’ the city through the introduction of landscaping to soften otherwise hard urban spaces and streets, long term maintenance is a critical city issue to be resolved.**

There remains a need for the high streets environment to be designed with the changing user of the city centre to be incorporated. High streets should no longer be designed and serviced as large retail destinations but rather places that incorporate city centre living, tourism, education, workers and retail. The Bolder Vision for Belfast is currently out to consultation and the responses received to date are providing significant support for people based public realm design supporting the FCC. Responses are also showing that there is a need to have the correct legislation, control measures and maintenance in place to deliver the ambitions of the emerging designs.

In terms of perceptions of public realm schemes themselves, with an approach to design and delivery that seeks to effect meaningful change in terms of how people experience and move within the city, there is an opportunity to reposition public realm scheme delivery as a critical element of placemaking that, while not a solution in and of itself, is a key component of an integrated approach to development and regeneration.

16. What improvements are needed in your high street?

There is an opportunity to harness the apparent appetite for change in terms of how people access and experience the city, to use public realm design and delivery to challenge existing allocation of space for vehicles and pedestrians, ensuring opportunities are taken to genuinely position pedestrians at the top of the user hierarchy.

There is a need to fully integrate greening and soft landscaping within schemes, to create attractive and useable spaces for all users (residents and visitors), and encourage innovative approaches to greening within existing streets, (e.g. vertical greening), while exploring solutions to specific issues such as high services and service diversions which often frustrate planting of street trees.

There is also potential to fully exploit the **value of lighting (street lighting and feature lighting) as a key placemaking tool within public realm schemes that can make a significant contribution to night time safety and vibrancy within the city, supporting the night time economy and city centre living.** Belfast City Council

published a lighting strategy, 'Luminous City', in 2020 that sets out principles that should inform the design and delivery of lighting interventions.

It will also be important that public realm schemes fully embed other themes such as child friendly/play, art and culture, and SMART technology as key elements throughout design development processes, as opposed to 'nice to haves' that have often been considered peripheral or secondary in public realm design.

As noted above, given responsibility is shared across multiple agencies, the issue of maintenance of green spaces and soft landscaping urgently requires a joined up 'city' approach to future ownership and maintenance.

Additionally, maintenance of hard surfaces has historically been an issue in Belfast, with works carried out by utility providers and others leaving prominent 'scars' in the form of temporary reinstatement- effective management and enforcement to ensure satisfactory reinstatement, including by supporting access to materials, is required.

17. What is a priority for Public Realm projects in the high street?

The priority outcomes for public realm projects are noted above in terms of taking a bespoke placemaking approach and prioritising greening and active travel infrastructure within emerging schemes. Also noted above, there is a critical issue for the city in terms of stewardship and maintenance of existing streets and spaces, and ensuring future maintenance requirements of planned public realm schemes can be met in a manner that reflects established city regeneration, sustainability and green infrastructure ambitions.

In terms of delivery, in addition to DfC led schemes such as BSA 3 and 5, Belfast City Council is also progressing design and delivery of public realm projects utilising developer contributions secured via S76 planning agreements. In addition, schemes will continue to be delivered directly by private sector developers in line with planning agreements. As the adopting authority, DfI have a critical role in all of these schemes. In this context, Belfast will see multiple public realm schemes ranging in value from £100k to c£30m delivered by a mix of central government, local government and the private sector during the next 5-10 years. A joined up 'city' approach will therefore be

required to ensure a coherent approach and a quality outcome. There is now an opportunity for DfC, DfI and Belfast City Council to deliver on **‘A Bolder Vision for Belfast’** through both direct delivery, as well as regulation of privately delivered public realm schemes that can have transformational impacts, or can effect incremental change in line with an agreed city ambition.

While delivery of major capital works in busy urban centres requires a significant lead-in due to design, consultation, statutory approvals and procurement, we consider that efficiencies should be sought wherever possible across government to support timely delivery of public realm schemes.

Additionally, in-year spend requirements can prove prohibitive for projects involving physical works to improve public realm, that often require a mix of both statutory approvals and third party consents.

Alongside delivery of public realm projects, there is a need to consider supporting programmes to improve the ‘vertical streetscape’ (buildings/facades), to promote a holistic approach to regeneration that also addresses long term vacancy, dereliction and urban decay, alongside public realm improvements.

18. What would make town-centre living more attractive?

Development and maintenance of a network of safe, accessible and attractive streets linking quality open and green spaces, large and small, that cater to the needs of existing and new city centre communities.

The city centre needs to be a place of choice, with consistently high standards in design, delivery, maintenance and stewardship of the public realm. Therefore consideration needs to be directed to the necessary attractors e.g. local amenities, shops, community infrastructure.

The city centre needs to be ‘clean, green and safe’, with potential residents confident in terms of health, safety and wellbeing. This has been demonstrated recently in research undertaken by Belfast City Council around a Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe city centre

for example the disjoints in city Centre cleansing is somewhat due to public realm being in the ownership of different organisations. This creates disconnect in terms of timing and standard of cleansing. Strong partnership working will result in street cleansing reaching consistent and optimum standard, positively impacting public perception on the suitability of the City Centre as a place to live, work, visit. Managing public perception is important by demonstrating to the public that the Council and key partners have a proactive approach to cleansing to enhance attitudes and behaviours.

Incorporation of family friendly design, whether through dedicated or incidental play, as a component of public realm design that caters for a range of users, promoting active and passive use of spaces that will help to deter longstanding ASB issues.

Theme 6: Fiscal - Including Rates

Fiscal policy is how government taxation and spending policies are used to influence economic conditions. This affects demands on employment, inflation, goods and services, and economic growth. This could require the consideration of:

- Reform the tax system to ensure that sufficient revenue to pay for public services whilst ensuring that the tax burden is fair.
- A fundamental reform and review of commercial and business rates in village, town and city centres. (NI Reval 2023)
- A targeted approach to rates for small businesses.
- Our high streets have the highest vacancy rates in the UK. We need to develop a policy response to address vacancies and rates.

Theme 6: Questions and Responses

19. What tax and rating reforms are needed to help stimulate the high street economy?

Business rate is the primary source of income for the Council. 78% of income comes from rates – 65% domestic, 35% non-domestic. Any reduction in the level of this important tax must be replaced with alternative revenue sources. Rather than making overall reduction in the levy targeted approaches should be adopted.

The overall level of taxation must be maintained to ensure service levels are sustained. Any of the proposals suggested in the following paragraphs must be subjected to detailed modelling to ensure a balance of funding is maintained.

20. What actions should be taken to reduce vacancy rates on the high street?

Anecdotally, it is understood that SME's and independents have been capitalising on the current rates concession as an opportune time to test space and trade their concepts in the city centre having a multiplier effect on positively impacting the local economy, reducing vacancies, increasing footfalls and providing new reasons to visit

the city centre. Perhaps there is some learning here in supporting SME's in setting up in prime pitches and locations.

21. Do you believe that legislation is required to change fiscal policy?

As referred to in an earlier response, in 2019, the Department of Finance via Land & Property Services (LPS) announced plans to undertake a full and comprehensive review of business rates in Northern Ireland. Covid 19 has held up further progress on this review. The review needs to be restarted.

The council recognises the importance of minimising the burden on the ratepayer and has set the district rate over the past number of years at below the rate of inflation. The council would welcome progressing further with the review and in particular the key issues highlighted for consideration in their response to the consultation to LPS in 2019.

The Rates Order lacks powers that permit local authorities to introduce reliefs to reflect the specific circumstances of their locality and local economy. This is a serious impediment in the development of local policies and strategies.

The rating system needs to be aligned to support growing the local economy and support city and town centre living. Examples of initiatives that could be considered to stimulate local environments are:

- Relief for build-to-rent properties and purpose-built managed student accommodation.
- Integrate the ability to pay and individual business circumstances.
- Introduce a vacant site and a derelict land levy to accelerate development.
- Incentivise city and town centre living with a series of green policy related exemptions and rewards.
- Review all reliefs, exemptions, and exclusions with a bias towards city and town centre living.
- Introducing a business growth accelerator.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the rates hardship scheme.

- Align the rating system to support specific sectors such as innovation, retail, and hospitality.
- Create “Retail Action Zones” which would exempt individual properties or specific areas.

Assembly should review the current tax; funding and development systems to rebalancing taxation to better encompass and reflect the rapid rise of online activities and the growth of retail parks and out of town shopping precincts. Potential suggestions for actions could include amendments to VAT, the introduction of digital taxes or transaction levies and the introduction of an Out-of-Town Car Parking Space Levy.

Theme 7: Capacity

Capacity refers to the built, social, spatial, and infrastructural strengths and opportunities to transform to produce significant and measurable change. This could require the consideration of:

- A capacity mapping and pilots exercise similar to that undertaken by the HSTF in England should be developed for our region, utilising Ministerial Advisory Group data and knowledge, and resourced and contemporised by HSTF funds. This should be council area coordinated and community led.
- Greater High Street inclusion for Community Wealth Building Pilots, community planning, with greater formal and allocated cross-departmental investment in each. Community Wealth Building Pilots are an investment model to enable local communities to increase co-operative asset ownership, anchor jobs and resources locally, and ensure local community economic stability and democratic control.
- Develop HSTF capacity by investment in hubs by location, and, if desired at community level.

Theme 7: Questions and Responses

22. What is the priority for capacity mapping and pilot exercises?

Capacity mapping should be considered as part of any investment – not as a separate or stand-alone exercise. The MAG living High Street Craft Kit template is a helpful starting point. The leadership should be reflective of the High Street/locality composition – so the definition of “community” may change from area to area (e.g. the business community may well lead in many cases, in those locations where they dominate the High Street).

23. What capacity skills need to be developed?

The key capacity skills that need to be developed include:

- Governance
- Financial management
- Evaluation and/or impact measurement
- Some technical skills (although these can be acquired or commissioned).
- Place-making

Groups also need to build an understanding of the local/regional government environment with clarity of areas of responsibility and shared knowledge on the required processes to progress priority interventions. NOTE – it would be helpful to create “how to”/process notes for these key work areas e.g. requests for parklets.

24. What should be created to support the development of high street capacity?

- a. Community funds
- b. Locality budgets
- c. Sector schemes
- d. Expert advice
- e. Workshops
- f. Collaborative approach
- g. Other (Please comment below)

We suggest that a combination of ring-fenced budgets accompanied by access to technical assistance and expert advice and support will be required. Facilitation and workshop design support would be beneficial (which don't necessarily just have to relate to one specific area) in ensuring an inclusive and co-design approach is adopted. We would advise against the creation of numerous parallel strands of activity.

Theme 8: Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability

Our environment is our most important asset and is crucial to each and every one of us. It is one of the main reasons that people from other countries and regions visit, bringing money into the local economy. It affects our economy, our health and well-being, and it facilitates social interaction. Building, through construction, renovation and repurposing, also plays a key role in emissions reduction. This could require the consideration of:

- The carbon impact of interventions during design, to reduce the carbon footprint and increase sustainable development.
- Carbon reduction measures in existing and future infrastructures in our high streets should be dynamically addressed.
- Blue-green infrastructures, which are strategically planned networks of natural and semi-natural areas to enhance the biodiversity designed and managed to support a wide range of ecosystem services, could assist with the greening of our urban environments, facilitate better water management and support safer, cleaner, sustainable spaces. This will allow interconnectivity, provide recreation spaces and help communities to connect and to thrive economically and socially.
- Examine incentives for repurposing existing buildings to address embodied energy, increase energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.

Theme 8: Questions and Responses

25. What actions should be adopted to provide greener urban environments?

[Belfast Resilience Strategy sets out the ambition to address both climate adaptation and mitigation. Adaptation measures include the creation of sustainable urban drainage, and integration of tree planting through the Belfast Million Trees programme. Such measures address multiple issues such as flooding, carbon sequestration, urban cooling and physical/mental health. Climate considerations should be undertaken on all investment, both public and private, and the correct levers and controls incorporated within the business case, viability, design approval and adoption processes. Effective decision making is critical to ensuring that policy and direction is provided to incorporate control measures to reduce the impact of](#)

climate change and to ensure delivery of the commitments made through the Climate Emergency Declarations.

26. What incentives should there be for repurposing buildings? (Tick as many or as few as you wish)

- a. Environmental grants
- b. Loans
- c. Reduced rates
- d. Other (if you pick "Other" please expand on your answer)

we believe all incentives should be properly considered and resourced. The Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap sets out recommendations for the retrofit of buildings to support our decarbonisation goals. Retrofitting, has an important role in repurposing existing buildings in major developments to reduce the carbon footprint.

27. Should existing buildings, including our heritage assets, play an enhanced role in transforming the High Street?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Yes, heritage assets play an essential role in the high street and the revitalisation of the high street should consider the sustainable reuse and retention of heritage buildings as key priority. we should examine opportunities to support and showcase actions to decarbonise, use of renewable energy, incorporating green infrastructure, and embedding principles such as play, which we have addressed through the Urban Childhood Report and our membership of the Real Play Coalition, all of which enhance the resilience of the city.

Theme 9: Housing and Other Infrastructure

Good quality, affordable and sustainable housing is central to reducing housing stress, homelessness and improving housing solutions for the most vulnerable. This could require the consideration of:

- Policies and strategies to address quality, quantity and availability of housing to encourage people to live in and around high streets.
- We should ensure that these are not just transient communities but that they are attractive to families.
- We should consider space standards, access to services and the living over the shops scheme.

Theme 9: Questions and Responses

28. What strategies are needed to encourage people to live in and around the High Street?

Although Belfast is seeing an increase in both investor interest and planning approvals for housing developments, and so an increase in the city centre population, this trend has been identified within the Belfast Agenda which set out an ambitious objective to grow the population of the city by 66,000 people. As its spatial articulation, the draft Local Development Plan (LDP) seeks to provide for 31,000 additional homes by 2035, with an estimated 8,000 units anticipated within the city centre thereby increasing the city centre population. Population density is now considered crucial to the success and sustainability of city centres.

Council understands that to **grow and sustain a strong and vibrant residential presence within the city centre requires a suite of strategic measures which will create a city which attracts more individuals and families as well as the services that communities need to thrive.** City centre living is central to the Councils long term vision and ambitions for growth; to create a city with a thriving economy and excellent job opportunities for all, where the right mix of homes is surrounded by great public spaces with easy access to nature, culture, high quality schools and learning opportunities.

To better understand the needs and aspirations of new and existing residents across the City, Council have commissioned a City Centre Living Vision 2035 (CCLV). This will help identify what Belfast can do to attract a variety of new tenures to reside within the heart of the city as well as identifying what the successes are that has retained residents within the city and which has helped establish important city centre communities. It is important that Council recognises the strategic ambitions for the growth of the city against the aspirations and concerns of these existing communities.

This CCLV is also looking at national best practices in which Belfast can learn from as we seek to revitalise and repopulate our city centre. We have seen how medium to higher density residential developments in mixed-use neighbourhoods can flourish, and how high-quality public realm, supported by efficient transport infrastructure not only lessons car dependency but supports the delivery of our low carbon ambitions. This CCLV will support the commitments of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy by capitalising on the change in landscape, and help create a Vision for the city to help it deliver on its growth ambitions. This strategy set out a road map of policies to guide city centre decision making and a series of potential projects that translate the policies into action. Housing growth was a clear intervention considered essential to Belfast's success addressing the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast.

There are a number of key ambitions to support a mixed-use city centre that can deliver investment opportunity and amenity provision to encourage and enable a significant increase in its residential population within the next 15 years. These include:

i. Enable and encourage higher density mixed tenure residential developments

A range of benefits can be achieved through development of compact, accessible urban forms, clean and efficient urban transportation options, efficient building energy use and local clean energy solutions, climate change adaptation interventions and efficient waste management etc.

ii. Social Infrastructure

This is crucial to the building of healthy communities and sustainable places. It responds to the basic needs of communities to enhance the quality of life, equity, stability and social well-being.

iii. Tackling the climate emergency

This vision for a low carbon city is critical with the need to look at new and ambitious ways to address the emerging climate crisis.

iv. Transport

Belfast is relatively car dominated, a high amount of its space is currently devoted to roads and parking. This should be rebalanced to allow for a more favourable pedestrian experience. The emerging Bolder Vision will be key to supporting the City's liveability ambitions which is needed to provide a quality city centre environment, responsive to climate change emergency., greener, safer, more sustainable and better connected.

v. Place good design at the heart of a liveable city

Architecture and places play a fundamental role in the creation of liveable, sustainable communities, enhancing health and well-being outcomes. Good design will help deliver aesthetic value by enhancing a setting, functional value by meeting and adapting to the long terms needs of its people, economic value by providing good value for money and social value by contributing to a positive sense of identity and community.

Given the challenges facing our city centre, the need to reimagine and inject new life into the city core is more critical now than ever. A thriving and Inclusive residential population will be integral to a reimagined city centre, brought forward from a place-making perspective, enhancing connectivity between the centre and surrounding communities and providing connected and welcoming spaces. However it is clear that subvention maybe required to underpin and kickstart housing at scale in the city centre. this was highlighted in the Reset for Growth Report (IIGC June 2021), which highlighted the need for significant housing investment funds.

29. What key services should be available for high street residents?

- a. Health ✓
- b. Housing ✓
- c. Education ✓
- d. Leisure ✓
- e. Other (if you pick “Other” please expand on your answer)

To address the needs of high street residents the high street needs to ensure that it provides a level of offer that matches the demands for all its residents. A successful high street will then retain those existing residents as well as attract new and emerging tenures across the city centre. A modern vibrant city centre community is typically mixed use, densely populated and incorporates layers of use that complement each other. **City centre living is indeed a major part of regenerating an area, but not on its own. People are looking at lifestyle choices; not just living, but working, playing, socialising, and learning, not to mentions staying healthy. Council recognised through the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy that city centre living was not a simple case of “build it and they will come”.**

A compelling, attractive, and secure environment, with shopping, open space and other amenities is essential. The overall strategy to improve the public realm, food and entertainment offerings, connectivity and general vibrancy of the city centre is all important in increasing and sustaining the residential population of the city.

Commitment to a broad range of housing tenure is encouraged by Council to create balanced local communities through appropriate mix of house types, sizes, and tenures. Mixed tenure developments that reflect a privately owned, privately let, affordable and social accommodation can help to avoid the creation or the negative perception of an area by increasing the diversity of people living there. Strong neighbourhoods are also encouraged through active street frontages, buildings that provide public services, including education, healthcare and recreational facilities, public pathways and cycleways, and passive spaces such as civic squares and public paths. The modern high street does need traffic free areas with space for seats, displays, street markets and events. People like to be able to get out of their areas and get to places in their towns and cities without having to

drive. Having walkable and bikeable streets that are safe and easy to manoeuvre are important. Combined with creating opportunities for communities to access local employment, shopping, leisure and social facilities ensuring that they can live full independent lives within inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable communities.

Commitment to sustainable transport is important and indeed the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy outlines a bold vision for a green, walkable, cyclable city centre attractive to all ages. The future vision of the city centre should prioritise people and place-making to ensure the delivery of a vibrant and sustainable City. It should be based on the emerging diversification of land uses where we are seeing employment, tourism, leisure, retail, family living and learning becoming the pillars of growth for the city centre. This involves not only shaping our residential development but shaping our tourism offer; developing a city imagining through the cultural transformation strategy, serving the culturally curious, creating events and festivals which serve the city's shared cultural identity, and future proofing our retail sector with experiential offerings. Creating a people centric city means we have our citizens at the centre of our plans; to ensure that they have the best life chances and living experience with access to endless opportunities.

Council have a leading role in helping create well designed places that are prosperous and welcoming and benefit the residents and all who use the high street. Places to gather and recreate are important to staying healthy and connected to others. Healthy cities encourage better urban planning to prioritise increased access to safe transport systems, green and public spaces which together reduce road traffic deaths, improve air quality and promotes physical activity. Where we grow up, live and work impacts how healthy we are. Interaction with other people through leisure and cultural activities are some of the many reasons why people locate and remain residing within the city centre.

30. How do we engage communities more effectively?

The Council is committed to early engagement with local communities and stakeholders and has sought to encourage inclusive discussions on the Belfast Agenda, LDP and key planning policies that will guide future development to deliver the tangible social, economic and environmental benefits for the city.

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (Planning Act), introduced a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), to be developed by Councils, setting out how they intend to involve the community in carrying out their respective functions. Belfast City Council published its SCI¹ in March 2018, which set out the method and timeframe for engagement on the draft Plan Strategy and POP which states when stakeholders and the community could contribute to preparation of the LDP, its Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and decisions around planning applications. It promotes a more meaningful and effective approach to enable interested parties and the local community to engage early in the plan process and throughout its preparation. Council recognises that encouraging people to live in the city centre will need a place making approach that is people focused and that planning and designing future developments and areas will require effective collaborative engagement between applicants and stakeholders in advance of a full planning submission. Pre-Application Discussions (PAD) provide an opportunity for early consideration and engagement on design considerations and will generally produce better outcomes, as it provides the opportunity to work through issues such as design and access, transport, parking including green travel measures, heritage and conservation issues, and environmental issues.

Council recognises the importance of providing a clear, transparent and accessible planning system so that different user groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged by the planning process. Finding and maintaining effective means of communication is unquestionably central to the collaborative process of place making. Through providing the opportunity for active participation from early onset instils ownership and pride in the outcome, which will greatly encourage its ongoing success and contribute to vibrancy, adaptability, and diversity thus creating sustainable and safe places.

Council has also led on various non statutory Masterplans and regeneration plans with community engagement being integral to this process. The Council believes a

collaborative approach involving community, landowners and other stakeholders is essential to realise the potential of an area.

The preparation of the LDP and the process by which individual planning proposals are now determined are key to furthering sustainable development, implementing the SPPS, and realising the vision and aspirations of local communities.

Council believes comprehensive and inclusive community engagement is fundamental to shaping our city at all levels. This has been at the forefront in the development of all Council plans, strategies, and planning processes to date.

Council have demonstrated this through the development of various channels to improve how we listen and engage with our residents and other stakeholders.

The Council's consultation and engagement platform, [Your Say Belfast](#) gives people the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas through comments, surveys, online forums and much more.

The recently published City Centre Living Housing Survey, (September 2021), identified key components and services required for a city centre living population and attributes to the creation of a city centre living vision.

Council feels that we can continue to develop and improve our means of engagement through strategic partnerships we have forged across the city and utilising the structures that are there to support these for example the Community Planning Partnership and associated boards. These partnerships will go some way to enabling the delivery of new and regenerated inclusive, healthy, sustainable, resilient, and liveable city centre neighbourhoods.

31. How will housing developments improve areas of deprivation in high streets, rural villages, town and city centres?

- Encouraging sustainable residential use into and near centres will increase footfall and their ability to increase spend in shops and services located at those which can stimulate a multiplier effect.
- Policies or initiatives to support the use of vacant or underused spaces within centres could support the delivery of residential accommodation and

contribute to a more sustainable mix of uses that increases the utilisation of existing assets.

- Consider initiatives to support vitality, vibrancy and increase options for people through initiatives such as LOTs.
- Key to this will be ensuring effective sustainable and active travel provision from areas of high deprivation into areas of learning of learning and employment, and addressing and overcoming the long standing issues of severance created through historical infrastructure provision.

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Theme 10: Getting To and From the High Street

Getting to and within villages, towns and cities is at the heart of urban regeneration and positively impacts local and regional economies. It unlocks development potential and as a result, many places and communities have seen increased regeneration, investment and employment. This could require the consideration of:

- Ensure that our town centres are well served with public transport provision and supporting infrastructure.
- Promote policies to encourage walking, cycling and the accessibility and quality of environment. This could link to the 15-minute neighbourhood concept.
- Maintain and improve accessibility to, and within, village, town and city centres.
- Parking, including issues such as charging, free or time-limited parking, especially in the levelling-up context.
- Reduce the appeal of commuter and out-of-town parking.
- Incentivise employers to promote the use of public transport.

Theme 10: Questions and Responses

32. How do you get to your high street? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Walk ✓
- b. Car
- c. Bus ✓
- d. Train ✓
- e. Cycle ✓
- f. Taxi

g. Other (if you pick "Other" please expand on your answer)

The vision as set out in the Belfast Agenda, the city's Community Plan, outlines the City's ambition to promote the development of sustainable transport, including promoting walking and cycling. The Belfast Agenda set a target for the City to achieve 15% increase in the use of sustainable transport. Council would therefore advocate and promote these modes to get to and from the local high streets and city centre.

In our ambition to attract 66,000 new residents to the city it is critical that connectivity considerations and alternative travel options can align with these growth ambitions. For example, the development of housing close to existing services may mean shorter, more localised journeys, allowing higher levels of cycling and walking or public transport, therefore reducing dependence upon the car and mitigating negative impacts such as traffic congestion and air pollution.

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) identifies creating a green, walkable, cyclable centre and connecting to the city around as two of its eight key policies, recognising that active travel and connectivity are closely aligned to regeneration and development.

Belfast City Council (BCC), the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Communities (DfC) are developing A Bolder Vision for the future of Belfast City Centre. This will inform actions, interventions and a more joined-up approach across planning, transport and regeneration in developing Belfast City Centre as the attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant space central to the partners shared ambitions for Belfast.

A Bolder Vision for Belfast involves a fundamental rethink of how streets and places are used to make them attractive, inclusive, accessible, healthy, and vibrant places. The first Phase of the Vision was agreed by Council and endorsed by the DfC and DfI Ministers in 2020. It is underpinned by four Visioning Principles that will drive and shape the city centre, which includes; fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car.

These Principles have shaped COVID recovery place-making and active travel interventions in Belfast and have supported modal change. However, this requires a collaborative and holistic approach across a number of stakeholders and partners to deliver strategic connections and improved access between, and into local communities and the city centre. Towards this aim, Belfast City Council and the Department for Infrastructure are working together to deliver a package of sustainable travel interventions that support improved connectivity to the city centre, including

cycle parking (covered and secured), active travel hubs that encourage cycling and walking, and have expanded the Belfast Bike Share scheme to link communities to the city centre.

Council recognises that people take different types of transport, depending on their circumstances and at times, these may be multi-modal journeys. The key is that A Bolder Vision is providing safe, sustainable choices for people.

A Bolder Vision Phase 2 is currently out for public consultation and is the overarching framework for this initial work and within it there are four Key Moves that groups short and long term interventions in critical parts of the city to create a green, people focused, connected city centre for current and future users.

Each of these Key Moves supports connectivity to the city centre and introduces a strategic direction of travel accompanied by short, medium- and longer-term interventions to encourage walking, cycling and wheeling.

It is critical that the correct strategy and policy framework, coupled with investment is put in place to deliver on the objectives of the Bolder Vision and other key place-making documents including the DfI Ministers 'Time for Change'. The public sector needs to be more flexible to change and have the correct frameworks and strategic direction in place to ensure effective decision making.

33. What would make your journey to and from your high street easier?

The Belfast Agenda seeks to develop a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable. We have committed to develop a city that is well planned and with the right infrastructure to succeed; to develop the city's infrastructure and improve connectivity locally, nationally, and internationally; to be a city that will encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport; where the natural and built beauty of Belfast, linked to its hills, parks, rivers, lough, fine buildings and public space is well protected and can be enjoyed by everyone. Key to making the journey to and from our local high streets and city centre easier is the quality of connectivity in terms of public realm, the interface between junctions, adequate and accessible public transport and the vibrancy of the environs and low

air pollution. Council have worked with IMTAC on a range of strategies and would advocate that they are engaged around accessibility to and from the high street.

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) identifies creating a green, walkable, cyclable centre and connecting to the city around as two of its eight key policies. It specifically references the lack of green space and tree-lined streets, identifies the need for rebalancing the scales between tarmac and soft landscaping and recognises that there is no provision for children in the city centre. these factors are also critical to making journeys to local high streets and in particular the city centre easier. the need to rebalance perceived severance between the city centre and its bounding communities in terms of harsh infrastructure and car dominated carriageways is key to making journeys to and from the neighbourhoods into city centre and vice versa.

As set out in the response to question 32 A Bolder Vision (ABV) and the aligned short, medium- and longer-term interventions including its key moves will be key to making journeys to and from the city centre easier. The four underpinning principles of A Bolder Vision support making journeys to and from the city centre easier:

- Creating a healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment that promotes well-being for all, inclusive growth and innovation;
- Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car;
- Providing lively, safe, and green streets linking inclusive shared spaces to promote resilience and enhance our built heritage;
- Removing severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all.

The key moves as set out in ABV supports connectivity to the city centre and introduces a strategic direction of travel accompanied by short, medium- and longer-term interventions.

The key moves are:

1. *Create a Civic Spine with a focus on people*

Establish a clearly defined and recognisable strategic north-south Civic Spine, connecting the Ulster University and York street Interchange through the heart of the city to Queen's University via Botanic Avenue. The Civic Spine would be reconfigured to prioritise space for people and support effective access by public transport while enabling the introduction of green spaces for a diverse, inclusive, future-proofed and vibrant city centre.

2. *Reimagine the Inner Ring Road and end Car Dominance*

Transform the Inner Ring Road to reduce physical severance for surrounding communities and become a sustainable mobility corridor. To do this, the Inner Ring should be reconfigured to accommodate high priority public transport services (such as BRT2) as well as fully segregated and green infrastructure for walking, wheeling, and cycling.

3. *Promote City Centre Living*

Encourage city centre living by providing greater quality, choice, and affordability of accommodation, to create a shared and inclusive environment. Establish a city-wide network of people friendly routes, community focus streets, incorporating city parks and connections to opportunities for play, interaction, rest, and leisure.

4. *Embrace the River Lagan and Waterfront*

Capitalise on one of the city's most defining, but underused assets, the River Lagan, by strengthening connections from the city centre to the east and its surrounding communities – enhancing connectivity across and around the River Lagan.

34. What changes to legislation, policies, processes or procedures would encourage walking and cycling?

The implementation of legislation, policies, processes or procedures which encourage and make walking and cycling more attractive should be welcomed. It is key to take these aspects forward in an integrated and holistic approach, providing a broader understanding of what is required to support walking and cycling.

However, it is recognised that the implementation of the three pillar approach as set in the Northern Ireland Changing Gear Strategy will encourage walking and cycling:

- Build – a comprehensive network for the bicycle
- Support – people who choose to travel by bicycle
- Promote – the bicycle as a mode of transport for every day journeys

There is an opportunity to encourage walking and cycling through improved strategic project planning and implementation. For example, a number of interrelated projects have been strategically identified as “Active Travel Enablers” and collectively they could form a compelling programme of small-scale catalytic interventions to support citizens to have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for every day journeys. This could directly contribute to the “Build” pillar of the Northern Ireland Changing Gear Strategy in that it will provide appropriate infrastructure, design, cycle parking and safety. Initiatives such as the following could enhance the Active Travel Network within the city through:

- Expansion of the first phase of cycle stands delivered through the Revitalisation Programme with a further city-wide roll out of covered cycle stands.
- Seeking collaborative opportunities to partner with multi-storey car park operators and other city partners to provide secured cycle parking units within their facilities providing multi-modal change centres and encouraging active travel through secure cycling provision. Cycle theft is a deterrent to cycling and the 2019 Bike Life reported that only 16% of residents reported that the security of public cycle parking was good, with concern in relation to bike storage at the workplace and home.
- In addition further value can be added to the existing Active Travel Network through the introduction and installation of bicycle repair stations.

Making effective changes to policy, legislation, processes and procedures to maximise funding available for Blue and Green Infrastructure projects and the extension of the Belfast Bike Network will encourage walking and cycling.

The implementation of the Belfast Cycling Network and incorporation of effective cycling infrastructure within the planned capital works programme including BRT2, SA3 & 5 and the BRCD will also encourage walking and cycling.

The outworking's of A Bolder Vision, and any required changes to legislation, policy, processes and procedures aligned to the identified and consulted on key moves and any additional interventions will be intrinsic to encouraging walking and cycling.

Funding for the delivery of all such interventions remains key. Importantly agile partnership working with agreed outcomes across all partners including DfI, DfC, Council and others will be critical. It is felt that the Community Planning partnership could provide a good mechanism for bringing forward an agreed action plan to deliver on increased active travel. The City Development Board of Belfast Community Planning Partnership has identified active travel and connectivity as a key priority and partners are being asked to commit to actions to deliver on an action plan.

35. What are your views on high street parking?

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) identified the need for a parking strategy and action plan to ensure appropriate provision and location of parking to support the vitality of the city centre. A Car Park Strategy (CPS) and Action Plan was published by Council in May 2018. Public consultation took place between August and November 2016. The CPS included a comprehensive baseline review of parking, focused largely within the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, which identified parking issues, challenges and opportunities, and outlined a number of objectives and actions to support the Strategy's vision; *'Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors'*.

The baseline review generally concluded that there is sufficient overall public parking supply within the city centre; a significant proportion of all day commuter parking takes place in the city centre; the quality of car parking facilities and payment technology varies greatly; and better management of parking demand and supply is

needed to provide an integrated parking information system. The report also noted the impact of commuters who park in mainly residential areas, which prevents local residents from parking, adding to the cluttered feel of individual streets, decreasing perceived safety levels and reducing access for emergency service vehicles. In conclusion the CPS 2018 and associated engagement found that the focus should be directed at demand management and effective management of the oversupply of car parking space aligned to active and sustainable transport priorities. However it should be noted that a review of the 2018 CPS is to take place in 2022.

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Theme 11: Tourism

Tourism is a major contributor to the economic well-being of our villages, towns and cities. Its development could include:

- A review of policy and regulations including support for hotels.
- Recognising the importance of sustainable town centres to meet the expectations of the tourist of the future. This will mean being able to provide a critical mass of services for accommodation, hospitality outlets and a thriving night-time economy.
- Develop the unique and visitor attractiveness of our high streets and remodel their marketing to reflect that.

Theme 11: Questions and Responses

36. How do we engage with communities to promote tourism?

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the health and success of our City and that of the tourism sector. To attract tourists in what is an increasingly competitive marketplace it is critical that our city is clean, attractive, vibrant and can offer the experiences and services expected by today's tourist. This includes good quality accommodation, great restaurants offering local food and drink, a local and distinct retail offering, vibrant cultural facilities, events and festivals. The flip side of this coin is that tourists can add to that vitality and the money they spend helps sustain those businesses and services that meet the needs of not just the tourist but those of local communities as well.

The Regenerative Impact of Tourism - In the decade prior to the COVID pandemic the growth of our tourism industry had a huge regenerative impact on Belfast which is the gateway to Northern Ireland, and in turn NI's other cities, towns and rural communities. Tourism led regeneration has revitalised redundant industrial areas of our city and region. Public/private investment in the Odyssey Pavilion and Titanic Belfast spearheaded the regeneration of the former shipyard into a new city quarter which has become a centre for tourism, recreation, learning, an innovation hub, home to the creative industries and an attractive place to live.

Tourism and hospitality have also driven the regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter, revitalising its built heritage and has made it a vibrant destination for both the tourist

and the creative industries sector. This was a significant factor in the relocation of Ulster University into the city. Tourism has had a similar impact in Derry-Londonderry becoming an attractive place not just to visit but also to live, study, work and invest.

The work being undertaken under A City Exploring Theme in Belfast's Cultural Strategy: A City Imagining and Council's draft ten year Tourism Plan: Make yourself at Home, currently out for consultation, are effectively focused on engaging with communities to develop and promote tourism. Regenerative tourism is driven by the relationship between people and place and the strategic themes of our Tourism Plan, uplift the importance of community in the context of tourism and in particular the relationship between visitor and the host.

Our Tourism Plan seeks to build on the success of tourism to date acknowledging both the investment of the public sector and the significant contribution of business, local enterprise and communities in taking risks and establishing, in a relatively short period of time, a city offer of culture, heritage and hospitality to be celebrated. The next phase of development is committed to an inclusive approach that recognises the importance of tourism and global connectivity to our economic and social wellbeing, but to do so under the principles of being people-centred, responsible and sustainable. Our plan places community at its heart with respect for the local context, to ensure tourism-derived benefits are shared and inclusive, which is evident in all four of the strategic themes - Grow, Position, Experience and Sustain. We are working with our communities to co-create and package authentic visitor experiences through opportunities for local people to tell their stories.

37. What changes to legislation, policies, processes or procedures should be made to develop tourism on the high street?

- The issues that the tourism sector had with the legislation pertaining to alcohol licensing and closing times has recently been amended so this is a positive move.
- Legislation relating to for example café culture and dining on street spaces needs to be examined and revised to become fit for purpose and to deliver for the recovery of our city and provide visitors with the experience that they expect to find in cities when visiting

- An effective Sunday offering to provide vibrancy and footfall within the city centre during times of limited animation
- Coach parking is an issue right now with poor provision and policies in place to accommodate coach parking for those coaches that bring groups of tourists to Belfast for day trips and overnight – in recent times Belfast has been losing out on this valuable tourism sector due to lack of parking and coach operators choosing to go elsewhere.
- Active and sustainable and integrated transport is important including cycling opportunities
- Simplification of certification of accommodation is needed
- The recently approved Belfast City Council Vacant Premises Programme aims to tackle vacancy within the city centre bringing vacant spaces back into use – some of these uses could be directed at tourism and visitor experiences.

38. Are you aware of an innovative tourism project that could help your high street?

The tourism-led regeneration projects within the City and Growth Deal programmes are central to the survival of the high street in Belfast. In making Belfast attractive to the tourist it will also help make it a place which is attractive as a place to work, learn and visit, and help retain and attract the talent needed to drive the innovation led economy of the future.

Of equal importance, tourism will also provide employment opportunities for those for whom employment in the knowledge economy is beyond their reach and contribute to a more balanced, inclusive and productive regional economy which contributes to a greater quality of life for all our citizens.

The plans for the new Belfast visitor destination, Belfast Stories will provide the platform for communities to tell their story which in turn provides an authentic visitor experience, and will result in tourism providing spend in communities thereby economic benefits and employment opportunities. It is essential that the investment in this visitor attraction is made available without delay as it will take time for it to be delivered. It will be important that the investment in Belfast Stories is made alongside the smaller City and Growth Deal programmes that are being planned and NOT left until the end.

Infrastructure is needed to support tourism and enables year round tourism rather than just at peak periods, which is essential to ensure that high streets remain viable.

In the meantime whilst the work on the new visitor destination is underway, there are opportunities for temporary use of buildings in Belfast City Centre to pilot and deliver cultural tourism visitor experiences. Investment in these cultural tourism visitor experiences will help to ensure that the reputation of Belfast as a cultural tourism destination will be secured and visitors will still choose Belfast as their city of choice.

Other innovative tourism projects that could help Belfast's high street include – Festival 2022; Urban Forest 2023; Year of Culture 2024; and UNESCO City of Music programme.

Theme 12: Digital High Streets Online shopping has impacted our high streets.

Online shopping has impacted our high streets. As well as the opportunities, consideration of the concerns and issues could include:

- Complementing existing business models to allow additional flexibility and resilience to react and survive during what are still uncertain times. Going online will also open up opportunities to reach new markets and new consumer demand.
- In addition to online innovation and diversification, the high street needs to be offering something different that cannot be delivered or experienced online.
- We need data-driven insights into the social media conversations that matter with ways to understand the audience and how to make better connections to reach them, such as their preferences.
- Promoting local products, services and trades.
- Considering the potential for strategies such as data and IT training

Theme 12: Questions and Responses

39. What aspects of a digital high street are important?

The impact of digital innovation on the high street is not just the trend towards more online retail at the expense of bricks and mortar. The impact has been much broader and more profound and need to be recognised and co-opted. Our experiences of the high street (and city in general) are now almost entirely mediated through a digital experience. Mobile and cloud technologies offer shoppers, residents and visitors discovery and decision-making support, recommendations, way-finding, shared social experiences, leading increasingly to an inter-connected, curated experience. Any action plan needs to recognise this holistic experience and not focus narrowly on online retail opportunities for individual companies for example click and collect, also using technology to “view” products out of hours e.g. enhancing sizing guides; ensuring all stock is posted online; online stock management/control.

- **Good wireless connectivity** is assumed. However, as the sophistication of the mobile offering grows (eg AR or rea-time AI) the need for next generation

advanced wireless will grow – not just for individual consumers, but for companies particularly business to business. Belfast needs to be offering a range of wireless options from comprehensive free WiFi through to 5G small cell.

- **Policy makers and businesses need access to data.** The city and its residents generate large quantities of rich data. But this is usually collected by third party digital companies – and can be difficult and expensive to access and harder to utilise. The city can create opportunities to work with businesses, citizens and policy makers to generate, collect, manage and utilise locally generated data for local data. This needs investment in shared data infrastructure, investment in data science, and data informed decision-making.

40. What digital innovations would help your high street?

As part of its Smart Belfast programme, Belfast City Council is collaborating with innovative companies, university researchers and public bodies to develop a Belfast Smart District commencing in 2022.

Co-terminous with the city centre, one of the aims of this smart district is to foster an environment in which partners are encouraged to exploit digital innovation to address major urban challenges such as the transformation of the high street. Belfast City Council would welcome engagement with the HSTF to co-design digital innovation opportunities.

What is the Smart District offering Belfast city centre?

- A £30m investment in state-of-the-art wireless networks – specifically designed to support innovation by SMEs, MNOs, end-user companies, innovators, researchers.
- A £20 million Innovation for Societal Impact challenge fund – specifically designed to encourage SMEs, researchers, and public bodies to innovate together on urban challenges such as the changing nature of the high street. This fund is planned to open for the first time in 2022/23.
- A £5 million urban data platform designed to provide a safe, trusted environment for the collection, management and utilisation of city-generated

data to allow SMEs, universities, public bodies to innovate on the city's key challenges.

- A curated urban innovation environment – A council-based team who will work to support innovation the city centre – by supporting access to locations, technologies, data, funding, partnership delivery, etc.

What are the kind of digital innovations need to be considered?

- The development of digital twins to support modelling of behaviours, urban mobility, logistics, impact of public policy interventions, etc. Digital twins have the potential to allow businesses and public policy makers to better understand the impact of fine-grain decisions and to model alternatives.
- Support for companies to innovate – creating a real-world environment (such as that on offer through the smart district) for companies to innovate, experiment, take risks, and learn.
- Local shared data – building local data pools about the high street and making them work for Belfast. This needs tech, expertise, and a trusted relationship between consumers, businesses, researchers and public policy makers. (Loyalty cards have explored this in a disconnected fashion – but there is no over-arching strategy for retaining local data with a trusted environment.)
- Related – creating a nuanced shared economic model of the high street that allows for scenario planning, data-informed decision making, A/B testing, trend analysis, etc. (Smart Belfast is currently working on a pilot of such a model with Land and Property Services).
- The role of digital in support last mile logistics, supply, active travel, multi-modal travel. The success of this is dependent on a rich data environment, digital twins, IoT infrastructure, and the expertise to exploit the data. (Smart Belfast is currently developing a pilot with Amazon Web Services on modelling multi-modal travel)
- The role of digital innovation to enhance alternative use of the high street – eg, supporting healthy urban residential living. Supporting city centre advanced manufacturing. (Both of which are being explored by the universities and/or Smart Belfast).

- It is still in an early phase – but the use of immersive technologies (AR, VR) to enhance the high street experience. Opportunities here to work with Smart Belfast and the two local universities.
- Support for new forms of transport – e-bikes, scooters, cargo-bikes, electric delivery vans. Drone delivery.

41. What more needs to be done to improve digital skills?

- Building skills to allow companies to adopt new ways of working that support innovation – eg, user-led co-design, living labs methodologies, agile as an iterative approach to innovative solutions, etc.
- Capacity building to support policy makers and companies to better utilise data to inform decision making. Our experience is that there are numerous data tools available on the market but that the ability of local partners to understand and exploit these tools remains limited. There is little evidence that new data opportunities (eg big data or real-time IoT data) is actually having an impact on plans and strategies.
- Capacity building for the citizen. Data as a tool for policy is only going to grow– however, there are concerns about trust, privacy, security and transparency. Engagement directly with the citizen on the exploitation of data and/or the use of AI technologies in the public realm is needed – or there will be growing distrust in the role of such tech in the city.
- Better awareness and adoption of the latest innovative practice from other places. Many cities are already experimenting with digital innovation in the high street. Opportunity here to link in with the many Smart City programmes across the world.
- There needs to be more specific digital marketing training provided to independent businesses who cannot afford to employ advertising and marketing agencies to provide these services. Although existing training courses are available, they are usually not specific enough and cover more general digital marketing topics.
- More targeted training is needed in areas such as search engine optimisation for their website and products, Google maps (listing your business, managing

reviews and feedback), Facebook and Google paid advertising (how to set up an advert, advertising budgeting, how to optimise adverts etc), proactive engagement with potential customers on social media, using tools to monitor their brand (reputation management), ecommerce (click and collect) etc.

- Businesses need to better understand the customer journey and how people find out about their business and products so they can optimise their marketing activity.

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Theme 13: Rural Settlements

Rural development is vital not just for individuals in rural areas but also for economic growth. Rural development will help improve productivity and stability in social and economic development. It enhances the quality of life and financial well-being of individuals, specifically those living in rural areas, but it also has major impacts on those in urban environments. This could require the consideration of:

- Providing support for rural settlements, including consideration of the social, environmental and economic role of settlements in a new era of connected working.
- Maximising the opportunities of the Department for the Economy-led Project Stratum that will bring high-speed broadband and connectivity to rural settlements.
- Invest in and provide a tailored and seamless approach.
- Village high street development

Theme 13: Questions and Responses

42. What changes to legislation, process and procedures are needed for village developments?

The planning approach focuses on stimulating economic and residential growth primarily within the city although an appropriate level of protection and growth will be directed towards our small settlements.

43. How could funding for rural settlements be made easier?

The introduction of Rural Needs Act 2016 aimed to demonstrate that sufficient evidence is considered to make effective policies which provide for equitable treatment of both rural and urban areas. As a result, any plan or programme being developed by Council is screened for Rural Proofing to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, where appropriate, adjustments are made to take account of particular rural circumstances.

In terms of funding rural settlements within Belfast, a small number have developed bids for funding through residents and community based organisations such as residents committees, sports clubs etc. Settlements have benefitted from the Rural

Development Programme and Belfast City Council Local Investment Fund. The Council has also worked with these groups to build capacity and consult on various policies, plans and strategies.

44. What innovative initiatives would improve village economies?

Innovative initiatives to address loss of banking presence in rural communities – e.g. cash back schemes. Also in terms of circular flow of the economy, improve village economies with better public transport links be developed in order to enable residents to avail of job opportunities and improve access to the City Centre and in return spend in local villages.

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Theme 14: People, Localism and Well-being

Places need to be compelling, to encourage communities to support economies, products and services that promote and improve the health and well-being of residents and the wider community. People need to feel connected, and community networks can support these links. This could include:

- The High Streets Task Force in England describes this regeneration framework as four Rs: repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring. These 'four Rs' require a new vision, a changed offer to consumers, better stakeholder communication and changing the governance of our high streets.
- Part of the solution to this challenge lies in fully developing and implementing the concept of 'localism' to repurpose our village, town and city centres as unique hubs at the heart of our community.
- Localism is not just about supporting independent retailers; it is also about empowering people and communities to reshape and repurpose their local villages, towns and city centres and reinvigorate the leadership model.
- Considering the impact of the Living Wage on equality and on people wanting to work on the high street.

Theme 14: Questions and Responses

45. Are you aware of any initiatives that would improve localism in your community?

Local government reforms that came into effect in April 2015 significantly shifted the role of local government towards one of active place-shaping. These arrangements provided councils with greater responsibility for important powers such as spatial and land-use planning, off-street car parks, local economic development and tourism. However, a residual sense exists across local government that the powers which transferred to councils did not go far enough. Effective place making starts within the community, engaging on the ground and bringing forward to delivery.

Community Planning is the most effective mechanism to support the integration of public services for the benefit of local communities. Particularly important though is work in Belfast City Council to develop a smaller "area" based planning and delivery

approach to integrating public services. This recognises that community planning at a local authority level still needs to connect more meaningfully to local places.

“Area” based planning and delivery in Belfast brings together people (communities/public service staff), services and place (physical environment/assets) in a holistic way and a current demonstrator is well underway in the form of the “Holylands Intervention” and the Multi-Agency Support Hub in the Botanic District Electoral Area.

The planned Review of People and Place (DfC) seeks to examine place based deprivation in a similar way to area based planning and that important relationship between NI Executive policy and local Council planning/service delivery needs continued investment

Further devolution of core place-shaping functions will allow for a more responsive approach to communities’ needs, aspirations and true feeling of localism. Councils have a greater understanding of, and engagement with, their local communities enabling the tailoring of services, improved decision-making and the delivery of local outcomes.

However, given the previous experience of the 2015 reform programme, we must emphasise the importance that if there is to be any further devolution of powers to local government this must be supported by greater resource, clarity of purpose and occur in a planned and phased manner to ensure continuity and certainty for all stakeholders.

In summary the main issues relating to the future role of local government that the Council wish to highlight include:

- Central government commitment to work in partnership with local councils, by providing the necessary funding and policy backdrop, from which councils can play a leading role in the sustainable recovery of their local areas;
- enhanced devolution to local government including regeneration, planning, skills investment and planning, and local transport planning;

- greater powers regarding local taxation measures and enhanced local investment powers, to ensure that that councils have the fiscal levers to tackle issues at community and city level; and
- the introduction of legislation/measures that strengthen the relationship between central and local government, including a duty to collaborate to provide for responsive and integrated service delivery at regional, city and community level.

46. What is the most important aspect for creating well-being in the community?

Core to effective community planning and area planning is empowered communities who feel confident in lobbying for and participating in public policy and implementation. It is recognised that capacity in most communities in Belfast is excellent, but that there are parts of the city where capacity needs further investment. Often these areas do not fall into existing government place based programmes (Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages, Building Successful Communities etc). A strategic exercise is needed to ensure capacity is developed in all communities.

The participation of communities in planning and implementation is core to their well-being and the Belfast Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise Panel (advisors to the Community Planning Partnership) are an excellent example of the role of this sector in shaping effective public sector service delivery. However, that principle of genuine and equal partnership between the public sector and the third sector is core to all public sector service delivery and should be embraced across government.

Currently, the Council works in partnership with each of the 9 government departments and their respective Ministers (who make up the NI Executive) in the delivery of policy and services to the citizens of Belfast. Such co-operation takes place across many policy areas including local planning, waste, environmental health, public safety, building control, community planning, and economic and cultural development.

The Council recognises the need to further strengthen the relationship between central and local government on a clear legislative and policy basis, in order to effectively

deliver for the citizen. This strengthened relationship should be underpinned by a shared commitment to delivering outcomes for our citizens and improve quality of life in a measurable way, such as health and well being. This approach can be tailored to local area interventions.

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- Smart Belfast
- Towns Fund
- The Entrepreneur
- The Great British High Street – The Digital High Street Report 2020

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Subject:	DfI Blue Green Infrastructure Fund – Active Travel Projects
Date:	9 th March 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update the Committee on DfI's Blue Green Infrastructure Funding relating to Active Travel Projects
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the Letter of Offer from DfI for capital funding to deliver Active Travel Enabling projects and that officers are currently in ongoing discussions with the Department on funding draw down and around the conditions of the LoO in particular the tight

	<p>timeframes and risk in terms of delivery of the projects as outlined within this paper. A verbal update on the outcome of these discussions will be provided to Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependant on the outcome of the ongoing discussions with DfI (with verbal update to be provided to Committee) to agree to recommend to the SP&R Committee advanced procurement of the covered cycle stands and cycle repair stands with further details on locations to be brought back to this Committee. Whilst the LoO is very welcome and is aligned to Council priorities officers would however highlight that any recommendation to accept this will need to consider any risk to delivery and potential financial implications in terms of clawback etc. • Dependant on the outcome of the ongoing discussions with DfI, to agree to the delivery of secured cycle units through an Expression of Interest approach to identify suitable delivery partners, with the outcome on the EoI including specification requirements to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee; • Note the proposal to develop the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine, and agree that Officers work with DfI and others to secure funding and to bring the designs through to RIBA Stage 3
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The CG&R Committee received an update, and provided approvals, in September and October 2021 on the Active Travel Enabling projects under delivery through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including a new temporary Active Travel Hub in Cathedral Gardens, expansion of the Belfast Bike scheme and replacement of the fleet, the establishment of an e-cargo bike pilot scheme and 10 new covered cycle parking locations located on Council assets across the city. The Committee were also informed that there was potential to seek additional funding through the DfI Blue Green Infrastructure Fund to deliver additional covered cycle stand locations as well secure cycle parking that could be delivered in partnership with, for example Translink or Multi-Story Car Park suppliers that can provide publicly accessible locations within a managed and serviced area.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Report</u></p> <p>As reported to the SP&R Committee in January 2022 Council submitted proposals to DfI for greenway and active travel projects that could potentially receive capital funding this financial year. These proposals were put forward based on receiving funding by October/November 2021 to facilitate completion by the end of the financial year. The submitted proposals had a focus on enhancements to live projects that have the best chance of delivery within the financial year. On this basis a business case was submitted to the Department seeking funding to deliver a further roll out of city-wide covered cycle stands, secure parking units to be delivered with partner organisations and the introduction and installation of bicycle repair</p>

	<p>stations along the active travel network. This application was submitted in recognition that Active Travel and connectivity are strategic priorities for Belfast, identified within the PfG, Belfast Agenda and underpinned within A Bolder Vision for Belfast. Through the Community Planning Partnership – City Development Board it was also agreed across the Partners that connectivity and sustainable and active travel should be a priority for the city, both in terms of meeting our sustainable objectives but also in terms of making the city a more accessible, attractive and liveable city. While the CG&R Committee received a report from DfI in December 2021 on the Belfast Cycle Network outlining the timeframe for developing up and delivering the much-needed expansion of the capital infrastructure it is recognised that an opportunity exists now to deliver Active Travel enabling projects in advance of these capital works, and to further compliment the schemes and projects delivered through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.</p>
3.3	<p>The SP&R Committee were informed in January 2022 that although funding had not been confirmed, DfI had publicly announced their intended support for four capital proposals – enhancements to the Forth Meadow Greenway Project at Sections 1 & 3, enhanced Connectivity between City Quays, Greater Clarendon and City Centre, and Active Travel Enablers such as cycle parking and bike repair stands. The SP&R Committee were informed that no formal offer of funding had been made, and that further work was required to establish the timeframes constraints given global supply chain issues and the need to mitigate against these issues, as well as constraints put forward in relation to match-funding requirements, and the Committee noted these risks to delivery.</p>
3.4	<p>On the 2nd February 2022 Council received a Letter of Offer from DfI to provide capital funding to support Active Travel Enabling Projects in line with the Business Case submitted to the Department. The Letter of Offer for £207,500 of capital funding includes cycle parking, secure cycle parking and cycle repair stands. It should be noted that the LoO commits Council to in year spend but given that we are now in March, this is the focus of ongoing discussions between officers and DfI, and a verbal update will be provided to Committee on the outcome of these. Officers are working to ensure that funding could be drawn down in a manner which would ensure deliverability and protects the interests of the Council and provide a level of comfort to Council in terms of advance procuring where possible, as well as allowing adequate planning, further procurement and installation of the capital schemes. The approval of the procurement and delivery of these schemes will also be subject to approval at the SP&R Committee. Whilst the LoO is very welcome and is aligned to Council priorities officers would highlight that a recommendation to accept this cannot be made if there is a risk to delivery and any potential financial implications in terms of clawback etc.</p>

3.5	<p>Under the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Officers had engaged Sustrans to identify a list of locations for covered cycle stands that can be further developed to bring forward the additional units under this funding stream. Officers from CRD, PP and CNS are currently working through this list and identifying potential for use of Council lands and 3rd Party landowners and any required permissions prior to bringing a final list of locations to Committee. Given the timing of the Letter of Offer, and pending Committee approval it is proposed to advance procure the covered cycle units with a list of locations to brought back to this Committee for agreement prior to installation. This is subject to the outcome to ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and conditions within the LoO.</p>
3.6	<p>With regard to the secure cycle units these are more complex in in terms of the need for physical assets /infrastructure, different operational models, staff resourcing, revenue tails etc. Officers have held a number of discussions with potential delivery partners including, Translink and Multi-Story Car Park Operators, that can utilise existing physical assets and provide strategically located, publicly accessible, and maintained and operated locations that could deliver out additional secure cycle parking as pilot projects for this type of provision. Subject to the outcome of discussions with the Department in relation to the Loo and pending Committee approval, it is proposed to engage the wider market through an Expression of Interest, with a potential to provide capital grant funding to delivery partners to install and operate secure parking infrastructure within their existing assets and to provide regular monitoring and reporting on the usage and uptake of the scheme to further inform potential future projects. It is proposed to run the EoI from the end of March of a period of 3 weeks followed by application and capital grant award process. Delivery partners will be assessed on their location in relation to key trip attractors and the Belfast Cycle Network, as well as their operating model and ability to adequately deliver a publicly accessible model. It is proposed that the results of this EOI is brought back to Committee at the earliest opportunity, and prior to awarding funding to deliver the secure cycle units. This is subject to the outcome to ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and conditions within the LoO.</p>
3.7	<p>Officers are also working on a list of locations for the cycle repair stations, aligned to the existing cycle network and Council assets. Subject also to the outcome of discussions with the Department it is proposed to advance procure these units to meet the funding timeframes with further detail on locations to be brought back to this Committee at a future date.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre.</u></p>

	<p>There have been ongoing discussions between DfI and Council in relation to the enhancement to the connecting routes to and from the city centre and the greater Clarendon area. This will better link communities from the Greater Clarendon / Sailortown area to and from the city centre. Given issues of severance with the city centre this was identified as a priority connectivity project in the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown Masterplan / Accessibility Guide progressed by DfI in conjunction with BCC, DfI and other partners including local communities. Building on these discussions and the proposal within the Masterplan /Accessibility Guide an application was submitted to DfI to develop up the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine to RIBA Stage 3, under a project entitled 'Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre'.</p>
3.9	<p>This project relates to the development of design proposals to enhance the urban environment and connectivity between the city centre and the Greater Clarendon area through the design of public realm/open space and active travel infrastructure improvements within the project area, known as the 'North-South Spine'.</p>
3.10	<p>As above the 'North-South Spine' concept was developed as part of the Greater Clarendon & Sailortown Masterplan and subsequent Public Realm & Accessibility Design Guide, which noted the importance of improved north-south pedestrian and cycle links (and east-west links) in terms of integrating Greater Clarendon and Sailortown into the city centre, enhancing local links to the Cathedral Quarter and City Quays, and linking the two new proposed city parks at Cathedral Gardens and City Quays.</p>
3.11	<p>Alongside the emerging plans for 'City Quays Gardens', it is proposed to develop similarly ambitious streetscape and open space design proposals for adjacent connecting streets. The proposed area takes in Tomb St, Corporation St and Little Patrick St/Great Patrick St, and design development would focus on enhancing local public realm and ease of movement, while contributing to wider city connectivity, including pedestrian and cycle links between City Quays and Custom House Square, the Cathedral Quarter and UU campus and accommodation. It is proposed that the appointed team would develop design information to RIBA Stage 3 for environmental and connectivity improvements for streets and spaces within the project area. Proposed interventions may include, but would not be limited to, enhanced pedestrian crossings, dedicated cycle lanes, soft landscaping, lighting, resurfacing, open space, street furniture. This is subject to the outcome of ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and any conditions which may be contained within a future LoO.</p>

3.12	<p>In line with the RIBA Plan of Work, preparation of design information to Stage 3 would include site appraisal, concept development, options appraisal, business case development, feasibility studies, development of project brief / budget / programme and stakeholder engagement. Specific outputs from the currently proposed design development work would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIBA Stage 3 Report • Outline Specification • Cost Plan • Planning application submitted
3.13	<p>On completion of RIBA Stage 3, funding options to support capital delivery would be further explored with delivery partners, including Dfl, as a 'shovel-ready project', in order to progress to delivery/construction. It should also be noted that a number of developer contributions have been agreed in principle for public realm provision, but not yet secured within this area,</p>
3.14	<p>A business case has been submitted to Dfl and the indication from Dfl is that an offer of circa 50% funding may be made by the Department. Officers are currently exploring opportunities for match-funding to meet the remaining funding requirements. Further updates will be brought to this Committee at a future date.</p>
3.15	<p>Finance & Resource Implications</p>
	<p>The capital costs associated with the Active Travel Enabler projects referenced in this report are to be covered from the Dfl Blue & Green Infrastructure Fund (subject to the verbal update at Committee in relation to conditions of funding). In relation to the 'Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre' design work, a LoO has not yet been received although Dfl has indicated it may be forthcoming based on circa 50% of the cost. There are ongoing discussions in relation to further third-party funding for the remaining cost and an update will be brought back to Committee.</p> <p>All proposals will be subject to the Council's Capital Governance Process. A verbal update will be provided to Committee on the outcome of ongoing discussions with Dfl in relation to the drawdown of funding.</p>
3.16	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p>
	<p>Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening will be carried out on the schemes prior to implementation.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>

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SAILORTOWN

UNIVERSITY
AREA

CITY QUAYS

CATHEDRAL QUARTER

NORTH-SOUTH SPINE

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Subject:	Academy of Urbanism Congress
Date:	9 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officers:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

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"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To make Members aware of the upcoming Academy of Urbanism Congress that is planned to be held in Belfast, 8-10 June 2022.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the proposal to host the annual Academy of Urbanism Congress in Belfast on 8th June 2022 and the opportunity for Council and its partners to shape and participate in the programme. To note the emerging key themes that will shape the agenda and potential venues and agree to a Council contribution of £10,000 to be met from existing budgets.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background: The Academy of Urbanism <p>The Academy of Urbanism (AoU) is, a not-for-profit, politically independent network of people and organisations devoted to creating and sustaining great places. Its mission is to understand, promote</p>

	and celebrate what makes great places and practically apply these lessons to improve towns and cities across Europe and beyond.
3.2	<p>Membership to AoU is open to everyone involved in the design, development and management of great places, with specific membership opportunities for young urbanists, professional academicians and community leaders. Members span city management and policymaking, community leadership, town planning and urban design, academic research and teaching, arts and cultural development, infrastructure and engineering, property management, politics and media. The Academy supports the Urbanism Awards that celebrate excellent practical delivery and generate a continuing resource of best practice guidance. By way of local example, recently the Connswater Community Greenway was voted as the best place in the UK and Ireland at the 2020 Urbanism Awards. Additionally, there are specific knowledge-sharing programmes such as Place Diagnostics, which can help places to engage people in challenging urban issues and they also publish a monthly journal, 'Here and Now'.</p>
3.3	<p>AoU Annual Congress, 8-10 June Belfast 2022</p> <p>As part of the AoU delivery of programmes and events that support places and people to explore and share good placemaking practice, its major flagship event includes an annual Congress, showcasing a different European city each summer. The AoU are proposing to hold their 2022 AoU Congress in Belfast. Past host cities include Eindhoven, Cork, Copenhagen, Rotterdam, Dublin, Aarhus, Glasgow, and Bristol. The Annual Congress is an inspiring, thought-provoking and entertaining opportunity to exchange ideas and hear leading-edge thinking from urbanists around the globe. It is an opportunity to embed the Academy within a city and use the assembled expertise of attendees to tackle live local issues alongside local partners through hands-on workshops, walking tours, and discussions.</p>
3.4	<p>The AoU are very much of the view that a successful Congress owes as much to the passions of local community participants as to the insights and inspiration of invited presenters. Based on previous years, there are usually 100-120 participants that attend Congress. It is anticipated that a number of these are drawn from the local area, but others will be visitors to Belfast and will have a chance to explore the city and hear how projects in Belfast are responding to our challenges as well as creating their own best practice.</p>
3.5	<p>There has been recent engagement by AoU with Council, DfC and DfI in relation to the proposed Congress. It is recognised that cities across the world are facing many challenges. This is particularly so given rapid responses necessitated by COVID and the increasingly immediate impacts of a climate in crisis which are testing our urban centres like never before. These, and the acceleration of changed practices such as home working, online shopping, and the future of tourism, are issues facing cities around the globe. Combined with the ongoing work already</p>

	underway across the Council with central government agencies, communities and private sector, our opportunity is to use the MoU to help guide the long term, sustainable change needed in how our cities function, look, and feel for people.
3.6	Belfast has a history of resilience and overcoming challenges and this year the proposed title of the Congress is <i>Belfast: Cities Overcoming Challenges</i> . Change and challenges can inform cities in unexpected ways. As new energies combine in ways not seen in the city before there is an opportunity for Belfast to learn from others and build on their existing priorities and plans and reflect on what more needs to do to make the next three decades a success.
3.7	The AoU Congress in Belfast is an opportunity to explore current strategic issues such as A Bolder Vision, the work of the High Streets Task Force, climate and resilience priorities, citywide regeneration and significant place-focused cultural initiatives, including the UNESCO City of Music and the forthcoming Year of Culture to explore how Belfast can better engage people and communities in the city's authentic placemaking. It is an opportunity to explore and highlight Belfast projects and practice alongside international examples of urbanism.
3.8	A key strand for example will include showcasing some of Belfast's cultural, urban and community professionals to an international audience and embed cultural practice in the city's regeneration to emphasise the importance of place character to the Year of Culture. It offers both local participants and visitors a chance learn more about the themes from a Belfast perspective and draw upon local case studies that link local to wider global issues facing cities. The agenda is currently being developed but potential local case study projects could include Culture Night, housing-led regeneration, StreetSpace, Sailortown, Belfast Opera, Portview, community and resilience projects. There is growing interest in the conference locally and the AoU have already been contacted by local stakeholders who are seeking to highlight their projects.
3.9	Supporting these thematic sessions, the AoU Congress also provides that chance to host sessions in venues across the city that will show off the diverse and rich range of facilities. Discussions are underway with potential host organisations such as 2 Royal Avenue, St Mary's University College, Carlisle Methodist Church, Banana Block and Ulster Museum. In addition, there are a number of site visits proposed that will enable Congress delegates and communities to work together and explore issues around good urbanism through specific site visits and workshops. It is intended that these support local people to build confidence in city development issues and connect with local and international practitioners. Discussions are currently underway in relation to this and potential site visits may include Cathedral Quarter, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, Eastside, Forward South and the Weaver's Cross/Belfast Transport Hub.

	It is proposed that there will be an opening evening session in the City Hall on 8 th June 2022.
3.10	<p>Engagement to date</p> <p>To date meetings have been held with BCC, DfI and DfC and the Chair and Board members of AoU to discuss the theme, format and potential sponsorship. It is also proposed to engage with the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board in order to link in with key city stakeholders including partnership bodies, private sector and public sector agencies. These discussions are ongoing and will shape the agenda, venues and keynote speakers.</p>
3.11	Financial & Resource Implications
	The estimated cost of Congress is approximately £50,000 and the AoU is seeking a £10,000 contribution from Council, which can be met from existing CRD budget. AoU is in discussions with DfC, DfI, SIB and Arts and Business for additional financial support.
3.12	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	None



Subject:	Dfl public consultation on Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes
Date:	9 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officers:	Callie Persic, Development Manager

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"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members that the Department for Infrastructure is running a public consultation on the Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes from 11 February - 1 April 2022 by way of a short questionnaire.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that the Department for Infrastructure is undertaking a public consultation, by way of a short questionnaire (link in report below) on the Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that there has been ongoing engagement by DfI with the East Area Working Group and Council officers in relation to the future delivery of the routes and that this is likely to continue to be an appropriate mechanism for future discussions. Members may however wish to respond directly to the current questionnaire and reports can be brought back to the relevant Committees as appropriate if these proposals progress further.
3.0	Main report
3.1	On 3 June 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure published ' <i>Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change</i> '. This document articulates the Minister's vision that active travel becomes a pillar of change within towns and cities to cut emissions, to improve health and wellbeing, and to better connect families and communities. It commits to the adoption of the sustainable transport hierarchy where prioritisation is given to sustainable travel by providing for walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport ahead of private vehicle use.
3.2	<p>The Minister followed this by publishing '<i>Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021</i>' on 4 June 2021. This document set out her ambition to make Belfast a more cycle-friendly city and provides a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years. The Belfast Cycling Network proposes a number of routes between Belfast and North Down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a greenway type route alongside the Belfast to Bangor railway line; and a walking and cycling path alongside Hollywood Road and the A2 north of Tillysburn.
3.3	<p>In February 2022 DfI opened a consultation on the Sydenham to Hollywood link and are seeking views as to whether priority should be given to developing one of three routes (see Appendix 1) and noted that the first two routes are already within the Belfast Cycling Network, but the third route is not a part of the Network:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a path along the railway from Sydenham through Hollywood Exchange (red) a path along Hollywood Road through Hollywood Exchange (green) upgrade the cycling route alongside the Sydenham ByPass (blue)
3.4	Each of the proposed routes is between 4.0 and 4.8km long and all of them start at the underpass vehicular entrance to Victoria Park and terminate near Kinnegar, Hollywood. The routes would also provide a link between the existing Comber and Connswater Greenways and Hollywood Exchange and the North Down Coastal Path. The preferred route will determine which scheme will be included in the Belfast Cycling Network delivery plan for construction in the short term and which scheme(s) will be included in the longer term.

3.5	The link to the questionnaire is here Sydenham to Hollywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Routes - NI Direct - Citizen Space and Members may wish to respond directly to this
3.6	Over the past couple of years, and in advance of the recent public consultation, there has been ongoing engagement with the DfI, the East Area Working Group and Officers on cycle routes and greenways. DfI presented the proposed Sydenham to Hollywood consultation routes at the AWG meeting on 3 February 2022 where it was agreed that after the completion of the public consultation, DfI would return to the AWG to present the consultation findings. Given the previous feedback and engagement with DfI, it is likely that the AWG will continue to be an appropriate mechanism for DfI, Members and officers across Physical Programmes, City & Neighbourhood Services and City Regeneration & Development to enable further discussions to progress to the next stage. DfI has noted that there is currently no budget to deliver the scheme at this time but would like to continue engaging with Council to work up options for delivery and once the routes have been agreed.
4.0	Financial & Resource Implications
	None associated with this report.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	None associated with this report.
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Map of the proposed routes

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Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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Public Consultation on Sydenham to Hollywood Walking and Cycling Routes



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If you have other needs in this regard please contact the Department.

This consultation will run from Friday 11th February 2022 to Friday 1st April 2022.

Active Travel Branch
Rm 3.09
Department for Infrastructure
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB
Email: activetravel@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

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Background

For decades transport infrastructure has been developed in such a way that it has suppressed walking, wheeling and cycling across all sectors of society and not enough has been done to reverse this trend. Until recently, transport appraisal favoured motorised traffic by not considering the wider value of walking and cycling which is now known to contribute to better health and communities, less congestion, and better quality of life, all of which yield an economic return. In order to secure the substantial health and economic benefits of active travel, it is important that transport infrastructure is developed which both encourages and enables active travel – in line with the Minister’s ambition to increase levels of active travel and the proportion of all journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport.

Cities across the world are seeking to become more liveable places. One of the key aspects of liveability is better places and greener spaces with accessibility for all the people of the city and where the city streets are not dominated by vehicles. A key element of greener cities is greener transport infrastructure and central to this is an effective active travel network – from walking, wheeling and cycling routes on city roads and streets to dedicated green corridors, linear parks, riverside paths – links to connect residential areas with jobs, services and leisure opportunities. This is particularly important in inner city areas where car ownership levels are low and accessible green space is currently limited.

On 3rd June 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure published ‘*Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change*’. This document articulates the Minister’s vision that active travel becomes a pillar of change within towns and cities in an effort to cut emissions, to improve health and wellbeing, and to better connect families and communities. It commits to the adoption of the sustainable transport hierarchy where prioritisation is given to sustainable travel by providing for walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport ahead of private vehicle use.

The Minister followed this by publishing ‘*Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021*’ on 4th June 2021. This document set out her ambition to make Belfast a more cycle-friendly city and provides a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years.

This Belfast Cycling Network proposes a number of routes between Belfast and North Down:

- a greenway type route alongside the Belfast to Bangor railway line; and
- a walking and cycling path alongside Holywood Road and the A2 north of Tillyburn.

Additionally, a resurfacing scheme on part of the Sydenham bypass in 2020 highlighted that there is demand for cycling infrastructure along that route. This is understandable given the fact that the Sydenham bypass is a very direct route into Belfast from North Down and the road provided separated cycle lanes on each carriageway when it was built in the late 1950s.

Figure 1 (on page 6) illustrates the three routes which we wish to consult on, which are broadly, in the same area.

The first two routes are in the Belfast Cycling Network but the third route is not. This public consultation is aimed at helping us to decide whether priority should be given to developing either:

- a) Route 1 – A path along the railway from Sydenham through Holywood Exchange (red); or

b) Route 2 – A path along Hollywood Road through Hollywood Exchange (green);

Or whether we should change our priorities to develop a walking and cycling route alongside:

c) Route 3 – The Sydenham Bypass (blue).

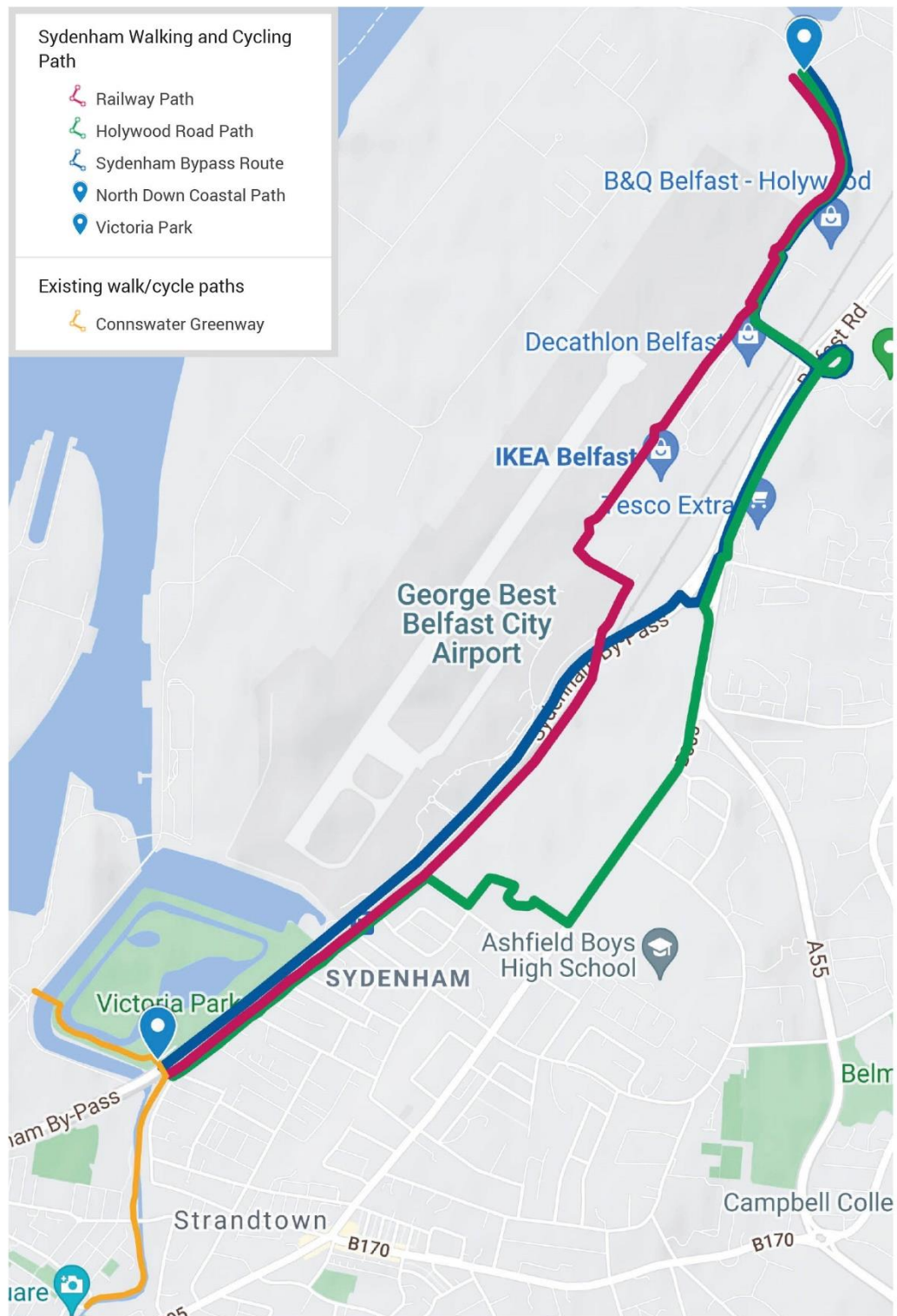


Figure 1: Potential Routes

Routes

Each of the proposed routes is between 4.0 and 4.8km long. They start at the underpass vehicular entrance to Victoria Park and terminate near Kinnegar, Hollywood. The routes would also provide a link between the existing Comber and Connswater Greenways and Hollywood Exchange and the North Down Coastal Path.

The three routes being considered are

- Route 1 – a railway path – which provides a direct link from Sydenham and Hollywood Exchange (red);
- Route 2 – a path alongside Hollywood Road – which provides links with various destinations along Hollywood Road (green);
- Route 3 – a path alongside Sydenham Bypass – which merges with Route 2 at Tillysburn (blue)

Route 1 – Railway Path

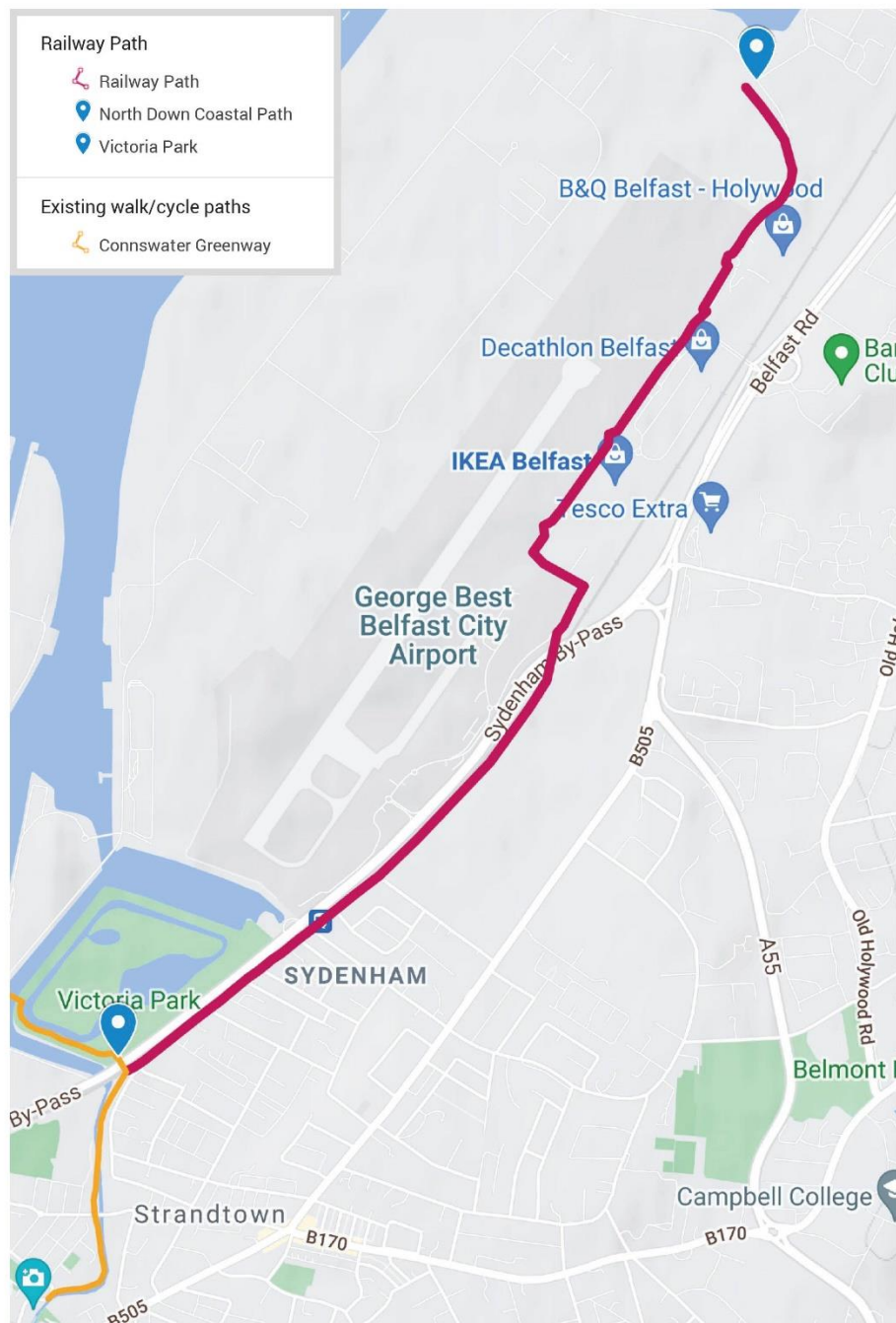


Figure 2: Route 1

Estimated Cost: £3,500,000

This is the shortest route at around 4.0 km. It commences at Victoria Park and continues along Larkfield Drive and Inverary Drive, becoming 'traffic-free' at Inverary Avenue. It would involve a new path around Alderman Thomas Patton Playing Fields, Shorts Recreational Club and Blanchflower Stadium, near the railway line. A major element is a proposed bridge over the

railway with an estimated initial cost in the region of £2,000,000. Significant embankments / ramps would be required to facilitate a bridge at this location. The route would utilise the existing airport exit underpass and continue along a 'disused' depot road which has some greenway characteristics. From Ikea the route would continue in close proximity to the airport fence line towards its termination further eastwards at Kinnegar.

Key Details

- It is the shortest route to Kinnegar and so a more direct route from Sydenham to Hollywood Exchange, Hollywood and the North Down Coastal Path
- The route would be fully segregated from motor traffic
- There would be one road crossing (at the end of the scheme where it enters the Kinnegar access road)
- It is a route that the Department has committed to building in the Belfast Cycling Network
- A good route for commuting from North Down
- There are limited opportunities for connections to schools and local destinations, being more remote from residential areas (local communities off Hollywood Road and at Knocknagoney)
- Approximately 25% would be traffic-free (greenway)
- Cost (the most expensive option)
- Delivery is currently estimated to take 48 months.

Route 2 – Hollywood Road

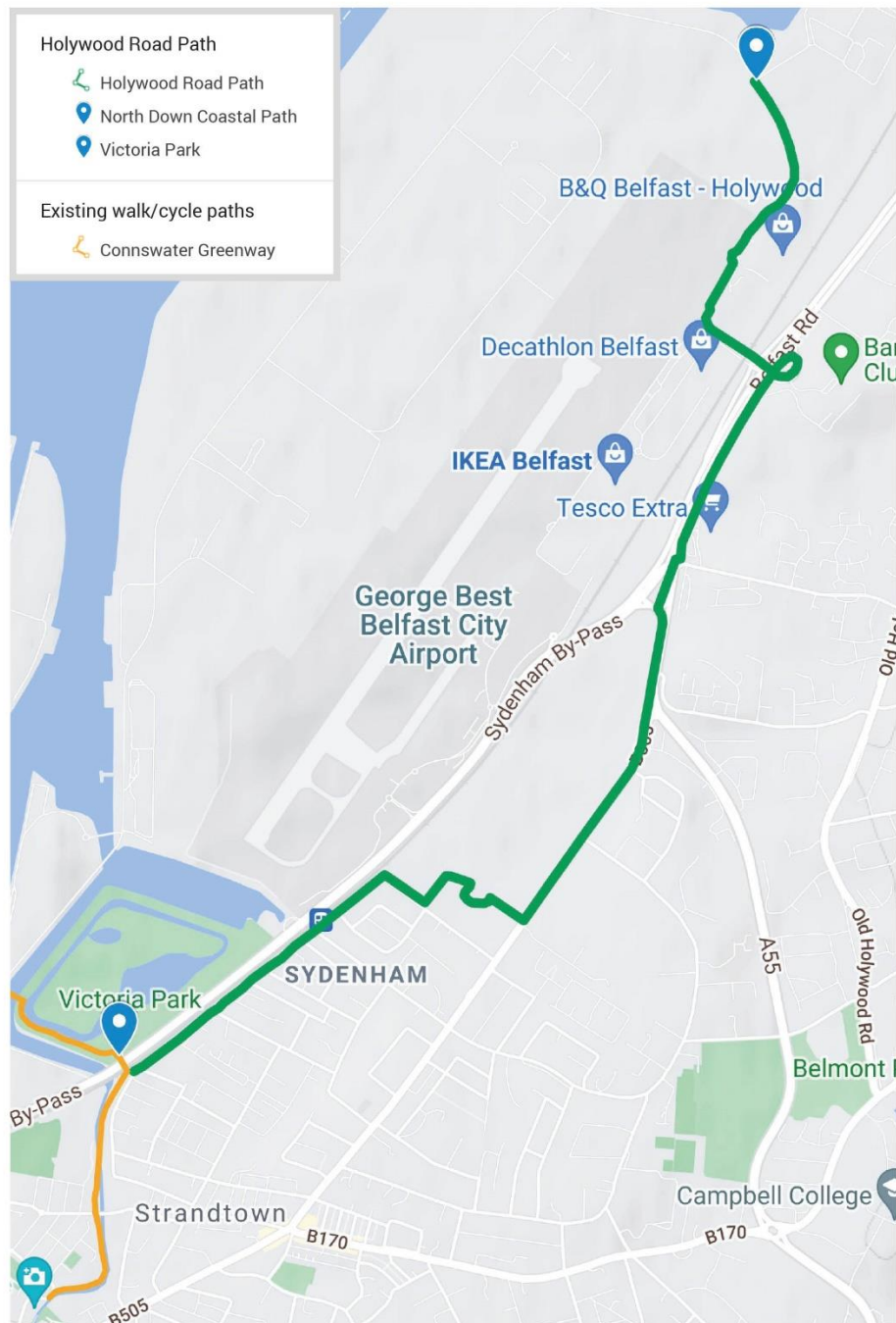


Figure 3: Route 2

Estimated Cost: £950,000

This is the longest route at around 4.8 km. It commences at Victoria Park and continues along Larkfield Drive and Inverary Drive and Alderman Thomas Patton Memorial Park. It then follows the line of the Hollywood Road. This could be on the north side (utilising grounds belonging to Shorts Recreational Club and Blanchflower Stadium) or on the south side (utilising a separated

path in front of the schools and by removing on-street parking). As well as linking the schools and communities off the Hollywood Road it would link with the proposed Tillysburn Park & Ride. After using the Tillysburn grade separated cycle paths it would follow the A2 Dual Carriageway on the east side by upgrading the existing path and providing physical separation from the motor traffic. It would utilise the existing flyover at Hollywood Exchange. Crossings would be required at the roundabout near the bridge and at Airport Road West before the route would continue in close proximity to the airport fence line towards its termination further eastwards at Kinnegar.

Key Details

- It provides good connectivity to local communities and destinations in the Hollywood Road and Knocknagoney areas
- The route would be fully segregated from motor traffic
- Makes use of an existing grade separated walking / cycling junction at Tillysburn
- Links with existing shared cycling infrastructure on Parkway (A55 Outer Ring)
- Provides opportunity for a more direct link to Hollywood town (Jackson's Road)
- It is a route that the Department has committed to building in the Belfast Cycling Network
- Cost (marginally more expensive than the cheapest option)
- A longer route to Kinnegar and the North Down Coastal Path from Sydenham
- Approximately 15% of the route is traffic-free
- Part of the scheme is adjacent to the A2 dual carriageway
- Delivery is currently estimated to take 24 months

Route 3 –Sydenham Bypass

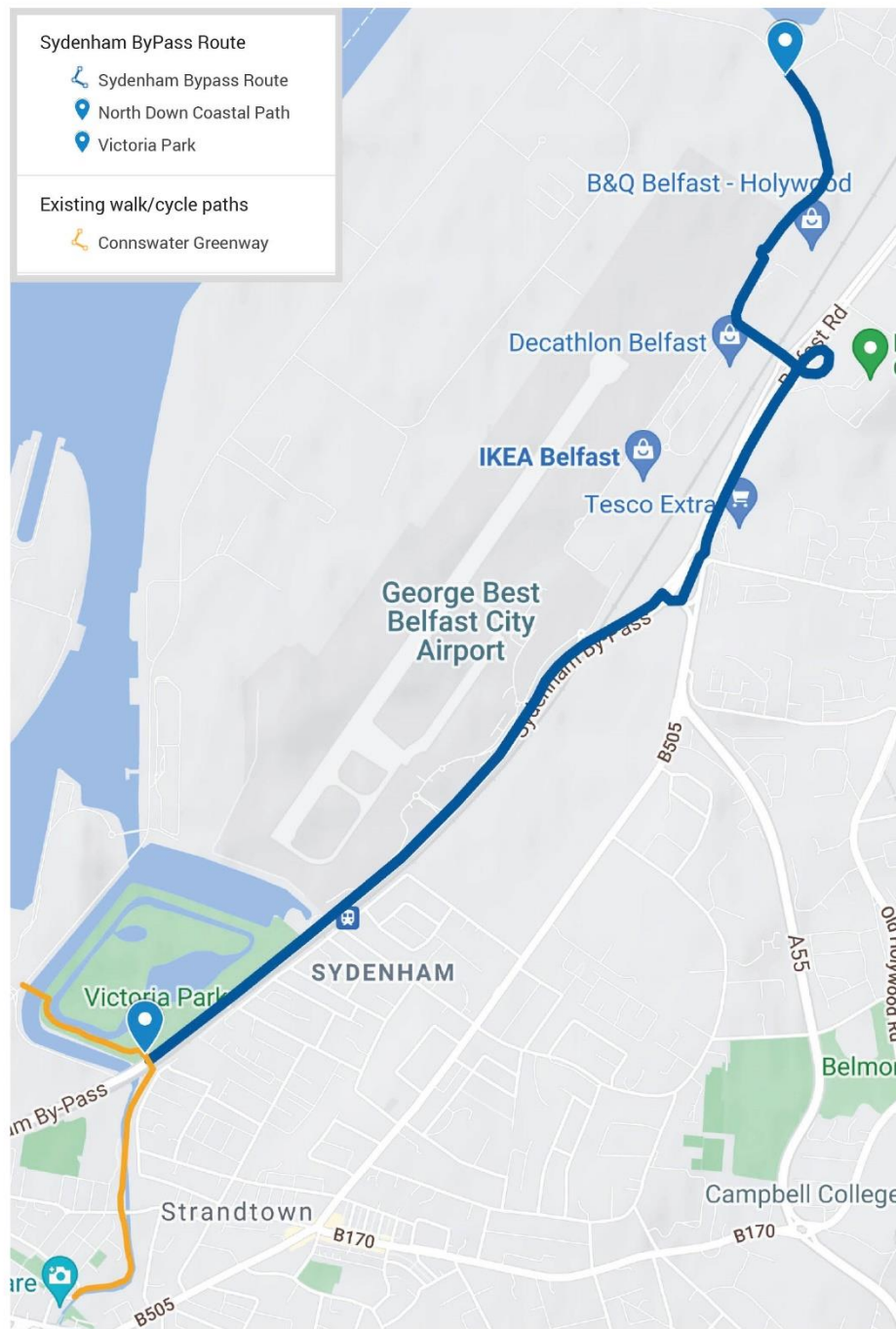


Figure 4: Route 3

Estimated Cost: £750,000

This route is around 4.4 km long. It commences in the area of Victoria Park where it would be accessed by the existing ramp to the underpass entrance to the park. It could also be extended 1.4 km further towards Belfast city centre using the existing hard shoulder as far as the Titanic Quarter station active travel underpass. It continues along the Sydenham Bypass on the existing

city-bound hard shoulder using kerbed segregation as far as the Tillysburn grade separated walking and cycling underpass, serving the proposed Park & Ride scheme at this location. It would then follow the path for route 2 alongside the A2 Dual Carriageway on an upgraded path which would provide physical separation from the motor traffic. It would utilise the existing flyover at Holywood Exchange. Crossings would be required at the roundabout near the bridge and at Airport Road West before the route would continue in close proximity to the airport fence line towards its termination further eastwards at Kinnegar.

Key Details

- A direct route from North Down into Belfast (which would be significantly improved by extending to Titanic Quarter Station).
- The route would be fully segregated from motor traffic
- Makes use of the existing grade separated walking / cycling junction at Tillysburn
- Provides opportunity for a more direct link to Holywood town (Jackson's Road)
- Cost (cheapest option)
- The majority of the route is alongside an arterial route into Belfast.
- Limited connection possibilities to local communities (Knocknagoney) and destinations in east Belfast
- Not included as a route in the Belfast Cycling Network
- Delivery is currently estimated to take 24 months

Consultation Questions and Options

The Department has committed to developing the cycling routes set out in '*Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021*' over the next ten years. This includes two of the routes in this consultation document (1 and 2). In light of recent suggestions that the Department should have incorporated better cycling infrastructure on the Sydenham bypass, we have included a cycle route along this road in this consultation (Route 3).

The consultation questions are designed to explore what route is preferred and will encourage more walking and cycling. The preferred route will determine which scheme will be included in the Belfast Cycling Network delivery plan for construction in the short term and which scheme(s) will be included in the longer term.

How to respond

To respond please use the SURVEY link here: <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/sydenham-to-hollywood-walking-wheeling-and-cycling/consultation/>

You can also send any views, comments or observations, via email or post to:

activetravel@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

or

Active Travel Branch
Department for Infrastructure
Rm. 3.09
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB

Whilst it may not be possible for the Department to address all of the issues raised, responses will be recorded and collated, and will form an important part of the body of evidence used to inform policy decisions

Consultation Questions

The following questions are provided as a guide to assist you in considering the issues relevant to this consultation.

Q1: How often do you travel in this locality on average? (select only one)

- (a) Every day / nearly every day
- (b) Once a week
- (c) Monthly
- (d) Very rarely
- (e) Never

Q2: If you travel in this area, what way do you usually travel?

- (a) Walk/run
- (b) Wheeling (use of wheelchair or mobility aid)
- (c) Cycle
- (d) Bus
- (e) Train
- (f) Private car or motorbike
- (g) Taxi
- (h) Goods vehicle

Q3: In which BT area do you currently live? - BTXX

Q4: In which BT area do you currently work, study or shop? – BTXX

Q5: When walking or cycling my choice is determined by (multiple answers):

- (a) the directness of the route;
- (b) whether the route is off-road (away from motor traffic);
- (c) how safe I feel using the route;
- (d) whether the route is suitable for older people, children, and those with limited mobility;
- or
- (e) Other (please comment briefly below).

Q6: If your preferred walking and cycling route were to be built are you more likely to use it for (multiple answers):

- (a) commuting;
- (b) going to school;
- (c) going to the shop/local amenities (GP, Leisure Centre, etc.);
- (d) accessing public transport;
- (e) recreationally walking, wheeling or cycling; or
- (f) I don't believe I would use it.

Q7: How often would you use your preferred route?

- (a) Every day / nearly every day
- (b) Once a week

- (c) Monthly
- (d) Very rarely or
- (e) Never

Q8: Which of the three routes are you likely to use? (please refer to page six of the consultation document - select all that apply)

- (a) Route 1 (Railway Path – red)
- (b) Route 2 (Holywood Road – green) or
- (c) Route 3 (Sydenham Bypass – blue)

Q9: Which is your preferred route? (please refer to page six of the consultation document – select only one)

- (a) Route 1 (Railway Path – red)
- (b) Route 2 (Holywood Road – green) or
- (c) Route 3 (Sydenham Bypass – blue)

Why is this your preferred route – Comment Box

Q10: What is your email address?

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Subject:	Culture Update – 2022/3 Work Programme
Date:	9 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Senior Manager – Culture and 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current status of the ten-year cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> and seek approval for key actions in 2022/23 aligned to the implementation of year 3 of the strategy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of this report and progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the actions for 2022/23 as set out in the report and in appendix 1 including the budget implications at 3.16 to be met from existing departmental budgets.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019 the final ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast <i>A City Imagining</i> was agreed. This included draft implementation plans for a three-year period to be reviewed and finalised on an annual basis.
3.2	Despite the challenges of Covid-19 significant progress has been made in delivery against strategic targets in year one and year two of the strategy. The strategy made a commitment to publishing an annual report in order to demonstrate the impact of cultural development on the city's wider agenda. Due to the pandemic this was not completed in 2021 however a report will be presented to Committee in quarter one of the new financial year that summarises 2020/1 and 2021/2 with a view to it being circulated to key city stakeholders.
3.3	<p>In 2021/22 this work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £3.08m funding through 117 awards via the following schemes: Cultural multi-annual funding including support for Arts/ Heritage organisations and Festivals/Events – 51 organisations supported; Transition funding for 11 organisations that had previously been in receipt of multi-annual funding; four Pathfinder awards for organisations not in receipt of core public sector support; Creative Bursaries for 10 individuals; 14 A City Imagining targeted cultural leadership grants; five Access and Inclusion grants in partnership with DfC; 20 Community Festivals Fund in partnership with DfC and four Creative Development Awards. - Additional investment was also made through the Creative Communities programme as part of Peace IV. - Completion of cultural mapping of the city including infrastructure audit. - Development of Co-design Framework for culture, arts and heritage. - Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 including commissioning of <i>Our Place in Space</i> and support for four additional projects. - Securing UNESCO City of Music Designation and developing of music strategy. - Delivery of meanwhile use at 2 Royal Avenue.

3.4	As the city hopes to emerge from the pandemic, year 3 of the strategy will seek to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in <i>A City Imagining</i> .
	<u>Investing in the cultural sector</u>
3.5	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration in February 2022 recommendations for core-multi annual funding were agreed providing support to 42 organisations for two years as well as continuation of four-year scheme that supports a further 13 organisations. This funding amounts to £2,430,010.
3.6	A further £79,768 was agreed in relation to <i>Pathfinder</i> development funding for four organisations. Approval was also granted to re-opened small grants (project funding) that had been suspended during the pandemic.
3.7	In addition to these established funding schemes, the cultural strategy committed to a broader investment model that considered the diversity of the city's cultural landscape. In response to detailed consultation with the sector and further evidenced by the impact of COVID-19, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations.
	<u>Sectoral Development</u>
3.8	In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2022/23 it is proposed that these will continue to build on work undertaken to date as part of the implementation of the cultural strategy as outlined below and further detail is included at appendix 1. These include bespoke programmes designed in partnership with sectoral organisations to specifically meet the priorities of the cultural strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belfast Audience Panel - Heritage Action Plan - Disability Action Plan
3.9	Council also operates a number of sectoral Forums: Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. To complement this work, new partnerships with Theatre and Dance NI and Craft NI are proposed.

3.10	<p>Members will be aware the Council has commissioned a report LGBTQIA+ visibility and representation in Belfast's Culture, Arts and Heritage. Recommendations will be brought back to Committee and developed into an action plan. A similar report is due to be commissioned on minority ethnic representation.</p>
3.11	<p>As well as these Belfast focussed sectoral and participation programmes, Council also provides partnership funding to larger strategic programmes such as <i>Blueprint for the future – a capacity and financial growth programme for the arts</i>. Blueprint is a bespoke programme designed to meet the unique needs of arts organisations and is based on a four-year programme of research led by Arts & Business NI and delivered by Small Change NI. Belfast City Council has engaged with partners throughout this development phase. It is designed to support small to mid-scale arts and cultural companies from across Northern Ireland. It will support and develop a cluster of organisations, investing in them over a five-year period to strengthen long term financial sustainability. Council's invested in year one ensured that the diversity and breadth of Belfast's sector was recognised in the programme. Council support is £30,000 per year amounting to 10% of total project costs and it is recommended that this level of funding is maintained in year two of the programme.</p>
3.12	<p><i>Further wraparound support programmes</i></p> <p>In addition to these bespoke programmes, Council officers will continue to engage with the sector and respond to challenges and opportunities throughout the year. This wraparound support will be provided to all organisations in receipt of funding. In addition, leadership mentoring will be offered working with external specialists. Advice, training and capacity building will also be provided to organisations who have been unsuccessful in securing Council funding.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Cultural Participation and Engagement</u></p> <p>As well as sectoral support for culture, arts, heritage and events, Council also delivers initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation. Research and development projects were completed in 2021/22 and this will be further developed into targeted initiatives in 2021/22. Included below is an outline of this workstream.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities to engage with heritage and arts with specific focus on support for telling Belfast Stories through skills development programme. - In 2021 toolkits were developed to support the activation of public space through community and cultural led programming. As part of ongoing city recovery, it is

	<p>proposed that additional support is offered to organisations seeking to use these spaces across the city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing capacity building programmes to improve accessibility of cultural initiatives in the city through initiatives such as Gig Buddies and how this can be expanded to venues and events across the city. - Promoting cultural diversity in Council led events through new programming approach in partnership with the cultural sector. - In addition to local engagement the cultural strategy also recognised the importance of supporting the cultural sector and practitioners to engage and connect globally ensuring opportunities for Belfast to participate in international networks.
3.14	<p><u>Strategic Initiatives</u></p> <p><i>2024: Designated Year of Culture</i></p> <p>2024 marks the beginning of the second implementation phase of <i>A City Imagining</i>, a ten-year strategy. It is also the year that has been earmarked as potential for strategic cultural and tourism programmes that will specifically support recovery of the international market. The cultural strategy committed to a year of culture to ensure that the energy, creativity, ambition and potential that had been harnessed as part of this European Capital of Culture process could be followed through on, to the benefit of the people of the city and region. This is envisioned as a yearlong programme of home-grown authentic cultural products with significant international appeal. It will demonstrate how <i>A City Imagining</i> is delivering against the five outcomes for the city as identified in the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.15	<p>Added to the established strategic context, there is now an opportunity to pivot these plans in the context of city recovery from Covid-19 in terms of both social cohesion but also in terms of the repositioning of Belfast internationally. As part of recovery plans it is proposed that the 2024 programme is launched in 2022. It had been planned to launch the initiative in 2021 however this was delayed due to the pandemic. This will require programme development building on work already underway such as the development of <i>Urban Forest</i> in partnership with the Eden project. Ongoing engagement will be required with the cultural sector to bring forward a co-designed commissioning approach. Further detail will be presented to Committee throughout 2022 as emerging plans develop.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2022/23 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic</p>

	Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals. A breakdown of specific areas of spend are included in Appendix 1.
3.17	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> 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>
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	Appendix 1: Cultural Strategy Year 3 Priority Actions

Belfast

Place and Economy Department
Economic Division
Appendix 1
Culture Update
2022/23 Priorities

Culture 2022/23 Priorities

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Cultural Development including funding and investment programmes				
City Compact	Implementation of recommendation from Cultural Enquiry by Core Cities network. This will establish a governance and investment model for culture in the city. This has been delayed due to Covid however it is important to support the establishment of necessary governance and engagement platforms and potential investment pathways for strategic initiatives such as 2023/24 including One Young World.	Establishment of City Compact with a range of partners. Establishment of participative forum	April 2022 – March 2023	£25,000
Core multi-annual funding	Management of year 3 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG) – total investment £2,430,010 Two year funding 2022-2024: £473,425 to 16 Festivals and Events organisations and £564,562 to 27 Arts and Heritage organisations Four year funding 2020-2024: £600,240 to four Festivals and Events organisations and £791,783 to nine Arts and Heritage organisations	56 organisations supported to deliver annual programme of activities in Belfast.	April 2022 – March 2023	£2,430,010 As agreed by CG&R February 2022.
Small Grants Arts and Heritage Community Festivals Funding	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes.	Support a minimum 15 cultural projects and 15 community festivals.	April 2022 – March 2023	£133,244 (A&H) £69,000 (CFF) + DfC match funding
Sector support programme	Design and deliver wraparound support programme aligned to investment model to support established organisations to adapt to change and to support new organisations and practitioners to take longer term risks in programming or creative development. Delivery of Blueprint Programme (yr 2) in partnership with Arts & Business NI	Support a minimum of 50 cultural organisations.	April 2022 – March 2023	£50,000 £30,000 in partnership with A&BNI

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Cultural Development				
Research and Development	Commission further research and engagement, collect and analyse data to ensure strategic approach to investment and delivery.	Cultural mapping analysis and delivery of action plan. Development of stage two with key city partners.	April 2022 – March 2023	£15,000
Heritage Development	Design and deliver neighbourhood public engagement programme to deliver a co-created and co-designed heritage programme to tell the story of people and places.	Engage with minimum of 300 citizens	April 2022 – March 2023	£15,000
	Develop a heritage plan for the city with cross-cutting actions.	Heritage Action Plan		£20,000 in partnership with UAHS
	Partner with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support.	Heritage events / publications		
Cultural animation	Support delivery of a playful city initiative in context of A Bolder Vision. Publicise Shared Spaces Toolkit alongside mentoring / peer learning at neighbourhood level to promote civic participation and access.	Number of partnerships created and levels of civic and sector engagement. At least 20 Belfast Canvas (arterial routes / city centre)	April 2022 – March 2023	£25,000
	Further develop a ‘City as a Gallery’ or ‘Art in the Public Realm’ initiative including scoping, international collaboration and neighbourhood reach including expand Belfast Canvas.			
	Development and programming of city centre space/s and participation in Vacant to Vibrant Scheme			

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Cultural Development				
Capacity Building	Co-design framework launch and development and delivery of key catalyst projects and programmes.	Development and delivery of action plans following R&D and and co-design programme development.	April 2022 – March 2023	£60,000
	Co-design specific programmes for demographics which are currently not engaging in culture as much as others.	A minimum 10 cultural ambassadors established.		
	Support employability skills and capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for LGBTQ++ and disabled artists and those from minority ethnic groups.	A minimum of 50 artists supported.		£50,000
	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people including Gig Buddies programme 2021 – 2024 in partnership with the Black Box, and in partnership with University of Atypical.	Delivery of Gig Buddies programme including recommendations from R&D and pilot year.		£45,000 in partnership with Black Box
	Work in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI to deliver a professional 3 year development and capacity building programme ‘Transform’ for artists in theatre & dance sector at differing career stages, focusing on networking, mentoring and creation.	Delivery of Transform - theatre and dance sector development programme.		£30,000 in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI
	Work in partnership with Craft NI to deliver inclusive programme of showcase and professional development events for makers in Belfast including growth of August craft month	Delivery of support and development programme for craft makers in Belfast.		£18,000 in partnership with Craft NI

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Cultural Development				
Capacity Building (continued)	Enhance Audience Development skills and capacity across the cultural sector.	Minimum 30 organisations benefit	April 2022 – March 2023	£20,000 in partnership with Thrive
Page 207	Maintain engagement with citizens via Belfast Audience Panel and creation of citizen led participative forum to enhance relevance of cultural programmes and communication channels. n partnership with Thrive audience development agency	Audience panel minimum 200 members		
	A new three stage scheme will support Belfast based artist studios and maker spaces to ensure a stable infrastructure for 2023/24: Strand One - Organisational Funding Strand Two - Strategic Review Strand Three – Micro Grants	Participative forum created with minimum 20 ambassadors		
		Artist studios and maker spaces programme – at least 20 organisations, collectives and artists supported		£150,000 towards artist studios and maker spaces programme agreed February CG&R 2022
Networking	Support active participation in relevant local, regional and international cultural networks including but not limited to IETM, Eurocities Culture Forum, and Culture 21.	Support for at least eight cultural exchanges, events and networking opportunities.	April 2022 – March 2023	£7,000

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Strategic Development including Year of Culture				
Programme Development Page 208	In order to deliver a programme of international standing based on local engagement and sustainable sector development, full programme development will continue in 22/23. This will include ongoing development and feasibility work on major commissions such as Urban Forest in partnership with Eden Project, development for One Young World 2023 and seeking partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete feasibility studies and business case for programme including leveraging match funding. • Engagement programme in place including launch • Commission anchor programmes • Develop co-produced and in-house projects. • Grant scheme to support overall programme 	April 2022 – March 2023	TBC as part of commission approach and fundraising strategy.
	Commissioning of anchor programmes and design and delivery of engagement programme by Creative Lead and creative production team.			
	Creative bursaries to support emerging artists	10 artists supported through competitive programme	June 2022- March 2023	£100,000
	Extension of Pathfinder Grants	4 organisations supported	April 2022 – March 2023	£79,768 as agreed by CGR Feb 2022.
Communications	The international reach of the 2023 programme will require a strong identity and strategic communications approach that appeals locally, regionally and across key visitor markets.	2023/24 communications strategy and identity in place. Launch event and local and international engagement programme events	April 2022 – March 2023	£60,000

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Strategic Development including Year of Culture				
<div> <div>Festival 2022</div> <div>Page 209</div> </div>	Belfast City Council is acting as the Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 alongside Creative Wales, Event Scotland and Festival 2022 Ltd. This role includes administration of NI funding (via Barnett consequential) of up to £4m. The team will also act as lead producer and be responsible for marcomms.	Delivery of projects and promotion Public engagement programme	April 2022 – March 2023	Up to £4m – total project costs approved Feb 2021. DfC funding

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Subject:	Draft Music Strategy
Date:	9 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, 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 to set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Members with an update following successful designation as a UNESCO City of Music including the proposed music strategy for Belfast incorporating strategic themes, priorities, leadership and governance models and recommended actions.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the content of this report and approve the <i>draft</i> music strategy included at Appendix 1 to commence a 12-week public consultation in April 2022. - Agree to receive a presentation of final strategy for consideration following the completion of the consultation

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p data-bbox="264 159 1453 539">Belfast is known internationally for having a rich and diverse music history, but it also has a promising future that arises from its recent revival as a genuinely global city. Music is recognised as a distinctive aspect of Belfast's cultural and economic profile with audience research indicating high levels of engagement locally as well as strong linkages to the city's international profile. Engagement with citizens during and after Belfast City Council's European Capital of Culture bid in 2017 also indicated that there is support for strengthening the role that music has in helping to make Belfast a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit.</p> <p data-bbox="264 611 759 645">Becoming a UNESCO City of Music</p> <p data-bbox="264 663 1453 797">In March 2018, as a result of the coalescence of many conversations which were happening in the city at the same time, council backed a proposal for the city and its partners to make an application for the endorsement of UNESCO City of Music status in 2021.</p> <p data-bbox="264 853 1453 1133">The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) aims to strengthen cooperation with and among cities that have recognised creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development with regard to social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects. Member cities come from diverse regions and work towards a common mission: placing creativity and cultural industries at the core of their urban development plans to make their cities safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1189 1453 1379">There are clear synergies between UNESCO Creative Cities and the priorities set out in Council's cultural strategy. These connections can also reach out beyond the sphere of culture to embrace the challenges and opportunities presented in our emerging work on resilience and economy.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1435 1453 2018">To become a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, candidate cities must submit a detailed application clearly demonstrating their willingness, commitment and capacity to contribute towards the objectives of the Network. Belfast submitted their application in June 2021 and was officially awarded the title of UNESCO City of Music on 8 November 2021, bestowing upon the City the international recognition that music is part of our identity – past, current, and future. We became only the third city in the UK to be awarded the status, with Liverpool receiving it in 2016 and Glasgow in 2008, and we are the first city on the island of Ireland to be granted the prestigious accolade. The ambitions submitted in Belfast's UNESCO application will be complemented and supported by the development of a new music strategy and implementation plan for city, delivering a more joined-up and visible music offer whilst also increasing opportunities for production and civic engagement in music across the city on a permanent basis.</p>

3.3	<p>Research & Analysis of music sector</p> <p>Council recognised the need to reinforce the strategic ambitions around music development in this city, and to complete the necessary requirements for the UNESCO designation robust strategic and analytical work of the music sector in Belfast, and its contribution to the wider region, was required. Sound Diplomacy were contracted to complete this body of analytical work throughout 2020. (https://www.sounddiplomacy.com/belfast). Supporting the music ecosystem in this manner requires significant research and analysis to better understand music's role in the city's economic landscape, planning, tourism, licensing, regeneration and other areas. It will also identify the specific needs of the local music sector, in the immediate recovery post-Covid 19 as well as the long-term requirements for the sector to grow and develop as a Music City nationally and internationally.</p> <p>Sound Diplomacy's body of work included stakeholder engagement, policy & strategic assessment, context and recommendations and a full economic impact report for the music sector as a whole. This work fed directly into this strategic plan for music, assessing immediate priorities and evidencing the economic value of the music industry in Belfast as well as its impact on tourism, the night-time economy and the cultural infrastructure of the city.</p> <p>Statistics gathered through this economic appraisal of music in Belfast include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019, the Belfast music ecosystem delivered a total economic impact of 3,131 jobs – representing 2.05% of the city's employment. • The <u>direct</u> employment generated in 2019 (1,781 jobs) represented 1.16% of the workforce in Belfast, which is a bigger contribution than other sectors such as Construction of Buildings (1,300 employees) and Advertising Market Research (458).
3.4	<p>Development of Belfast Music Strategy</p> <p>The Fourth Pillar, Morgan Young Consulting and Score Draw Music worked with Council to develop Sound Diplomacy's research into a roadmap for music and the associated strategic recommendations. We acknowledge that there is much work to be done in order to develop a stronger and more sustainable music ecosystem which is both anchored and adaptable to change.</p> <p>Our vision is to wholly support musicians and those working in music with the development of their talent and ideas, whilst embedding music and access to it in all parts of the City. This aim is underpinned by a set of core values which will inform our actions and commitments – belonging, collaboration, fairness, inclusion and respect.</p>
3.5	<p>Engagement with the sector and the city</p> <p>Engagement with the city, its people the music sector has been core to the development of this music strategy. Following the co-design and collaborative ethos of the cultural strategy</p>

– *A City Imagining* – Council has carried out robust consultation and partnership building through continued work with the City of Music Steering group since 2019 as well as targeted engagement via the work of Sound Diplomacy and Fourth Pillar in researching and developing the strategic recommendations for the music strategy.

This has included:

- 27 City of Music Steering Group meetings with 20 members representing various genres & city stakeholders such as Tourism NI, BBC, British Council and Arts Council NI.
- An online survey on music (both for audiences and sector workers) 1500+ responses
- 45 one to one meetings with music and city stakeholders representing a variety of expertise
- 6 round table workshops about music recovery for artists and music sector workers

3.6

Music Strategy – strategic themes and priorities

We want to reshape music in Belfast, so it is characterised by quality, sustainable projects, and accompanied by long-term strategic investment. This strategy constitutes a response to the challenges, concerns and, indeed, opportunities that exist and is intended to take a foundational approach – one which will deliver the fundamental needs of individuals working in or engaging with music and one which has identified the shortfalls in the local music ecosystem and sought to eliminate them. In our approach, we have chosen to put musicians, performers and music creators first for, without them, Belfast would be a culturally and economically poorer place.

Mirroring the *A City Imagining* cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are a number of actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.

Theme 1: Place artists at the heart - Recognising the value of creators

Theme 2: Nurture the sector - Strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators

Theme 3: Ignite the live experience - Liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth

Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO - Sharing the gift of music with the people of Belfast

The music strategy also puts forward recommendations for the following areas:

- **Leading the Way – The Belfast Music Governance Model** including recommendations on a dedicated music officer/office working on strategic delivery

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take Back the City – The Belfast Music Leadership Model including the recruitment of a new Belfast Music Board to oversee the strategic delivery - Friends of Belfast Music – Partners and Allies including developing partnerships with Arts Council NI, Tourism NI and BBC to deliver on shared ambitions - Something to Sing About – Belfast Music Branding and Communications Strategy including promotion of our UNESCO City of Music status locally and internationally
3.7	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Council proposes to take the music strategy out to public consultation from April 2022, taking back recommendations and feedback in August in order to implement the strategy from September 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 2022: music strategy public consultation - August 2022: revisions from consultation approved - Sept 2022: strategy signed off and goes live - Sept 2022: recruitment of Belfast Region Board - Oct 2022: delivery of comms strategy – website, social media, newsletters - 2022 onwards: delivery of recommendations and actions
3.8	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are currently no financial implications attached to this report. Phase 1 delivery has been agreed as part of approvals for UNESCO City of Music. The additional resources required have been considered and agreed as part of the structural review for Economic Development.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>This music strategy is part of the overarching cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of the public consultation.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Our City, Our Music: Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast</p>

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unesco

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Belfast
CITY OF
MUSIC



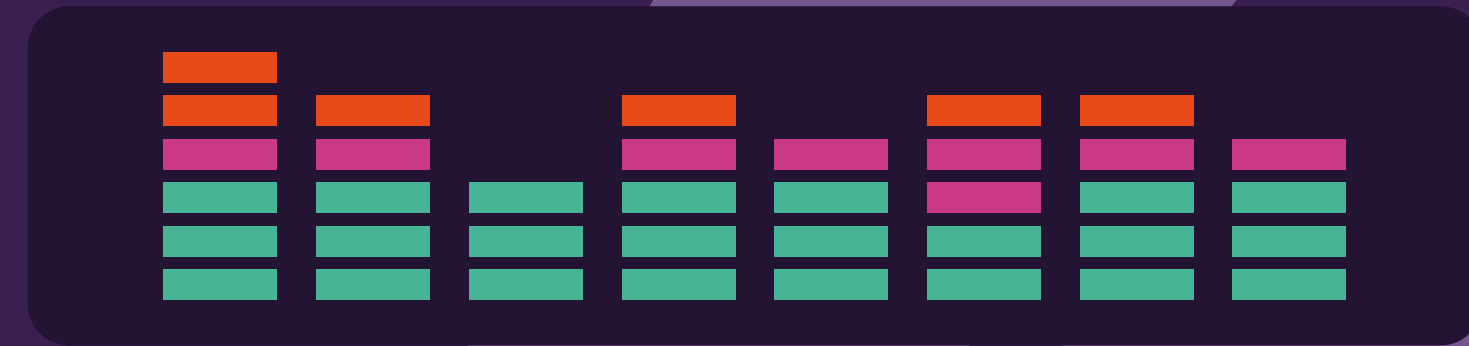
MUSIC
MATTERS

A roadmap for Belfast





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MUSIC

SHARED VISION TO BUILD A THRIVING & SUSTAINABLE MUSIC SECTOR IN BELFAST

Leadership & Advocacy

STRATEGIC THEMES

Theme 1: Place artists at the heart
Artists Musicians Creators

Theme 2: Nurture the Sector
Freelancers Businesses Organisations

Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience
Live music sector

Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO
People of Belfast

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Invest & fund
Creative professional development
Local national international collaboration
Opportunities for everyone across community

Invest & fund
Professional development
Business growth & export support
Next generation business pipeline

Entertainment licencing
Develop NTE
Visibility & safety of venues
Going green

Support audiences
Strategic comms plan
Innovation & new experiences
Belfast Music brand

UNDERPINNED BY 6 UNESCO INITIATIVES

Music support

Learning skills talent development

Transform spaces & places with & for creativity

Sustainability & greening the sector

Safe inclusive accessible experiences for all

Cultural heritage - Belfast Music story

BELFAST IS A CITY OF MUSIC

However, if we are to chart this very specific journey towards developing the first ever music strategy for the city then the story begins in 2017 with one of the largest public engagement programmes it has ever undertaken. We asked 20,000 people one question: 'what does home mean to you?' What quickly emerged was that, for many, home is an emotional connection, a sense of belonging.

And as we began to examine the tangible expressions of such a concept, more often than not, music was there, right at its heart because our lives are punctuated by music moments. From the deeply personal to societal shifts. In a city characterised by division, music has always kept us connected to each other and to the world.

Music has value. As a city, we must embrace, harness, reinforce and strengthen its potential.

Musicians have value. As a city, we must appreciate, invest in, and cultivate their talent.

Music workers have value. As a city, we must recognise, develop, and support their ambitions.

Music venues have value. As a city, we must create conditions to facilitate the revitalisation of their business.

Music audiences have value. As a city, we must encourage, educate, and engage audiences in memorable experiences.

This belief is our starting point; and this strategy is our roadmap. A work-in-progress but a significant step in the right direction. A new hymn sheet for the city to sing from.

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BELFAST CITY OF MUSIC PATRONS

“ **Music is woven into the DNA of Belfast.** That’s the thing about this city, there are so many incredible bands and artists, and more every single year. I’ve watched in these last 25 years of relative peace the music scene grow and then thrive and now burst at the seams with fearless and limitless talent. I would put Belfast now, without bias (or at least with as little bias as possible) at the level of one of the great music cities in Europe. We have all fought hard for our culture to thrive and the results are so plain to see. **Belfast’s heart beats fervidly with music** and the entire music scene has helped raise Belfast up and out of the darkest of times. ”

Gary Lightbody, Snow Patrol
UNESCO City of Music Patron



“ **Belfast is an alive, vibrant and a musically powerful city.** Now is the time to celebrate those that are making a difference in music, in culture. We are so much more than what has gone before; there is female empowered punk, new wave, BRIT nominated EDM, jazz and an abundance of classical music that runs through the veins of this city and yet to the wider world, it is all unheard of, underground, eclipsed by its past but still supplying a pulse and vibrancy that needs to be lauded for the future. There is so much creativity here in Belfast to celebrate today. It is the only place I can think of, that with support, the difference made will echo nationally. ”

Hannah Peel
UNESCO City of Music Patron





THE STORY SO FAR...

Music is recognised as a distinctive aspect of Belfast's cultural profile with audience research indicating high levels of engagement locally as well as strong linkages to the city's international profile. Engagement with citizens during and after the European Capital of Culture bid in 2017 also indicated that there is support for strengthening the role that music has in helping to make Belfast a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit. In March 2018, as a result of the coalescence of many conversations which were happening in the city at the same time, Council backed a proposal for the city and its partners to make an application for the endorsement of UNESCO City of Music status in 2021.

This music roadmap is the culmination of years of strategic engagement which have laid the foundations for placing music at the heart of Belfast to make the city a better place to live, work and visit.



THE BELFAST AGENDA

Music is embedded in the daily lives of the city's people, and is, right now, being harnessed to create a shared vision for the city. Investing further in music and creativity will catalyse this. This is particularly relevant following the impact of COVID-19. We believe that culture and music should be an intrinsic part of Belfast's recovery. And it is through a shared vision with music at the core that Belfast will develop a sustainable and resilient society and economy.

The shared vision we hold was set out in the Belfast Agenda. Created by a strong civic partnership led by Belfast City Council, the Belfast Agenda is our city's first community plan. It sets a vision for 2035 that imagines a culturally vibrant city.

THE STORY SO FAR...

We asked for the city’s feedback in sharing their hopes for the future and for the city they live in.

THE RESPONSES?

- Belfast is already a place of optimism and ambition.
- Belfast is a place where we take care of each other; a place that celebrates diversity. No-one in Belfast should be left behind.
- Belfast can be proud of its natural and built environment. Belfast should take care of its beautiful places - now and for future generations.
- Belfast has a place in the world’s story, its vibrant cultural life and its unrelenting energy. Belfast needs to be outward-looking and confident on the world stage.
- Belfast should be a city where everyone has a good start in life, a good education and a good job – where everyone has safe, good quality places to live, work, play and learn, where people get on with each other.

We agree.

And we believe music has a central role to play in achieving these ambitions. We are a confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.

Belfast will be a city:

- where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.
- that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all.
- that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable.
- where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing.
- where everyone fulfils their potential.

This is our time to be ambitious.

This is our Belfast Agenda.

This is our commitment to music.



A CITY IMAGINING

The Belfast Agenda is expanded upon in Belfast’s Cultural Strategy 2020-30, *A City Imagining*. It is focused on promoting cultural rights, sustainably growing Belfast’s cultural ecosystem, expanding local and international connections and increasing competitiveness. Supported initiatives include a green policy for festivals, a visitor experience plan harnessing Belfast’s uniqueness, and a start-up programme for creative entrepreneurs, all of which complements the city’s music strategy.

It acknowledges that change requires ambition, long-term commitment and a sustainable and adaptable approach. We believe that change is happening. This is our commitment to embedding cultural policy across wider city development. Our issues are complex and long standing but creativity and resilience are in the very fabric of our city and our people. *A City Imagining* has been the catalyst for the urgency and agency required to encourage innovation, new connected thinking and greater collaboration.

Music is a core component of delivering the city’s cultural strategy which imagines:

- an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life.
- a diverse city with vibrant public and cultural spaces.
- a city where creativity pushes boundaries.
- a city confident of our place in the world.





BECOMING A UNESCO CITY OF MUSIC

Belfast officially became a UNESCO City of Music on 8 November 2021, bestowing upon the city the international recognition that music is part of our identity – past, current, and future.

We became only the third city in the UK to be awarded the status, with Liverpool receiving it in 2016 and Glasgow in 2008, and we are the first city on the island of Ireland to be granted the prestigious accolade. As a result, we now join 59 other Cities of Music around the world in belonging to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). This Network recognises the importance of music to Belfast – and Northern Ireland; it tells the outside world that music is part of what makes our communities stronger, it's what our people are passionate about, and it lets everyone know that we have real talent, which is important not just to our economy but to our identity.

Whilst all the members of the Network will work towards putting music at the core of making their cities better places to live, work and visit, we are also saying that we take pride in our music sector.

We are thankful to everyone who plays a role in using music to make Belfast and Northern Ireland the place it is, and we want to safeguard and strengthen the role of music today and in the future.



The UNESCO bid was driven by the people of the city through co-design, led by our City of Music Steering Group and facilitated by City Council and our partners in the public and private sectors. The Steering Group was formed in 2019 with 20 members representing different sectors and genres including artists, managers, venues, studios, festivals, community organisations, heritage, business, and statutory partners.

Meeting monthly for more than two years, including throughout the pandemic, they co-designed and spearheaded this process in partnership with Council. The application process was underpinned by extensive engagement with the music sector, facilitated by **The Fourth Pillar, Morgan Young Consulting and Sound Diplomacy.**

We thank all of those who engaged with us through the six Belfast Music Forum sessions, more than 25 one-to-one meetings, and online engagement through our dedicated Belfast Music website and social media platforms.



BECOMING A UNESCO CITY OF MUSIC

The resulting commitments made as a UNESCO City of Music are:

- To work with the music sector to develop a strong model for safe, inclusive, and accessible music experiences for audiences and musicians, through our wellbeing initiatives reaching 15,000 people.
- To launch a dedicated music support service providing professional development, networking and music entrepreneurship advice, reaching 1500+ musicians and music businesses annually.
- To collaborate with stakeholders, as well as the film and design sectors, to transform multiple vacant and public spaces for cultural use.
- To work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.
- To host a Global Music Convention on Sustainability reaching 4,000 delegates worldwide.
- To share our incredible music story and create new music stories with collaborative projects reaching young people around the world and close to home.

These commitments are woven into our inaugural music roadmap and will be delivered over the course of the next five years. The UNESCO City of Music title is ours for as long as we continue to uphold the values of UNESCO and show a meaningful and long-lasting commitment to the transformative power and value of music. **We hope you will join us in amplifying the impact that this status will bring to all corners of the city.**

DID YOU KNOW?

Belfast is also a UNESCO City of Learning!

In 2018, Belfast committed to work in partnership with city stakeholders to develop a learning city plan. The aim of the plan was to address barriers to learning and extend opportunities to all citizens in the city, regardless of age or background, and to deliver a better Belfast for all. Moving forward, there is sizable and scalable potential for the music sector to work with Belfast Learning to place music at the heart of skills and education programmes within communities, both locally

MUSIC COUNTS

SOUND
DIPLOMACY

In 2020 Belfast City Council contracted **Sound Diplomacy** to carry out a body of work researching and analysing the music sector in Belfast, including an analysis of the Belfast music ecosystem and engagement with the music sector on recommendations for recovery post-covid and for sectoral development. Sound Diplomacy is the global expert in developing long term and self-sufficient music strategies. Its work focuses on exploring how best to support the evolution and recovery of the sector from COVID-19, and their body of research and engagement work has fed into the content of our first ever strategic music roadmap for Belfast.

This engagement was built upon by The Fourth Pillar, Morgan Young Consulting and Score Draw Music in developing this roadmap and its strategic recommendations.

More than 30 meetings and video calls across three months were held with the Steering Group and its stakeholders, music and community organisations, experts in the field of equity, access and inclusion, audience development, indigenous music and more, as well as one-to-one sessions with interested parties.



ECONOMIC IMPACT SUMMARY

TYPE OF IMPACT	EMPLOYMENT (NUMBER OF JOBS)	OUTPUT MILLION £	GROSS VALUE ADDED MILLION £
Direct	1,781	180	84.27
Indirect	562	89.18	43.15
Induced	787	77.63	46.96
Total Impact	3,131	346.81	174.38

Direct, Indirect, Induced
and Total Economic Impact.

THE BIG NUMBERS

As part of its contribution to the roadmap, the company conducted an economic impact analysis, the results of which are shared in this chapter. The figures relate to 2019, prior to global pandemic and the devastating impact that COVID brought to the lives and livelihoods of many.

In 2019, the Belfast music ecosystem delivered a total economic impact of 3,131 jobs – representing 2.05% of the city’s employment. It generated a total output of £346.8 million and a total gross value added (GVA) of £171.4m.



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT...

EMPLOYMENT IN MUSIC

To put the size of the Belfast music ecosystem into perspective, the direct employment generated in 2019 (1,781 jobs) represented 1.16% of the workforce in Belfast, which is a bigger contribution than other sectors such as Construction of Buildings (1,300 employees) and Advertising Market Research (458).

SECTORAL STRENGTHS

The majority of the direct economic value of the sector is created by the Live Music and Touring sub sector (72%), while Recording / Publishing and Radio Broadcasting represent 12% and 9% respectively; the remaining percentage groups are Music Creation (3%), Instruments and Equipment Stores (2%) and Music Education (2%).



THE WIDER ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MUSIC

In 2019, the indirect economic impact of the music ecosystem in Belfast reached an output of £89.2 million and a GVA of £43 million. At the same time, it is estimated that 563 jobs in Belfast were indirectly supported by the music ecosystem in 2019. The induced economic impact is the economic value (output, GVA and employment) derived from the spending of workers whose wages are supported directly and indirectly by the Belfast music ecosystem (e.g. money spent on services, food, entertainment, and transportation). The induced output of the music ecosystem in the city reached £77 million, a GVA of £47 million in 2019, and supported 787 jobs.

THE INCOME OF MUSIC WORKERS

According to the NISRA Business and Employment Survey 2019, the average income of music ecosystem workers in Belfast was £19,127 – 27.09% smaller than the average income for all Belfast employees. Both employees and freelancers in the ecosystem are mainly working full-time (45%) and, prior to COVID-19, their music-related activities constituted 69% of their total income. The main type of contract is as a freelancer (51%).

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT...

THE IMPACT OF COVID IN 2020

At the time of the economic study, Sound Diplomacy was able to estimate the losses at that moment in time in the direct economic output of the music sector in Belfast. Calculations show that losses reached £126 million during 2020 (70%). Live Music and Touring was the most affected segment, with estimated losses of £121 million (96% of total losses), while the losses of the other segments (Recording & Publishing, Music Creativity, Instruments & Equipment, Supporting Industry, and Education) reached an estimated loss in output of approximately £5 million.

Furthermore, around 950 employees (53% of the direct music ecosystem employees) were negatively affected by the pandemic. However, thanks to job retention schemes the loss of jobs was not so drastic; by 2020 only 2% of the music ecosystem employees were made redundant, while 12% and 39% suffered permanent reductions in working hours or went into furlough respectively. The survey also revealed that the majority of employees and freelancers in the sector (64% and 82% respectively) suffered a considerable decrease in their annual incomes during 2020.

Prior to COVID-19, music venues had as their main source of revenue the sale of tickets (26.8%) and bar or food sales (21.4%); however, following the onset of COVID-19, 78% had to cancel music performances altogether, making most live music venues (89%) highly dependent on government support.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the average decrease in income for the music ecosystem was 70.29%. Regardless of the size of the business or the average annual income, the impact was significant. The decrease was more accentuated for live music venues (95%) and the recording industry (e.g. label, publisher, distributor, etc.), with an average decrease of 82.5%, compared to artist management (50%), music/instrument retailers (40%) and sound recording companies (3.3%).



INTRODUCING THE BELFAST MUSIC ROADMAP

We acknowledge that there is much work to be done in order to develop a stronger and more sustainable music ecosystem which is both anchored and adaptable to change. This roadmap therefore does not constitute a blueprint, but rather supports a philosophy of enablement with a view to creating a fluid, permeable place which values music and an 'anything is possible' attitude.

Our vision is to wholly support musicians and those working in music with the development of their talent and ideas, whilst embedding music and access to it in all parts of the city. This aim is underpinned by a set of core values which will inform our actions and commitments – belonging, collaboration, fairness, inclusion and respect.

We are not starting from scratch. As shown by the UNESCO City of Music status, Belfast is already a city bursting at the seams with music and creativity. Our foundations are strong. There is a solid sense of community and a willingness for individuals and organisations in music to work together.

The small size of Belfast has created a collegiate atmosphere with an impressive DIY-mentality which has spawned the creation of exciting, diverse and authentic scenes. There is a strong music heritage and not just in the recent past; the amount of young people learning to play indigenous music is increasing with more than 5,000 over 18s engaging in it. There is active community participation in music as well as a professional music industry base, albeit the latter is under-developed. And there is existing support from public funders and local businesses and an appetite to do more.

All of this has created a strong international profile where local music regularly punches above its weight, as other countries connect with and look to us.

But we recognise that we can do more, do better, and be bolder.



INTRODUCING THE BELFAST MUSIC ROADMAP

We have listened extensively to the feedback and the views from the sector and the city's people, and we want you to know that we have truly heard you.

- We know there is a great need for additional spaces and resources to support musicians and creators across all genres – not just the commercially popular ones.
- We know we need to strike a balance between recognising and celebrating our music heritage whilst driving a forward-thinking and modern -day music identity.
- We know we need to safeguard talent retention and development, particularly in light of COVID-19, to create a more accessible music scene for artists and audiences.
- We know there is a gap in the value chain from grassroots to international, whether in infrastructure, opportunity, agency, or management.
- We know we are good at identifying and working with musicians when they are emerging but that upon reaching a tipping point, they often leave, disappear or are unable to fulfil their potential.

- And we know that we need to engage equally with both the private and not-for-profit sectors, valuing both music in the community as well as the commercial music potential.
- Historically, we acknowledge that there has been a dichotomy in Belfast, either economy or culture, but as a UNESCO City of Music, this is our opportunity to bridge the two.

We want to reshape music in Belfast, so it is characterised by quality, sustainable projects, and accompanied by long-term strategic investment. This roadmap constitutes a response to the challenges, concerns and, indeed, opportunities that exist and is intended to take a foundational approach – one which will deliver the fundamental needs of individuals working in or engaging with music and one which has identified the shortfalls in the local music ecosystem and sought to eliminate them.

In our approach, we have chosen to put musicians, performers and music creators first for, without them, Belfast would be a culturally and economically poorer place.



THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

RECOGNISE THE VALUE OF CREATORS

Music creators must be at the heart of any music strategy for a UNESCO City of Music. Were it not for the musicians and creators, the broader sector would have no talent in which to invest, live music venues would hear only the sound of silence, and audiences would have no musical activity to uplift their spirits.

The most basic – or foundational – needs of musicians, music creators and performers are the focus of this theme, with funding, creative and professional development, opportunities to collaborate and create with others, and the talent pipeline emerging as the challenges to overcome and the opportunities to embrace. By putting these individuals first, regardless of their socio-economic background, personal protected characteristics, genre or musical ability, we have sought to show deep appreciation and recognition of their talent and its immeasurable contribution to our community, society and economy.

Priority 1: Increase the financial investment by reviewing and enhancing funding programmes for music creatives and making careers in music in Belfast more accessible and sustainable.

Priority 2: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music creators with the critical knowledge, contacts, and tools for building a sustainable career within the sector.

Priority 3: Open up the Belfast music sector by creating opportunities for music creatives to connect and collaborate with their peers locally, nationally and internationally

Priority 4: In partnership with local communities, design & implement a series of initiatives to ensure that music is inclusive, accessible and open to everyone in our city.

THEME 2: NURTURE THE SECTOR

STRENGTHEN THE STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO GUIDE AND INVEST IN CREATORS

The structure of the music sector is often explained by comparing it to an iceberg: the artist is the most visible part of the sector, putting themselves out to market for everyone to see and engage with; whilst under the surface there is a team of skilled, knowledgeable and connected individuals who provide the support and guidance required to navigate the artist through often-choppy waters. These individuals make it possible for music to be rehearsed, recorded, released and then promoted far and wide through digital services, tours, and media opportunities.

Music is complex; it requires an understanding of intellectual property; it requires an understanding of how to monetise copyright; and it requires an understanding of specialist skills and techniques specific primarily to music. And that's before creativity for marketing campaigns and PR moments or political knowledge for lobbying Governments and influencing policy comes in. There is a wealth of experience in Belfast, and indeed Northern Ireland, across these various facets and individuals and organisations need to be able to access the support required to continue building the infrastructure for the music sector.

This roadmap places great emphasis on the freelancers, organisations, trade bodies and businesses who embody the pivotal role of enabling creators to be just that – creators.

Priority 5: Increase the financial assistance available to freelancers, organisations and businesses whose primary role is to enable, support and develop creators.

Priority 6: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music organisations and businesses to build sustainable career pathways within the sector.

Priority 7: Prioritise the sustainable growth of the music business sector through initiatives supporting entrepreneurialism, meaningful business development and export opportunities.

Priority 8: Working stakeholders to drive forward the creation of funded opportunities to engage and support the future generation of creative freelancers, cultural leaders and music business entrepreneurs.

THEME 3: IGNITE THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

LIBERATE THE LIVE MUSIC SECTOR AS A MAJOR CATALYST FOR CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

As clearly outlined in Sound Diplomacy’s findings, live music is the most significant contributor to Belfast’s music sector. It provides employment, attracts visitors and is, for many people across Belfast and Northern Ireland, the primary way of engaging with artists and performers of all genres. The pandemic saw the growth of the live music economy halted, with audiences only able to access performances remotely, if at all.

As we emerge carefully from lockdown, the live sector is presented with a set of new challenges, which only add to those experienced before COVID-19. At the same time, the drive to re-engage audiences and open live music up further to the people of Belfast and beyond presents a set of new opportunities. If ever there was a moment for embracing bold ambitions, creating unique experiences, building upon the assets the city already has, and promoting these to the world, it is now.

This roadmap recognises the importance of live music to Belfast for creators and performers, for freelancers and those working in music, and for the people of the city, our audiences.

Priority 9: Deliver a series of measures that would facilitate the development of a thriving, sustainable and strong live music sector in the wake of COVID-19 including a review existing licensing frameworks that impact upon the potential for growth of Belfast’s live music sector.

Priority 10: Enhance Belfast’s night-time economy, culture and governance to ensure the city is fulfilling its economic and cultural potential after dark

Priority 11: Support venues and performance spaces in implementing initiatives to ensure the health and safety, both physically and in terms of mental wellbeing, of performers and attendees at live music events.

Priority 12: Lead the charge in greening the live music sector, embedding sustainability at the heart of its approach to business operations.

THEME 4: UNLOCK THE UNIFYING POWER OF UNESCO

SHARE THE GIFT OF MUSIC WITH THE PEOPLE OF BELFAST

Belfast’s people are as important to this roadmap as the creators, workers and spaces where music lives. They inspire, encourage and support our creators and performers; they educate and motivate our cultural leaders; and they fill our venues with the joy that they experience when engaging with music. And so, as a UNESCO City of Music, it is important that any strategy meets the needs and responds to the experiences of the people who told us that music matters to them.

This roadmap aims to create a sense of ownership of the UNESCO title for the people of the city, recognising the vital role they have played in our musical past and the exciting role they can play in our music future. They can help to embed music in local communities, get involved in managing or organising music activities, and be part of Belfast’s music story which we can – and should – promote the world over.

This roadmap aims to provide more opportunities to feed their passion for music and to truly embrace the potential for embedding music in all corners and communities of the city. It also seeks to position the Belfast City of Music brand on the international stage as a gateway to visitors and investors.

Priority 13: Give the people of Belfast greater ownership over, and involvement in, music activities and events across the city

Priority 14: Through improved and enhanced strategic communications, make it easier for locals and visitors to find out about the music events and activities taking place across Belfast

Priority 15: Take an innovative and creative approach to music activities, ensuring citizens and visiting audiences have access to incredible and unique music experiences which reflect the culture, heritage and ambition of Belfast.

Priority 16: Partner with tourism bodies, Sister Cities and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network to promote Belfast, and Northern Ireland, as a must-visit destination for any music lover.

LEADING THE WAY THE BELFAST MUSIC GOVERNANCE MODEL

In order to deliver the recommendations set out in this roadmap, Belfast City Council plans to enhance and amplify its leadership for and within the local music sector.

This roadmap demonstrates that music is a primary pillar of the city’s commitment to improving quality of life, providing greater music and cultural offerings, and developing the city economically. It offers a visionary understanding of music’s role in placemaking and acknowledges that, in order to create a more dynamic music economy and city, the needs of musicians and those who support them must first be met.

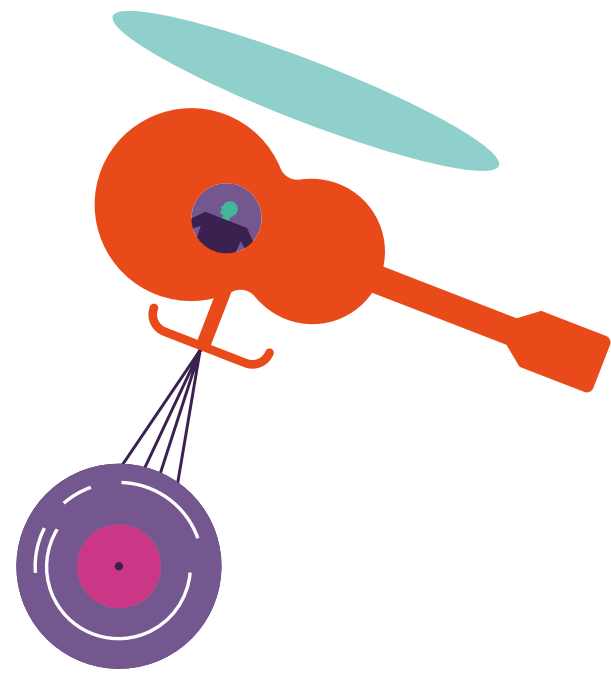
But Council itself is not immersed in the ever-changing needs of the sector nor wholly connected to recognise the opportunities that may arise. This reality creates a need for dedicated music leadership, with representation from and engagement with the music community in its broadest sense.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Whilst Council will work closely with the city's music sector, it is important to outline the role of Council in supporting music activities and initiatives and the parameters within which its officers can and should operate.

At the highest level, and over the next four years, the litmus test for progressing with any music-related activity will be (a) the provision of clear evidence demonstrating the need for any proposed activity or initiative and (b) the clear demonstration and quantification or qualification of the outcome or benefit to the intended recipient (i.e. creators, workers, the live music sector and/or the people of Belfast, taking into consideration at all times diversity, inclusion and belonging in respect of under-represented communities, individuals and genres).



Recommendation: Recruit a Belfast Music Officer

Whilst engagement with and support for music in Belfast clearly sits across Economic Development within Council, music should have a permanent and fixed home to ensure one team takes ownership of the overall implementation and prioritisation of this roadmap and the city's deliverables as a UNESCO City of Music.

It is recommended that the home for music is that of the Culture and Tourism team, where a dedicated Music Officer should be employed and will be responsible for co-ordinating relationships working closely with colleague in Business Growth and Enterprise.

THE ROLE OF A MUSIC OFFICER

The dedicated Music Officer will provide the music sector, music communities and all music stakeholders with a clear point of contact for all music and UNESCO-related enquiries. The individual will serve as a liaison between the city, the private sector and the third sector within the music ecosystem. They will be an advocate for music, will seek to build relationships that benefit the ever-increasing role of music within the city, and will be mindful of the goal to protect and amplify Belfast's designation as a veritable City of Music.

Whilst the delivery and implementation of this roadmap will be the priority for this role-holder, the following responsibilities will be critical to their effectiveness and eventual success:

- Acting as a resource to local stakeholders and a first point of contact to national and international stakeholders;
- Advocating for the local musicians, venues, community groups, music organisations, and music businesses;
- Ensuring consistent communication between the local music sector and the city's leadership (news, funding and grants, opportunities, best practice);
- Fostering collaboration with other creative hubs and sectors in Belfast and beyond; and,
- Identifying opportunities for amplifying the UNESCO City of Music brand as well as opportunities for outwardly promoting Belfast music.



Recommendation: Develop a Belfast Music Office

The recruitment of a Music Officer represents a significant opportunity to show the commitment of Belfast City Council to the artform which is vitally important to the future of the city. However, one sole Officer will not suffice as Belfast's journey as a UNESCO City of Music evolves and grows, bringing with it exciting opportunities for all those who engage in music.

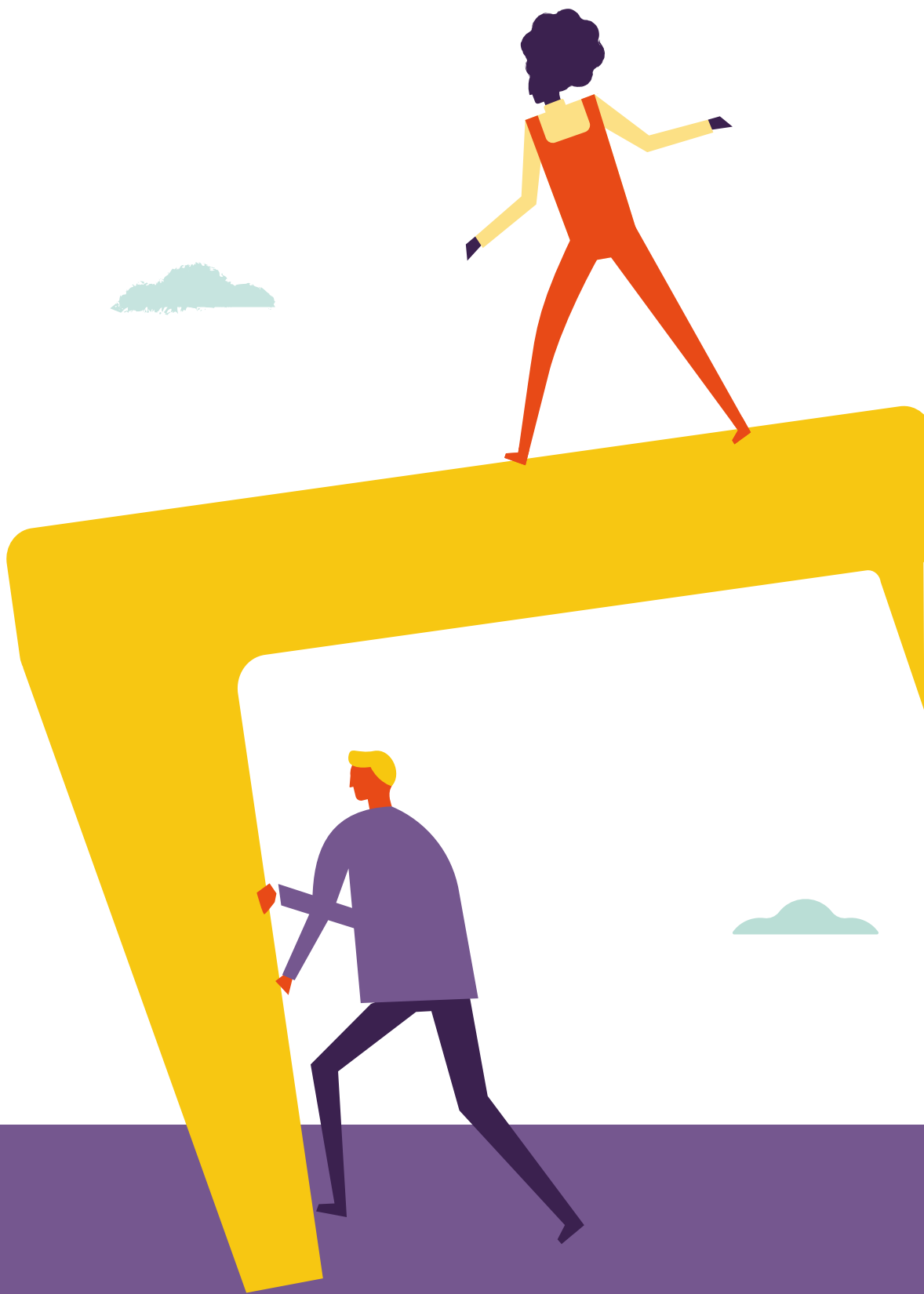
Belfast City Council will explore the development of a dedicated Music Office in collaboration with various city stakeholders and music partners, drawing on best practice from other Music Cities, to ensure adequate support for meeting the needs and expectations of the city as music visibly becomes a core pillar of its economic growth, community engagement and cultural offering.



TAKE BACK THE CITY THE BELFAST MUSIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

This music roadmap represents a genuine opportunity to uplift the voices of those to whom music matters; to ensure that the needs of the sector and the city are met whilst the expertise and experience of individuals is drawn upon to guide Council in its actions. The following proposals are being recommended to ensure a collective, collaborative, and cohesive approach in the delivery of the roadmap.

A phased approach is being proposed to allow each new body ample time to find its rhythm, adapt to joint working, and assess its effectiveness. This measured and logical approach will give these structures the best chance of success in delivering tangible benefits for all stakeholders.



TAKE BACK THE CITY THE BELFAST MUSIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION 1: Create a Belfast Region Music Board

Drawing on best practice from other dedicated Music Cities around the world and following on from the successful implementation of the city of Music Steering Group to drive forward the UNESCO application process, the city should develop a Belfast Region Music Board.

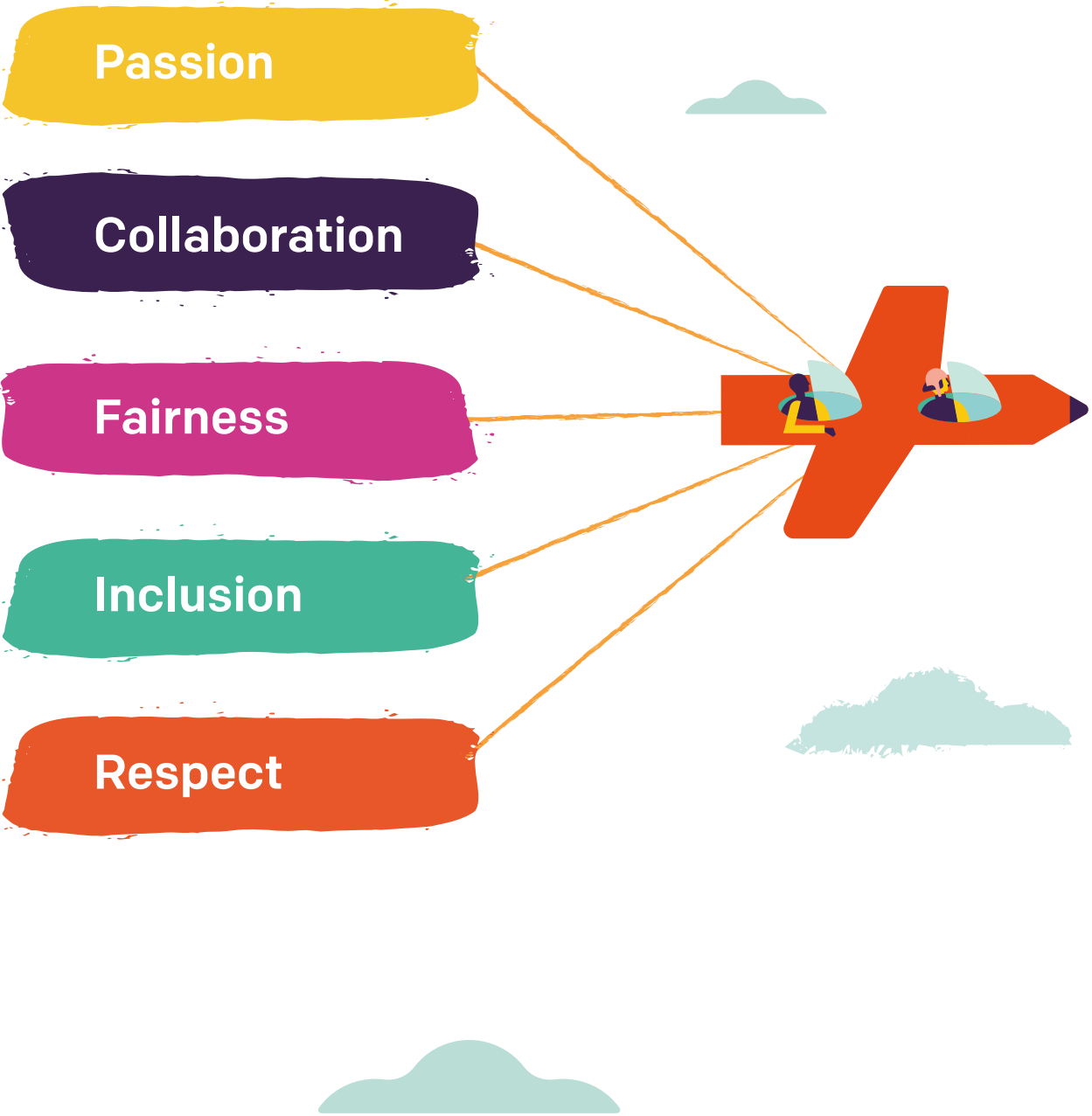
ITS VISION?

To bring to life the UNESCO City of Music designation, embedding music in all communities across the city and underpinning both strategic ambition and tangible delivery with the need to make music a sustainable career option for creators and those who support them.

ITS PURPOSE?

The overarching role of the Board is to oversee the implementation and prioritisation of this roadmap, anchoring the city's commitment to music and ensuring its composition represents the varied interests and needs of both the music sector and the people of Belfast.

ITS VALUES?



RECRUITMENT

The recruitment of between 15 and 20 members of the Belfast Region Music Board should be done via an open recruitment call with selection determined by three primary factors:

- **Professional Experience:** The level of professional experience in a candidate's chosen field will be important to the overall composition of the Board.
- **Representation:** The Board must reflect the communities of individuals which this roadmap seeks to support, i.e. creators, sectoral workers, the live music sector, and the people of the city. In addition, a Reserved Seats Policy is recommended to ensure that individuals from diverse and under-represented communities (People of Colour, Disabled, LGBT+, Woman) and under-represented genres have a voice in the discussions relating to the future of music in Belfast. This approach has been inspired by the Musicians' Union approach to its Section Committees.
- **Skills audit:** Belfast City Council should undertake a skills audit to identify the skill sets required to support the work of an effective Belfast Region Music Board. Any specialist skills required will be set out explicitly in the recruitment materials.

The positions of Chair and Vice Chair will be selected by those eventually appointed to the Board. Up to five seats will be made available for any existing Steering Group members who wish to re-apply to ensure continuity in the process. It will be important to ensure that a fair, open and transparent recruitment process is observed, underpinned by respectful communication with candidates.

REPORTING

The Board will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair who will be responsible for liaising with the City Council. The initial point of contact for any and all reporting will be the Music Officer in the Culture and Tourism Unit who will then perform a vital triaging role to ensure the information, request or feedback reaches the appropriate individual or Unit within Council.

TRANSPARENCY

In order to communicate the core activity from the Board to the wider sector, a three-fold approach is recommended:

- The publication of minutes from Board meetings;
- A quarterly newsletter to recipients who express an interest in the work of the Board; and,
- A dedicated website or section on an appropriate website to publicise members, responsibilities, key initiatives and policies.

TAKE BACK THE CITY THE BELFAST MUSIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION 2: Create additional fora for creators, the live sector and young people

The strategic recommendations that have been devised for this roadmap have been inspired by evidence; both the evidence of need to support creators first and foremost and the economic evidence which demonstrates the scale and importance of live music to Belfast's economy and culture. As such, it is recommended that, 18 months after the Belfast Region Music Board is officially in operation, it should – in partnership with Belfast City Council – seek to create a dedicated Music Creators' Forum and Live Music Forum.

A) MUSIC CREATORS' FORUM (T • 18 MONTHS)

It is recommended that the Music Creators' Forum comprise musicians, songwriters, composers, producers and any other creatives involved in the process of music creation. Meeting twice yearly with the Belfast Region Music Board and feeding into the ongoing work of the Board through a dedicated music creator representative, this forum will allow for open and honest discussion around the needs of music creators in the city and will provide an opportunity for their voices to

be heard by Council.

B) LIVE MUSIC FORUM (T • 18 MONTHS)

It is recommended that the Live Music Forum comprise venues, promoters, festivals, events' organisers, technical freelancers and any other individuals involved in live music in Belfast. This forum will provide an opportunity to discuss any ongoing challenges and opportunities for the sector, whilst also facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practice between attendees.

In recognition of the importance of music to young people's lives and aspirations, regardless of their intention to pursue a career in the sector, it is being recommended that a further sub-group of the Board be created to engage the next generation in the Board's discussions and actions relating to music in Belfast.

C) YOUTH MUSIC FORUM (T • 24 MONTHS)

It is recommended that the Youth Music Forum be developed in partnership with youth and community organisations across Belfast. This forum will provide an opportunity for young people aged 14 – 21 to think about the positive role of music in their local communities, establish and lead music initiatives to respond to the needs of their peers, and to explore a future role in music artistically or within music business.

GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATION 3: Create a Music Council to engage the wider sector

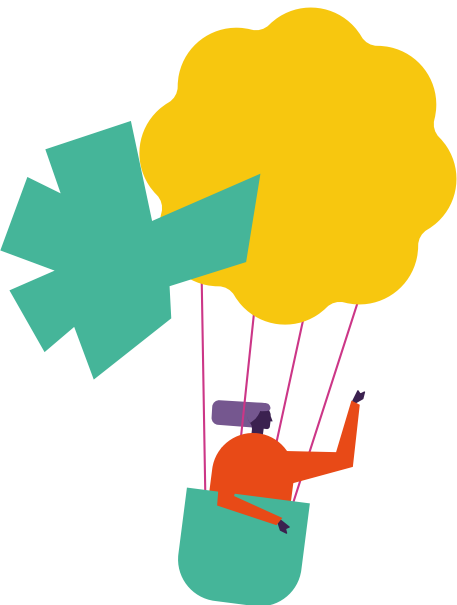
To complement the aforementioned governance structures, it is recommended that Belfast City Council, together with the Belfast Region Music Board, develop a Belfast Music Council. This process should follow the establishment of the aforementioned groups.

The Music Council initiative has been inspired by The Ivors Academy Senate, which allows 40 voted-for members from across the songwriting community to feed into the work of the Board and establish ad-hoc working groups dedicated to specific challenges and opportunities for this important part of the music sector.

It is proposed that The Belfast Music Council would adopt a similar approach to recruitment and responsibilities ensuring that, in the longer term, a wide and varied range of voices have an outlet for their issues and ideas and that democracy is truly in action within a diverse and welcoming sector where everyone has a sense of belonging.



FRIENDS OF BELFAST MUSIC PARTNERS AND ALLIES



An ever-evolving City of Music requires support from a broad range of partners and allies, from specialist trade bodies and interest groups to the private sector and public funders. Whilst the responsibility for delivering on this roadmap rests firmly with Belfast City Council, it is imperative that delivery is aligned with the plans and priorities of other organisations and stakeholders where there is a shared interest or common goal.

The Music Leadership Model outlined for Belfast City Council should be supported by Observers from a number of organisations, including but not limited to:

- Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- BBC
- Belfast Chamber
- British Council NI
- Help Musicians NI
- Invest Northern Ireland
- Music Venue Trust
- Northern Ireland Screen
- Thrive
- Tourism NI
- UK Music

THE ROLE OF AN OBSERVER IS THREE-FOLD:

1. To listen to sectoral feedback via the Belfast Music Board, UNESCO Music Business Ambassador, UNESCO Musicians in Residence and other voices as appropriate to learn and understand the needs, challenges of and opportunities for the development of the Belfast music sector and the embedding of music across the city.
2. To support the delivery of the Belfast Music Roadmap through their respective organisations, identifying opportunities for collaboration and joint working as well as any available funding, research projects or promotional mechanisms to strengthen the role of music in Belfast.
3. To advocate for Belfast Music, acting as a champion and an ambassador for the power of music and its importance to the city, both within their respective organisations and in engagements with their own stakeholders.

FRIENDS OF BELFAST MUSIC PARTNERS AND ALLIES

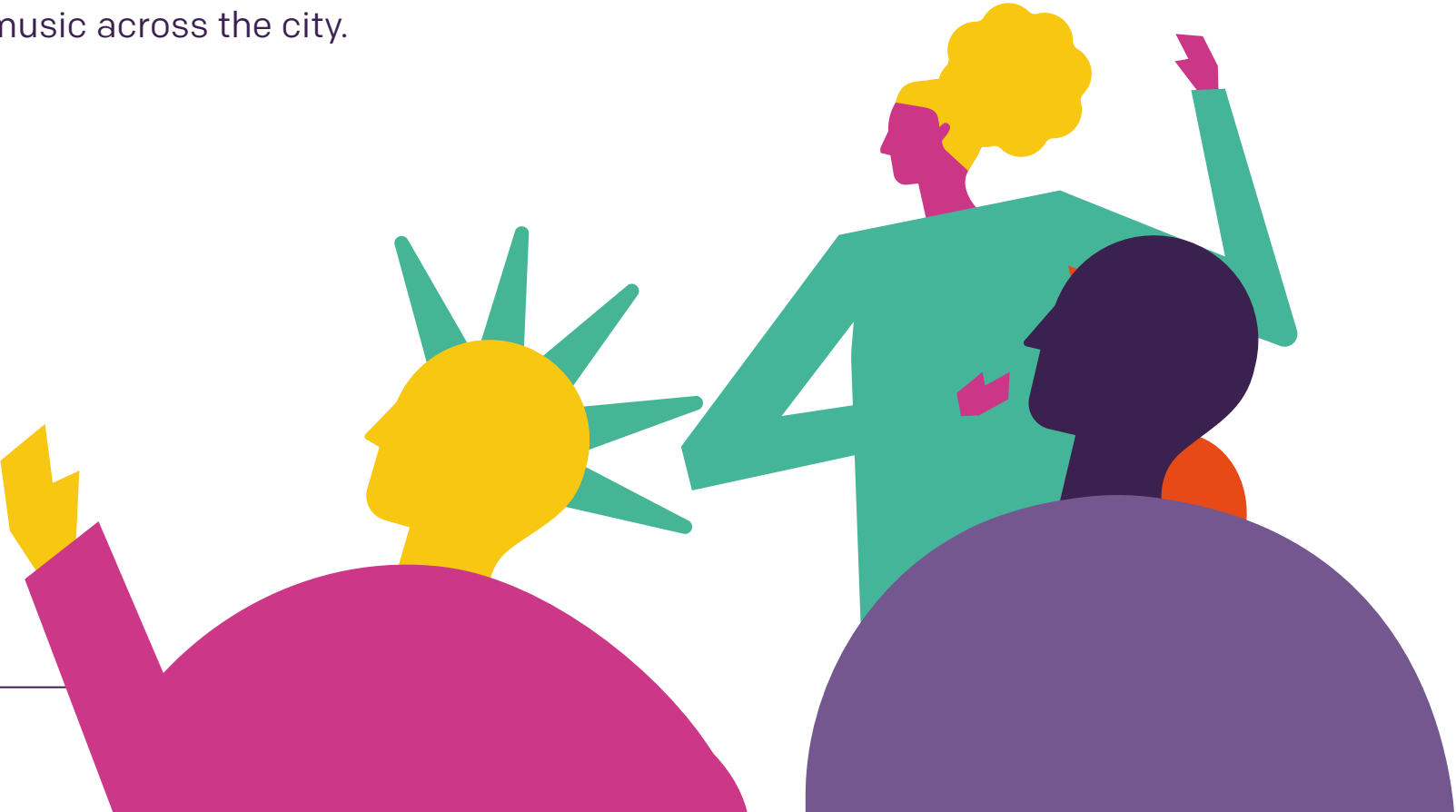
Observers are encouraged to attend all meetings of the Belfast Region Music Board to listen, learn and lend support; outside of the Music Board meetings, the Observers Group (OG) should meet quarterly with Belfast City Council.

The aims of the meeting include but would not be limited to:

- **Strategic work programme:** planning to ensure alignment and avoid crossover between Observer organisations.
- **Tactical events and initiatives:** sharing updates on forthcoming music-related activities.
- **Marketing and communications:** inputting into communications planning for music across the city.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

In addition to our local partners, we are excited to have joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) on becoming a UNESCO City of Music. The Network aims to strengthen cooperation with and among cities that have recognised creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development. Member cities work towards a common mission: placing creativity and cultural industries at the core of their urban development plans to make their cities safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable. We will look forward to going on this journey with their support and to working with other cities, including our existing Sister Cities, to create opportunities to develop and promote Belfast music around the world.



SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT BELFAST MUSIC BRANDING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Securing the UNESCO City of Music designation has been the key to unlocking the potential of music for influencing Belfast's future. Belfast is a City of Music and, moving forward, what is needed is a coherent brand to promote Belfast's new title and all accompanying music activity to the world.

But UNESCO isn't just about Belfast. The city has benefitted for years from musicians, creative freelancers, cultural leaders and audiences who have come from beyond Belfast's borders. This important fact needs to be recognised as the UNESCO brand is also a result of their passion, energy and commitment.

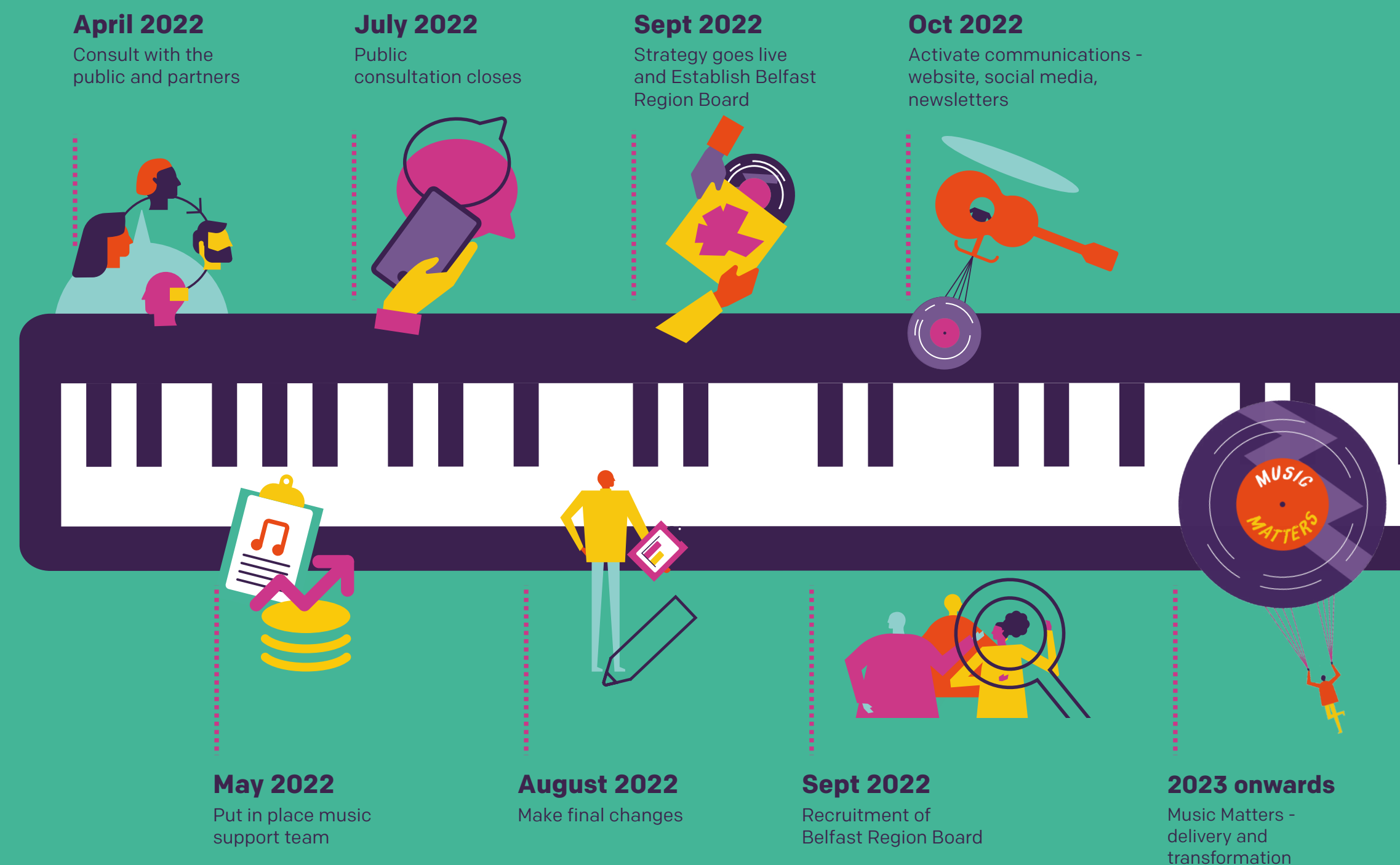
Recommendation: Belfast City Council, with the permission and agreement from UNESCO, should develop a UNESCO City of Music brand identity which can be embraced not just by those engaging with music in Belfast but by those individuals and organisations (in or outside of Belfast) who partner with Belfast to deliver joint activities and initiatives. Whilst the resulting brand will be owned by Belfast City Council, the output should result in the delivery of a visual identity and accompanying brand strategy and branding toolkit which is unique to music produced in Northern Ireland and open to be used by those who embrace the power of the UNESCO brand to music across Northern Ireland.

Developing a brand is an integral part of the internal housekeeping of any initiative, organisation, or company. With the visual identity agreed and applied to a number of assets, it is then appropriate to consider how to promote, market and communicate Belfast's music status externally to ensure key messages resonate with the intended audiences. The rationale for doing so is to attract the input of others who can support the work of Belfast City Council and the Belfast Region Music Board and to facilitate meaningful connections and collaborations for and with our creatives and wider communities.

Recommendation: Belfast City Council should devise and deliver a comprehensive strategic communications plan over the next four years, leaving no stone unturned in its bid to promote music and the power of music to a wealth of audiences, influencers, and potential partners. The plan should elevate Belfast and, where appropriate, Northern Ireland as a whole, as a natural home for music - a place where music is embraced, developed, and celebrated; a place where music enhances and transforms people's lives; and a place where music is recognised as an ever-growing contributor to the economy.

Any communications plan should include, but not be limited to, the delivery of the following assets:

- **Community engagement:** a plan to facilitate the greater involvement of the music sector and the people of Belfast with City Council on ideas and initiatives related to UNESCO to instil ownership of the brand across the city.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are delighted that you are engaging with us as part of our public consultation on this new roadmap for music in Belfast. There will be different ways for you to get involved and let us know what you think. As well as the ambition and priorities set out in the document the next section also gives you an idea of the types of programmes and initiatives that could form part of our delivery plan.

Over the coming weeks we will be continuing to engage with partners to refine these actions and agree commitments that will form part of our final agreed strategy.

MAKING MUSIC MATTER

The following proposed actions are indicative of the types of initiatives we believe will be meaningful and impactful in supporting the future of music in Belfast. It is important to note that Belfast City Council will seek to enhance and build upon existing initiatives that may fall under the proposed actions below, whilst striving to collaborate with stakeholders across the city.

Stakeholders include but are not limited to Arts Council NI, BBC, British Council, Invest NI, and Tourism NI. Through the public consultation these will be further refined and developed into a delivery plan.



PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 1: Increase the financial investment by reviewing and enhancing funding programmes for music creatives and making careers in music in Belfast more accessible and sustainable.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
1.1	Review existing funding processes, increasing access for those with additional, neurodiverse or accessibility needs.	Funding programmes which are accessible to and by all
1.2	Continue to deliver the Creative Bursaries scheme for musicians and expand this to include other music roles including producers, composers and conductors. The first year should focus on developing the creative talent; whilst a new second year should focus on the professional development of the individual and building business skills, knowledge and contacts.	Funded opportunities for creators accompanied by professional development
1.3	Consult the live music sector to create a “UNESCO Fair Play Charter” which recognises the value of musicians and their talent to venues, hospitality and tourism and remunerates them fairly.	Fair pay for play across all UNESCO-branded performance spaces in the city
1.4	Commit to funding up to two initiatives per year to alleviate the costs incurred by music creators in Belfast. These could take the form of a subsidised Studio Voucher Scheme, Rehearsal Voucher Scheme, or Plug and Play programme at Belfast City of Music partner venues across the city.	Easing the financial burden on creators

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 1: Increase the financial investment by reviewing and enhancing funding programmes for music creatives and making careers in music in Belfast more accessible and sustainable.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
1.5	Liaise with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network to explore a “UNESCO rate to create” to provide musicians and their teams with support cost-effective travel and accommodation packages when touring nationally and internationally	Further easing the financial burden on creators and their teams
1.6	Create a Belfast City of Music Musicians in Residence programme with a special focus on both indigenous music and diverse / under-represented genres and/or communities to elevate the role of musicians across Belfast, deliver educational initiatives and reach new audiences	A city where all forms of music and the uniqueness of individual creators is appreciated, recognised and promoted
1.7	Ensure music programming takes an inclusive approach at all times and provides annual opportunities for showcasing musicians with disabilities and / or additional needs. Ensure music activities are made available in safe spaces for all ages, where the needs of those with disabilities can be met	An inclusive music programme for the city
1.8	Alongside any financial assistance granted to creators, provide recipients with the opportunity to undertake a health and wellbeing one-to-one session with trained medical experts	A healthier music community with the tools to be a creator in Belfast – especially post-COVID

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 2: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music creators with the critical knowledge, contacts, and tools for building a sustainable career within the sector.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
2.1	Develop a Music Support Service (initially a digital space/website) which will act as a point of contact for all questions arising from within the music community (new, emerging and tipping point artists), deliver and promote educational and development opportunities, and facilitate connections amongst and beyond individuals and organisations working within the music sector	A more informed and better-connected community of musicians and music creators
2.2	Research, devise and implement a programme aimed at supporting artists at various stages of their career, including developed acts across multiple genres who demonstrate readiness to tour and perform nationally and internationally	Pathways and performance opportunities for talent outside of NI
2.3	Identify and financially support the recruitment of a partner to deliver a music business education course for music creators to further their understanding of how to sustainably develop a career in music	An educated sector of musicians and creators with essential knowledge of the business
2.4	Working with the sector, seek to provide opportunities via events and programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones	A more engaged community of music creators in the nuts and bolts of the business

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 2: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music creators with the critical knowledge, contacts, and tools for building a sustainable career within the sector.

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	ACTION	OUTCOMES
2.5	Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning	The integration of business and creative elements of music for creators
2.6	Identify and financially support the recruitment of a partner to deliver a programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment	Greater access to technical opportunities in the music sector for an under-represented community
2.7	Consult the live sector to encourage the implementation of Access Riders to ensure the needs of disabled musicians and performers are understood and met	Tangible support for disbaled performers across the city's venues
2.8	Co-design with sectoral stakeholders and fund a programme of practical wellbeing events and initiatives to ensure the physical and mental health of music creators is safeguarded and protected throughout the year. This should include a mechanism for reporting and dealing with inappropriate behaviour	A safe, healthy and inclusive sector where all musicians have a sense of belonging

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 3: Open up the Belfast music sector by creating opportunities for music creatives to connect and collaborate with their peers locally, nationally and internationally.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
3.1	Create more physical spaces for music in the city which adds to and complements existing spaces and provides a safe, healthy and cost-effective environment for creators to meet, collaborate and create new music	A destination for creativity and genuine collaboration
3.2	Identify flagship events and opportunities nationally and internationally that will enable creators to connect and collaborate with their peers. This includes, but is not limited to, residences, exchanges and showcasing opportunities. Provide creators with advice and support to maximise the new opportunities created	Strategic promotion of Belfast and NI music globally
3.3	Seek to provide opportunities for creators to engage with other creative individuals and art forms beyond music. e.g. film and screen, to increase collaborations, opportunities and export potential	Music everywhere across the city
3.4	Work with stakeholders, including other local authorities, to develop opportunities for NI and Ireland-wide NI touring for musicians and performers	A connected community of music creators in NI and Ireland
3.5	Explore the use of interactive technology to facilitate artistic collaborations locally, nationally and internationally	The breaking down of borders to promote local music

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: PLACE ARTISTS AT THE HEART

Priority 4: In partnership with local communities, design & implement a series of initiatives to ensure that music is inclusive, accessible and open to everyone in our city.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
4.1	Support and enhance initiatives which provide instruments for local communities across Belfast to ensure individuals, regardless of age, sex or background, have the opportunity to learn or engage with music. Consider the role of traditional / indigenous instruments in this objective	Democratised access to music
4.2	As part of the UNESCO Musicians in Residence programme, work with local schools and community groups as well as Belfast City of Learning to deliver a UNESCO Schools Tour	An inspired generation of future musicians and audiences
4.3	Explore the potential of interactive and assistive technology within communities to ensure those with additional needs have the opportunity to engage in any music-related programmes being delivered	A truly open sector where the joy of music can be experienced by all
4.4	Work with stakeholders to develop a Youth Music Forum comprising 14-21 year olds to amplify and encourage young people's impact on the music sector	An informed music sector to safeguard it for future generations



PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 2: NURTURE THE SECTOR

Priority 5: Increase the financial assistance available to freelancers, organisations and businesses whose primary role is to enable, support and develop creators.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
5.1	Review existing funding processes, considering those with additional or accessibility needs	Funding programmes which are accessible to and by all
5.2	Continue and expand upon core funding for organisations, ensuring beneficiaries include organisations who support diverse and under-represented communities or genres and those with disabilities or additional needs	Financial security for organisations who support musicians, including the under-represented
5.3	Identify, select and allocate funding for a three-year period to support the development, delivery and promotion of a set of core music business flagship events	Identification of Belfast as a home for developing music business knowledge and skills
5.4	Allocate programming funding to support organisations who seek to develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres and provide opportunities for disabled musicians in performance spaces across Belfast	A broader range of music programming and greater visibility for diverse and under-represented genres

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 2: NURTURE THE SECTOR

Priority 6: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music organisations and businesses to build sustainable career pathways within the sector.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
6.1	Invest in the delivery of a specially designed mentoring programme for individuals working in music, including continued professional development for senior or experienced individuals working in music	A better supported music business sector
6.2	Undertake a skills audit of the sector, identifying the gaps and working with stakeholders to deliver upskilling programmes and initiatives	An upskilled workforce in music; the creation of new skills and roles to plug existing gaps in the sector
6.3	Create more opportunities for cultural leaders and business owners to learn from and share best practice with international counterparts	A deeper networked and connected music business sector
6.4	Allocate funding to support the attendance and representation of Belfast music individuals at international conferences	An international reputation as the home of talented cultural leaders
6.5	Pilot the creation of a UNESCO Music Business Ambassador (MBA) – a recurring two-year role to guide City Council in identifying the needs of workers in music and the opportunities for personal development and growth	A champion for the ongoing development of music business professionals

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 2: NURTURE THE SECTOR

Priority 7: Explore and develop professional development opportunities to educate and equip music organisations and businesses to build sustainable career pathways within the sector.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
7.1	Develop a music business accelerator programme to grow micro-businesses into small businesses and beyond	A better supported music business sector
7.2	Create a one-stop-shop online Music Directory to promote and connect all facets of the music business and those working in it	A visible and well-connected music sector working more closely together
7.3	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - transform a disused space into a dedicated music business hub to facilitate co-working and hot-desking for music business workers	A dedicated and well-equipped home for music business professionals to work collectively
7.4	Develop a Sponsorship Toolkit to help music organisations attract private funding and educate leaders on pitching best practice. Create opportunities for third sector and private sector matching and meet-ups	Enhanced private investment in the music sector and more financially sustainable organisations
7.5	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Support all parts of the sector in “going green” through practical initiatives, training and financial incentives	A climate conscious music business sector
7.6	Develop an export strategy to support the promotion of music businesses alongside the promotion of musical talent	A more internationally visible Belfast music sector
7.7	Promote Belfast nationally and internationally as a destination for music start-ups, attracting inward investment and building up the sectoral infrastructure	A more technologically innovative Belfast music sector; job creation

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 2: NURTURE THE SECTOR

Priority 8: Working stakeholders to drive forward the creation of funded opportunities to engage and support the future generation of creative freelancers, cultural leaders and music business entrepreneurs.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
8.1	Allocate funding to increase the number of paid internships and apprenticeships in music businesses	Greater opportunities for the next generation of cultural business leaders
8.2	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Weave music business into a Belfast City of Music Schools Tour to introduce young people to the myriad of behind-the-scenes roles in music	An inspired and educated next generation; more informed teachers and careers advisors
8.3	Co-create a Belfast City of Music Youth Music Forum to engage young people across Belfast in music and to input into the Belfast Region Music Board	An engaged youth music sector whose voices are heard and respected



PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 3: IGNITE THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

Priority 9: Deliver a series of measures that would facilitate the development of a thriving, sustainable and strong live music sector in the wake of COVID-19 including a review existing licensing frameworks that impact upon the potential for growth of Belfast’s live music sector

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
9.1	Lobby for implementation of the Agent of Change principle to protect the future of Belfast’s live music venues and performance spaces	A protected and supported live music sector
9.2	Review the current arrangements in place for busking and clarify the process for obtaining licences to play music in public	A thriving music scene in the streets of Belfast; greater performance opportunities for musicians
9.3	Consult the live music sector on all entertainment licensing processes which affect the ability of venues to operate at their full economic potential	Greater dialogue between Council and the live music sector

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 3: IGNITE THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

Priority 10: Enhance Belfast’s night-time economy, culture and governance to ensure the city is fulfilling its economic and cultural potential after dark.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
10.1	Create and implement a Get Home Safe initiative to ensure those working or partaking in music and other cultural activities in the evening can return home safely at any hour	A safer night-time environment for those working in or attending music events across the city
10.2	Join the Cities After Dark initiative to learn from and share best practice with culturally vibrant cities around the world	A modern approach to the night-time economy, culture and governance; putting Belfast’s night-time economy on the international map
10.3	Appoint a champion or ambassador to ensure the needs of the night-time sector are understood and that a strategy is co-designed across Council with input from all relevant city stakeholders	A Council strategy which commits to creating a thriving and safe night-time economy

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 3: IGNITE THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

Priority 11: Support venues and performance spaces in implementing initiatives to ensure the health and safety, both physically and in terms of mental wellbeing, of performers and attendees at live music events.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
11.1	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Create a Belfast City of Music Live Music Charter to ensure minimum standards are met in terms of safeguarding, servicing and supporting performers and audiences, including those with disabilities and additional needs	High standards of safety and support for performers and audiences in live music venues
11.2	Provide financial support to help venues make the necessary capital changes in a post-pandemic environment, taking into account the specific needs of those with disabilities and additional needs	Safe, healthy and welcoming live music spaces across the city
11.3	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions, create an international venues circuit to facilitate co-curation and co-promotion of music events	Internationally renowned venues in Belfast; global audiences for local talent
11.4	Develop and deliver an educational safeguarding campaign and programme to ensure performers and audiences are signposted to support services in times of distress or unease at live music events	Educated and supported live music community
11.5	Support venues and events’ organisers in making venue-specific information available online ahead of events to educate and inform those attendees who may have access needs or other needs arising from a disability	A confident, reassured and well-informed audience
11.6	Support for venues, technical staff, and events’ organisers in providing training and awareness on the needs of disabled musicians and audience members, including support for signing, captioned performances and audio descriptions	A music experience that can be enjoyed by all, whether performing or viewing

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 3: IGNITE THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

Priority 12: Lead the charge in greening the live music sector, embedding sustainability at the heart of its approach to business operations.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
12.1	Host a conference on sustainability in music, drawing on international expertise and best practice	An educated sector with real-life examples of how to deliver change and progress
12.2	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Provide a practical “Go Green” toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	A well-equipped sector and an ever-growing knowledge base on sustainability
12.3	Make available dedicated and ongoing support within Council to the live music sector to ensure meaningful and lasting change in terms of sustainability	A supported sector with a direct line to a sustainability expert



PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 4: UNLOCK THE UNIFYING POWER OF UNESCO

Priority 13: Give the people of Belfast greater ownership over, and involvement in, music activities and events across the city within the sector.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
13.1	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Develop and deliver Gig Buddies scheme across the city to support those with learning disabilities who wish to attend live music events	Live music experiences for all
13.2	Create a cohort of Belfast City of Music Volunteers, ensuring opportunities are available to those with disabilities or additional needs, with opportunities for individuals to be trained as Gig Buddies and/ or Mental Health First Aid responders	Opportunities for music fans across the city to get involved; training and upskilling opportunities
13.3	Drive forward the development of an audience relationship and development strategy to understand the barriers to accessing music in Belfast and respond with initiatives to deepen and broaden engagement	Music experiences that can be enjoyed by all socio-economic backgrounds
13.4	Undertake an audit of disused or partially used spaces across the city that could be used for cultural purposes within communities and compile a Directory to make this information publicly available	The transformation of local spaces and places to fill with music

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 4: UNLOCK THE UNIFYING POWER OF UNESCO

Priority 14: Through improved and enhanced strategic communications, make it easier for locals and visitors to find out about the music events and activities taking place across Belfast.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
14.1	Create a one-stop listing service for venues, organisations and the hospitality sector to promote their music activity to the city’s locals and visitors	An informed audience which can support and engage with the music community
14.2	Design an interactive Belfast Music Map to guide locals and visitors to music hot spots across the city	The promotion of the wealth of music hotspots in the city
14.3	Provide a comprehensive social media and communications toolkit to the sector to help them proactively promote Belfast music on their owned channels	A sector speaking with one voice to champion music in all its forms
14.4	Develop a city-wide marketing campaign aimed at promoting the value and importance of music to all communities	An impassioned City of Music which respects and understands the power of music

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 4: UNLOCK THE UNIFYING POWER OF UNESCO

Priority 15: Take an innovative and creative approach to music activities, ensuring citizens and visiting audiences have access to incredible and unique music experiences which reflect the culture, heritage and ambition of Belfast. Belfast.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
15.1	Weave music into the delivery of Council's Rooftops initiative, through its own programming as well as that of individuals or organisations who wish to take part in a pilot	Unique experiences for music fans and the people of the city
15.2	Explore the potential of both assistive and interactive technology in venues to enhance the live music experience for audiences, both physically and virtually	Innovative music experiences which can be enjoyed by all
15.3	Make music a core component of all Council-owned events across sports, screen, food, and other creative art forms	Opportunities for musicians to perform to wider audience groups
15.4	Increase the frequency and consistency of programming for traditional / indigenous music as well as diverse and under-represented genres, with a view to building stronger audiences to support their growth and popularity	Increased pride in the music that has historically put Belfast on the global music map

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 4: UNLOCK THE UNIFYING POWER OF UNESCO

Priority 16: Partner with tourism bodies, Sister Cities and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network to promote Belfast, and Northern Ireland, as a must-visit destination for any music lover.

	ACTION	OUTCOMES
16.1	Develop a music tourism strategy for the city to ensure Belfast is promoted globally as a music destination	Music as a key asset for the outward promotion of NI
16.2	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions - Develop a music brand to promote Belfast and/or NI music globally	A strong music identity to attract visitors
16.3	Make music a core component of the Belfast Stories project being driven forward by Council	A tangible music attraction at the centre of Belfast's newest visitor attraction
16.4	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions Work with the film and design sectors to bring the Belfast music brand to life across the city	Music woven into the DNA of Belfast City

THE LAST WORD...

On behalf of Belfast City Council, thank you for taking the time to read this roadmap. We hope that you will engage in the consultation process and provide us with constructive feedback and guidance on priority items so that we can hit the ground running at the earliest opportunity.

We would like to thank the **City of Music Steering Group** for their commitment and dedication to working with us over the last three years, particularly at a difficult time for the sector as it sought to navigate the challenges of a global pandemic on local livelihoods. A special thanks goes to Charlotte Dryden as Chair of the Group during this period.

Our thanks go to **Sound Diplomacy** who started this journey with us and engaged extensively with the music sector, providing us with the vital insight needed to propose the recommendations. A further thank you goes to **The Fourth Pillar, Morgan Young Consulting and Score Draw Music** on bringing the Sound Diplomacy intel to life, consulting further with the sector, and creating this roadmap and leadership structure to guide the work of Council over the coming years.

Thank you to all the artists, freelancers, organisations, businesses, venues, audiences, music fans and wider stakeholders who contributed in any way to this critically important piece of work. It has been a pleasure working with you on this first phase. And we hope you will join us as our journey continues.

KEEP IN TOUCH:

- @ourbelfastmusic
- Belfast Music
- @ Belfastmusic_scene
- belfastmusic@belfastcity.gov.uk

www.yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/city-of-music-bid

