

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



**Belfast
City Council**

9th May, 2022

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, 11th May, 2022 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Presentations

- (a) Translink - Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme (Pages 1 - 4)

3. Requests to present

- (a) Renewed Ambition Task Force (Pages 5 - 8)
- (b) Department for Infrastructure - Spring and Autumn Report 2022 (Pages 9 - 12)
- (c) Pragma Consulting - Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy (Pages 13 - 16)

4. **Positioning Belfast to complete**

- (a) Freeport/Innovation Zones (Pages 17 - 22)
- (b) Update on Harkin International Disability Employment Summit (Pages 23 - 26)
- (c) Electronic Travel Authorisation (Pages 27 - 78)
- (d) Belfast Stories Update (Pages 79 - 112)

5. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

- (a) City Regeneration and Development Work Programme 2022/23 (Pages 113 - 120)

6. **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

- (a) Cut in Student Places announced by Queen's University - Councillor Heading



Subject:	Weavers Cross Presentation
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Adrian Ferguson, 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	The purpose of this report is to bring to Member's attention the key issues which will be covered in a presentation from Translink on the Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that Translink will be presenting to Members at Committee on 11 May in on their Weavers Cross regeneration scheme.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members may recall that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2021 received a presentation from Translink on the Belfast Transport Hub and the wider Weavers Cross regeneration scheme. Representatives provided an overview of building works, together with estimated timeline of completion stages and advised that the main works had been contracted over the next four years with anticipated completion for Summer 2024. Representatives from Translink have advised they will provide Committee with a further update on the progress of this, and will specifically cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update on Belfast Transport Hub (Belfast Grand Central Station) and wider Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme - Update on Social Value delivered on the project to date and looking forward to Main Works including job creation, training, work experience and development opportunities. - Overview of strategic synergies and alignments to the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and a Bolder Vision (transport led regeneration scheme, focus on movement, active travel and connectivity including into local neighbourhoods) - Update on Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme, including master developer procurement, current procurement status, international linkages and meanwhile use - Overview of engagement carried out to date with stakeholders, including with local communities, through arts and heritage activity
3.2	<p>Members will recall that this Committee has previously noted the Council's Hope Street car park as having significant potential to contribute to the comprehensive Weavers Cross Regeneration scheme and following approval by the SP&R Committee in November 2019 it was included within Translink's master planning and marketing collateral for a development partner on a conditional basis. The SP&R Committee, at their meeting on 19 November 2021 were further updated in relation to Weavers Cross and the approach of Translink in their competitive dialogue process for inclusion of third party lands within the scheme to include the Hope St car park site.</p>
3.3	<p>There is continued engagement between officers from City Regeneration & Development and Translink in relation to the Weavers Cross and Transport Hub regeneration proposals including officer representation on the Belfast Transport Hub Programme Board which focus covers both the Transport Hub and wider Weavers Cross development scheme.</p>
4.0	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
4.1	None issued with this report.

5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	None
6.0	Appendices
6.1	None

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Subject:	Request to Present: Renewed Ambition Partnership and the Social, Economic and Environmental Impact of Real Estate Investment
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

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 seek approval for the Committee to receive a presentation of report findings which examined the role the built environment plays in delivering Social, Economic and Environmental benefits to Belfast and the wider Belfast City Region.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree to receive a presentation from representatives of the Renewed Ambition Partnership Task Force, and their commissioned consultants in relation to a report which examines the role the built environment plays in delivering Social, Economic and Environmental benefits to Belfast and the wider Belfast City Region. It is proposed that this presentation is made at the June meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members are reminded that the Renewed Ambition Partnership - a joint public-private initiative which is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners including BCC and other BRCD partner Councils, commissioned research which sought to examine the role the built environment plays in delivering Social, Economic and Environmental benefits to Belfast and the wider Belfast City Region.
3.2	The Renewed Ambition partnership commissioned this research to identify and demonstrate the positive social, economic and environmental impact that real estate and built environment projects can deliver when done well and, provide recommendations to help deliver wider benefits from future real estate development in the Belfast region, based on vocal international best practice.
3.3	<p>Specifically, this research has three objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look back at what social, environmental and economic benefits have been achieved through real estate investment in the Belfast city region over the past five years. 2. Look locally and further afield to what best practice looks like including local and international case studies and a review of sustainable development frameworks and certification schemes. 3. Look to the future and provide recommendations to further improve the social, environmental and economic outcomes from future real estate investment in the Belfast city region.
3.4	<p>Members will recall that they were invited to participate in a workshop in August 2021 to seek their input into this work and consider priority areas and the role that Council and its partners can play to maximise the positive impact of real estate investment and built environment projects.</p> <p>This research recognises the important role that city region partners, including the real estate and construction industry in the Belfast region, and councils in the Belfast region,</p>

	and the NI Executive, play in delivering sustainable, inclusive development. It also looks at the wider benefits this brings to the region and has resulted in a number of key findings and associated recommendations aimed at the real estate sector and construction supply chain, the built environment investment projects funded through BRCD, and for local and central government.
3.5	Representatives from the Renewed Ambition Partnership Taskforce, along with the consultants who undertook this research, would like to attend the June meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update Members on the report findings and wider programme of work currently being undertaken by the Renewed Ambition Partnership.
3.6	<u>Finance & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	None

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Subject:	Request to present DfI Spring and Autumn Reports
Date	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and Development

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 request Member's approval to receive presentations from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) on its Spring and Autumn 2022 Reports.
2.0	Recommendations

2.1	<p>The Members of Committee are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Agree to receive presentations from DfI on their Spring and Autumn 2022 reports at the Special meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 22nd June 2022 and 26th October 2022 respectively. II. Consider any strategic city infrastructure questions to put to DfI at the proposed presentation of the Spring Report on 22nd June 2022. III. Agree to delegate authority to officers to schedule future DfI Spring and Autumn reports at Special meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Department for Infrastructure have requested permission to present their Spring and Autumn 2022 Infrastructure Report to the Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee on the 22nd June 2022 and 26th October 2022 respectively. This request is in keeping with the DfI bi-annual reports to the Council on works completed and proposed works of the Department. Going forward Members are asked to delegate authority to officers to schedule the future DfI Spring and Autumn Reports at Special meetings of the CG&R Committee.</p> <p>A number of areas of focus have previously been raised with the Department in relation to the roads and sustainable and active travel networks, and the partnership working model required across the statutory and civic leaderships to deliver infrastructure within a place-making priority aligned to the Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision for Belfast.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p>
3.2	<p>Bolder Vision & Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP): A Bolder Vision for Belfast is nearing the final stages of completion which will see the publication of a strategy and ancillary action plan in Autumn 2022. The strategy will propose a number of Key Moves, and the emerging Action Plan will be strongly informed and enabled by the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) and the Local Development Strategy (LDP) which remains in draft form pending the publication of the PAC report following independent examination in 2021. Given the importance of the BMTP it would be helpful to have a confirmed timeline for its completion and publication.</p>

3.3	<p>The future delivery of projects and priorities under a Bolder Vision and the associated Action Plan will be critical, and DfI will be a key partner in the delivery of infrastructure and active travel projects, as well as a partnership via BCC/DfI/DfC on the delivery and future funding priorities of the Bolder Vision Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Partnership Working: Belfast City Council in partnership with the DfI and the Department for Communities (DfC), are continuing to successfully deliver the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme placemaking and tactical regeneration interventions the nature of which are aligned to A Bolder Vision for Belfast. These interventions are supported by funding from the DfC Covid Revitalisation Programme and the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure fund and, are bringing forward a number of active travel initiatives including covered and secure cycle stands, expansion of the Belfast Bike Network and replacement of the bike fleet, Active Travel Hubs and repair stations. At previous DfI Presentations Members have queried the level of investment and timeframe for the delivery of the Belfast Bicycle Network and a further update on this will be provided at the Spring Report.</p>
3.4	<p>Residents' Parking Zones (RPZ's): As presented to Committee in April 2022, Belfast City Council has submitted a draft response (pending Council ratification) to the DfI consultation Inconsiderate Pavement Parking - Options Paper. In our response we have again highlighted the issue of a lack of dedicated parking and on-street parking availability within residential areas which are becoming more and more constrained. There is also inconsiderate parking within our city centre residential areas causing congestion as well as servicing issues for cleansing and general services. Critically, inconsiderate pavement parking is impacting on active and accessible connectivity for all of our residents.</p> <p>Members are asked to consider further issues / questions which they would like to put to the Department at the proposed presentation on 22nd June 2022 and Officers will work with Departmental Officials to ensure that these queries are addressed at the presentations.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>

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Subject:	Request to Present findings of the Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Richard Griffin, Development Manager / Catherine McKeown, Regeneration Project Officer

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 seek approval for the Committee to receive a presentation on the findings of the Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy prepared by Pragma Ltd in support of the Council's Future City Centre Programme which includes the emerging programme of work to address vacant properties in the city centre.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to receive a presentation from Pragma Ltd in relation to the findings of the Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy. It is proposed that this presentation is made at the June meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) provides a vision for retail in Belfast City Centre as <i>“providing a regionally competitive retail offer and a shopping experience that is unmatched anywhere else in Northern Ireland”</i>. To support and develop this BCCRIS Belfast Council, in conjunction with the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, commissioned Pragma in 2018 to undertake a Retail Analysis of the city centre aimed at identifying the challenges and opportunities facing the city’s retail sector and to inform recommendations on how best to address these. This analysis was reported to Committee in September 2019, with the subsequent Action Plan reported to this Committee in February 2020.</p>
3.2	<p>As reported to Committee previously the key findings of the Retail Analysis identified the Catchment and Shopping Patterns of the city centre, identifying a lack of point of difference causing low sales densities along with a higher-than-average vacancy figure within the Primary Retail Core (PRC). The report did identify the PRC’s higher than average percentage of independent retail (51% of city’s retailing units) has a positive point of difference within the PRC although the Trading Gap Analysis identified the potential to increase the current non-grocery sales by 23%, providing a realistic estimate of potential turnover growth worth £114m.</p>
3.3	<p>The Retail Analysis Report also identified the critical role of retail in the PRC in terms of having the potential to be a driving factor for improving the city centre’s performance and supporting the further development and long term sustainable of this economic driver. To support this, and in conjunction with Pragma the Retail Analysis Action Plan was presented to the CG&R Committee in February 2020, where the Committee approved the implementation of the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme. The FCC now forms an integral part of the CG&R Committee Plan and subsequent updates are brought to members on a regular basis on the key themes of the FCC – i.e. Physical Regeneration and Connectivity; Business & Investment; Vitality; Digital & innovation; Positioning the City to Compete and Clean, Green & Safe. This work includes programmes such as the Vacant to Vibrant scheme, Housing Led Regeneration, Strategic Acquisition of key assets, the Entries, Grey to Green, the Bolder Vision and Positioning the City to Compete.</p>

3.4	Since the implementation of the Future City Programme the city centre, and national and international retail as a whole have continued to feel the impacts of local and global issues such as the Bank Buildings fire, the Covid Pandemic and a further increase in the trend to online shopping and rising inflation.
3.5	In light of this Officers have been working with Pragma Ltd to undertake a review of the 2018 Retail Analysis, taking into account the dramatic change in landscape to produce a detailed report containing the evidence-base in relation to existing Retail / Leisure performance in the city centre, gaps, potential demand, challenges and opportunities. The report will inform both strategy and implementable recommendations for the FCC.
3.6	It is proposed that a presentation will be made by Pragma, alongside officers, at the June meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update Members on the report findings and recommendations.
3.7	<u>Finance & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	None

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Subject:	Freeport/Innovation Zones
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Enterprise and Business Growth 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 an update to members on developments regarding Freeports across the UK and to advise on preliminary work undertaken to explore the potential for a Freeport as part of a Northern Ireland Innovation Zone.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the research undertaken to date • Agree that officers continue working with partners to explore this opportunity further as the policy context evolves.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	A designation of Freeport status creates an economic zone with exemptions from customs and excise duties and tax concessions to make the area within the port boundary attractive for new investment. From 1984 until 2012 the UK operated a number of Freeports, and one remains in the Isle of Man as a Crown dependency. The original incentives focussed exclusively on customs reliefs but these were phased out as it was considered there had been little benefit from the limited relief offered.
3.2	Based on work undertaken over that earlier period, the UK government has re-imagined the Freeport model aiming for a more ambitious range of incentives than simply customs reliefs. They are committed to establishing Freeports in each of the four nations. The number of awards will be jointly agreed with the relevant devolved region.
3.3	<p><u>English Freeport Prospectus</u></p> <p>In November 2020, the UK Government produced the English Freeport Prospectus, the first under this new policy. It defined a broader list of incentives that might be considered as part of any Freeport. These levers included tax benefits, customs provisions, planning freedoms, funding for infrastructure upgrades and innovation supports as well as local retention of business rates. This approach had a number of objectives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing national hubs for global trade and investment • Regeneration and levelling up • Creating hotbeds of innovation • Net Zero has more recently emerged as an objective
3.4	To date, 8 freeports have been designated, namely East Midlands Airport, Felixstowe and Harwich, Humber, Liverpool City Region, Plymouth, Solent, Thames and Teesside. Two are intended for Scotland, and Wales and Northern Ireland are still being developed.
3.5	The current Freeport model aims to support a place with a clear economic geography and outer boundary. The boundary area must contain at least one port, one customs site, and one tax site, although multiple sites can be included.

3.6	Freeport Tax Sites have legislative power to set out the geographic area where Freeport tax measures can apply. In the English case that includes reliefs on Stamp Duty Land Tax, enhanced capital allowances, land transaction taxes as well as National Insurance and business rates. An individual site must be clearly marked out on a map and is subject to size restrictions. Tax sites should be “underdeveloped” so that the tax measures support areas with economic potential, rather than already successful sites. There also an amount of autonomy that Freeport proposals can apply depending on devolved tax powers and policy.
3.7	A Freeport Customs Site means businesses operating within the customs site receive tariff benefits and, subject to trade agreements, custom duty exemptions. Businesses will also be able to suspend import VAT on goods entering and avail of simplified import procedures. Operators of customs sites will need to obtain authorisation for their customs sites and meet requirements of HMRC and other agencies.
3.8	Tax sites and customs sites can be designated within the Freeport outer boundary within limitations. The port does not have to be a customs site or tax site, for example a tax site could be situated nearby, within the outer boundary. Proposals should aim for one tax site, but depending on an economic case up to 3 single areas may be included. The English prospectus indicated a maximum distance of 45km between any two sites within the boundary unless a special case can be made.
3.9	Freeports bids were initially expected to be led and operated by the private sector, but due to the due diligence required to draw down public funding, they have become increasingly public sector led, often with a significant private sector ‘anchor’.
3.10	<u>Scottish Greenport Prospectus</u> The Scottish Government renamed their proposition as ‘Greenport’ in January 2021 to distinguish the focus of the Freeports from the more trade and investment-oriented policy in England. This ‘Greenport’ proposition was aligned very closely with their pre-existing economic development strategy, centred around fair, inclusive work and Net Zero emissions.
3.11	In July 2021, the Scottish Government named nine areas being considered under the Greenport proposition - Shetland, Orkney, Aberdeen with Peterhead, Montrose, Dundee, Cairnryan, the Firth of Forth and Glasgow city region. In February 2022 the Scottish and UK governments agreed to establish two Freeports in Scotland, now termed ‘Green Freeports’.

	<p>The bidding period will close on 20 June 2022. The UK government has committed funding of £52m to the initiative and bidders will have to pledge to reach net zero by 2045.</p>
3.12	<p>Devolved elements of the offer were created in conjunction with the Scottish Government, with the UK Government sharing the lessons learnt and expertise gained from the English Freeport programme. Many Green Freeport features will operate in the same way as Freeports in England. The prospectus retains an emphasis on supporting the green transition and decarbonisation.</p>
3.13	<p>The customs and tax models are designed to incentivise businesses to invest in Green Freeports. This is supplemented with seed funding to develop key infrastructure to help level up communities. The sites will benefit from accelerated planning processes. Potential Green Freeports will have to outline a decarbonisation plan. The largest area a Green Freeport Outer Boundary can cover is a circle of diameter 45km. Consideration will be given to applications for exceptional additional customs and tax sites outside the Outer Boundary where there is a clear economic rationale and there is a relationship to the area within the Boundary.</p>
3.14	<p>The UK Government has indicated that they will continue to work with the other devolved administrations to extend the Freeport programme across the rest of the UK.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Emerging Northern Ireland Proposition</u></p> <p>In 2021, a group of partners including Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Foyle Port commissioned a strategic appraisal of a Freeport proposition in the Northern Ireland context, taking account of alignment with key regional and national goals and strategies, including City and Growth Deals. The emerging findings identified the potential for a 'Northern Ireland Innovation Zone' to use the levers of the UK Freeport policy to deliver innovative and sustainable economic growth for the region.</p>
3.16	<p>The emerging model takes account of specific circumstances in Northern Ireland that require enhanced investment. For example, this could include areas such as innovation, skills, and sustainable business models ready for future growth.</p>
3.17	<p>The appraisal highlighted that any NI bid will have to be constructed in a unique way and that applying for several Innovation Zones may create competing bids. Two Public Trust Ports of Foyle and Belfast serve hinterlands with a natural location spread that includes deprived</p>

	neighbourhoods in and around Belfast and Derry/Londonderry according to Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures.
3.18	<p>The strategic appraisal identified a range of initial objectives for any Northern Ireland Innovation Zone, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation: Fostering scalable companies, supporting City Deal innovation funds, supporting Innovation District initiatives, make use of regulatory sandboxes to build on strength in RegTech • Competitiveness and productivity: Improving skills of the working population, driving NI's relative competitive advantage in key sectors, driving up entrepreneurship, • Trade and investment: Stimulating new high value sectors by providing wrap-around provisions for new SMEs and FDI private investment in R&D to diversify the innovation base and grow exports. • Regeneration: Developing underused sites, supporting City Deals' drive for regeneration • Net zero: Supporting critical sectors to address global challenges such as net zero carbon adoption, repurposing coal and oil sites to protect for future use, cleantech investments (such as offshore wind), pilot hydrogen fuel generation from wind power.
3.19	The research undertaken has identified two potential sites that could form part of the NI Economic Zone – namely Belfast Harbour and Foyle Port. It does recognise the need for a final proposition to consider further input from other locations such as Larne and Warrenpoint Ports and the International Airport.
3.20	<p><u>Alignment with NI Executive and UK strategies and policies</u></p> <p>The City Deals will play an integral role in supporting some of the NI Innovation Zone (NIIZ) components. Tax incentives under Freeports will increase the attractiveness of the area for the private sector. Drawing in such investment has the potential to encourage new collaborations that benefit centres created through City Deal Investments. The Innovation District intends to build up on the investments granted by the City Deals and create a coherent district with appropriate facilities. The Freeport incentives would be one other lever contributing to making the zone even more attractive.</p>
3.21	The emerging NIIZ model could support delivery of the priorities in various regional and sectoral economic strategies through its specific tax incentives including, for example, innovation and green transition. There is also the potential to explore how local business

	rates could be retained and invested in skills, recognising that the rates system in Northern Ireland operates differently to other parts of the UK. An Innovation Zone of this nature could also provide a compelling proposition for Invest NI when promoting Northern Ireland as an FDI location.
3.22	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There are currently no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
3.23	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are currently no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents attached
	None



Subject:	Update on Harkin International Disability Employment Summit
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy

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 update members on the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit which will take place in Belfast in early June 2022. This is the first time that this international conference has taken place outside of the USA.
2.0	Recommendations

2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit which will take place in Belfast on 7-8 June 2022 • Note the commitment to securing a significant legacy from this event, including the proposals around access to employment, mentoring and work experience • Promote the event through their networks and contacts in order to maximise its impact and support the wider discussion on a new disability employment strategy which is being led by the Department for Communities (DfC).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Harkin Summit was conceived in 2016 by Senator Tom Harkin. Senator Harkin represented Iowa in the United States Congress for more than four decades up until 2015. In his early years in the Senate, he led on legislation to protect the civil rights of millions of Americans with physical and mental disabilities. This work led to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
3.2	The Summit is internationally recognised as a platform that brings together leaders and activists across business, government, philanthropy, VCSE sector and academia to highlight and address disability employment issues, showcase best practice and success, build relationships and challenge for change.
3.3	The event will take place in Belfast on 7 and 8 June 2022 in the ICC Belfast. This is the first time that the event is to take place outside of USA. It is being organised locally by the Harkin Institute and the Department for Communities. The SP&R Committee recently agreed to host the 7 June conference reception in Belfast City Hall and the Laord Mayor has been invited to make an address at the event which will involve a number of key advocates and business leaders.
3.4	It is expected that the event will attract more than 400 international delegates over the two days. A programme for the event can be accessed using the link: https://eventfulbelfast.eventsair.com/harkinsummit2022/programme . Attendance at the event is free of charge and members are encouraged to register and to promote the event through their networks and contacts.
3.5	

3.6	<p>In parallel with the conference, DfC has recently been working on a new strategy to support access to employment for those with a disability. This strategy recognises that disabled people are much less likely to be in sustainable employment than those who are not disabled. It will establish a long-term commitment to reducing the disability employment gap in Northern Ireland. This strategy will align to and deliver on an employment chapter within an overarching disability strategy for NI, a commitment under New Decade New Approach. Initial engagement and research work has been under way for a number of months and it is anticipated that the new strategy will be finalised within the coming financial year. The Department is also using this event as a launchpad for a range of legacy interventions to increase access to employment for those with disabilities. This includes a commitment to a number of new employment opportunities (including within the Northern Ireland Civil Service), mentoring support and work placements.</p> <p>Many local organisations will promote their activities during the event so it offers an opportunity to both learn from good practice and to promote the many positive interventions that are under way in the city to promote access to employment for those with a disability.</p> <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no finance or resource implications for Belfast City Council in hosting this event. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to offer the City Hall for the conference reception.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>By highlighting good practice on matters relating to disabled access, this conference will have a positive impact on those with a disability.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents attached
	None

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Subject:	Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry McMullan, Tourism and Events 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	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 6 April 2022, the Director of Economic Development was asked to update Members on the impact of the introduction of the proposed Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for travel between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the evidence heard by and presented to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at the House of Commons on 20 th April 2022.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of this report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A further update on the progression of the legislation and how the ETA will operate will be brought to a future Committee.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background to the proposed Electronic Travel Authorisation Scheme</p> <p>Under new post-Brexit immigration and border control legislation going through Westminster, non-Irish EU citizens living in or visiting the Republic of Ireland would require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) to cross the border into Northern Ireland. The Nationality and Borders Bill is primarily an asylum and immigration bill, however the new legislation extends to short visits into the UK, so tourists will have to comply.</p> <p>Last month, MPs voted 298 to 216, majority 82, on the Nationality and Borders Bill to reject a Lord's amendment to the Bill which sought to remove the requirement for foreigners to need an ETA. The Bill is now at the consideration of amendments stage and it is planned that the ETA will be fully operational by the start of 2025.</p> <p>The visa-waiver style scheme, which would be similar to the one used in the US, would not apply to Irish or UK citizens, who are guaranteed free movement around the island under the terms of the long-standing common travel area (CTA) agreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would require non-British and non-Irish EU citizens to apply for pre-travel clearance. • An ETA will be required for those international tourists who want to travel onwards to Northern Ireland, even if it is just for a day trip. • The system would be similar to the declaration that international passengers have to fill in before travelling to the United States or Canada. <p>The draft bill contains measures to require non-British and non-Irish nationals to apply in advance for permission to travel to the UK via an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme. The Government has not yet announced full details of the ETA such as how much it will cost, but there are concerns, highlighted by votes in the House of Lords, that the ETA could be a disproportionate response by the Government to concerns about issues such as people trafficking. The UK Government has insisted the ETA process will be simple and will not involve physical checks on the border.</p>
3.2	Impact on Belfast and Northern Ireland - Oral evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

3.3	<p>Oral evidence on the introduction of the ETA was heard by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at the House of Commons on 20 April 2022 and was heard from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Joanne Stuart OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) established in 2018 and led by industry, is the voice for tourism and travel in Northern Ireland with members spanning all sectors of the tourism economy. • John McGrillen, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism NI • Shane Clarke, Director of Corporate Services, Policy and Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland
3.4	<p>Dr Joanne Stuart OBE, NI Tourism Alliance (NITA) advised the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been no consultation at all with the industry on the planned introduction of the ETA and the impact in Northern Ireland and detailed information on how it will work is limited • We currently have seamless travel across the island of Ireland with our main gateway for overseas travellers via the Republic of Ireland, and particularly with tour operators, people come and arrange their trip based across the island of Ireland. • The perceived single-entry system would be unworkable and completely impractical as often people cross the border multiple times during a visit and people want to have hassle free travel. Research by Tourism Ireland on our overseas markets has shown that anything that is perceived to be an additional obstacle or barrier to a trip could result in deciding to stay within the Republic of Ireland. • Recent challenges with different regulations around international travel during Covid resulted in tour operators cancelling the Northern Ireland elements of their trip due to the additional testing requirements, administration with the UK passenger locator form and the additional cost. We have seen the impact that it can have when there is not alignment across the island. • About £160m of visitor spend is at risk impacting on about half a million visitors (based on 2019 NISRA figures) – not just leisure tourism; but a lot of people will travel via the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland to attend international conferences. Any additional administration or barrier to entry could have an impact on our competitiveness to attract those conferences to Northern Ireland. • There are concerns about the impact on cross-border workers such as coach drivers and tour guides, many of whom are living legally in the Republic of Ireland due to their EU membership but are not Irish citizens. Through the EU settlement scheme people who work on a full-time basis in Northern Ireland are covered,

3.5	<p>however, a lot of coach drivers and tour guides who will come over with the tours will not be in that situation and given the skills shortage in this sector we need to make it more attractive, not put those already working here at risk.</p> <p>In summary we estimate that we have lost around £1 billion in visitor spend to tourism and the tourism economy. We are an export industry, so we are bringing money into the economy. When tours and conferences are being planned, we are looking three to five years out. The uncertainty about what the requirement is going to be and how it is going to work in Northern Ireland can be very off-putting. We ask that it be considered as a matter of urgency so that we can clarify the situation and have the opportunity to work through the detail of what, as currently laid out, we think is unworkable for us in Northern Ireland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are suggesting an exemption for those people who arrive in the Republic of Ireland and travel across the land border to Northern Ireland so that they do not require the ETA. Their trip is within the island of Ireland. We do have people who arrive directly into Northern Ireland from European countries. We have some European flights, and as they are arriving in an official port of entry, they will be aware that they will need an ETA and will have to have that. Also, if anybody were coming from Dublin to Northern Ireland and then on into GB, they could only get into GB via an official port of entry. At that point, they would need the ETA, which would be checked. • Our challenge is that there are no checks, and we have been told by the Home Office that it does not intend to have any checks on the land border. Our concern is whether we are going to start having ad hoc checks and how they will determine who they check for an ETA, which could cause some problems around how they identify who they want to check. The exemption is very much specified as, or restricted to, those who are travelling from the Republic of Ireland across the land border into Northern Ireland. <p>John McGrillen, Tourism Northern Ireland advised the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has taken us a long time to build up the level of business we have got. Our fear would be if we don't make this simple or easy to understand, there is the potential for that business to be lost again. • In 2019, which was probably the most recent year in which we got reasonable statistics, about 780,000 visitors out of the 3 million overseas visitors who visited Northern Ireland came from outside the common travel area. The estimation is that
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3.6	<p>about 60% of those people spent time on both sides of the border on the island of Ireland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not have statistics for people who have arrived in the Republic of Ireland, travelled into Northern Ireland and then travelled on to GB, but I would say that the numbers of people doing that would be minimal because people typically come for a visit to the island of Ireland. The tour operators tend to operate on an island of Ireland basis, although there are a number who would operate on the island of Ireland, then go into Scotland and then perhaps return to Dublin to fly home again. • There is a fear that many tour operators in the south would simply choose to forego trying to sell packages including Northern Ireland over the plans advising that “the fact this ambiguity exists, or this level of explanation is required, will make it much easier for that agent to simply say: ‘I don’t need to be bothered with this hassle it is much easier for me to sell a trip to Cork or Kerry’. • It is an issue for coach tour operators because that sector is very dependent on migrant labour, particularly in the Republic of Ireland. They would employ lots of Poles, Lithuanians and suchlike to drive their coaches. Imagine a coach driver who currently crosses a border 70 to 80 times a year bringing a coachload of people from Dublin to the north and back again. It is an issue for the coach tour operators, and they have raised it with us. • The industry over the last two years has survived on visitor numbers from the Republic of Ireland and staycations. As our routes open up, those people who have been locked into the island of Ireland for the last two years will want to travel abroad. The recovery and growth of the sector will really be dependent on the numbers of visitors we attract from the rest of the United Kingdom and further afield in the years ahead. From our perspective, the growth of the tourism sector is going to come from those overseas markets. <p>Shane Clarke from Tourism Ireland outlined the damage the system could have island wide advising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the moment, we have really seamless travel across the island of Ireland. Our main gateway for overseas travellers is via the Republic of Ireland, and particularly with tour operators, people come and arrange their trip based across the island of Ireland. • It is not only going to be damaging to visitors that would go to Northern Ireland, but it would also be damaging to visitors who would be considering the island of Ireland as it would be just seen as another barrier.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an industry that has been on its knees the last few years with Covid. They can't really believe this kind of regulation has been brought in. • The only feedback from the research that we did is that tour operators and industry clearly want to be compliant with the applicable laws. That means that, from a marketing point of view, we would need to tell people that there was a difference and they needed to be compliant with the laws. Clearly, that would mean people being less likely to want to travel into Northern Ireland. The tour operators would be less willing to programme it because of the associated complexities and costs, and because they would not want their coach driver to be breaking the law inadvertently in any way. Northern Ireland is also a transit point for people going from the south of Ireland up to Donegal, so there is all that complexity. • To summarise some of the findings from our research with the tour operators and the industry. They said that this was a bad idea for tourism for the island of Ireland and a really bad idea for tourism prospects into Northern Ireland. From our point of view, it is value-destroying. We have invested over £1 billion in marketing the island of Ireland and Northern Ireland over the last 20-odd years as a place where people can come with unfettered access across the island. That would need to be reworked to add in these complicating factors.
3.7	<p>Written evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee</p> <p>Written evidence was also submitted by NITA, TNI and TI included at Appendix 1 which provides additional information, statistics and detailed independent research commissioned by Tourism Ireland.</p>
3.8	<p>Government Response to the Evidence:</p> <p>Following the oral evidence session, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Immigration and Future Borders, Kevin Foster gave evidence to the committee, defending the plans and reiterated that there would be no physical checks on the border and the system would operate electronically.</p> <p>Kevin Foster said the purpose of bringing in an ETA scheme is to improve border security. People will be cleared for travel before they depart rather than if, for example, you happen to decline them at the border and then remove them afterwards. That is in relation to travel into the UK from outside the Common Travel Area (CTA) and said the move was necessary to prevent any abuse of the Common Travel Area. There are no proposed checks on the land border.</p>

<p>3.9</p>	<p>He advised that for operators around the world, they will not have to acquaint themselves with a raft of UK immigration statuses and documents. The ETA system not only clears people for travel who are non-visa nationals, but can confirm wider immigration statuses, so people are no longer having to present UK documents to get permission to travel.</p> <p>Simon Hoare, Chair of the NI Affairs Committee asked Kevin Foster why he had not engaged with NITA, TNI and Tourism Ireland. He did acknowledge that there had been no consultation with the tourism industry or tourism bodies in Northern Ireland and would be happy to do so. However, he emphasised that they had had several engagements with the Irish government and that these types of systems are becoming common around the world. The points made were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This type of system has been implemented in many countries and many more countries will go down this route • The cost, although yet to be decided, will not be prohibitive and will only add a small additional cost to the total cost of a holiday • The same immigration controls in Belfast should be the same as for the rest of the UK • It will be the responsibility of tour operators organising trips which include NI to ensure that travellers are aware of the need to have an ETA. • There are no planned immigration checks on the land border and any checks will be intelligence led • The Minister did confirm that there has been ongoing engagement with the Irish Government, and they were looking at developing a solution to address the issue for those legally residing in RoI but not Irish Citizens. <p>One potentially positive update was the fact that the ETA will be multiple entry, as this would resolve the issue of tourists crossing the border multiple times on any one trip. and is likely to cost about £10 and would be valid for more than a year and would cover multiple trips. He also suggested it would begin operating in 2025. However, this is not currently in the legislation.</p> <p>Way Forward</p> <p>It is likely that the introduction of the ETA will go ahead in 2025 despite NITA's request for exemption. Council will continue to work with our strategic partners in NITA, Tourism NI</p>
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	<p>and Tourism Ireland as they engage with ministers to lobby for the inclusion of a multiple entry ETA into the legalisation and for the cost to be kept to a minimum.</p> <p>Council will also work with our partners to ensure that other issues are clarified including for example liaison with insurance companies regarding car hire and use of coaches in NI; and support non-Irish residents who live in ROI to gain the required permission to work in NI. In addition, ongoing work to ensure that tour operators are supported by TNI and TI to make it as easy as possible for them to explain and to include Northern Ireland as part of their itineraries; work with airlines and other carriers to ensure that they advise visitors in advance of the ETA requirements and it is easy to access online.</p> <p>Council Officers will continue to keep a 'watching brief' on the ETA and a further update on the progression of the legislation and how the ETA will operate will be brought to a future Committee for Member update / consideration.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are currently no new financial implications to this report.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - Written evidence submitted by NI Tourism Alliance, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Minutes of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at the House of Commons on 20th April 2022</p>

Appendix 1

Written Evidence submitted by Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland to the NI Affairs Committee related to the introduction of the ETA included in the Borders and Nationalities Bill

Written evidence submitted by Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance, related to Tourism and the Common Travel Area non-inquiry Committee business (TCT0002)

Briefing: Borders and Nationalities Bill – Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) and the implications for Tourism

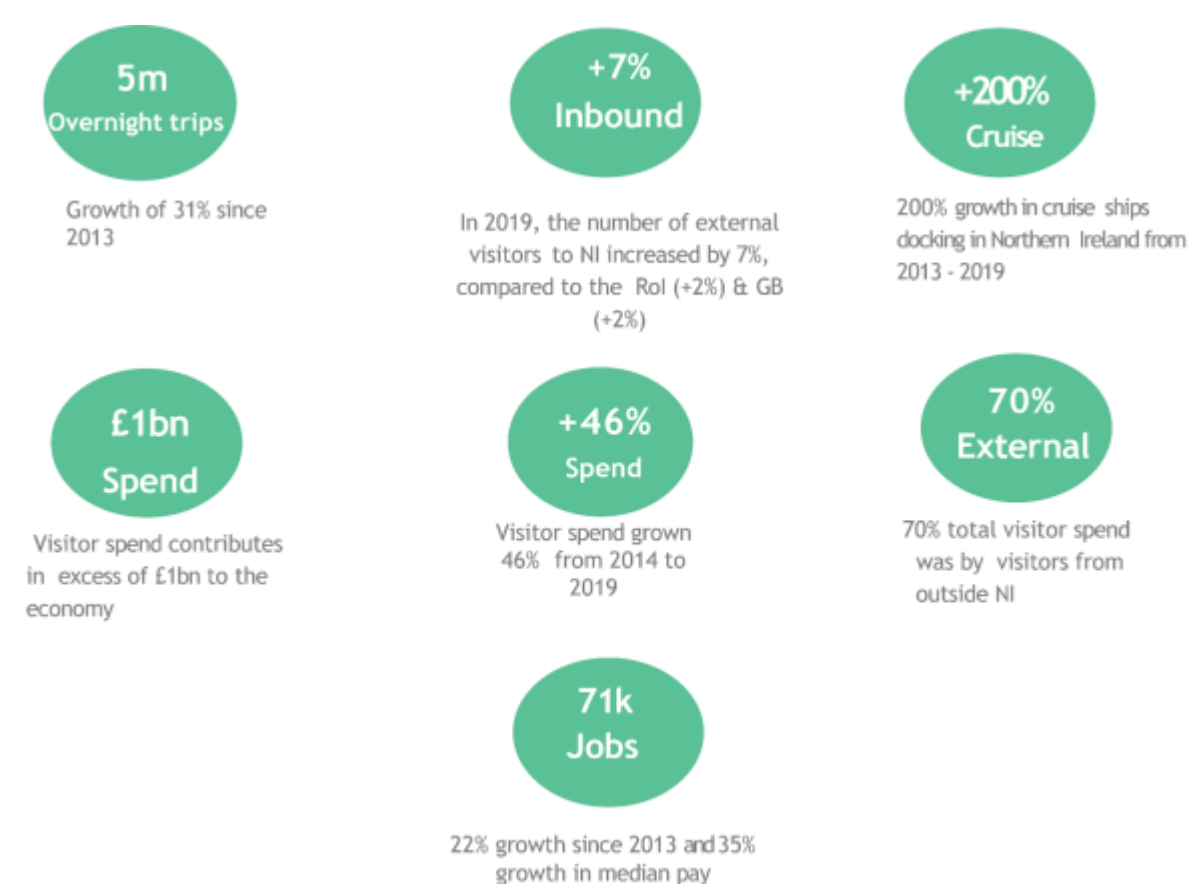
Introduction

NITA welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the NI Affairs Committee in regard of the impact of the introduction of the ETA, included in the Borders and Nationalities Bill on tourism in Northern Ireland.

The NI Tourism Alliance, established in 2018 and led by industry, is the voice for tourism and travel in Northern Ireland with members spanning all sectors of the tourism economy. An overview of our work and our members is included at the end of this document.

Tourism – A Key Economic Driver

Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, tourism has been one of the most resilient and successful parts of the local economy surpassing returns on investment made in other industrial sectors and outpacing the average in job creation. 2019 was a record breaking year for Tourism which generated over £1bn in direct visitor spend and supported over 72,000 jobs.



Impact of Pandemic on Tourism

Tourism businesses have been at the forefront of the catastrophic economic impact of Covid-19. In effect, the tourism industry lost 12 months of trading during the 24 months of the pandemic. It is estimated that the industry and therefore the economy will have lost over £1bn in visitor spend during that period.

Tourism businesses have shown resilience, innovation and agility to come through the pandemic and there is an ambition to build back stronger, however with unprecedented levels of debt, significantly reduced reserves and increasing costs the industry has its challenges to overcome in order to recover and grow.



Borders and Nationalities Bill – Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) and the implications for Tourism

The UK Government are in the process of passing the ['Nationalities and Borders Bill'](#).

The bill is now at the consideration of amendments stage and the House of Commons is considering the amendments made by the House of Lords. Part of this legislation proposes visa requirement for non-British and Irish nationals to cross the border in Ireland something which the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) and other tourism bodies across the island of Ireland believe will be hugely detrimental to tourism on the island.

Northern Ireland is promoted internationally by Tourism Ireland, as part of the Island of Ireland destination, and the majority of overseas visitors to Northern Ireland arrive via Dublin.

Typically, non-GB overseas tourists who travel to Northern Ireland (those that spend at least one night in Northern Ireland):

- 60% spend nights in both Northern Ireland and Ireland
- 13% spend nights only in Northern Ireland but access via a port in Ireland

Bill summary

The bill is primarily an asylum and immigration bill, however the new legislation extends to short visits into the UK, so tourists will have to comply.

As it stands all non-visa nationals (NVNs) visitors into the UK, who do not hold British or Irish citizenship, will have to apply for an ETA. It is planned that this be fully operational by the start of 2025. There will be a charge attached to this, and once issued, the ETA will entitle the holder to one visit into the UK. Further details as to the exact cost and means of application/issuing are, as yet, unclear. How an approved ETA would be validated for single entry on the Irish border is also unclear.

Industry concerns

The tourism industry in Northern Ireland and across the island have not been consulted at any stage in this process despite being key stakeholders. Introducing an ETA requirement to cross the border in Ireland is of huge significance to our industry, yet in spite of this we see none of our concerns taken on board thus far. This briefing details some of the many ways in which this proposal impacts the tourism industry and the reasons we consider it to be unworkable. We welcome a revision of the proposed legislation and ongoing engagement with key voices in our industry.

Our concerns are echoed by Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland and the Irish government has also been outspoken in its desire to see proposals for an ETA requirement on the island of Ireland quashed.

Various industry partners have studied and costed the potential impact of this proposal and their findings are extremely concerning for an industry already on its knees after the pandemic.

This briefing outlines a summary of these findings

Difficulty to implement

Northern Ireland is unique in that it is the only part of the UK that shares a land border with another state. There are over 300 crossing points on this border. It seamlessly sits on fields, villages, streets and bridges. A requirement to have an ETA for every single crossing could run into hundreds of pounds per day for tourists or non-British or Irish residents of Republic of Ireland (RoI) on the border. It would be impossible (and undesirable) to validate every crossing making the proposed legislation totally unworkable.

Independent travellers frequently cross the border multiple times whether travelling by rental car or bus. It would be common to go through the north via Derry/Londonderry to Donegal and back via Belfast to Dublin. A relatively standard itinerary such as this would require multiple single-entry ETAs and would be a significant extra expense as well as an administrative and psychological deterrent to tourism.

There are many non-Irish EU nationals employed in the tourism sector in the RoI including, but not limited to coach drivers. They are employed and legally resident in RoI, yet their job requires crossing the border, sometimes multiple times per day. Under the proposed scheme they would require a separate ETA for every entry. In addition to these there are the tours which travel to Ireland from mainland Europe, for whom this will be equally unworkable. In an area already experiencing a skills shortage this could prove devastating.

Tourism Ireland research has continually confirmed that hassle and expense are key deterrents for travellers when choosing their holiday destination, therefore consumer perception on ease of travel is paramount. In addition to the bureaucracy and cost we must also consider the threat of prosecution of noncompliance as a significant deterrent. If implemented in its current form this will be expensive and unclear and tourists may likely decide not to bother with the northern part of any itinerary. Furthermore, with fuel costs, inflation and now ETA, the risk is that many global tour operators will exclude Belfast and NI from their itineraries as no longer a feasible option.

The experience of differing regulations and requirements under covid was an example of an administrative, financial and psychological border to free travel and the industry suffered from mass cancellations from tour operators.

Another factor to be considered is the communication element. Entry requirements for any country are generally given when travel is booked into the port of entry. Travellers arriving in to the RoI will not be given this information and so many, especially independent travellers, may be unaware of the requirements and find themselves inadvertently having broken the law. Obviously, this is something we must try and avoid.

Financial implications

NITA and industry partners have costed the implication of the ETA some of those findings are outlined below. Should further information be required this can be provided.

- On an industry-wide level we estimate that the introduction and associated costs of the ETA for NVNs could impact over half a million visitors and put £160.6m visitor spend at risk (based on 2019 NISRA figures).
- In addition, 9% of residents in the RoI are not Irish citizens but are legally resident due to EU membership. Under this proposal they will require an ETA every time they cross the border. Based on 2019 visitor numbers (NISRA) this could impact up to 68,000 visitors from RoI putting around **£13M at risk** from this alone. This is a conservative estimate as there was a significant (estimated ~50%) increase in these numbers during the pandemic
- Visit Belfast handled 867,300 visitor enquiries through its Visitor Information Centres in 2019/20. 48% (416,000) of those enquiries were from outside the common travel area with many coming into the city via Dublin due to international air access - or as part of an all-island trip.
- For the City of Derry, due to its proximity to the border, more than 30% of its visitors are from outside the CTA, well above the national average for NI. Derry/Londonderry, which is a former (and the first ever) UK City of Culture, could see the years of hard work and innovation which went into establishing it as a go-to place in the field of tourism put at risk due to uncertainty and bureaucracy resulting from the ETA and its unworkability.
- Research from one of NI's key attractions forecasts that an estimated 25% of visitors from outside the Common Travel Area would not travel to Northern Ireland should ETA be a requirement. The combination of the forecasted **drop of both Irish-resident and international visitors totals 15%**, bringing numbers down from 800,000 to 681,920 visitors. This is enormous.
- Based on the economic impact of this aforementioned key attraction contributing £430m in additional spend in its first 10 years, this potential 15% drop in visitors

would mean a **loss of approx £10million** in additional spend to the NI economy in financial year 2024/25

- Custodian of other key attractions have also put forward their concerns, noting that, in 2019 of the 998,000 visitors to one of their main sites, 78% were out of state, with significant number entering NI from RoI. It has also been noted that attractions close to the border may feel an even greater impact than that foreseen by the industry in general. Another factor giving them cause for concern is the impact this would have on volunteers, on which many attractions depend, and for whom Northern Ireland in general, and especially areas close to the border, may become a less attractive destination.
- Business tourism is a growing sector and Visit Belfast has advised that on average (5 years pre-pandemic), 35% of all inbound conferences secured for Belfast have been European and international events providing crucial midweek and year-round business for the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of these delegates enter via Dublin due to limited direct flight access into Belfast from international business source markets.
- ETA will significantly impact our ability to compete for international business tourism at a time when Northern Ireland has just launched an [ambitious 10 year strategy for growth in business tourism to the region](#). The sales cycle for international conferences can be 3-5 years in advance so despite the legislation not coming into effect by 2025, it will impact sales prospects now and is a huge risk for international business bids.

Precedent

The Home Office currently have an exemption to existing immigration policy for visitors to NI. EU visitors are no longer able to travel to the UK on an EU ID card however, the Home Office have made an exemption permitting visitors holding only an EU ID card to cross the land border from RoI to NI. This means that the legal entry requirements for entry into the UK are different for ports and for the land border with RoI. This is a sensible and enforceable policy which the tourism industry would like to see replicated in this case.

Proposed action

In line with other exemptions which reflect specific geographic nature of the island of Ireland and the fact that Northern Ireland is promoted internationally as part of the Island of Ireland destination we would like to see an ETA exemption for all those travelling by land to Northern Ireland via the Republic of Ireland for the purposes of tourism/ business/ work/ medical treatment.

About NITA

NITA's role, as the single representative body for the tourism and travel industry in Northern Ireland, is to represent our members and ensure the voice of industry is listened to, to shape the future growth of tourism and lobbying at all levels of government and beyond to raise awareness of and contributing to the solution of major strategic issues affecting the industry, which include everything from the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK's exit from the European Union, the impact of APD, VAT, access to talent and skills development and the ongoing uncertainty of the economic climate to the industry's overall competitiveness and growth.

We work closely with the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland and provide a conduit to the breadth of sectors that make up the Tourism & Travel economy. More recently we have been engaging with Department of Health and The Executive Office regarding Covid-19 regulations, guidance and reopening. NITA were part of the Tourism

Recovery Steering Group established by Minister Dodds in response to the decimating impact of Covid-19 to the tourism & travel industry.

In the UK, we are part of the Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group and the Tourism Industry Council ensuring that the challenges we face are understood and considered in policy developed and delivered through UK Government departments.

Members:

Titanic Belfast; Visit Belfast; National Trust; Belfast City Airport; Aer Lingus; British Airways; City of Derry Airport; Visit Derry; Belfast Harbour; Fermanagh Lakelands; Tour Guides NI; NI Tour Guides Association; Hinch Distillery; Titanic Distillers; Visit West Belfast; NI Hotels Federation; Hillsborough Castle; National Museums Northern Ireland; ABTA; Bus and Coach NI; ICC Belfast

Associate Members

Belfast Metropolitan College; Queens University Belfast; Translink; Belfast City Council; Derry and Strabane District Council; Ards and North Down Borough Council; Newry and Mourne District Council; Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Strategic Partners

Tourism NI; Tourism Ireland

Written evidence submitted by Tourism NI, related to Tourism and the Common Travel Area non-inquiry Committee business (TCT0001)

Potential Impact of the Nationality and Borders Bill on Tourism in Northern Ireland

The realisation of the proposed Nationality and Borders Bill has the potential to be damaging to the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. While there may be no routine checks planned on the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, if this becomes a legal requirement, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, who are responsible for the marketing of the Island of Ireland overseas, will have to share that information with prospective visitors, including on our websites Discovernorthernireland.com and Ireland.com. We will also need to advise all overseas tour operators and their agents who feature Northern Ireland in their tour programmes.

Tourism is a vital industry for the Northern Ireland economy. Prior to COVID-19, 2019 was the best year ever for tourism to Northern Ireland, when we welcomed 2.245 million overseas visitors, who spent £589 million during their time here, supporting 70,800 jobs. Since 2010, there has been a +57% growth in overseas tourists to Northern Ireland. This includes growth from the following impacted markets:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|
| - | North America | +90% |
| - | Mainland Europe | +49% |
| - | Other Areas | +108% |

Also since 2010, we have seen growth of +85% in overseas tourist revenue as follows:

- North America +92%
- Mainland Europe +32%
- Other Areas +85%

The growth in this business has been hard won. We have had to overcome decades of negative international publicity about Northern Ireland and convince tour operators and agents who have been successfully selling traditional itineraries of the Republic of Ireland to include Northern Ireland within their programmes. The requirement for potential visitors to complete an ETA along with the added cost, irrespective of how quick and inexpensive that might be, will be a deterrent and will discourage people from travelling north of the border as part of their trip to the island of Ireland.

The majority of overseas visitors to Northern Ireland arrive on the island of Ireland via Dublin. Typically, amongst non-GB overseas tourists who travel to Northern Ireland (those that spend at least one night in Northern Ireland):

- 60% spend nights in both Northern Ireland and Ireland
- 13% spend nights only in Northern Ireland but access via a port in Ireland

Tourism Ireland research has continually confirmed that hassle and expense are key deterrents for travellers when choosing their holiday destination, therefore consumer perception on ease of travel is paramount. For example, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland's experiences on communicating the different Covid-19 entry requirements for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to tour operators, demonstrated that any additional administration resulted in cancellations and lost business.

The impact of introducing an ETA is not limited to potential impact on visitors from overseas, According to the Republic of Ireland's latest published Census of Population (2016), of the 4.76 million population, 535,475 were non-Irish nationals from 200 nations. Of these, 103,113 were from the UK leaving 432,362, representing 9% of the Irish population. This therefore reflects a significant proportion of the resident Irish population who could be directly impacted by the Bill if wishing or requiring to travel to Northern Ireland depending on their visa, work permit status etc.

Attracting visitors from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland has not been without its challenges. In 2016 research undertaken by Tourism NI concluded that of all the short breaks taken by ROI residents on the island of Ireland, less than 3% were taken in Northern Ireland.

Over the course of the past 5 years that has risen to almost 9%, in part due to the ease of access to Northern Ireland during the pandemic period. Research undertaken in 2021 has shown that over 50% of those visiting NI from the Republic had done so for the very first time. Tourism NI believe that there is potential to grow this market further but requiring 9% of the population to be in possession of an ETA will act as a deterrent to that growth.

Written evidence submitted by Tourism Ireland, related to Tourism and the Common Travel Area non-inquiry Committee business (TCT0003)

Opening Statement by Tourism Ireland's Director of Corporate Services, Policy and Northern Ireland to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

Introduction and background

Tourism Ireland is the organisation responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a leading holiday destination. Our principal objectives are to increase tourism to the island of Ireland and to support Northern Ireland to realise its tourism potential. We operate in over 21 markets around the world and roll out world-class global marketing campaigns for Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland. We work closely with Tourism Northern Ireland to ensure that our promotional themes align with their development priorities for the industry. This is a very integrated and collaborative approach.

Importance of tourism to Northern Ireland

Tourism is a vital industry for Northern Ireland as it is a significant driver of economic growth. Prior to COVID-19, 2019 was the best year ever for tourism to Northern Ireland, when we welcomed 2.245 million overseas visitors, who spent £589 million during their time here, supporting around 71,000 jobs.

Since Tourism Ireland came into operation in 2002, almost 32 million overseas tourists have come to Northern Ireland, whose visits have generated more than £7.2 billion generated for the Northern Ireland economy. Visitors from non-GB markets accounted for 9.5 million, or 30%, of those tourists and £2.7 billion in revenue.

Impact of COVID-19 on tourism

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on global travel and has presented a completely unprecedented and extremely serious situation for our industry. Every destination across the globe has experienced the impact of COVID-19 and now, as we emerge from the pandemic, is seeking its share of the recovery. The competition in the international marketplace to attract tourists is more challenging than ever. Keeping Northern Ireland front and centre in consumers' minds, and making it as easy as possible for them to choose Northern Ireland, is therefore critical.

Nationality and Borders Bill

As Tourism Ireland is responsible for promoting the island of Ireland – including Northern Ireland – overseas, we feel it is important that we voice our concerns about the impact this bill could have on overseas tourism to Northern Ireland.

Although British and Irish citizens (in line with Common Travel Area principles), and non-British and non-Irish citizens who already have a visa for the UK or other kinds of immigration permission, will not need an ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation), we believe the realisation of this bill has the potential to be very damaging. Everyone outside the aforementioned categories will need to apply for an ETA before travelling to the UK, including for 'local

journeys' from within the CTA. For example, a Polish coach driver living in Co Louth who drives coach tour groups from Dublin to Belfast would require an ETA to cross the border, in order to comply with the law. A French person working in a hotel in Derry-Londonderry, but living in Co Donegal, would require an ETA to go to work.

Under the proposed rules, any non-Irish / non-British citizen who is encountered by the authorities in Northern Ireland without an ETA or other permission to be in the UK would be committing a criminal offence and would be subject to immigration enforcement.

While there may be no routine checks on the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, if this becomes a legal requirement, Tourism Ireland will have to share that information with prospective visitors, including on our international website, Ireland.com. We will also need to advise all overseas tour operators who feature Northern Ireland in their tour programmes.

The majority of overseas visitors to Northern Ireland arrive on the island of Ireland via Dublin. In 2019, most (62%) non-GB tourists came through the Republic of Ireland and their visits delivered £109 million to the Northern Ireland economy (or half of the non-GB revenue). Two-thirds, or 68%, of Northern Ireland holidaymakers from markets other than Great Britain use the Republic of Ireland as their point of entry (77% from North America, 68% from Mainland Europe and 54% from other areas). In fact, Dublin Airport provides an alternative gateway to Northern Ireland, due to its proximity, share of Northern Ireland resident traffic and its route network, with direct flights from 180 locations.

Typically, the further a tourist travels to get to a destination, the longer they stay and the more they spend. GB visitors to Northern Ireland have a shorter average stay (3.9 nights) and lower average spend (£253) than other tourists (5.4 nights and £281).

Having to apply online for pre-travel clearance in order to cross the border would add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and complexity. Tourism Ireland research has continually confirmed that hassle and expense are key deterrents for travellers when choosing their holiday destination. For example, over the past two years, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland's experiences in communicating the different COVID-19 entry requirements for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to tour operators demonstrated that any additional administration resulted in cancellations and lost business.

MCCP research

Earlier this month, Tourism Ireland commissioned research to assess the awareness and perceived tourism impact of the proposed bill. The research was conducted by MCCP and involved interviews with both tourism industry professionals and overseas tour operators.

The research showed that, although the cost of the implementation of the proposed bill is not yet known, the tour operators and industry foresee an immediate drop in visits to Northern Ireland, as it will bring increased cost and administrative burdens which will be passed on to the traveller.

Northern Ireland, unlike other parts of the UK, relies more on non-domestic visitors and on visitors coming via Dublin as the main gateway. Northern Ireland is an important part of an itinerary but is not a stand-alone destination for many.

Industry and tour operators interviewed for this research made it clear that adding this barrier to a currently seamless offer is likely to strike Northern Ireland off itineraries. The 'unity' of the Tourism Ireland brand and island of Ireland proposition will be fractured after so much investment and many successful years.

The proposed bill has the potential to damage our reputation. Among those interviewed, it is seen as a step backwards, at a time when tourism needs support and forward momentum. Northern Ireland will become more isolated and become a harder sell, as an ETA is seen as a border check. Tour operators will want to adhere to the law, even if it will not be border controlled, and it is feared that any news of potential arrests will present perceptions that it is unsafe and not easy to travel to Northern Ireland.

In addition, the bill is seen by the industry as an additional bureaucratic burden that does not give due consideration to the economic impact on Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

The realisation of the proposed Nationality and Borders Bill has the potential to be extremely damaging for overseas tourism to Northern Ireland. Our research highlights that there are significant concerns amongst industry and tour operators and certainty is urgently needed.

Since it came into operation, Tourism Ireland has invested over £1 billion in marketing the island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, overseas. This investment – from the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly – has been made on the basis of unrestricted access across the island. If this bill is passed, the island of Ireland proposition will be fractured after so much investment and many successful years.

If the bill is passed, clear communication, clarity on its implementation and a simple application process will be required.

I ask members of this committee to consider the risks associated with this bill and look at mitigation options. It is vital for the future of the Northern Ireland tourism sector that all efforts are made to keep travel from overseas as hassle-free as possible.

THE POTENTIAL TOURISM IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED UK NATIONALITIES AND BORDERS BILL (Presentation for Tourism Ireland by MCCP, the Independent Strategy Agency)

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Assess the awareness and perceived tourism impact of the proposed UK Nationality and Borders Bill which includes the requirement for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) to enter the UK and Northern Ireland.

Who we spoke to

- 12 x in-depth interviews (15-20 minutes)
- Across both industry and tour operators
- Locations in Europe and North America
- Conducted w/c 4th April – 12th April 2022
- Moderators: Kay McCarthy and Richard O'Donnell

Number	Profile	Location
1	Industry professional	Ireland
2	Industry professional	Ireland
3	Industry professional	Northern Ireland
4	Industry professional	Northern Ireland
5	Tour operator	France
6	Tour operator	France
7	Tour operator	USA
8	Tour operator	Canada
9	Tour operator	USA
10	Tour operator	USA
11	Tour operator	Germany
12	Tour operator	Global

2. AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

LOW AWARENESS, CONTEXT IS AN INDUSTRY IN SEVERE RECOVERY MODE

- **Now focussed and in recovery mode:** The tourism sector is in the midst of recovery in the wake of Brexit and Covid-19 disruptions, so not looking as far out as 2024, even though this will impact some travellers and operators very shortly. Some feel it is a bit under the radar.
- **Good news is required, not confusion or uncertainty:** An optimistic pressure now exists for success in 2023 and forecasting through to 2024/25 –but all *without* considering this Nationality and Borders Bill.
- The absence of detail on how it will work, how it will be managed, and associated costs is **adding more uncertainty** at a time where recovery and good news are needed.
- Industry experts appear more informed than tour operators of the Bill's existence and there is consensus between both groups that the **traveller is not at all aware of this change**.
- Several operators did not know much about it, apart from some communication from Tourism Ireland.

“Tourism is so busy – planning ahead is key and this issue could be in danger of slipping through” (Industry)

“We need good news and clarity, more uncertainty is fuelling concern and this will impact on decisions today that are being made for 2024” (Industry)

THE BILL IS VIEWED AS A DEVASTATING MOVE FOR TOURISM ON A NUMBER OF LEVELS

- The economic impact: Even though the cost and implementation plan is not known, tour operators and industry foresee an immediate drop in visits to Northern Ireland, as this regulation will bring increased cost and administrative burdens which will be passed on to the traveller.
- Northern Ireland, unlike other parts of the UK, relies more on non-domestic visitors and on visitors coming into Ireland via the Dublin as the main gateway.
- Northern Ireland is an important part of an exciting itinerary but is not a stand-alone destination from many.
- Adding complexity: Adding in a barrier to a seamless offer is likely to strike Northern Ireland off an itinerary as it is often a one or two-day trip for many. For some (e.g. long-haul travellers who include Ireland as part of a European trip), the island of Ireland could be struck off, as it will increase the cost and hassle of the trip and make it less competitive versus other European destinations.

*“Exceptionally detrimental, this is a shame, we’re only growing back business post-Covid ”
(Tour operator)*

“Island of Ireland has a great proposition – now people may have to forgo the North, this will have an impact on visitor numbers and the overall proposition will also suffer” (Industry)

TOURISM IRELAND’S BRAND AND REPUTATION WILL BE UNDERMINED

- ETA/Bill creates a marked difference between visitor requirements from one tourism market and another. Ireland being sold as an inclusive, single destination will be compromised.
- Tourism Ireland’s work along with Tourism Northern Ireland has been successful in the promotion and development of iconic attractions. It is felt that this work (investment) will be undermined by the introduction of the border bill, as it will put a barrier in place for both travellers and operators. It is seen as a step backwards at a time when the tourism industry needs support and forward momentum.
- Ease of travel is a key benefit for operators to promote and to travellers who want to get more options for their stay. This will no longer be the case.
- Tour operators will want to adhere to the law, even if it will not be border controlled, and it is feared that any news of potential arrests will present perceptions that it is unsafe and not easy to travel to Northern Ireland.

“We have been successful in promoting the Island of Ireland as one beautiful place with many different attractions, this will put a barrier for the traveller, they want the opportunity to visit all of it” (Tour operator)

DIVERGENCE OF REGULATIONS WILL BE DIVISIVE BETWEEN TOURISM MARKETS, IMPEDING EASE OF CROSS SELL

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND - may be more insulated from the Bill impact:

- Main focus destination –larger offering, longer stays
- Tourists often holiday close to where they arrive
- EU travel freedoms
- Currency convenience
- Longer tourism history –but less of a diversified offering without Northern Ireland

NORTHERN IRELAND - Northern Ireland will become a more difficult sell:

- Minor/short stay destination easy to ignore by travellers
- Tour operators may reduce promotion of NI
- Electronic border = unwelcome psychological barrier
- Resurgence of unpleasant Troubles' memories and safety issues
- Currency difference
- Unravelling of all island co-operation benefits

BILL IS SEEN AS A BUREAUCRATICAL BURDEN WITHOUT DUE CONSIDERATION OF ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT ON NI

- Tour operators distinguish between the appeal of visiting a country and the administration negatives that authorities may impose
- Ireland-Northern Ireland destination is unique and operational ease is important to successful collaboration and the tourism experience
- Some European operators still maintain frustration towards Brexit and see this Bill as a further political hindrance for the sector
- If the ETA requirement does not equate to a request (an actual border check), it becomes a pointless (and costly) obligation
- Tour operators fear the UK is attempting to enforce illogical tourism procedures in Ireland disguised as migration/asylum control plans

“The UK just wants money from everywhere, money grabbing, which it must do when it has isolated itself from Europe” (Tour operator)

“Bad thing, Brexit has not been a good point, French have got attitude to travel to places that are safe and easy... this ETA is not a good way” (Tour operator)

3. THOSE THAT WILL BE IMPACTED MOST

PERCEIVED IMPACT ON JOURNEY TYPE

- EUROPEAN: Potential for significant impact
- SPONTANEOUS: Potential for significant impact
- LONG HAUL: Potential for moderate impact

EUROPEAN VISITORS ARE BETTER POSITIONED TO CHOOSE ELSEWHERE

- Tour operators view the European tourist market as very competitive for Ireland
- As there are currently no 'close' European destinations with such a proposed ETA process, any additional administration provides an easy reason to choose an alternative 'sunnier place to visit' instead
- In addition, proportionately, Europeans will find it difficult to justify an ETA fee on top of a cheap flight for a short break
- Bitterness still exists for some Europeans towards Brexit and the UK authorities' approaches to doing business and travel; another barrier is not a helpful move

"While cost of this ETA is as yet unknown, it would be difficult to proportionately justify such a cost against an inexpensive flight for a weekend to Belfast" (Tour operator)

SOCIAL, SPONTANEOUS AND SHORT- TERM TRAVEL WILL BE PROHIBITIVE

- Spontaneity of travel from the Republic to Northern Ireland will be immediately affected
- The notable 9% of Irish residents, but non-citizens, that want to travel to Northern Ireland will be affected
- last minute weekends away to Northern Ireland or concerts for non-Irish/non-UK passport holders are expected to be too complex under ETA, to make it worth it
- Tour operators will be prohibited from taking spontaneous advantages for their customers, on events, special offers north of the border

"For tourists that want to travel on a whim to Northern Ireland, it will have a massive impact on this." (Industry)

ETA COULD BE MORE MANAGEABLE WITH LONG-HAUL TRAVEL

Tour operators in locations such as North America are somewhat more accepting of this proposed policy, once it is within reason in terms of cost, online process etc.

- Long-haul destinations are part of a more involved travel booking process including other 'paperwork' elements, all of which are usually planned well in advance
- This new authorisation completion could become just a small part of the bigger process

- However the irrational requirement for an ETA vs 'no request' at the destination (no actual border checkpoint), is expected to drive complaints over the actual logic of the system and may deter travel in the end

“For long haul travel, tourists are used to filling out a lot of forms so this will probably end up being just another thing to do” (Tour operator)

PERCEIVED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TRAVELLER TYPE

- FAMILIES: Unjustified (multiple) expense and effort
- OLDER TRAVELLERS: Anxiety and unnecessary hassle
- BUSINESS TRAVEL: Uncertainty and doubt
- OPERATORS: Complexity, increase costs and admin

FAMILIES WILL BE EXPOSED TO UNJUSTIFIED EXPENSE AND EFFORT

- Identification cards' option for EEA citizens for cross-border travel is a clear advantage for practical and cost-conscious families
- Whether from Europe or elsewhere, any additional cost in multiples for a family trip, is a psychological barrier to travel
- Northern Ireland has a smaller tourism offering so an easily avoidable destination if such a short trip proportionately does not justify the expense or hassle of an ETA
- Families (particularly European) will favour the Republic of
- Ireland over Northern Ireland; or the Schengen zone

“You are forcing families to pay unnecessary money ... multiple ETA fees add up for a family” (Tour operator)

OLDER TRAVELLERS VULNERABLE TO ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Older travellers benefit and rely on the security, re-assurance and convenience of using tour operators
- Additional costs or processes will need to be carefully managed with, and communicated, to these more anxious customers
- More paperwork or a new online task pre-travel, may encourage older travellers to avoid this destination in order to avoid the uncertainty and anxiety

“What happens if an older traveller hasn't completed it correctly or forgotten to do it, it would create a lot of anxiety on their trip if they realised they didn't have it when we were crossing the border ” (Tour operator)

ETA COULD BE VERY DAMAGING TO BUSINESS TRAVEL

- For companies booking business conferences, an additional requirement like this would be a significant deterrent for fear of those attending being unaware of this requirement
- Additionally, business travellers in general are extra sensitive to additional requirements and hassle and ease of travel and doing business takes priority for them
- Again, this ETA in conjunction with continuing Brexit bitterness may endorse a business decision to travel elsewhere

“Business travellers are very sensitive to any additional requirements, they are more sensitive to the pain of organising a trip than most” (Industry)

SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS EXIST FOR TOUR OPERATORS

- The existing challenging labour market often requires non-CTA citizens to be responsible for both planned and un-planned cross- border travel. A new layer of costs and a procedure will need to be included by employers and tour operators to continue to include these workers on cross-border travel
- The introduction of an ETA will introduce unnecessary hassle for tour operators where passengers will seek information and guidance from their already stretched teams
- It is likely tour operators will start to bypass quick trips to Northern Ireland on their scheduled tours and potentially avoid promoting Northern Ireland in certain instances to avoid the hassle of tourists having to apply for an ETA

“For quick stops in the North, we would start to bypass these on our tours to avoid the hassle” (Tour Operator)

4. SUMMARY

IN SUMMARY:

1. There is undoubtedly poor awareness of this Bill, which is concerning for tourism as it will most likely change traveller behaviour, negatively affect Northern Ireland and cause wider economic implications
2. The ‘unity’ of the Tourism Ireland brand and island of Ireland proposition will be fractured after so much investment and many successful years, where Northern Ireland’s offering (albeit on a smaller scale) has become valuable
3. Northern Ireland will clearly become more isolated and become a harder sell; as an ETA is seen as a border check (even if it may not actually be requested which also causes frustration and confusion)
4. The assumed similarities to ESTA and the PLF forms will increase operational pressures (including cross-border worker concerns), costs and force product offering changes for tour operators etc.
5. Those travellers that can find easier and affordable alternatives – such as families, older visitors, business travellers, short-haul/European markets – are expected to vote first ‘with their feet’
6. FIT (independent) travellers will also be impacted and will require more advanced communication to ensure they are aware of requirements

7. The Bill is viewed as a lack of consideration of the vital impact of tourism to Northern Ireland
8. However, hope exists that Northern Ireland's and the industry's voices will emerge – that exemptions or allowances such as the recent passport adjustment for European travellers will be an option – although time is of the essence
9. If it is passed, clear communication, clarity on its implementation and a simple application process will be required
- 10.

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Tourism and the Common Travel Area, HC 1242

Wednesday 20 April 2022

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 20 April 2022.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Simon Hoare (Chair); Mr Gregory Campbell; Stephen Farry; Mary Kelly Foy; Sir Robert Goodwill; Claire Hanna; Fay Jones; Ian Paisley.

Questions 25 - 74

Witnesses

[II:](#) Kevin Foster MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Immigration and Future Borders, Home Office; Rachel Lloyd, Director, Borders, Visitors and International Migration, Home Office.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Kevin Foster MP and Rachel Lloyd.

Chair: Minister, good morning to you.

Kevin Foster: Good morning, Chair. How are you?

Chair: I am very well indeed. You are becoming a regular friend of this Committee, or a regular attender.

Kevin Foster: I welcome the Committee's interest in the work that we are doing. It is useful to be able to engage at this time rather than in future years when things are already in place.

Q25 **Chair:** Precisely. We will come on to that in a moment. This is not a game of bingo, by the way, but do these numbers mean anything to you: three, five, 32, two, 15 and two?

Kevin Foster: Not off the top of my head.

Chair: They were in a response to a written question from your Department to me yesterday. The following number of people have been prosecuted for entering the UK illegally via the Ireland and Northern Ireland land border: in 2017, there were three; in 2018, there were five; in 2019, there were 32; in 2020, there were two; in 2021, there were 15; and in 2022, I suppose up to the end of last month, there have been two cases.

Operation Gull's most recently published figures state that 775 irregular immigrants were intercepted travelling to or from Northern Ireland in 2015-16. Would you tell us what nut the Home Office is trying to crack with this? Why is there such a stark differential between people found under Operation Gull and the number then brought to prosecution?

Kevin Foster: First, let us look at why we are looking to bring in an ETA scheme. You were asking about the nut we are looking to crack; I would say that there are a number of factors. The first is improved border security. People will be cleared for travel before they depart rather than if, for example, you happen to decline them at the border and then remove them afterwards. That is in relation to travel into the UK from outside the CTA, of course. There are no checks on the land border; we have been very clear on that point.

What does that give operators? We move away from operators at check-in around the world having to acquaint themselves with a raft of UK immigration statuses and documents. The ETA system not only clears people for travel who are non-visa nationals, but can confirm wider immigration statuses, so people are no longer having to present UK documents to get permission to travel.



There is also wider, better customer service. Most people have an e-gate-style arrival at an airport, rather than having to talk to an immigration officer about their status, for example. There are things like ending the need to collect vignettes from a visa application centre. You will have been closely following the debates around the Ukraine scheme recently. We recognise the advantages that that type of system brings, particularly in its ultimate iterations—potentially having fully documentless travel, although people travelling purely on facial and finger biometrics is probably some years away.

Is this a proportionate thing that we are looking to do? We can look at what comparable nations are doing. The United States already has ESTA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand have similar systems, and the EU's Schengen zone is going down the path of a very similar system of ETIAS, which will be very similar to what we are doing with ETA. We believe it would be rather odd, if others had looked at this and come to the same conclusion, to conclude that this was not worth doing.

Q26 Chair: You will be aware that when you very kindly came to give us evidence on citizenship, our report and our rebuttal to your Department's reply to it said in essence that the Home Office needed to have a deeper and more sensitive understanding—I am slightly paraphrasing—in its operation with regard to the island of Ireland, and not to deal with things from the island of Ireland as we do with other parts of the world.

We have just heard from leaders of the tourism bodies. There has been no engagement from your Department with them on this prior to publication of the Bill and its progress through Parliament. A tiny number of tourists who arrive in the Republic will then go on to visit GB, but a huge number go across from the Republic as part of a mixed trip into Northern Ireland. I can understand—I think the whole Committee understands—the need for border security, but you and the Department have stated that this piece of paper is not going to be examined by anybody.

Kevin Foster: It will not be a piece of paper, Chair. In most cases, it will just be an electronic record.

Q27 Chair: A metaphorical piece of paper. It is not going to be examined by anybody on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A tiny percentage of people who arrive in the Republic and go to Northern Ireland will then go on to GB, either from Belfast or from Dublin. I go back to the initial question: what is the nut you are trying to crack? The industry markets itself as a "visit the island of Ireland" experience, as a totality. It is an industry that has been hammered as a result of the pandemic. It needs this like a hole in the head.

Kevin Foster: First, I would point out that our immigration system operates on a UK-wide basis. It does not have separate rules between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It has always been the case that those who cross the land border need to do so in accordance with UK



immigration rules. Our enforcement is proportionate and reflects that, but similarly there are not passport checks or immigration checks on flights between Belfast and Edinburgh, for example, because people are travelling within the UK; they are not crossing an international border or a migration border.

We have already had this. For example, if someone is a visa national—our lists are very similar, it has to be said—and gets a visa for the south, they also need to apply for a visa for the north. Again, we are proportionate in what enforcement we have in place. If someone is encountered in Northern Ireland and is not in accordance with our immigration rules—if they do not have a visitor visa when they are required to have one—then appropriate enforcement action, proportionate to the circumstances, may be taken. This is not an entirely new concept.

Q28 Chair: The Bill is very explicit: if you are an aircraft operator, a ferry or a cruise ship, there is a £2,000 fine per person you are carrying without this metaphorical piece of paper. What about the coach driver, the minibus driver, the cab driver, the train operator or the public transport operator taking people across the border? Are you expecting them—

Kevin Foster: No. The carriage penalties apply to bringing people in via particular routes. I would not expect that to be something we would do or check at the border. Obviously, if people knowingly brought people into the UK while breaking immigration rules, for example if they brought visa nationals in, we might well need to have a conversation with those individuals about other types of penalties.

If the example you are thinking of giving is the road in Fermanagh that crosses the border about 14 times, but you would not know if you had crossed the border unless you were a particular expert in the county boundaries and the geography of the area—

Chair: As somebody who has driven the border, it is impossible to know.

Kevin Foster: Yes, it is impossible to know, but again what we would say is that the principle has been there for a long time and has worked fairly well. I would also point out that one of the benefits of ETA is that it is likely to reduce the number of visa nationals for the UK. I hope you will appreciate that I will not get into speculating on exactly how we do our assessments for visa national status, but there are already a number of countries for which people are likely to become ETA nationals who are currently visa nationals, and who are visa nationals for the south of Ireland as well.

We should not see this just as a barrier. For some people, it will mean moving away from filling in a full short-term visit visa application to doing something pretty quick, potentially on their phone, with a cost that is very different. They will only need to give basic information for a security



check; they will not need to tell us the purpose of their visit, how they will fund it and various other things.

Q29 **Chair:** Let us go back to those numbers. There were 775 irregular immigrants intercepted—"irregular immigrants" is the terminology used by Operation Gull—but the prosecutions were three, five, 32, two, 15 and two. Why is there such a discrepancy between the figures?

Kevin Foster: Again, our enforcement operations operate in particular ways. I would make the point that immigration enforcement operates within Northern Ireland, particularly at Belfast; it is not Border Force checking passports before people head towards the rest of the United Kingdom. For us, it is about having a modernised immigration system that is easier to work and operate and has a number of customer service benefits, as I have touched on, as well as overall border security benefits. As I say, we look at the fact that various comparable nations have implemented exactly this type of system already.

Q30 **Chair:** But it is not easier if you are an American citizen. Let us say you are bringing an extended family trip—which happens, as you know, at some considerable expense—to see the mother country, the homeland or whatever. People arrive and they want to do the whole experience.

Let us say you are taking a family party of 12. This is a cumulatively expensive thing to have. It is a new burden; it is something that you do not require now. You have no intention of coming into GB. You are a recognised tourist from the States, Canada or Australia, which are the three principal, though not exclusive, sources of foreign tourism. It is an extra burden and an additional cost that is likely to see a reduction in per capita spend on food, drink and visiting tourist attractions because it has taken a chunk out of the budget.

The tourism and business tourism sectors of the island of Ireland are healthy and growing. They have been hit very hard by the pandemic—which part of the world has not been? They need this like a kick in the privates, do they not?

Kevin Foster: I would be interested if you would apply that to the ETIAS system coming for the Schengen area as well, which the EU is implementing.

Q31 **Chair:** Do not forget that part of the narrative was that we are not a member of the EU so we can do things in our own way.

Kevin Foster: Absolutely. That is why we are looking at our friends in Australia, Canada, the United States and New Zealand for inspiration.

Chair: If we want to support the tourism sector of Northern Ireland rather than having people say, "I will come to Dublin. We can have a tailored package and just stay in the Republic. We will not go to Northern Ireland. We are not going to—"

Ian Paisley: They have been doing that for decades.



Chair: A lot have been.

Ian Paisley: No, most have. Tourism Ireland has failed to attract more and more people north when it should have. Northern Ireland has had to wrestle against that.

Chair: I know we had to abort the report because we got caught by the general election, but that is the marketing. It is not 100% of people who arrive in the Republic, but a significant number make cross-border day trips.

Ian Paisley: As a citizen of Northern Ireland and as a representative of Northern Ireland, I think you are over-egging the pudding.

Q32 **Chair:** Let me just ask the question of the Minister. We heard from two of our three witnesses that they thought that this would be detrimental to the tourism economy of Northern Ireland. If you embark upon discussions with them, is that something that you will take into account?

Kevin Foster: I very much note what Mr Paisley has just said and am interested to hear it.

What we would look at, which you touched on, Chair, is the fact that at considerable expense they have already arranged a trip. I would make the point that the ETA requirement would be a very small part of the cost; I would also point out that it is different if someone is a tourist as opposed to a resident. We had a very helpful conversation and appreciate the difference for residents of Ireland; there is a real difference when someone is resident in Ireland.

For example, if they are hiring a car they would already almost certainly be asked, "Are you planning to drive into the border areas? Are you planning to cross into Northern Ireland?" By the way, that also happens if you hire a car at Belfast: you get asked, "Are you planning to take this car into the south?", because of obvious issues around motor insurance. There are different rules and people may have to pay an extra supplement or other things.

In terms of this system, it is right to be clear that if you are coming into the UK, ETA applies unless you are, for example, a UK or an Irish citizen—again, an Irish citizen regardless of where you happen to live. We have had a productive conversation with the Irish Government about residents of Ireland; I accept that there is a very different position if you live in County Donegal, for example, with permanent residency or with an Irish long-term immigration status. I accept that that is different. You have planned a boat or a plane trip to Ireland as part of a holiday in which an operator can actually complete the ETA form for you.

Q33 **Chair:** Operators will be able to do it on people's behalf?

Kevin Foster: Yes, people can do it on your behalf, in the same way that most of us, when we fly now, will give advance passenger information



data to our airline. That is fairly common. Few of us would argue that it is a requirement that we should get rid of; most of us would say that it is a perfectly sensible thing to have in place.

Those are ways we have been working with engagement that can manage tourists coming in. It is certainly not an onerous requirement. For example, the US tourism economy seems to be doing perfectly well with this requirement in place and the European Union has come to its own assessment around Schengen as well.

We believe that it is proportionate, given how it can be simply filled in. If someone wants to come into the UK, is not covered by the exemption and needs this, then in most cases it would be something that they could do on their phone fairly quickly. It is not a full visa application. You do not have to tell us, "I want to go to the Giant's Causeway. This is where I am staying. This is the funding."

- Q34 **Chair:** That is helpful. You and I—and all of us, I am sure—will have rolled our eyes when we have heard Government Ministers at different times, when pressed about why they are not doing something that is obvious common sense, saying, "We have this frightful fear of being judicially reviewed. We therefore have to consult on these proposals, and that is going to add to the timeframe." Probably DEFRA is the prime culprit in having to do huge amounts of consultation on things that often seem blindingly obvious. Was there a reason why the Home Office did not consult tourism industry representatives on this proposal?

Kevin Foster: We have certainly engaged quite extensively with carriers. There are already some carriers running the system in shadow to experiment with how the dataflows work in their receipt of the data and our transmission of it. No decisions on whether anyone can fly are being taken based on that system, but a number of carriers are already running it in the background on a couple of routes to start getting an impression of how it works in real life and to make sure that the tech stands up as well. That has been effective.

Personally, I have met the Irish Government and representatives in relation to tourism. I also met the Irish ambassador recently. This is certainly not something that is all going to come in on 1 January next year; it will be as cohorts come, and we will shortly confirm who the cohorts will be. Our initial intent is that a cohort of some nationalities will become ETA nationals and then it will roll out until probably the end of 2024, which is when we would look for all to be covered by it. We had a very productive conversation with the Irish ambassador, who made some very fair and reasonable points, as did Dr Farry, about residents of Ireland and how we could make that work, because what we do not want is an exemption that is far more difficult to prove than it would be just to fill out an ETA form.

- Q35 **Chair:** Are you in a position to share with us what Dublin shared with you?



Kevin Foster: It would be for Dublin to speak for itself. It does not need me to do so, but certainly Ambassador O'Neill was very clear, rightly and strongly, as other members such as Dr Farry were, in the meeting we had about the particular issue for residents in Ireland. These are people who are living in Ireland one day and become an ETA national the next day. I appreciate that that is a very different position from someone planning a holiday or a boat or plane trip to Ireland, who can be advised when they are booking of a requirement that is in place. Some visa nationals have to take into account whether they are a visa national for the north as well as for the south; ditto the other way around.

The position was very strong. They expressed a wish for engagement around tourism. They have a view, which I understand, that they would rather it was done Great Britain-Ireland. They respect that, clearly, we are the United Kingdom Government; we are not the Great Britain Government. They made some very good and really constructive offers around working together, for example on residents, on how we could exchange data on citizens who might become ETA nationals but have an Irish immigration status and on how the position around EEA nationals can be thought through, given the free movement rights that apply in Ireland.

I accept that it is a very different position for someone who lives in Ireland, who would be resident one day and required to do this the next, and who could in day-to-day life be crossing the border a number of times, as opposed to someone planning a trip or a holiday where they could book it. To be clear, our concession would apply across the whole UK, not just to travel to Northern Ireland.

Q36 **Chair:** You would see that as a work in progress: "Watch this space."

Kevin Foster: As I say, our default is that people will need to have it, but if we can get a good data-sharing arrangement with the Irish Government around Irish residents—we have already worked together on a GB-Ireland visa in relation to Indian and Chinese nationals and on a number of other areas very productively—it is a conversation we can have. But we want it to be clear how people can comply, so that we do not get inadvertent non-compliance or people having to spend a lot of time proving that an exemption applies to them.

Q37 **Chair:** Let me very briefly go back to the pre-legislative consultation. You mentioned that you have had some meetings with carriers, with Dublin and with Ambassador O'Neill. John McGrillen, chief executive officer of Tourism NI, Shane Clarke, director of corporate services, policy and Northern Ireland at Tourism Ireland, and Dr Joanne Stuart OBE, chief executive officer of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance, have had no engagement whatever.

Kevin Foster: Certainly we would be happy to engage. What I would also say is that the universal permission to travel was included in our



manifesto, so this has been coming for some time; it should not have come as a big surprise to people.

Q38 Chair: You know as well as I do, Minister, that there are lots of things in our manifesto. The manifesto takes on totemic proportions on some things, but less so on others.

Kevin Foster: We are engaging with the sector and the industry more widely. We appreciate that there are nuanced points to go through in this area.

Q39 Chair: But you are not. With the greatest of respect, you have not engaged with those three organisations.

Kevin Foster: We are certainly happy to do so, Chair, and we will certainly pick up the point, but as I say, this type of system is becoming common around the world. Most of Europe will soon be covered by one; the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are already covered; and other countries we know are looking to go down this path, given the quite significant customer service benefits that it brings, particularly at airports on arrival and for those who switch from being visa nationals to non-visa nationals.

Chair: I just find it strange that in an area of the Northern Irish economy that is important, which is tourism, nobody in your Department reached out to those bodies to find out what their views, concerns or ideas might be before the Bill was passed.

Mr Campbell: Minister, the Chair alluded to the previous issue that we raised. You will probably be pleased to know that I will not raise passports with you today, but I will in future—we will come back to it.

Chair: That is a “watch this space” one.

Q40 Mr Campbell: Yes, until we get a satisfactory result.

Minister, you have been very clear on the need to try to move to a productive working relationship so that this system works satisfactorily. There are two things. Let us say that there are people in the Republic who are not Irish citizens or UK citizens and have arrived over the past 10 or 15 years from various countries. How would they be affected if they work in Northern Ireland on a regular basis and are crossing the border daily?

Kevin Foster: If they are working in Northern Ireland, they will almost certainly have a permission under the UK immigration system to be able to work—that might be either those protected under the withdrawal agreement or other cohorts. If you have permission to work in Northern Ireland, it is almost certain that you already have an immigration permission and would therefore not need to apply separately for an ETA.

Q41 Mr Campbell: What about people who are in similar circumstances to the group we have just discussed, but are now being offered a job in



Northern Ireland? In other words, they are not the same as the first cadre we talked about: they are now beginning to work in Northern Ireland. Would they have to fill out an ETA?

Kevin Foster: If someone is being offered a job, they would almost certainly need to get an appropriate permission to work in Northern Ireland. You cannot work as a visitor; there is some limited paid permitted engagement, but I do not think that that is what we are talking about in this instance. If someone has been offered a permanent job in Northern Ireland, they would need to seek permission or have the right to work—clearly Irish nationals have the full right to apply and the points-based system does not apply to them. For the sake of argument, where someone is offered a job in Northern Ireland who applied for a skilled worker visa or the appropriate visa to take up that job, if they have a UK immigration permission, they would not need to apply for an ETA on top.

Mr Campbell: On the wider issue about inward tourism, which the Chair and others have alluded to, you have set aside the business of checks at the border. I am glad to hear that; it was ludicrous that people were talking about a hard border over the past four or five years when there was never any possibility that it could come about.

Kevin Foster: There was no prospect.

Q42 **Mr Campbell:** It just was physically impossible. Some of us kept saying that, but I am glad that the penny is beginning to drop now. It is just a pity that they unnecessarily raised political tensions by doing that.

On this issue, the concerns that we and many people have are that if tour operators in Canada, the States or wherever are bringing groups of people across to the island of Ireland and advertising it as an island-wide visit, they might just look at this and say, "It is easier and slightly cheaper as an offer to our potential customers not to go to Northern Ireland. We will just not bother any more—we will just do Dublin, Killarney and the south. We will not go to the Causeway now, because it is just an extra bit of bureaucracy and more expense that we have to pass on to our customer."

That is what the concern is, whether you are based in New York, Montreal, Perth or wherever, and you are selling a tourism project to the island. Normally, until last year and this year you would have expected a day or a two-day visit to include Northern Ireland. Now, they might just say, "We will just not bother."

Kevin Foster: Similarly, the other way around, once ETA is fully in, you could soon have some markets and some countries where you can visit the north by filling in a very simple online form. You could visit the Giant's Causeway and see the studios where *Game of Thrones* was filmed and some of those locations without applying for a visitor visa, yet if you wanted to go down to Dublin, you would need to apply for an Irish visitor visa. This system may well cut both ways. Also, our visitor rules are slightly more generous in what you get when you arrive.



Mr Campbell: But you will accept that, given the land mass of the island, the vast majority of people coming from the States, Canada, Australia or wherever are just going to land in Dublin. That is where they are going to land, because that is where the direct flights are. There are not very many flights into Belfast, unfortunately, so they are going to land in Dublin and therefore most of their visit is going to be in the Republic. While I accept and fully endorse what you are saying about a Northern Ireland-wide project, that is the other side of the equation. The vast majority of people who come to the island come to Dublin, so it is going to be more difficult.

Q43 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** The figure we got in the first session was that 96% of tourists in Ireland arrived in the Republic and 60% of tourists had a holiday on both sides.

Kevin Foster: That is why we say that with ETA it will need to be streamlined, be simple and have a cost that is more comparable to the current schemes. A lot of people have put some commentary out online that this will be like the visitor visa cost. No, it will be nowhere near the cost of a visitor visa, nor anywhere near that of making a visa application. Also, it will differ. Some have said, "This is like your electronic visa waiver, is it not?" No, it will be multi-year and multi-trip. It will not be like the current EVW that applies.

Q44 **Chair:** What will it be?

Kevin Foster: We have not set the fee yet, but if I give you the figures that are likely to be comparable—

Q45 **Chair:** You must have run a business case with figures.

Kevin Foster: We will announce the final fee once we are firm on final costings, but to give an impression, the EU's ETIAS will be €7, which is £5.81 at the most recent exchange rate; the US ESTA is \$14, which is £10.77; the Australian electronic travel authority is 20 Australian dollars, which is £11.36; and the New Zealand ETA is 9 New Zealand dollars via the app or 12 New Zealand dollars if completed online, which is £4.67 or £6.22 converted.

That gives the picture that it is unlikely to be a significant factor in the cost if, for example, you have already paid for an air fare, hotel accommodation, your food and various other things. Certainly the evidence from countries that have looked at this and brought it in is that it has not proved a particularly significant barrier to tourism. It is multi-year and multi-trip, so if, for the sake of argument, you visit this year and come back next year, you will not need to reapply for an ETA. It will be valid for more than one year and for multiple trips during that period.

Sir Robert Goodwill: I would like to ask about people who find themselves, in effect, on the wrong side of the law: people who decide on the spur of the moment to get the train from Dublin up to Belfast to see the Titanic museum, worship at Mr Paisley's church or whatever, and find



themselves on the wrong side of the law.

Chair: Does he have his own church now?

Sir Robert Goodwill: People travel for all sorts of great reasons.

Chair: God help us.

Q46 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** The Government are on record as saying that they will only prosecute what they call egregious cases. Could you give some examples of what would be an egregious case?

Kevin Foster: Let us say that someone knows that they should not be in the UK, because there is an extant deportation order, or knows that they should have applied for a visa, such as a visa national who potentially did not have status in the south either. If we detected them in the north, we would look at that. There could be cases in which it is clear that someone has been warned of the requirement several times before. I am not going to go through an exhaustive list. Similarly, I will not go through an exhaustive list of the various compelling and compassionate situations that we would always bear in mind when dealing with any immigration matter and with anyone we have encountered here in the UK who is not immediately in compliance with our immigration laws.

Q47 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** So if I do not fall into one of those egregious categories, why would I bother getting an ETA? I am not going to be stopped at the border and I am unlikely to be stopped in any other way. Why would I shell out even a relatively small amount of money when I know that nobody is going to stop me and ask for my papers?

Kevin Foster: In the first case, if you do decide to travel outside the CTA and come back in via the UK, it is a convenient way of ensuring that you have permission to travel to the UK without having to go through a lengthy read-up on large amounts of immigration rules on exactly what you are planning in your visit.

For those of us who have been to the United States since the ESTA came in, yes, it is checked at the airport. You do not see that many operations within the US itself to check ESTA possession, but, again, we believe it is a proportionate thing. For the potentially very significant benefits that it could give to the travel industry, as well as the border security benefits, we believe that it is proportionate.

As I have touched on, it is something that you can apply for wholly online. The turnarounds are very quick because this is not about checking, shall we say, what your intentions to travel are. This is about looking at, for example, whether you are on certain warning lists or databases or whether there is the sort of thing that would flag up when we scan a passport—that is a comparator. This is not saying, “I am filling this in because I am going to Belfast this week.” Once you have it in place, just like with the comparable systems, you do not need to keep applying for it again. You can renew it if you wish. We will set the period



that it will be valid for, but it will be for well over one year and multiple trips during that period.

- Q48 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Say someone comes into contact with the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. I may have a few too many drinks on a night out and get arrested. Would this be thrown on the charge sheet along with other things? Is that likely to happen?

Kevin Foster: Unsurprisingly, if people are engaging in behaviour that is non-conducive, we do take an interest to see what their exact immigration status is and whether their presence in the UK is compatible with our immigration rules, but I would not want to get too drawn into the times when we find people who are behaving badly. The vast majority of visitors who come into the UK behave perfectly well and enjoy their visit, for the purpose of their visit, and then leave in accordance with the rules at the end of their planned time here in the UK.

- Q49 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Are there likely to be some other implications? For example, if I hire a car in Dublin, ignore the advice to get an ETA and am involved in a motor accident, my insurance company might consider that because I am illegally in Northern Ireland, that is a get-out for the insurance. I may need to go to the national health service. Are there other implications of not having an ETA, involving the way insurance, access to healthcare or other services that I might need as an emergency in Northern Ireland work?

Kevin Foster: Let us cover healthcare first. The NHS provides emergency health provision, for example after a car accident or other accident, anywhere in the UK free of charge and does not check immigration status as part of doing that. Immigration status becomes relevant only if we are moving into certain secondary care services that are highly unlikely to be the type of thing you would access after a car accident. Emergency and urgent treatment is provided free of charge to tourists here in the UK, although of course people are very well advised to have travel insurance whenever they are travelling abroad, as we advise our own nationals when travelling abroad.

On car insurance, I gave an example of hiring cars on the island of Ireland. It is very likely that you will be asked at the time, "Is there any plan to travel across the border?", given the motor insurance implications.

- Q50 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** What if I say, "Yes, I intend to go to Northern Ireland," but I do not get an ETA?

Kevin Foster: It will depend on the policy. I know that the Secretary of State is planning to give a more formal written answer on that point, but this would already be an issue for visa nationals who may have a visa for the Republic but have not applied for a visa for the United Kingdom. We will come back to the Committee in writing on that concept, given some of the details, but most of it will depend on what the insurance policies say.



Q51 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Finally, can we clarify something? In the first session, the tourism industry seemed to think that the ETA would be a single-entry document.

Kevin Foster: No. We have been very clear that it is not.

Sir Robert Goodwill: I am pleased that you have put that right, because there were concerns about that.

Kevin Foster: We have been clear a number of times that it is a multi-entry document. I can understand where the confusion comes from: the current electronic visa waiver system, which some have looked at and thought, "Ah, that is what this is going to be." It applies to certain Emirati citizens, for example: they apply up to 48 hours beforehand, and it is for one trip that you get your visa waiver. With this system, you apply for it, you get clearance and then it applies, similarly to other systems, for a number of years, unless it is revoked.

The circumstances under which ETAs are revoked would be the types of circumstance in which we would currently be looking to decline someone entry to the UK: where they have been convicted of a serious criminal offence in another jurisdiction that we are friendly with, or where there is evidence that they have breached immigration rules in our partner countries that we get on well with and share data with. That would not change the fundamental issues. It would just be that the ETA would be—

Sir Robert Goodwill: Thanks for clarifying that. That will put minds at rest a little on one misconception.

Kevin Foster: We also intend to look at having a system around renewal that may well prompt people. Again, we are working through the final technicalities of how we can make sure that people are reminded of the potential need to renew their ETA.

Q52 **Chair:** Is one able to apply both retrospectively and within country? Let us say, for example, that I have arrived in Dublin and have taken the judgment that nobody will check this if I go across the border, so I have not got one, but I then decide to go to London or Liverpool—or I am there on business and they suddenly say, "We need you to go to Manchester for something or other." Can you apply for one of these things once you have landed in Dublin and crossed the border? Can you apply within the UK?

Kevin Foster: Our view would be that you should apply before you cross the border, but this is a wholly online application, so unless there were a particular issue, I do not think that it would particularly block you from applying.

Rachel Lloyd: I am not certain, so we might need to write.

Kevin Foster: We can come back in writing on it.

Q53 **Chair:** There are some things that you cannot apply for in-country. You



have to leave, do you not?

Kevin Foster: Yes, but those will be visas where people have to give their name and address and sometimes have to go to a visa application centre and other things, where it is very obvious that you are applying at the service centre in Belfast rather than the visa application centre in Warsaw, for example. We will certainly come back in writing.

Q54 **Chair:** I am going to talk to you about a 75-year-old woman from Tennessee—I do not know why she has to be a 75-year-old woman from Tennessee—who has arrived in Dublin. She has been given a brochure that says, “You can get on this coach trip and go to the north,” and she does. She happens to be checked, or something happens. She has not done it deliberately. She did not know that she had to have one; the coach operator did not tell her. If she then says, “Oh hell. I am a very law-abiding citizen. I don’t want any black or grey mark on my record—I don’t want anything at all. Can I apply for it now and pay for it?”, would she be allowed to?

Kevin Foster: Again, we will come back, but in any circumstance where we are encountering someone who is vulnerable, we would expect our teams to apply a proportionate approach.

Q55 **Chair:** You can be 75 and not vulnerable. Say that this was just a spur of the moment thing, where she decides to cross the border.

Kevin Foster: Again, we already have long experience with visa nationals who have inadvertently crossed into the north. By the way, the south has the same. We had a particular issue during covid when the Republic closed all its visitor routes, which sounded very logical—why would tourists be coming?—but we kept ours open for particular compelling and compassionate reasons. That meant that there was a period when UK ILR holders—people who are resident here in the UK permanently—had no legal route to cross the border into the south. I can give the example of a Ghanaian priest who had lived in the UK for a number of years. He had ILR and there was no option for him to go and undertake a wedding in the south because he could not apply for a visa. The rest of his family could go, because they were all UK nationals and therefore did not need to apply for a visa.

Some of these conundrums that you are bringing up are things that already exist where we have visa nationals on both sides. For many years, we have had appropriate relationships with the Irish Government on proportionate work by immigration enforcement. That has got around many of the problems and allowed us to have effective immigration control, but at the same time maintain the concept of general free flow of people between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, not just on the island of Ireland.

Q56 **Chair:** A theme of common sense will run through this particular pudding.



Kevin Foster: I would hope that that has run through our entire approach to immigration rules at the Irish land border. In fact, we reformed some of them about 18 months ago. For example, you could not get permitted paid engagement leave if you crossed the Irish land border, which produced some odd examples of non-EEA nationals who were non-visa nationals having to fly to a gig in Belfast via Paris so that they could cross the CTA boundary and come back. There are things that we have done in our immigration rules to facilitate general free flow, but I take a fairly strong view that if I am happy for someone to be in Belfast, why would I not be happy for them to be in Paignton, and vice versa? If I would not be happy for them to be in Paignton, in my constituency, why would I be happy for them to be in Mr Paisley's?

Q57 **Claire Hanna:** You have arrived at this electronic travel authorisation due to what you say is abuse of the common travel area. The Chair has explored with you the information that is and is not in the public domain. What other solutions did you explore before you settled on this one?

Kevin Foster: This is not just about the common travel area. This will apply at the outer CTA border. Very similarly to other countries, we looked at security. Declining people at the UK border and then requiring an airline to return them to where they came from, particularly if someone has just flown transatlantic, has quite an impact on the individual and the airline. It also potentially means a period in immigration detention. If this sort of system could have been done at the start and prevented all that, it would have been much better.

We looked at how this brings in many opportunities to end airlines having to check through immigration papers. We also looked at customer service. A lot of the architecture that goes with this will allow more e-gate-style arrivals for all nationals with permission to come in—not just, as at the moment, EEA, B5JSSK, UK and Republic of Ireland nationals who are able to use them. That is very much why we went down the very same path as other countries. This is part of modernising our system.

It does not have plans at the moment, but I cannot imagine that at some point in the future, once ETIAS is in, the Republic will not want to go towards a similar type of system for non-visa nationals and general travel to the Republic. Obviously, there is a difference with free movement and EEA rules there.

That was very much the path that we went down. This is about having a much more modern immigration system. It is about e-permissions, moving away from vignettes and all sorts of things being put in passports, and having a system that works effectively and well and can provide security checks and allow more people to be non-visa nationals.

Q58 **Claire Hanna:** We have established that there is not going to be proactive looking for these and checking them, so I just want to understand how you think they are going to help. What assessment have you made of their effect on what you think is CTA abuse?



Kevin Foster: We will certainly publish more detailed assessments as we come forward with the main proposals, particularly as we start applying it to wider cohorts, but our general assessment is very similar, funnily enough, to the EU's for its Schengen zone, the Canadians' for Canada, the Australians' for Australia, and New Zealand's. It is a remarkable coincidence that all these countries are coming to the same conclusion as us: that this is an appropriate type of system to look at implementing.

It is not just about CTA abuse; it is also about ensuring that people are blocked before they fly into the UK. Again, I know Ireland is not planning it at the moment, but we would certainly be happy to work with it, looking at what we could do around joint applications, if they were to bring in that sort of system, respecting the sovereign jurisdictions that we both are.

Our assessment is this is a more effective system in making the CTA secure. It provides benefits both to us and the Republic in blocking people who should not be travelling to either of our islands from doing so. It also brings some quite major customer service benefits to people's experience on arrival at the UK border and the airport and in how they can apply for visas if they need to, by removing some of the physical documentation.

Q59 **Claire Hanna:** How will that work? If you are not looking for them, how will it stop them?

Kevin Foster: In the same way that we currently have a visa regime, but we do not just randomly stop people in the street to ask to see visas. Part of it will be intelligence-led; part of it will be about particular modes of travel. I am always very clear that we are not at Belfast airport checking passports for people flying to London. It is not an international flight; it is a domestic one. We will have a proportionate system.

Overall, this will give a lot of advantages. As I have touched on, a number of countries that are currently visa nationals are likely to switch to being non-visa nationals, giving a real opportunity in those markets to market a trip to the UK, including Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom, to those people who would currently have to apply for a short-term visitor visa.

Q60 **Claire Hanna:** What can you tell us about the cohorts and the roll-out, which you have referred to a couple of times?

Kevin Foster: We will shortly confirm the cohorts. It is very likely that the first cohorts will be focused more on those—basically United Arab Emirates citizens—who currently use the electronic visa waiver system, which allows people to apply 48 hours before. To be clear, this is not about extending the concept of the electronic visa waiver, where you have to fill it in for each journey; this is multi-visit.

We will look at what we are learning at the moment with the airlines that are operating this in shadow on certain routes, to see how it functions for



them, and look at how we can then apply it to wider cohorts and at who will be the first. People may also see other things change first: for example, certain nationalities who have UK visas will start being able to use e-gates as part of the architecture built around ETA. This is not just about ETA itself.

Q61 Claire Hanna: I want to ask you about discussions. You referred earlier to exempting non-Irish and non-British residents of Ireland, who are about 10% of the population; I know you have discussed it. What grounds do you think there are for treating different residents in the same country in different ways? Can you just clarify where that conversation is going? It sounds like you are open to evolving the policy.

Kevin Foster: Treating different residents in different ways already occurs via the visa national rules. A visa national for the UK in Northern Ireland would need to apply for a visa in the south in a way that a non-visa national for the Republic would not need to in order to take a visit to Dublin. That is already there and has been there for a long period of time. We have never had a requirement for our immigration system to exactly match, although it is probably worth saying that there is not a massive set of differences between the UK's visa list and the Republic's, because our assessments probably come to not dissimilar conclusions.

On what we look at with residency, first, it is a clearly defined cohort. There are a certain number of people who live in the Republic of Ireland, whereas for tourism and non-visa nationals, you extend that out to a cohort in the hundreds of millions. Secondly, there is a friendly Government that we get on very well with. Yes, we have disagreements at times, but generally the relationship between the two nations is, rightly, more one that reflects the type of relationship that we wish to have. We can have very detailed and constructive engagement about how this data exchange will work, because what we do not want is to have an exemption that sounds good, but then end up with someone sat in an office in a part of the UK having to get out various bits of data to prove, "Yes, I am a resident of Ireland."

Ironically, for some of the long-term residents who have visas, that is probably a relatively easy thing to look at. Again, it brings up a debate about what we do where we have visa nationals for both sides. Are there some options there as well? For now, we are clear that the position remains that visa nationals need to get appropriate permissions to cross the border.

We also felt that with some of the data systems, again, it is appropriate. As I say, I accept the point that it is a very different position for someone who is resident in Ireland and would be driving about: they would not make a planned journey where an operator would be able to say to them, "You do know that there is now an ETA requirement for travel into the UK?" That is a very different position from someone planning a holiday, where an operator can say to them, "If you are planning a trip to the wider UK, you need to do this."



To be clear, what we have discussed with the Irish Government would apply to travel to Great Britain as well, because we are clear that this will be UK-wide. Touching on my earlier point, it would not seem very logical to say that we are happy to have someone in Belfast but not in Birkenhead. That would seem a rather weird position, which is why data sharing is a solution.

Q62 Claire Hanna: You have made it very clear that this is a whole-UK policy. Of course, it is absolutely the UK's right to do whatever it wants on its borders, but this border is not the same as other borders. When did you realise that this was going to be a problem? Are there lessons learned from the fact that maybe you cannot and should not always treat this border the same as the rest of the UK border? Are there mechanisms within your Department for triaging and addressing things that are going to fundamentally disrupt the way of life on the island of Ireland?

Kevin Foster: We have always been aware that having different visa requirements will potentially have an impact on life on the island of Ireland—as, by the way, the Irish Government are. An example during the covid period was that the closure of visitor routes meant that some people faced a hard border. They could not have a legal way to cross, but they had been lawfully resident in the UK for many years. It brought into quite stark relief for some of them the difference between having ILR and having a UK passport in their ability to travel within the CTA.

We are always conscious of it. We have the rules on entry via Ireland, which we reformed not long ago to remove some elements that were having an impact. For an American member of a band to have to fly via Paris to do a gig in Belfast did not seem to us a particularly sensible way of operating an immigration system. Similarly, we also changed the rules around short-term study and other things, again on the visitor route, to make things simpler and easier for people entering—in the whole UK, not just Northern Ireland, though it had an impact in terms of Ireland. We do carefully consider it.

Whenever we bring in a system for a visa regime, ETA or something like that, we are conscious that there will be an impact on the CTA. Similarly, the Committee has not dwelled on this point, but if I start making people in quite a number of nations non-visa nationals, who are visa nationals for the south, we are conscious about what that means for Irish immigration control. That is clearly something that it may want to take a view on.

One thing that we have started being quite clear on is that when we make major immigration rule changes in the UK, there is a different type of engagement that we need to have with the Republic. If I am granting people visas that allow people to go into Northern Ireland perfectly lawfully, that is effectively granting them quite easy access to another country in a way that it does not to France, for example, because there are clear passport controls between us and France—having a UK visa does not mean that you can instantly get into France.



Q63 Claire Hanna: Is there some process within the Department that goes, “Oh my goodness, this is going to be quite substantial,” and triggers consultation, or do you just announce it and wait for people to scramble to negotiate a workable outcome?

Kevin Foster: It has been known for some time that we were going to look at some sort of electronic travel authorisation. You only need look at what is happening across the world to see that that is where modern economies and immigration systems are heading, but we certainly do ongoing engagement.

As I say, our default position is that everyone who is not a UK or Irish national will need to have it, but we are only too happy to engage with the Irish Government, given the unique position of the CTA, the relationship there and the unique impact for residents of Ireland—people who may well live in Donegal and regularly travel over to see family in Scotland—where we can have a very useful conversation. To be fair, Ambassador O’Neill certainly made some very strong points about that particular cohort, as did Dr Farry, and we are happy to engage.

Without going too much into it, given that we are still making final decisions, the first cohort is likely not to be a particularly large cohort of residents in the Republic of Ireland. Again, we have regularly engaged and continue to do so. We always do so on the basis that we have a UK-wide immigration system and that we do not intend to have a migration border down the Irish Sea.

Q64 Stephen Farry: Welcome, Minister. I will pick up from Claire’s questions about your potential flexibility in relation to residents of Ireland, which we do indeed welcome. Could you give a bit of clarification of your thinking about whether there is more likely to be an up-front general exemption for people who have residency, or will it be almost an after-effect where someone in that category happens to intersect with the UK state without an ETA and is deemed not to be subject to enforcement? Is it to the former or the latter that you are probably heading?

Kevin Foster: Some of this we are now exploring in detail with the Irish Government. We will be keen to understand, from their perspective, what they are happy to share and how a confirmation of someone’s status would work, particularly if they are travelling. Does it apply only intra-CTA or if someone is arriving at Heathrow, for example? There are a lot of technicalities that we need to go through, where people need clear answers. I am conscious that the worst position we can have is a vague exemption. That is why we did not support the local journeys approach that the House of Lords had suggested in the Bill. What is a local journey? Is Dublin local to Armagh, but not to Antrim? You get all those sorts of things.

In an ideal world, if someone is travelling into the UK, it would be shared with us or checked, so that if someone said, “I am a resident of Ireland,” having come into contact with us and the matter came to the fore, a



request could be made for information. That will be some of the detail that we will work through. As I say, we have had very positive engagement. We also engage more widely on our immigration system, because we are conscious that some of the tech that we have brought in, like fully online visa applications, may be of use to the Irish system in future.

Q65 Stephen Farry: Can we go into some of the subtleties around that? Historically, local journeys on the island would usually be understood as being within the island—that is my recollection of what that primarily means.

If someone is coming into the UK, they will have a passport and they may well have other ID, but for movements on the island of Ireland, not everyone will have a driving licence, a bill or something like that. There are questions about whether people are required to carry those types of thing with them in any event, but there will be a cohort of people, particularly those who are more vulnerable or marginalised, who may not have those types of ID. We need to ensure that there is full equality screening in any solution that is found, to make sure that those are picked up.

Kevin Foster: This is some of the work that we are doing with the Irish Government. We have explored things like driving licences, because there is a database. It is more about looking at whether there is a database that can quickly be checked. It is going to be more inconvenient to have to carry around a load of paperwork than it is to quickly apply for an ETA. Let us talk candidly: the idea that there is this great exemption and now I carry a folder of paperwork to prove it applies to me, rather than spending a couple of minutes on the phone applying for something every couple of years—that is what we are exploring. What are the databases that can appropriately be shared with consent or permission? Where we have encountered someone in the UK, what information can that reveal about someone's residence? What we would purely be looking for is their residence, but again, that is some of the detail that we need to work through with the Irish Government.

We are conscious that not everyone has a driving licence and not everyone might have a particular element. We are conscious of the issue with EEA nationals who would not, as long-term residents, necessarily have what an American long-term resident of Ireland would have in the form of Irish immigration permission.

Q66 Stephen Farry: Absolutely. May I ask about the relationship between the proposals and the UK's obligations under the withdrawal agreement vis-à-vis the Northern Ireland protocol, particularly with reference to two articles: article 2 on the non-diminution of rights under the Good Friday agreement and article 3 on the ongoing regulation of the obligations of Ireland in relation to the CTA? You have specifically mentioned that there will be no impact on freedom of movement to and from Ireland for people who currently have it. How can you reconcile this with that?



Kevin Foster: For anyone who is covered by the withdrawal agreement and has EU settled status, ETA is not a relevant consideration; they already have status. We believe that ETA is perfectly compatible with article 2 of the protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. We already have slightly different immigration systems, and for visa national countries it already applies, so I think we can certainly work together. We have done so for a very long period of time, with some people having a visa for Northern Ireland under our system and not for the south, and some having one for the south but not for the UK. We continue to consider our obligations, but we do not believe the introduction of ETA particularly changes them.

- Q67 **Stephen Farry:** Particularly with reference to article 3, I have it in mind that there will be a lot of relationships that have built up over time such as marriages or partnerships between Irish citizens and EEA nationals, some of whom will have children. Will you recognise that there will need to be some degree of equality in terms of how that family unit is treated as it moves backwards and forwards?

Kevin Foster: Again, I think we are getting into some of the detail. For Irish nationals, it does not apply. For anyone who has Irish nationality, regardless of whether they are resident in Ireland, the ETA requirement will not apply; they can show their Irish citizenship as evidence that they are in compliance. Where our CTA is core is UK-NI; the CTA rights do not apply to all third country nationals, for obvious reasons.

- Q68 **Stephen Farry:** Some people dispute that particular point. CAJ, for example, would argue that custom and practice over many years have broadened it out.

Kevin Foster: Let us be clear where we have always been and, by the way, where Irish immigration enforcement is as well. There is scope for a workable data-sharing arrangement. For most people, our default advice would be "If unsure, apply for an ETA: they are multi-trip, multi-year and fairly cheap." However, we constantly need to be clear that, for those covered by withdrawal agreement rights and those who have UK residence visas already, that would not be relevant.

- Q69 **Stephen Farry:** Finally, even if someone applies for an ETA, there is a requirement to renew it after a certain period of time, whether it is a year or two years. With all Government bureaucracy, a percentage of people always forget to reapply, whether it is for the MOT or whatever. In the example of the EU settlement scheme, the Government put a lot of effort into marketing it, but even then, by the deadline of 30 June 2020, a large number of people still had not applied because they did not think that they needed to. That is something just to bear in mind in how you design the policy.

Kevin Foster: You have seen what we did with the EUSS, which is a good example of a very large scheme that was categorising people. As for renewals, the period will be significantly longer than a year. It will not be



13 months, for the sake of argument. We have yet to set the final period, but it will be longer than a year. It will not be an annual renewal that someone is required to do.

As I say, we accept that someone who is a resident of Ireland is in a very different position from someone who is planning a trip where, certainly if they are planning to travel into the UK, an operator would say, "Have you got your ETA in place?" or "It expired—please remember to renew it if you are going." I accept that for a resident of Ireland it is a different position, hence the discussions with the Irish Government, but it needs to be a practical exemption. What we do not want is a system that sounds good in theory, but where you are now carrying a shedload of paperwork with you.

Q70 Chair: The point about those people who live within the Republic is a clear and obvious one. The Committee has made this point to your Department before, and I make no apology for making it again: certain hares have been set running that, by the sound of it, do not actually exist. A little more understanding, empathy or sensitivity—call it what you will—about how the island of Ireland operates post-Good Friday agreement, common travel area and so on might help, because a lot of anxiety has been raised by people who, by the sound of it, did not need to have anxiety raised at all.

It is a point that the Committee has made with regard to the citizenship issue. As easy and as handy as it is to default to treating the island of Ireland or the Republic of Ireland as we do the rest of the world, history, tradition and those long-standing relationships of which you spoke a few moments ago do not appear to be taken into account. That is unfortunate, because it creates tension where, if I am reading your body language correctly, those tensions do not need to be created.

Kevin Foster: Being able to have that type of approach for residents of Ireland is fundamentally dependent on the co-operation and agreement for the Republic of Ireland on sharing information that it holds. Rightly, it has a sovereign right to say no, but I must say that it has not, and we have had extremely useful discussions. It is right that we are also clear that our default, if we could not get a workable agreement, would be that if you are not British or Irish and do not have an extant immigration permission in place, including from the withdrawal agreement, you would need to have the ETA in place. By the same token, however, the very productive engagements that we have had say to us that there is almost certainly a path to agreeing this in a way that could practically work, because we are conscious that it needs to be a practical solution.

More widely, though, we have to be conscious that we have to be able to justify treating one group separately in an immigration sense from others. UK and Irish nationals we can justify, given the long history of the CTA, the CTA rights and other matters. Residents of Ireland I can justify on the basis that being resident within the CTA is a very different concept from being resident outside it, particularly in respect of non-visa nationals



and the experience that they may have had living in Ireland and in the rest of the UK.

We also have to be clear that our default if, for example, sharing information were refused or there were no co-operation, would have to be going back to a particular position, but certainly from the very constructive conversation with Ambassador O'Neill I was very reassured that we can probably find a way that makes this work for both sides.

We hopefully look forward in years to come to working with Ireland, if Ireland decides to go down the path that seemingly virtually every other immigration jurisdiction has gone down. We will be very keen to work with it, first, to save it reinventing wheels on the tech, if I can put it that way, and secondly on whether we could look to allow information sharing between the two systems so that if someone ticks a box for the UK one, they can apply for an Irish one and vice versa.

Chair: We go back to the theme of common sense.

Kevin Foster: We are perhaps five to 10 years away, and I respect that it would be a sovereign decision for Ireland whether it wished to go down that path.

Q71 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Buy one, get one half-price, maybe.

Kevin Foster: If we are doing similar checks—but there are a lot of issues that we would have to go through around how we would still have a sovereign jurisdiction on each side as well.

Q72 **Chair:** As an action point, you are going to let us know vis-à-vis Sir Robert's point on insurance and health.

Kevin Foster: Health we can be very clear on: we do not check immigration statuses for access to the NHS urgent care services, so I think that the example given of a tourist would not apply. For residents, there are already memorandums of understanding. On car insurance, I think Secretary Lewis is planning to write to you anyway, so that will be the response on behalf of the Government.

Chair: We have that as an action point. Our Clerks can share with your office the contact details of those three organisations, which are very keen to engage with you on this.

Kevin Foster: Yes, we are keen to engage with tourism.

Q73 **Chair:** I presume you would undertake to keep the Committee updated on when you will be publishing the costs of this measure when it comes into effect.

Kevin Foster: It would almost certainly be our intention to advise Parliament when we do, perhaps via a letter to all colleagues registered in the Library. I presume that at some point we would need to bring through certain pieces of legislation—almost certainly secondary legislation—to apply some of this. There is a formal side—Parliament



must be updated—and a legitimate side as well. I am always happy to update you, Chair, at an appropriate future point on where our discussions are with the Irish Government as well.

Chair: Minister, that is helpful. Thank you very much indeed.

Q74 **Stephen Farry:** Is it still 2024 or 2025 as the target date for this?

Kevin Foster: It is the end of 2024, so effectively 2025, but again, given that we literally have this system on a test bed at the moment—that is the best way I can put it—we will be looking at what the results of sharing live data have been. I have to say that we are not making any border or immigration decisions at the moment based on what is being exchanged with some airlines. We will be looking quite carefully at that before we press the button to go ahead and see, because our absolute priority is that before we switch this on, we must be confident that it works, that it works at volume and that it is accurate.

Chair: Minister, thank you. Ms Lloyd, thank you very much indeed for your attendance.

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Subject:	Belfast Stories Update
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Wendy Langham, Programme Director
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Strategic Lead

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	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update Members on the Belfast Stories programme as part of the Belfast Region City Deal including the development of a Stories Collection Framework. - Outline emerging engagement plans and seek approval to undertake a public consultation.

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 Belfast Stories programme of work. - Agree to complete a public consultation exercise to include elements of the Stories Collection Framework as set out in Appendix 1. - Agree to hold a Members' workshop in August 2022 as part of the consultation process. - Agree to receive a future report setting out the key findings of the public consultation and recommendations on next steps.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal and is due to open in 2028. Several important milestones in relation to the project have been achieved including the acquisition of the site for Belfast Stories in October 2021 and the signing of the Deal Document for the BRCD and press launch of Belfast Stories in December 2021.
3.2	Members will be aware that majority of the site (95%) was secured by BCC for Belfast Stories and that negotiations for the acquisition of two smaller properties on the site are ongoing.
3.3	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed at its meeting on 19th November 2021 to progress a number of key pieces of work, in order to ensure we meet the 2028 anticipated opening date including the appointment of the integrated design team, the exhibition design team and the stories collection. City Growth and Regeneration Committee received a programme update in December 2021 where Members noted that a further presentation would be brought to Committee in 2022.
	<u>Programme Update</u>
3.4	Progress against the agreed programme is ongoing.
3.5	Members will be aware that an initial Outline Business Case was completed in 2020 in advance of the purchase of the site. This work will now be updated to reflect progress and

	<p>project development. Following engagement with Tourism NI and the Department for Economy (DfE) and an assessment of options by the project team it is proposed that an updated Outline Business Case is submitted when concept designs have been further developed to RIBA Stage 2 in 2023, when the project would then move to departmental casework review. We have requested BRCD approval to move to this approach via the Tourism and Regeneration Advisory Board and the BRCD Executive Board.</p>
3.6	<p>To align with Belfast City Council's Net Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast and the Resilience Strategy, a feasibility study has been commissioned to assess the viability of using geothermal technology to meet the building's heating and cooling requirements. An initial report has been completed by Tetra Tech Ltd and concludes that geothermal is a viable option for the site with a shallow closed loop geothermal solution preferred. This would increase capital costs and alternative funding sources are being considered. However, as well as being a low carbon solution there would also be operational savings compared to air source alternatives. Further work will be required as detailed design work progresses and Members will be updated in due course.</p>
3.7	<p>Work is ongoing with Physical Programmes supported by KPMG to bring forward a number of key appointments as the project moves to the next phase of development.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RIBA has been appointed following a tender exercise to provide the necessary expertise to conduct a Design Competition to appoint the Integrated Design Team. - Documentation is being finalised to commence the procurement in June 2022 of an Integrated Design Team, Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team and Project Management and Design Assurance Team.
3.8	<p>A Benefits Realisation Framework has been developed to define and refine the range of benefits and outcomes linked to the investment spending objectives of the project and Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) funding. A key spending objective is "to create and sustain a diversified, vibrant city centre – attractive place to live in, invest in and work in" and within this objective we have been examined the wider impacts on the city centre, local community, local residents and local economy. Crucial to realising the impacts will be identifying the enabling mechanism(s) to deliver against expected benefits.</p>
3.9	<p>An important aspect of the wider benefits of Belfast Stories is to define and deliver social value including increasing secure employment and skills, building ethical and resilient supply</p>

	chains, promoting wellbeing and delivering zero carbon. Social clauses will be included in all contracts in line with buy social Public Contract Regulations PPN 01/21 with the main value opportunities to be delivered during the construction phase 2025 - 2028.
3.10	A Social Value, Employability, Skills and Education group has been set up to advise and input on opportunities. In addition, members of the Belfast Stories project team have attended Social Value in Construction Contracts training as part of BRCD programme, to further understand and support the key themes around creating job opportunities, investing in skills, supporting social enterprises, new businesses, voluntary and community organisations, reduce our carbon footprint, promote equality and diversity and improve mental health and wellbeing.
3.11	It will be important for the Business Case for Belfast Stories to demonstrate delivery against social value outcomes. As part of the consultation and engagement process, the work strands of the draft engagement plan will be developed to ensure all opportunities are maximised that in turn will feed into the overall project Benefits Realisation Framework. This approach will be embedded into all aspects of the programme including opportunities as part of Stories collection.
	<u>Stories Collection Framework</u>
3.12	The collection of Belfast's stories underpins the Belfast Stories concept and is key to the success of the project in meeting its ambition and delivering the benefits. To support this work, Council commissioned Lord Cultural Resources to develop a Stories Collection Framework. The purpose of the Framework is to support the development of the Belfast Stories project and delivery of Council's wider ambitions as set out in the <i>Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy</i> , the <i>Belfast Agenda</i> , the ten-year cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> and the recently finalised tourism plan, <i>Make Yourself at Home</i> . This will provide a Framework for future plans and recognises the important role that many city partners representing the community, cultural and tourism sectors have in telling Belfast stories across the city and throughout the year.
3.13	Members will be aware that the Belfast Stories project seeks to strengthen existing structures and networks to ensure that the benefits of the project are realised on multiple levels. The initial concept for Belfast Stories identified the opportunity for a significant new anchor in the city centre that would not only deliver regeneration in the immediate area but also act as an

	<p>anchor that would help establish a hub and spoke model to strengthen connectivity and flow of visitors across the city and support community tourism projects.</p>
3.14	<p>Working in collaboration with key stakeholders and subject matter experts across the city we have developed a Stories Collection Framework (SCF). The Stories Collection Framework outlines the proposed direction on a number of areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guiding principles – programmes such as the Decade of Centenaries have established good practice in setting clear guiding principles that inform Council's position and partnership approach. - Ethical parameters – there are important ethical considerations that must be assessed and necessary processes put in place to ensure best practice is reached across engagement, collecting and telling of Belfast stories. - Themes – the purpose of the thematic framework is to assist in what will be a considerable undertaking to collect and arrange stories. This is an organisational tool and is not how the stories will be presented or told as this will be addressed at the next stage when the curatorial approach will be developed as part of public engagement and design processes. - Partnership approach – this sets out a phased approach to a wider programme and partnership model to support cultural and tourism development in relation to collecting and telling Belfast stories. Whilst this will in turn support the building project, the potential benefits are much wider. - Governance – Council is not a collecting organisation. This requires significant infrastructure and expertise. The governance is linked to the partnership model that locates Council within a wider stories ecosystem for the city and acknowledges the considerable expertise that exists in partner organisations.
3.15	<p>The Stories Collection Framework is a flexible tool that will evolve over time. It is critical to ensuring the authenticity and diversity of the stories represented in Belfast Stories and across multiple initiatives. In its present form, the Framework seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore new ways and perspectives of telling the stories of the people of Belfast. - Bring the people of Belfast into the heart of the initiatives. - Increase accessibility of existing collections across the city and beyond. - Identify and address gaps in stories that have not been collected or that lack visibility. - Encourage long term active engagement with partners creating a network across the city and beyond that will increase opportunities to participate in the cultural life and support neighbourhood tourism.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify efficient and sustainable ways of sharing and putting collections to their best use. - Bring in new perspectives and creativity in adding to the city-wide cultural offerings.
3.16	<p>From 2022 it is proposed that Council delivers a Belfast Stories Programme that will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Story collection audit – to better understand what stories have been collected and current levels of access to these collections. - Feasibility study – to establish what infrastructure (including digital) may be required to support a city level collecting initiative. - Public engagement programme – as outlined below and at appendix 2 the public consultation is the beginning of a sustained programme of engagement with the city. - Pilot projects – this would include alignment to planned activity and commissioning of new work to help test the Framework. - Partnerships – establish joint working within Council on initiatives such as Year of Culture, UNESCO City of Music and neighbourhood tourism to deliver on shared objectives. New partnerships would also be developed (local and international) with community, cultural and tourism partners to begin to establish a Stories network in advance of the building opening in 2028. <p><u>Public consultation</u></p>
3.17	<p>Belfast City Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework describes a broad spectrum of two-way communication (from consultation to engagement to involvement) between the council and its residents and stakeholders. It recognises that effective dialogue helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit. It is in line with this that Belfast Stories seeks to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at its core, supported by a co-designed and inclusive process throughout all aspects of the project.</p>
3.18	<p>Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent Consulting to provide specialist guidance and support to plan and assist with Belfast Stories consultation and engagement. This Belfast Stories Engagement Plan (Appendix 2) brings together a range of consultation, engagement and involvement approaches to build on best practice, statutory requirements and stakeholder expectations.</p>
3.19	

3.20	<p>The overall approach seeks to build long-term relationships while using a variety of methods to engage people on the terms they want to be engaged. As an initial step it is proposed that a public consultation is carried out early in the process.</p>
3.21	<p>The purpose of the engagement plan is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To help make Belfast Stories a destination that resonates with local people, captivates visitors and is welcoming of all. - To bring Belfast Stories to life through the knowledge, insight and ideas of its people and stakeholders.
3.22	<p>This engagement plan covers RIBA Stage 2 as aligned to overall Belfast Stories programme, which runs from May 2022 to June 2023. During this stage, concept designs and plans are produced in line with the requirements of the project brief. This will include plans for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the layout of the building - the design of the exhibition space - the Story Collection Framework
3.23	<p>There will be two broad parts to our engagement between May 2022 and June 2023.</p> <p><i>Public Consultation</i></p> <p>The public consultation is planned to run for 14 weeks from week commencing 6th June to 14 September 2022. The public consultation will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development. - Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and Story Collection Framework. - Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement.
3.24	<p><i>Ongoing Engagement</i></p> <p>Ongoing engagement will be structured around four work strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equity - Sustainability - Partnership

3.25	<p>- Experiences</p> <p>These will set the foundations, building relationships and shaping further ongoing engagement up until (and possibly after) Belfast Stories opens in 2028.</p>
3.26	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>It is proposed that a Members' workshop is held during the public consultation period in August 2022. A report will be presented in October 2022 outlining the key findings of the public consultation and will present further detail on recommendations and next steps.</p>
3.27	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no new financial implications to this report.</p>
3.28	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An initial Equality screening has been complete. An Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment will be undertaken as part of the public consultation and will be reported on in due course.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	<p>Appendix 1: Story Collection Framework Executive Summary</p> <p>Appendix 2: Belfast Stories Engagement Plan Summary Report</p>

The background of the entire page is a collage of various photographs of people, mostly of diverse ethnicities, smiling and looking towards the camera. These photos are layered and partially obscured by a dense pattern of thin, hand-drawn lines in blue, red, and black, resembling a network or a map. The lines are scattered across the entire page, creating a textured, artistic effect.

BELFAST STORY COLLECTION

FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary – 21 Jan 2022



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SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK

On completing the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, and in beginning to deliberate on opportunities to bring the multiple voices of the people of Belfast into the cultural life of the city, Belfast City Council identified a need for an overarching **Story Collection Framework**, a strategic tool whose scope would be to support, frame and organize the **Custodianship and Access of (a) Collection(s) of Belfast Stories** while looking at long term engagement and collaboration with partners, communities and people.

Although the Belfast Destination Hub (BDH) had certainly prompted the need for such a tool, **this Framework is much broader than the BDH in its scope**, as it sets a strategy at the city level, offering guidance for **year-round cultural programming** around Belfast: activations, programs and events, in addition to the BDH.

To develop this Framework, Lord conducted extensive research (second sources) on topics, themes, audiences and ethics while using their 40 years of experience in pulling together best practices and recommendations in relation to Collecting, Audience attraction & retention, Ethics, Governance, Partnerships and Mediums for Visitor Experience. Feedback was collected from primary sources via the Creative Workshop (45+ participants over two days), One-on-One Interviews (20+ interviews) and a Discussion Workshop in Dec 2021, which offered the opportunity to collect valuable information from a range of local cultural organizations.

The Framework is a flexible tool, neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, as adjustments and additions are expected to take place over the course of its use. In its present form, the Framework seeks to:

- Explore new ways and perspectives of telling the stories of the people of Belfast
- Bring the people of Belfast at the heart of the initiatives
- Increase accessibility of collections across the city and beyond
- Encourage long term active engagement with partners
- Identify efficient and sustainable ways of sharing and putting collections to their best use
- Bring in new perspectives and creativity in adding to the city-wide cultural offerings

The main items of the Framework will be summarized in the following sections.

FOUNDATION STATEMENTS

The Foundation Statements comprise the Vision and Mission, as well as the Guiding (ethical) principles. These statements form the cornerstone of the Framework, since they should guide the entire work, activities and operations in relation to (a) collection(s) of stories. These are proposed as follows:

Mission Statement:

The Story Collection Framework is integral to the city of Belfast's goal of capturing and making accessible the stories of the people of Belfast. Using a partnership-driven approach, it augments opportunities for story collecting and sharing at a city-wide level.

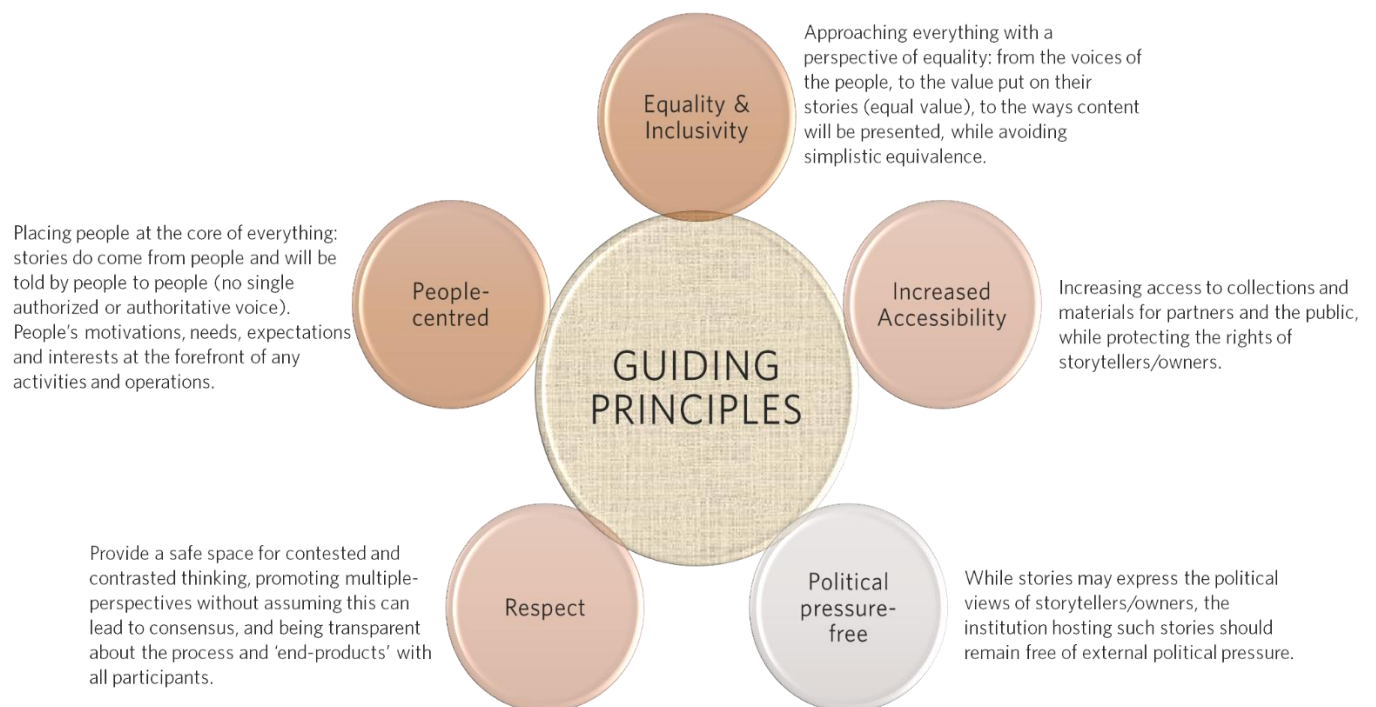
Vision Statement:

Sharing people's stories is FOUNDATIONAL to the city of Belfast's transformative journey toward new perspectives and connections as individuals and communities.

This is an UNPARELLED and UNIQUE opportunity for the city to create authentic and creative expressions of Belfast which connects its past, present, and future.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles may be considered the ethical guardians of the collections' custodianship and use. They are recommended to be widely socialized and championed with partners, the people of Belfast and within the Council itself.





DEFINITION OF A STORY

Stories may be expressed and gathered in many forms. While oral storytelling may be one of the oldest forms of expression, stories now exist in many other forms (e.g audio and video, writings, photography, visual arts, digital forms etc.). It became thus evident that a clear definition of a story within the context of this Framework was needed, since such definition would underlie the approach to interpreting, collecting and creating a visitor experience, as outlined in the Framework.

Considering such ubiquitous nature of stories and their possible uses across a wide range of programming options, it is a key recommendation to embrace an inclusive approach to what a story is, enabling voices to manifest freely in multiple expressions, and incorporate time-bound perspectives as well. As such, it has been proposed to define stories as **‘voices, feelings, experiences, memories, and expressions that reveal past, present and future-constructed narratives and form connections with the people.’**

While oral histories may comprise the core of the collection of stories, other forms (i.e., still and moving images, performing arts, digital creations, artistic expressions, 2D and 3D objects etc.) may be considered to add depth to the collections and offer a variety of experiences to a wide range of audiences.

THEMATIC APPROACH

The proposed thematic approach acts as a foundational intellectual structure to the collection(s) of Belfast’s stories, by **connecting stories to broader themes and sub-themes and placing them within important historical and cultural contexts**. It is a flexible approach that supports both existing stories and those that are yet to be told and collected, and can be adjusted over the course of its use as new stories and themes may emerge. It adopts a cohesive and integrated approach to capturing stories through time. Overall, it embraces the plurality of Belfast’s multiple, distinct voices.

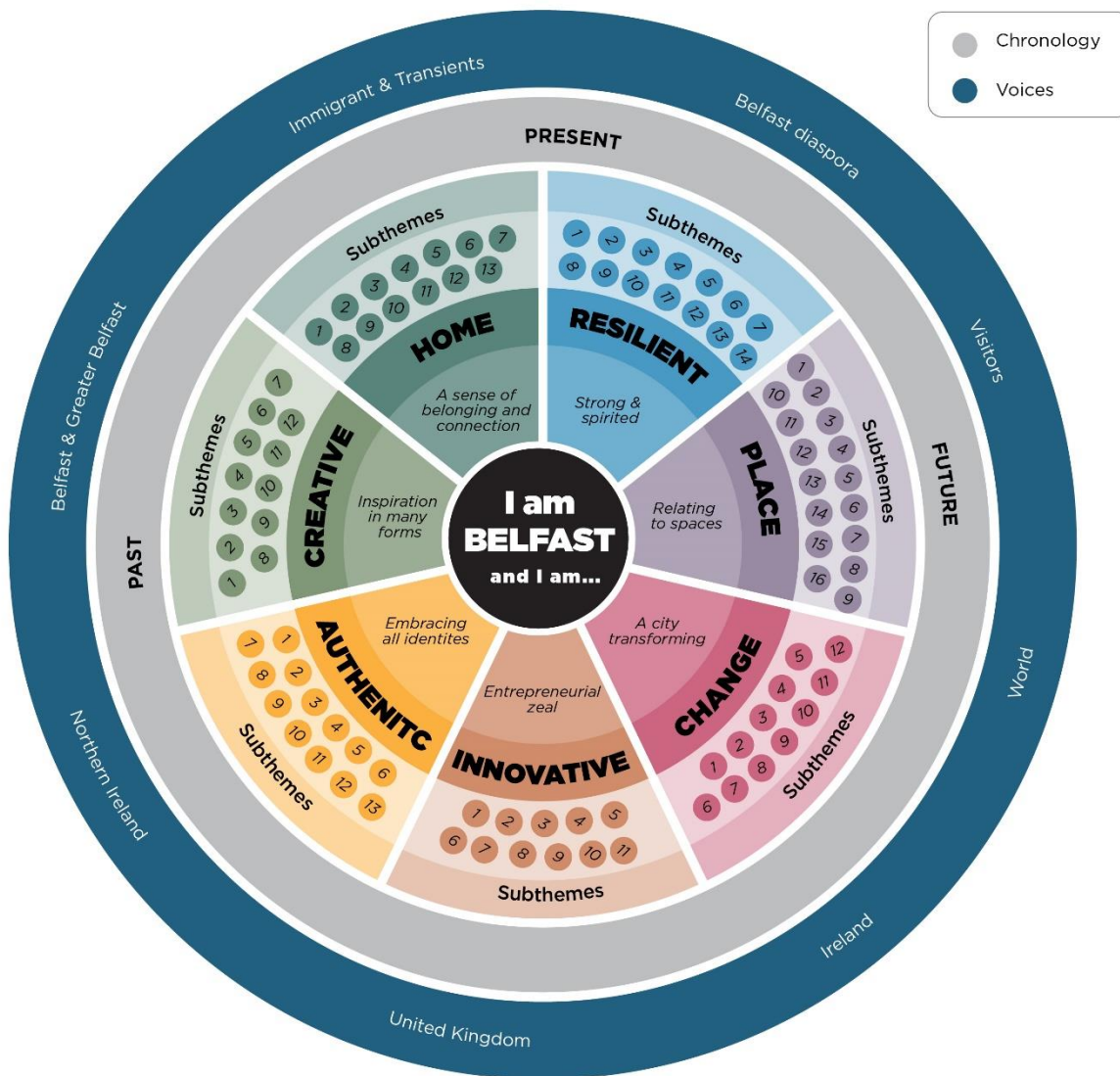


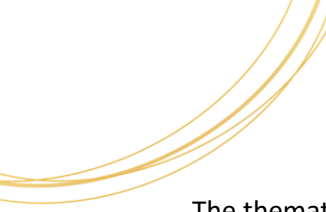
Figure 2: Proposed thematic framework

(‘transient’ includes populations temporarily coming to Belfast, i.e. workers coming on a six-month contract; it may also include commuters to Belfast, driving to the city for work but living away, sometimes from other districts too).

Figure 3: proposed sub-themes

SUBTHEMES	Home	SUBTHEMES	Resilient	SUBTHEMES	Place	SUBTHEMES	Authentic
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. New beginnings (renewed start to life, finding a new home in a new place)2. Where is Home? (place, where the essence of home is strongest)3. Land stories (Generational family stories, stories rooted in land/place)4. Leaving Home (reasons for leaving, impacts)5. Migration Stories (immigration and emigration, facing a new life)6. Border Stories (e.g., Partition of Ireland, living on either side of the peace walls)7. Finding my place in the world (what place defines me most, where do I feel most connected)8. Family Ties (bonds with family and how it ties to home and place)9. My communities (neighbours, nearby shop vendors, workmates, family)10. Is Home a place or a feeling? (feeling of home whether it is a physical space or strong emotional connection)11. Belfast Neighbourhoods (places of Belfast that have formed strong connections for people)12. Losing your home (dealing with the loss of home, why it happened, its impacts)13. Creating safe spaces (the need for safe spaces in the city, why it's important)		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The spirit of Belfast (the fortitude and tenacity of the people)2. Healing from Conflict & Trauma (explore city efforts for ppl to heal individually or in groups)3. Impacts of the Troubles (physiological, psychological, logistical)4. Shared memories of an event or time (collective storytelling activities that empower, heal)5. Reflecting on the Past (ways to recall and reflect events of the past, recognize individual memories) and the Present6. Advocacy (understand, support, and/or activism toward global causes/issues)7. Tackling Difficult Pasts (provide safe spaces and ease of sharing of difficult past experiences)8. Building resilience as a community (collective growth through shared experiences)9. Truth & Reconciliation (speaking truths, acknowledgement and atonement, reconciling with the past)10. Looking outward and forward (focusing on the future with reflection on the past)11. Looking at connections with the world's events (moving away from the narrative of 'exceptionalism')12. Using humour in dark times (ways in which the city uses humour to address difficult pasts)13. Impacts of Religion and Class (how religion and class can shape your life, look at differences/similarities in communities)14. Climate resilience as a city (adopting strategies to build a safer and sustainable city in the face of climate change)		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Place-Making (planning and designing physical and digital spaces that inspire, promote wellness, reflection and connectedness)2. Architecture of Belfast (iconic and quintessential buildings) and built Heritage (tangible cultural heritage, part of human history)3. Sights and Sounds (capturing what we see and hear such as church bells, flowing rivers, ship horns etc.)4. Historic Landmarks (physical spaces that are marked by historic events – engage multiple viewpoints and perceptions)5. Geological Features (topography, waterways, rock formations) and human interactions6. The River System (impacts of the rivers on life, community, taking care of it)7. A Port City (stories on Belfast as a bustling harbour)8. Changing Landscapes (how landscapes changed over time and through specific historic periods, also changes due to climate)9. A Sustainable Future (promoting city living that contributes to a cleaner and healthier planet; repurposing spaces (e.g., creating green spaces, adaptive reuse of derelict spaces))10. Climate change impacts (how climate change has impacted physical spaces)11. Places of rendezvous: how specific places of Belfast were / are being used as opportunities for encounters and connections12. Inclusive spaces (spaces that invite equal representation of marginalized groups)13. Places of significance: places that are being remembered perceived and related to, and how this changes over time (ever-changing nature of places)14. Places of expectations: places associated to specific norms of behaviour and expected/ predetermined identities15. Places of imagination: exploring individual and collective representations of imagined places16. Sites of healing (creating and using physical sites in the city for healing)		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Distinctly Belfast (things, people, places that are unique to Belfast)2. Shifting Identities (as a city, as individuals)3. The Many Faces of Belfast (different identities of the city)4. Societal Values (values that are important to the people of Belfast, values that best reflect the city)5. Identity and belonging (what shapes who we are and the places we belong to)6. Extraordinary ordinary lives (nuances and extraordinariness of the everyday lives of people)7. Belfast Reborn (aspects of the city reawakening, feeling renewed)8. Voices of the city (capturing distinction through voice)9. Roots of language (similarities among languages, commonalities with other languages, common ancestors)10. Crafting a city's identity through humour, including dark humour (humour that is unique to Belfast, and is part of the city's identity)11. Religion is a part of life (how religion is an intrinsic part of a community/city)12. Activating communities on social change (supporting activism toward issues that spark social change)13. Food and Drink in Belfast (what foods are unique to the city, what is popular, what communities do these foods represent)
SUBTHEMES	Innovative	SUBTHEMES	Change	SUBTHEMES	Creative		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 17th, 18th and 19th century Industry Powerhouses (linen, whiskey, cotton, rope-making, paper etc.)2. The industrial impact (how it impacted/ changed Belfast)3. The shipbuilding era (explore significance to the city, Titanic)4. A trade and commerce hub (trading past and present, port city)5. The Tech Age in Belfast (advancements/ diversification in health tech, fintech, new jobs, bringing migrants)6. Entrepreneurial spirit (pioneers, change-makers)7. Activating green spaces (repurposing existing spaces to be more sustainable)8. Cultural innovations (innovative ways in which the city explores culture through music, theatre, filmmaking etc)9. A city transformed (how Belfast is transforming through innovation)10. Belfast and the World (regional and global perspectives, seeing Belfast from a global viewpoint)11. Gastronomic inventions (what Belfast's top chefs and local eateries are concocting)		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A city in transformation (explore changes that have led to a city's transformation from specific to large scale)2. Cultural and societal Shifts (over decades) – reflecting on regional/global shifts that have changed the city3. Forgotten Places (remembering places that no longer have a prominent place due to change)4. How We Live – what's changed? (changes in how we live – what has caused these changes)5. Changing Climate (how is Belfast's climate different from what it used to be)6. Living through and coming out of a Pandemic (impacts, has it changed us, in what ways)7. Embracing Diversity and Inclusivity (incorporating inclusiveness and accessibility in the city)8. Belfast: Then and Now (exploring change through time)9. Belfast's community: agents of change (Community is integral to change, bringing voice to people's power)10. Remembering historic Milestones (key moments/landmarks in Belfast's history)11. Belfast's future in the making (changes we can foresee in Belfast's future, what do we want to see/prevent)12. Stories addressing poverty and the socio-economic gap (is poverty being addressed enough, how can the gap be narrowed)		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Belfast's Street Art2. Underground Music Scene (vibrant dance and music scene)3. Music Heritage (city's musical history, part of the city's culture, tradition)4. Booming Film Industry (growing site for film production/development)5. Exhibitions and events focusing on a large cross-section of Belfast culture6. Culture through Sport (football, rugby, ice hockey etc are a big part of Belfast)7. Photographing Belfast (seeing the city through photography)8. Festivals of song and dance (events that feature song/dance culture of the city)9. Folklore traditions (traditional stories that are part of the city/ people's culture)10. Literary figures (people in Belfast renowned for literary contributions, past and present)11. Visual arts initiatives (paintings, photography, murals, digital art etc that are part of Belfast's visual landscape)12. Honouring Belfast's cultural heritage (tangible and intangible aspects of history and culture)13. Belfast through Theatre (how performance art like theatre is part and parcel of the city's culture, their societal impacts/contributions)14. Belfast Epicurean Arts (getting to know a city through its food/drink culture)		

*List non exhaustive



The thematic framework adopted for this approach includes the following interlinked components:

- **Core connector:** *I Am Belfast* is the core connector through which all themes, sub-themes and stories flow. While giving agency to and empowering the individual voice is at the core, these voices together embrace the plurality of Belfast's collective voice.
- **Main themes:** Seven themes which represent Belfast's history, place and culture act as pillars of support in bolstering a wide range of multifaceted stories that are unique to Belfast.
- **Sub-themes:** They support the main themes to which they add a more detailed and contextual layer, by offering multiple access points and diverse perspectives of the collected stories. Each theme has a list of 10 – 15 potential sub-themes. The sub-themes will likely change over time, as new stories and voices emerge and new thematic gaps are being identified.
- **Chronological linking theme:** The core connector and themes are linked by a chronological theme that connects stories from the past, present and future by way of *Exploring the Past, Living Now, and Creating the Future*.
- **Local, national and international dimensions:** Geographic dimensions add yet another important facet to the story-collecting process, especially in discovering voices and stories that connect Belfast to Greater Belfast, Northern Ireland, the wider region and the world, and vice versa (inward and outward looking perspectives).

CREATING A VISITOR CENTERED EXPERIENCE

A set of guidelines for developing & designing visitor-centred experiences that cater to the needs of local and international visitors has been provided as part of the Framework. These guidelines may be used when planning physical venues (such as the Belfast Destination Hub), or for any other type of activations, programs, events, community engagement initiatives etc.

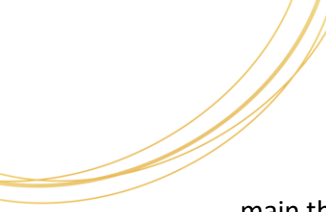
The guidelines are articulated around four main aspects, building upon each other:

- Aspect of SAFE: feeling safe and comfortable, physically and psychologically
- Aspect of ENGAGING: enticing people to pay attention
- Aspect of REINFORCING: people do understand the stories, they feel empowered
- Aspect of MEANINGFUL: personal relevance

COLLECTION MAPPING

A high-level mapping exercise was conducted with a small sample of local cultural organizations to get a sense of the types of collections that already exist, their strengths and potential gaps. The following points may be noted:

- There are a variety of collections that already exist in the city, featuring content that may be relevant to the seven themes identified in the Thematic approach, which confirms the strengths of the proposed main themes, noting however that the quantity of material available to support each



main theme was not assessed. A further analysis of the sub-themes shows many potential under-representation/gaps when exploring narratives and perspectives that aren't related to the dominant narratives of Belfast.

- Digital appears currently as the least utilized and represented medium amongst all collections.
- Most content available with the current cultural offerings demonstrate a strong focus on stories of the past, with stories about the future showing the weakest representation.
- The following 'voices' appear under-represented in Belfast's cultural landscape: tourists/visitors to Belfast, immigrant and transient population, Belfast natives living abroad and international perspectives in general. In addition, voices from ethnic and religious minorities, women, children and young people, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and marginalized people are also harder to find, although most organizations are now seeking to address these missing voices.

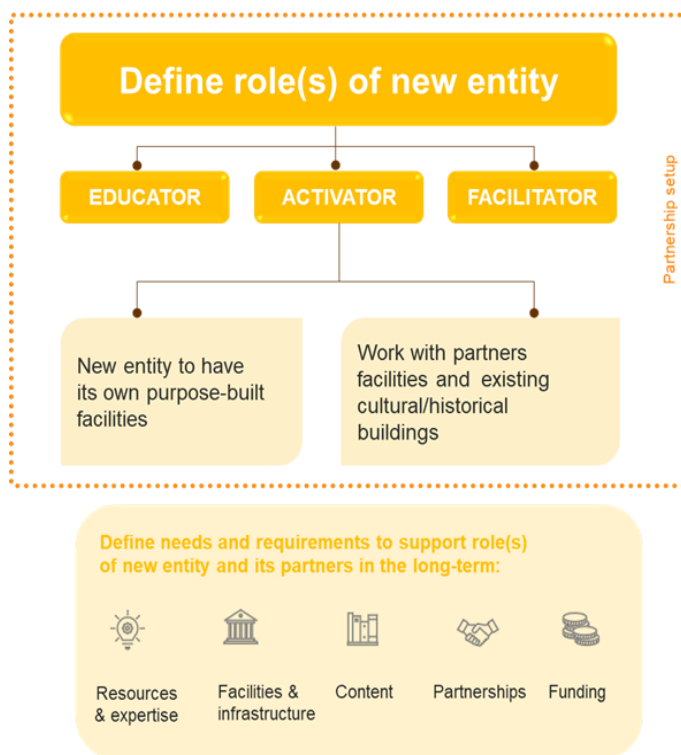
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to the creative workshops, interviews, meetings and research conducted so far, the following key recommendations have emerged to support a custodianship of collections that is sustained in the long-term and authentic and meaningful visitor experiences.

Institutional Setup

The institutional setup and governance as outlined in the Framework applies only to the '**Custodianship of and access to (a) Collection(s) of Belfast Stories**', which is intended to protect the integrity and ethical behaviour around the Collection(s) and its uses and access.

As depicted in the infographics below, various scenarios have been explored, revolving around the idea of either a **collecting** or a **non-collecting entity**. The common objective is to present and make collections more accessible to the public but key activities may differ depending on the mandate – collecting or not collecting.



Non Collecting entity

Partnership-based model whereby partnering organizations handle collecting and preservation of collections while the new entity positions itself to complement the existing cultural offering and enhance access to it. The new entity will be displaying partners' collections and acting as a gateway to discovering other cultural provisions around the city – and beyond. It may function as a centralized support body for its partners, providing a unified vision and standards to protect the integrity and ethical behavior around the development, uses and accesses of the Collection. The key will be to plan for resources, expertise, content, facilities, infrastructure, partnerships, and funding accordingly, to support the new entity and its partners in the long-term.

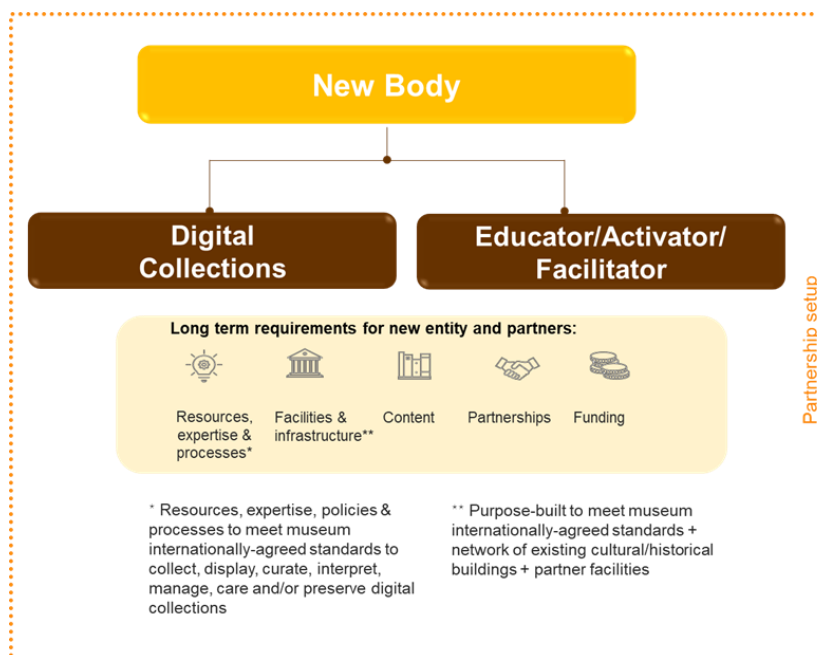
Digital Collections



Collecting entity

The proposed **collecting entity** would focus on developing a digital collection of stories (born digital and digitized formats). Such endeavour may be done through formal collaborations with partners. The new entity will also work with partners with the objective to make existing collections more accessible to the public. Of applicable, material culture may be lent to the collecting entity by other organizations (e.g for exhibitions).

This model can only work if roles, responsibilities, ownership, resources and funding are defined at the outset and agreed by all parties.



Hybrid model

The two models could be morphed into a hybrid option, whereby the new body may lead active collecting while also fulfilling a role of activator, facilitator and/or educator to complement its mandate. It is still recommended for the hybrid model to sit within a formal partnership setup and all requirements as mentioned under scenarios 1 and 2 above would still apply.

Facilities

All scenarios may be supported by purpose-built facilities, partners' facilities, community-based venues and other cultural and historical facilities that exist, forming a network of connected sites across the city and beyond. Indeed, we would like to emphasize the potential of activating places, facilities and venues to engage with the local communities in their neighbourhoods.

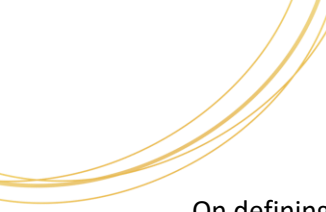
As an example, the Destination Hub may become a gateway where visitors get a meaning experience, and from which they can be 'signposted' to other destinations across the city – and potentially at national level, over time - thus making things more accessible at a city-wide level.

Governance implementation

A phased approach has been proposed for the implementation of any of the scenarios:

Phase 1 - Interim governance model

Set up an interim governance system that brings together, in an informal scheme (working group/consortium), all the potential partners to discuss and carefully assess the risks of the various models, agree on role(s) of the new entity and identify key requirements (e.g. resources, funding, facilities etc.) for implementation, conduct consultations among potential partners, stakeholders and communities to confirm needs and expectations, and decide the way forward in setting up formal partnerships. This is a critical phase which will help building a relationship with potential partners, so it should not be rushed.



On defining the institutional and governance setup, it is advisable to consider an evolving model: proceeding step-by-step, starting small, then expanding over time, and potentially morphing into something new, depending on how things go.

Phase 2 - Final Governance model

Move into a **final governance setup** once there is consensus on how to proceed and who the founding partners are. In the meantime, get started on the mandate using partners' network of venues and community-based venues to reach out to different audiences and build awareness.

- Solid community engagement work should take place during this phase – engage communities in their neighborhoods.
- Activate places and sites across the city through public programming.
- Together with formal partners, identify scopes and responsibilities, define requirements for resources, funding, facilities etc. and agree on implementation.
- Establish the governance structure for the chosen model.

Other key recommendations

Collections Mapping

The key recommendation here is to conduct a comprehensive collections audit across a large range of organizations to confirm trends, strengths and gaps.

Target Audiences

The Collection(s) of Stories (and any activities in relation to the Collection(s)) must target, first and foremost, the local audiences; it is essential for the Collection of Stories to be rooted with the people of Belfast, otherwise it won't succeed in being relevant. Tourists will follow the locals.

Setting up Partnerships

Formal partnerships are essential to the long-term success of this endeavour; formal partnerships will help reaching out to wider audiences, bridging the gaps of under-representation, widening collections, bringing together various set of skills and expertise and increasing accessibility to collections across the city, rather than in one single location.

- Funding and resources will be required – partners cannot be expected to take on additional scope and responsibilities without required resources and funds to do so.
- Working within a partnership model requires trust on all sides, which takes time to build. It is advisable to 'start small', perhaps with one project, to test the relationship and the ability to work together as partners before committing to longer term engagements.

- A partnership-based model will only work with clear roles, responsibilities, ownership and funding defined at the outset and agreed by all parties.

Building long-term relationships

Building trust between people and collecting organizations is essential to the success of the Collection of Stories. This is about creating a network with people and communities over time and can be implemented by focusing on community-led / grassroots engagement programs, working with locally based partners and ambassadors, activating local places and sites, and thriving to be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Curating and mediating stories

There is no shying away from sensitive and contested stories! It is vital to embrace **multiple perspectives** and recognize that there isn't a specific narrative that is deemed more important than another, create a safe space for all to tell their stories, and acknowledge the fact that stories are changing and volatile by nature. These are all critical principles to embrace for this endeavour to work, as long as it is underlaid by **sound research, evidence and contextualization** to avoid the trap of creating oversimplistic equivalence, and provides visitors the tools they need to approach the stories and make their own decisions. In addition, setting up an expert advisory panel, implementing a review process with participants, working with mediation experts and actively using the Guiding Principles are highly recommended to facilitate the mediation of content, especially when sensitive.

Collecting, using and accessing stories:

Managing uses of and access to stories can be quite challenging and requires collaboration and transparency. All aspects of uses and access to stories should be captured in policies and clearly defined processes and procedures.

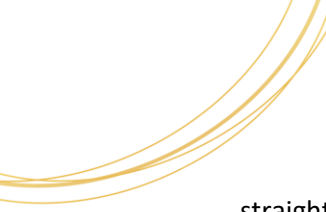
It is vital to recognise that stories belong to the people who tell them. As such, they should retain ownership and control, which includes the rights to access, review and withdraw their stories. When it comes to the uses of stories, participants should be involved in the process of permission and access, noting that everyone needs to understand the potential impacts and consequences of signing on various types of permission for uses.

Going digital

The sheer volume of digital data (whether from digitization of physical collections or born digital material) that needs to be sorted, processed, curated, stored, preserved and made accessible can be quite a challenge. This must be taken into account from the outset, at the planning stage, since it has an impact on the physical facilities, selection of technologies and infrastructure, resources, expertise, operations and ultimately, costs.

Immediate next steps

- Curatorial and interpretive planning is required to connect this Framework to the development of programs, activities and events of all kinds. This is essential. We strongly advise against going



straight from this Framework into, for example, exhibition design or public programming without first laying out the curatorial and interpretive plan.

- For capital projects such as the Destination Hub, we would highly recommend for the following planning work to take place (if not done yet):
 - Full institutional and business planning – this is critical for long term sustainability.
 - Facility planning - to ensure that any architectural and engineering design and layout fits the requirement of the project, rather than the other way round.

CONCLUSION

There is an opportunity for the City Council to become the acting agent that articulates the Belfast Story Collection Framework, creates an authentic experience that is rooted with the people of Belfast, makes resources more accessible and pulls disparate organizations and groups together. This needs to be done **within the context of the other cultural organizations of Belfast to be successful**. Time and open collaboration will be needed to build trust amongst all partners and agree on the best way forward, leading eventually to something completely new and unique, which may well have resonance beyond the city, potentially becoming a wider (e.g national?) initiative in time.

The full report may be used as a basis for discussion with potential partners and stakeholders; it will encourage further discussion as to what already exists and how this new entity may position itself in a role that is essential although not covered anywhere else, at least not extensively. A thorough review and risk assessment – together with potential partners and other stakeholders - of the various models is encouraged, in order to assess the best fit for the new entity.

BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY REPORT

CONCEPT DESIGN STAGE (MARCH 2022 TO JUNE 2023)

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INTRODUCTION

WHY WE ARE ENGAGING

Belfast City Council's **Consultation and Engagement Framework** describes a broad spectrum of two-way communication (from consultation to engagement to involvement) between the council and its residents and stakeholders. It recognises that effective dialogue helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit.

Belfast Stories **Equality Framework** recognises that the Belfast Stories vision can only be achieved if equality, diversity and inclusion are at its core, supported by a co-designed and inclusive process throughout all aspects of the project. This should seek to build long-term relationships while using a variety of tactics to engage people on the terms they want to be engaged.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Belfast City Council to actively seek ways to encourage:

- greater equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without, and
- good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and **Disability Discriminations Order 2006** require the council to protect disabled people from discrimination, promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

One of the key tools for doing this is an equality impact assessment (EQIA) as set down in the council's **Equality Scheme**. An EQIA can help determine the extent and nature of any impact upon the Section 75 categories and find ways to promote equality of opportunity and good relations more effectively. An EQIA should be carried out in line with **Equality Commission** guidance, which requires a 12-week public consultation period.

Rural Needs Act 2016 requires Belfast City Council to have due regard to rural needs when developing policies and initiatives. One of the key tools for doing this is a rural needs impact assessment (RNIA). An RNIA can help determine the extent and nature of any impact on a policy or initiative on rural needs and find ways to support the social and economic needs of people more effectively in rural areas.

Belfast's residents and stakeholders have been consulted on a wide range of council policies and initiatives and likely will also have **legitimate expectation** of being consulted about Belfast Stories.

Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent Consulting to provide specialist guidance and support to plan and assist with Belfast Stories consultation.

This Belfast Stories **Engagement Plan** brings together a range of consultation, engagement and involvement approaches to build on best practice, statutory requirement and stakeholder expectation.

VISION AND MISSION

The purpose of the engagement plan is

To help make Belfast Stories a destination that resonates with local people, captivates visitors and is welcoming of all

Our mission is

To bring Belfast Stories to life through the knowledge, insight and ideas of its people and stakeholders

WHAT IS COVERED IN THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

This engagement plan covers RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stage II, which runs from May 2022 and June 2023. During this stage, concept designs and plans are produced in line with the requirements of the project brief. This will include plans for:

- the layout of the building
- the design of the exhibition space
- the story collection framework

There will be two broad parts to our engagement between June 2022 and June 2023.

1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The public consultation will run for 14 weeks from [week commencing 6th June] to [14 September] 2022. The public consultation will focus on:

- i. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development
- ii. making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and story collection framework

- iii. asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement (below)

2. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement will be structured around four work strands:

- i. Equity
- ii. Sustainability
- iii. Partnership
- iv. Experiences

These will set the foundations, building relationships and shaping further ongoing engagement up until (and possibly after) Belfast Stories opens in 2028.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION



BUILDING EXCITEMENT

If people are excited by Belfast Stories, then they will want to help shape it, including by sharing their stories.

To do this, we will:

- **Launch** the public consultation with a story-themed event
- Develop an **online consultation hub**
- Develop a **physical consultation hub** in a central location

- Create **pop-up consultation hubs** throughout the city, particularly in areas that might be most affected by the development (neighbouring businesses and communities) or are furthest away and less likely to see the city centre hoardings and consultation hub
- Keep the **Belfast Stories website** up to date with what is happening and ways to get involved
- Use Belfast City Council **social media channels** to keep people up to date with what is happening and ways to get involved
- Publish key information and ways to get involved in **City Matters** magazine
- Encourage **partner organisations** to promote what is happening and ways to get involved through their websites, social media and other communications channels
- Put **information boards** up around the building with key information, key dates and ways to find out more
- Partner with **Hit the North Arts Festival** to create a new mural at the site
- Offer **hard-hat tours** to potential partners and people and groups who may be less likely to be engaged through other methods

MAKING SURE BELFAST STORIES IS FOR EVERYONE

We want the building to be **welcoming and accessible** for everyone and for everyone to **see themselves reflected** in its stories. There are three main ways we will do this.

1. EQUALITY IMPACT AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

We will let people know how they can read the draft impact assessments and respond to questions about them through the methods listed above. We will also test our findings through **group and one-to-one meetings**, including with:

- Belfast City Council's **Equality Consultative Forum**
- the Belfast Stories **equity steering group**
- any other **key organisations** representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method

2. THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

We will set up an equity steering group. The equity steering group exists to make sure that equality, inclusion and diversity is at the heart of Belfast Stories.

The steering group will be made up of staff from **Belfast City Council's Belfast Stories and equality teams** working alongside **people who are experts by experience** of being less heard or listened to due to their identity or circumstance.

During the public consultation, the steering group will help us **consult with a people and groups within their networks** including through **meetings, focus groups, surveys and other engagement tools** that we come up with together. This will include:

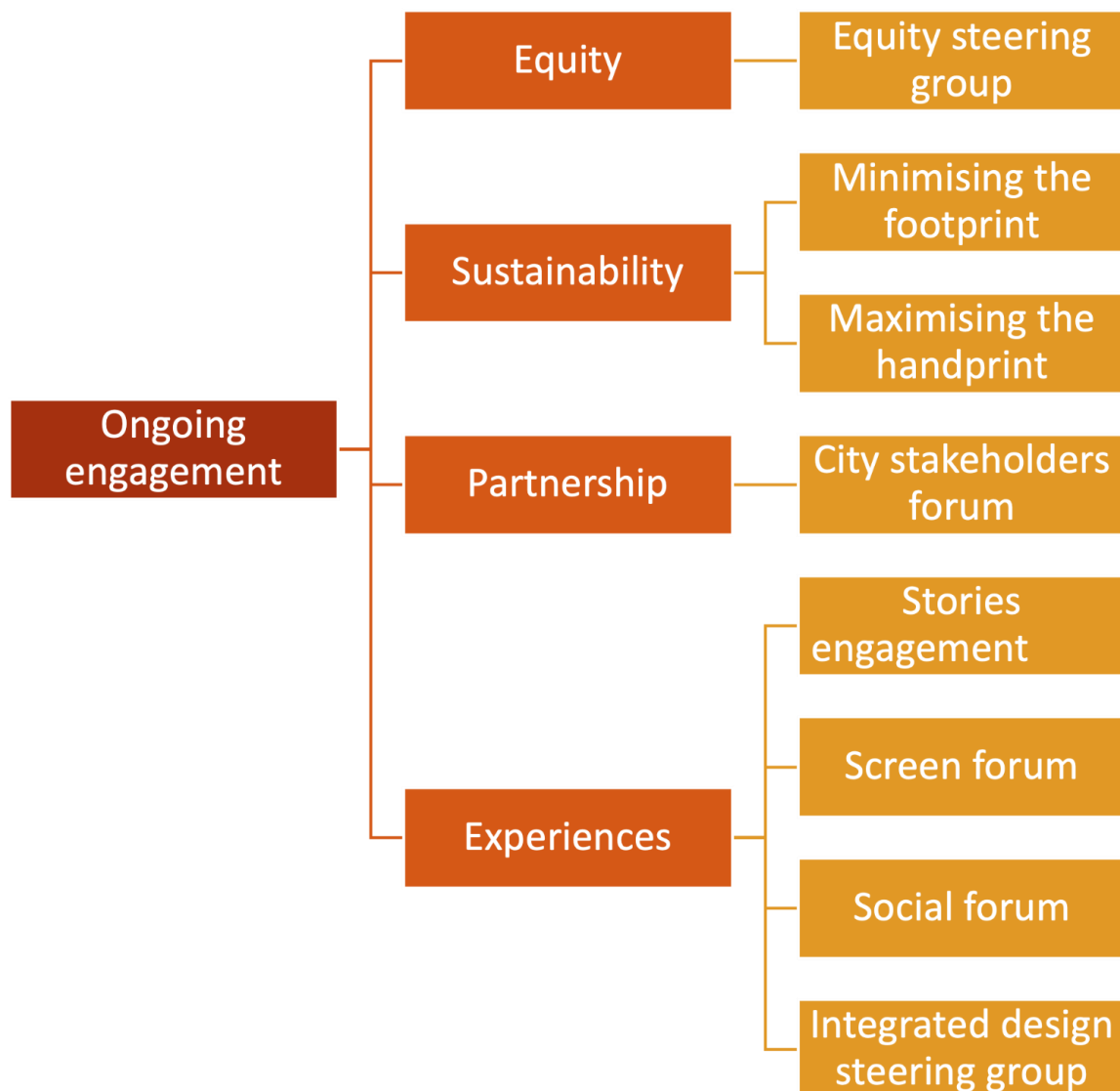
- People from different faith, political and cultural backgrounds
- People from minoritized ethnic communities
- Deaf/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people
- Older people
- Children and young people
- Women
- Carers and people with dependents
- LGBTQ+ people

3. TESTING THE DRAFT STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

The **story collection framework** was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders. It is essential that the framework is meaningful to the people and groups we want to share their stories. We will test the story collection principles and themes through:

- **Creative workshops** in consultation hubs and with community partners
- Other engagement opportunities designed with the **equity steering group** targeting missing voices
- **Workshops** with:
 - **stakeholders involved in the development** of the draft story collection framework
 - **existing story collections and collectors** (museums, archives, libraries, local history groups and so on)
 - **storytellers** (such as writers, photographers, artists, producers and so on)
- Online **quizzes and polls** targeted at the general public The equity storyline

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT



The following section outlines the how the ongoing engagement will be structured – we will structure it around four work strands: Equity; Sustainability; Partnership; and Experiences.

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

During the ongoing engagement phase, the **equity steering group** will:

- **identify and connect** to “missing voices” and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an **engagement programme** that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building

- co-produce **engagement opportunities** throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the **accessibility** of consultation materials
- act as a **critical friend**, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

THE SUSTAINABILITY STORYLINE

The purpose of this storyline is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. Being truly sustainable means thinking about the triple-bottom-line of planet, people and prosperity.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT

This is about caring for the environment, valuing precious resources and reducing the carbon footprint of Belfast Stories during its construction and operation.

Belfast City Council's climate team will facilitate a **working group** in partnership with key environmental stakeholders.

MAXIMISING THE HANDPRINT

This is about how **responsible tourism** can **regenerate communities** through investment in local people. For Belfast Stories this means looking at how to add value through

- **volunteering, job skills, employment and career development** for local people
- use of **social clauses** and **social value procurement**
- supporting **local suppliers** (food, craft, artists and so on) so visitors can have memorable, **meaningful cultural experiences**
- **signposting** visitors to other places where people can continue their experience

Belfast City Council's tourism, culture and economic development teams will develop **networks and programmes** to help local businesses and cultural and community organisations and local and regional tourist providers build on the Belfast Stories opportunity.

THE PARTNERSHIP STORYLINE

Belfast Stories is not Belfast City Council's story. There are already many organisations across the city collecting, storing, interpreting and celebrating the city's stories.

The **city stakeholders network** will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It will **meet quarterly** to share key information, discuss emerging issues and

opportunities and encourage collaboration. Partners will also be asked to share information and engagement opportunities with **their members, communities and networks**.

THE EXPERIENCES STORYLINE

1. STORIES

Our plans may change depending on the feedback we get on the story collection framework during the public consultation, but these are the types of tactics we might use to **gather, record, store, select and share stories**.

- A **social media campaign** encouraging people to share micro-stories in words, photographs or videos
- **Storytelling ambassadors**, including well-known and “ordinary” people from different backgrounds
- Support (such as training, toolkits, equipment, expertise or funding) for **community networks**, such as community organisations, schools, libraries and other public-facing services across the city, to test the story collection process, identifying barriers that might stop people from telling their story and coming up with ideas to overcome them
- Pop-up workshops during **festivals and events**
- An **onsite drop-in consultation hub**
- A **graffiti wall** coinciding with the 2023 Hit the North Festival

2. SCREEN

Made up of representatives of the film sector alongside Belfast City Council’s arts and creative industries teams, this **forum will be led by NI Screen**. It will work together to start to scope the broad parameters of the film and skills programmes.

3. SOCIAL

Made up of representatives of the arts, culture, events, festivals, food and retail sectors, this **forum will be led by Belfast City Council’s tourism and culture teams**. It will work together to scope the social offering and creative use of public space in the Belfast Stories building.

4. INTEGRATED DESIGN STEERING GROUP

The integrated design steering group will comprise:

- representatives from **the equity, sustainability and experience storylines**
- **key partners such as NI Screen** and

- **contractors appointed to design the exhibition space and the overall building**

It will be responsible for ensuring that the design of the building and exhibition reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.

WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE RESULTS

Because people are sharing their time, expertise and ideas, we want them to know that they have been heard.

We will summarise what we have heard and learned and what we plan to do about it at key points during the engagement. These findings will then be published in the consultation hub and shared through our groups, forums and networks.

No individuals will be named or identifiable in what we make public.

The findings will then be used to inform next steps including in relation to the Belfast Stories concept, design and engagement programme.

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Subject:	City Regeneration and Development Work Programme 2022 - 2023
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Adrian Ferguson, 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"/>
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 provide Members with an overview on the work programme of City Regeneration & Development for 2022 – 2023, and to seek approval to progress

	necessary procurement for key actions in 22/23 aligned to the priorities of this Committee as well as the wide strategic corporate objectives of the Belfast Agenda.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the 2021 – 2022 progress across the regeneration and development activities aligned to the City Regeneration and Development Division. • Agree the outlined activities for 2022 - 2023 as set out in the report including the budget implications as below being met from approved and existing departmental budget. • Agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate framework arrangements) be initiated for any of the planned City Regeneration and Development activities for 22/23 as required and in line with the approved departmental budget.
3.0	Background
3.1	<p>The City Regeneration and Development Division are focused on supporting the priorities of this Committee which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling and shaping city regeneration, development and investment ensuring alignment across the Place and Economy Department and wider organisation, in order to deliver on the Council's Strategic objectives for the physical and inclusive development of the city. • Delivery of programmes and projects within Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) and associated Masterplans together with other citywide regeneration activities, as aligned with the Belfast Agenda, Belfast: Our Recovery, Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023 and the Improvement Plan 2022 – 2023. With an understanding that underpinning the delivery of regeneration and development is the ability to attract investment to ensure a thriving city, maximising the regeneration impact to deliver on inclusive growth.
3.2	<p>In 2021 – 2022, despite the challenges of the Pandemic, significant progress was made across regeneration and development in the city. Specifically, some key highlights in relation to the role of the City Regeneration and Development Division this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of £4.039m DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including Business and Community Cluster Programme Grant across the city, active travel measures, new social and placemaking projects across the city, and notably the award-winning Belfast Entries programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to develop A Bolder Vision Strategy with DfC and DfI including the completion of the public consultation exercise. The Bolder Vision Strategy will provide a more holistic approach to infrastructure and major development investment, providing more of an onus on delivering transformative place-making and regeneration opportunities within our collective capital public and private investment plans, aligned to the principles and Key Moves of the Bolder Vision. • The acquisition of the site for Belfast's flagship BRCD project Belfast Stories which will be housed in one of Belfast's most beloved heritage buildings, the art deco former Bank of Ireland building on Royal Avenue, along with the surrounding 4,000sq metres site. • The acquisition of 2 Royal Avenue and working to develop long term and future uses collaboratively across Council for this listed heritage building, providing Council with a key opportunity to help address the challenges impacting on the city centre while protecting our heritage assets. • Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 - city centre cluster sites including regeneration concept plans progression to PAD stage on a number of sites, and the completion of the initial EoI stage to attract Institutional Investment. • SSA Phase 2 - City wide Strategic Site Assessments, including the establishment of a joint public sector housing group as the appropriate vehicle, chaired by the NIHE, to drive this forward through an agreed methodology. Continuing the comprehensive mapping of public sector assets in conjunction with partners, assessing these assets in line with the Urban Capacity Study and the Housing Monitor to identify and bring forward opportunities for Housing Led Regeneration. • Developing a City Centre Living Vision through focused engagement with communities and other stakeholders to inform the City Centre Living Vision Document • Leading the refreshed City Development Board, under the Community Planning Partnership; including supporting sub structures to work towards the finalisation of draft actions plans for each priority theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Led Regeneration - Future City Centre Programme - Connectivity, Access, Active & Sustainable Travel - City-Wide Development and Regeneration • Securing £207,500 funding for active travel enabling infrastructure through DfI's blue and green infrastructure fund to deliver secure and covered cycle stands and cycle repair stands.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing additional funding for Belfast Entries Phase 2 and development of tactical regeneration programmes for the SW Quarter, the 5C's and Castle Street area. • Progressing design work on a number of public realm catalyst projects utilising developer contributions including the 5C's, Little York / Little Patrick St and the North South Spine • Providing civic leadership and regeneration advice including representation on various Programme/Project Boards) on a number of key city projects and programmes including, Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2, BRCD, the Junctions Working Group, and Streets Ahead Programme Board as well as a number of major private/public sector developments including Weavers Cross, Waterside, Tribeca, and Queens Quay • Vacant to Vibrant Programme: includes launch of an EoI to inform the viability of a £700k capital grant scheme to incentivise both property owners and potential occupiers to bring vacant spaces in Belfast city centre back into use and support the revitalisation of the city centre • Working with public and private sector partners to position the city to compete and promote the city for inclusive investment. Including supporting the Renewed Ambition public and private partnership, focused on promotion, advocacy and engagement and research work on social, economic and environmental impact of real estate development.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	The focus of the Division in 2022 – 2023 is again aligned to the priorities and plan for this Committee as well as the wider strategic objectives for Council and themed across a number of programme pillars, below is a high-level outline of activities under these:
4.2	<p>Future City Centre (FCC) Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FCC now forms an integral part of the CG&R Committee Plan and the Community Planning Partnership Board and provides a holistic oversight of the various priorities to ensure alignment and co-ordination and seeks to maximise the benefits of collective private and public sector investment across a number of strategic, cross-cutting activities /projects. These cross-cutting activities are aligned under the key pillars of the FCC Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical Regeneration and Connectivity - Business & Investment - City Centre Vitality - Positioning the City to Compete

4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital Innovation - Clean Green & Safe. <p>The FCC includes programmes such as the Vacant to Vibrant scheme, Housing Led Regeneration, Strategic Acquisition of key assets, the Entries Programme, Tactical Regeneration, the Bolder Vision and Positioning the City to Compete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a refresh of the overall FCC programme based on ongoing work across the pillars to ensure that the programme takes account of changing local and global situations. • Launching and delivering the Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme • Tactical Regeneration Programme feasibility, design and delivery focusing on the Grey to Green initiative, SW Quarter and 5C's Tactical Regeneration projects as previously agreed by this Committee. • £150k from approved and existing departmental budget will be allocated to further developing and delivering the FCC Tactical Regeneration Programme. <p>Housing Led Regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise regeneration plans, PADs and all due diligence detail on Strategic Site Assessment Phase 1 cluster sites linked to the approach around attracting an institutional investor / development partner to bring forward housing led regeneration across SSA Phase 1 Council assets and, where appropriate, together with other public sector partners (DfC, NIHE, Dfl) and private sector landholdings. • Finalise the City Centre Living Vision that will support progression of residential development aspirations for the city centre, to include engagement with relevant stakeholders and progressing recommendations as appropriate. • Continue with work to procure an institutional investor/development partner to progress Council's housing led regeneration ambitions. • Continuing to bring forward the Strategic Site Assessment Phase 2 city wide work via the CPP City Development Board and its substructure (Housing Led Regeneration Group) chaired by the NIHE. Finalise the extensive cross public sector mapping exercise (including LPS, DfC, NIHE) to assess landholdings identified within LDP's Urban Capacity Study and the Housing Monitor, identifying and assessing a refined list of opportunities for Housing Led Regeneration • Analysis of public sector assets, alongside existing private sector opportunities (including key city developments) to identify barriers to delivery and potential mechanisms for unlocking, aimed at maximising opportunities and ensuring prioritisation of funding/delivery through the appropriate delivery agent.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the Inner North West Development Brief to deliver housing led regeneration by addressing barriers to unlock delivery of mixed tenure residential development.
4.4	<p>Connectivity, Active Travel and City Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the Bolder Vision Strategy and Action Plan with partners in DfI and DfC; establish an integrated working approach with partners through an MoU Partnership approach and prioritise funding approaches for feasibility and delivery of the priority projects emerging from the Bolder Vision Work. £200k from approved and existing departmental budget will be allocated to developing up the Bolder Vision Action Plan suite of projects. • Continue to provide civic leadership and direction to enable the timely delivery of capital connectivity, active travel and city infrastructure projects. • Develop and oversee an overarching city-wide programme to co-ordinate Council's approach (inc partnership working) to connectivity and active travel aligned to the Corporate priority on Connectivity & Active Travel and as part of the CPP City Development Board priority. • Further develop the Belfast Urban Greenway in conjunction with the DfI Cycle Network and seek funding for delivery and further development and delivery of sustainable travel initiatives. • Ongoing monitoring and implementation of the of the Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan in line with the emerging BMTP & LDP documents. • Work collaboratively with DfI in relation to the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, and the Belfast Cycle Network
4.5	<p>City Development and Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Regeneration Programme Framework for key regeneration projects including partnership projects at a citywide level; to include preparation of feasibility studies and business cases as appropriate. To include regeneration projects to support development and investment for Bolder Vision and housing / mixed uses regeneration projects. • Identification of barriers preventing investment to key city regeneration and developing approaches, with partners as appropriate, to de-risk, unlock and support bringing forward development proposals. • Undertake a review and purpose of the City Centre Investment Fund to align with delivery of city development aspirations. • Developing long term uses and attracting funding for 2 Royal Avenue

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the Sixth investment & development opportunity • Complete assembly of optimal site for development of Belfast Stories project • Delivering the Vacant to Vibrant Grant Programme to address the rising level of ground floor vacancy within the city centre • Overseeing the delivery of the streetscape environmental improvements of the city-wide Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations in conjunction with Officers from across the P&E Department • Working across Council and via the Community Planning process to progress a joined-up approach to city wide regeneration and development priorities on a place based approach involving communities and wider city partners. • Undertake a review of the priorities /projects within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy and progress /oversee those where Council is the lead partner. • Chair and driving forward the regeneration work programme of the UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum. • Continue to provide civic leadership regeneration advice, including representation on Programme / Project Boards, on key city infrastructure and regeneration projects (public and private).
4.6	<p>Positioning the City to Compete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to positively position Belfast globally as an attractive investment location through targeted marketing and communication interventions to support the delivery of regeneration projects across the city and inclusive sustainable growth, aligning to city recovery plans, Belfast Region City Deal, Reset for Growth, Net Zero and Innovation City Belfast ambitions. • Support the Renewed Ambition public private partnership and the various elements of that work programme as previously reported to Committee. • Refreshing the Invest in Belfast website to ensure the city is positioned to attract investment including across real estate development, Innovation and Green Growth sectors. • Developing a CRM system to manage the database of investment and development contacts. • Continue to deliver the strategic physical / real estate investment and marketing programme for the city including the implementation of a cohesive city and investment narrative.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching the Building Impact Report which examines the role the built environment /real estate plays in delivering Social, Economic and Environmental benefits to Belfast and the wider Belfast City Region, including the development of a targeted action plan to support the implementation of the report recommendations to deliver enhanced social and environmental benefits.
4.7	<p>It is also worth highlighting that as well as the above outlined activities the Division align significant officer resource to driving and facilitating regeneration and development opportunities through various city level fora, including community engagement. Specifically, this involves working with city partners including anchor institutions, public and private sectors, developers, communities and umbrella organisations to bring forward and maximise the regeneration potential of development projects as aligned to corporate and city priorities e.g. facilitating / representing Council at reference groups / board members including, Weavers Cross, Waterside, Tribeca, Belfast Stories, High Street Task Force, Housing Supply Strategy Programme etc. This role of advocacy and influencing whilst difficult to measure is critical to shaping the future development of the city aligned to our strategic policy and growth ambitions of the Belfast Agenda, LDP and BCCRIS.</p>
4.8	<p>The Division will also continue to complete the existing Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme in line with the agreed projects and timelines and continue to develop projects to feasibility stage to attract further funding for catalyst opportunities across the city.</p>
4.9	<p>Members are also asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate framework arrangements) be initiated for any of the planned City Regeneration and Development activities including externally funded projects for 22/23 as required.</p>
5.0	Finance & Resource Implications
5.1	<p>The activities and allocation budget to these activities in this report will be resourced from the approved 2022 – 2023 budget for City Regeneration and Development and with tenders/contracts to be awarded in line with this.</p>
6.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
6.1	<p>Specific projects if not already screened will be subject to equality screening.</p>
7.0	Appendices
7.1	<p>NA</p>