

Public Document Pack

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



Belfast
City Council

8th November, 2022

**HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE-
REPORT TO FOLLOW**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both in person and online in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 9th November, 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:

6. Positioning Belfast to Compete

- (a) Christmas Programme 2022 (Pages 1 - 8)
- (d) Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts & Heritage (Pages 9 - 50)



Subject:	Christmas Programme 2022
Date:	9 th November, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry Mc Mullan, 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
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of the Christmas programme proposed in November / December 2022.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the contents of this report and that further information on the socio-economic impact of Christmas activity will be presented in due course (post event).
3.0	Main report

3.1	On an annual basis, the Council's Culture and Events Units delivers a series of large-scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. This is further supported by the activity of other teams who support a number of annual programmes and activities and the Markets Unit who manage the delivery of the Christmas Market at City Hall in addition to year-round activity at St George's and Smithfield markets.
3.2	Members will recall that in 2021, officers adopted a different approach to the Christmas 2021 programme which replaced the traditional switch - on ceremony. In the context of Covid, the challenge for officers was to design a programme that continued to be cognisant of safety considerations and have the ability to respond to a changing environment whilst meeting the needs of city stakeholders including those businesses impacted by the pandemic. The cessation of the traditional Christmas Light Switch was also in response to safety concerns regarding crowd control raised by colleagues in our Corporate Health and Safety Unit. In addition, feedback from city centre traders on the traditional light switch was not entirely positive, with many highlighting traffic, parking congestion and the event itself acting as a barrier to normal trading at a crucial time of year.
3.3	As well as responding to the pandemic the Christmas programme also aimed to meet the development objectives set out in the ten-year Cultural Strategy, including long-term recommendations for events in the city including better strategic alignment across the Council in the design and, delivery of these event-based programmes and above all ensuring the activities were authentic and utilising our local supply chain.
3.4	Cultural animation and creative interventions were identified as fundamental in welcoming people back into the city and played a significant role in creating an authentic and open environment at Christmas.
3.5	As a consequence, in 2021, the Christmas programme consisted of a combination of creative initiatives such as street performance, projections, music, window dressing and lighting installations all inspired by the theme ' <i>Once Upon a Time in Belfast</i> ', utilising local artists, creatives and designers to create an authentic and engaging experience for all throughout the festive season.
3.6	The weekend event proved to be successful. Despite concerns over moving away from the traditional switch on format, the new approach offered increased value for money and audience satisfaction in an environment that was designed to prioritise public safety.
3.7	Estimated audiences over the 2 evenings (20 & 21 November) was 15,000, with the event primarily taking place in the City Centre across key zones which included Donegall Place, Cornmarket, Royal Avenue, Fountain Street, Fountain Lane, Queen Street, Castle Street,

	Castle Lane, Berry Street, Rosemary Street and Lower Garfield Street. The audience profile was similar to the previous format with a strong focus on families.
3.8	<p>Belfast City Council also commissioned an independent socio-economic survey for the <i>Once Upon a time in Belfast</i> themed - event. Results included the following feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 65% of visitors were from the Belfast City Council area, and a further 35% from elsewhere with a small percentage of visitors from Republic of Ireland (3%). - 54% attended the event with children. - 84% gave the event a rating of 8 out of 10 or above, including 27% who rated it as 'Extremely good'. - 92% of visitors agreed that the event improves the city's reputation as a host for events like these and as a place to visit. - 69% of visitors said they would 'definitely' revisit the <i>Once Upon a Time in Belfast</i> event in future years, while 99% agree there should be more events like this in Belfast. - 98% believed that events like this encourage people to come to Belfast, and 93% said that such events improve their sense of well-being and community.
3.9	In 2022, it is intended that the 2021 model of Christmas animation and event delivery would be further consolidated through a programme of seasonal animation in the city centre, which would support economic recovery in the city post pandemic and uplift the city and visitors in the context of the current economic climate.
3.10	<p>Benefits would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the cultural vibrancy of the city - Foster civic pride - Position the Belfast brand - Support the local culture, arts and events sectors - Deliver direct economic benefits - Support businesses
3.11	<p>Christmas Programme 19th November 2022</p> <p>Belfast's Christmas celebrations will officially begin on Saturday 19th November with the '<i>Christmas in Belfast</i>' opening day event, which will take place from 6pm to 9pm.</p>
3.12	In 2022, the opening weekend activity is being reduced from two nights to one and will focus on Saturday night only. This decision has been taken based on the findings of the independent evaluation and feedback from 2021, which evidenced that the opening evening (Saturday) was much better attended than the Sunday. By reprofiling the event and animation budget into the Saturday night only, the programme can be uplifted to

	<p>enhance the visitor experience and increase impact. The event schedule will consist of a range of elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas lighting scheme - Lighting projections - Music programme - Procession - Window animation - Street animation - 2 Royal Avenue - Christmas Market - Lord Mayor Role - Marketing and Communications Activity
3.13	<p>Christmas Lighting Scheme</p> <p>2022 will be year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme which will begin on the 19th of November and run until the 4th January. The scheme will be identical to the 2021 programme, with the addition of icicles on Ann Street and the positioning and lighting on 12 additional trees on Donegall place.</p>
3.14	<p>Lighting Projections</p> <p>City Hall will be illuminated from 18th November to 7th January inclusive. This has consistently generated a positive response from the public. A temporary lighting scheme will also be devised for 2 Royal Avenue at the former Tesco site and the Bank of Ireland building. This will include mapped projections which will operate from 19th November to 1st January.</p>
3.15	<p>Another highlight for the Christmas period will be the lighting of the old Bank of Ireland Building at the bottom of Royal Avenue which will run from 19th November to 1st February. The lighting up of the Bank of Ireland building received significant coverage on social media in 2021. This will be repeated for 2022, raising awareness of the significant ongoing work on the Belfast Stories project. Additional illuminations across the city on the 19th November will include Fountain House above Primark on Donegall Place and the Mayfair building in Cornmarket.</p>
3.16	<p>Music Programme</p> <p>On the evening of the 19th, a music and animation programme will take place across the city across a number of zones (subject to change):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone 1 - Donegall Place (From Carroll's to McDonald's (both sides of street) and Fountain Lane) • Zone 2 - Waterstones, Fountain Street, College St, Fountain Mezzanine, St Mary's Church, Queen's St and Castle Street

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone 3 - Berry Street, Rosemary St, Tesco Metro, Castlecourt Front, Lower Garfield Street, BOI Building (All Royal Avenue) • Zone 4 - Lombard St, Castle Place / Kiosk and front of Bank buildings • Zone 5 - Cornmarket - Dunnes Stores, Ann St, Arthur St, Castle Arcade, Castle Lane and Calendar Street
3.17	<p>A raised platform will also be in situ on the evening of the 19th (likely location in front of 2 Royal Avenue - TBC) with a three-hour set from 6pm to 9pm showcasing local musicians. In addition, a music programme will be curated across the Christmas period including several music elements for the opening night including performances at Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church and music on Berry Street and Lower Garfield Street.</p>
3.18	<p>A 4 week 'weekend programme' of Christmas Animation will also be delivered. The activity will primarily take place in the city centre from 1pm-5pm each Saturday and Sunday in the build- up to Christmas.</p>
3.19	<p>Procession</p> <p>An external provider (Lux) have been engaged to create an interactive 'White and Bright' cavalcade of props and performers which will move through Royal Avenue / Donegall Place on the evening of the event. It is likely that some props will also remain static for the event duration. This will be complemented by a community engagement programme of choreographed costumed performances, creating a real festive spectacle.</p>
3.20	<p>Window Animation</p> <p>US Folk have been engaged to produce winter-themed window vinyls to create a more aesthetically pleasing city centre offering over the festive period. These vinyls are designed to remain in situ throughout winter and are therefore not completely focused on the Christmas theme. BCCM will independently operate a 'Christmas for All' themed window dressing competition for businesses in the city centre.</p>
3.21	<p>In addition, the programme will also include 'live' window animation on the opening night (19 November) in two of the main retail stores on Donegall Place. This will include music and comedy theatre sketches running throughout the event. This proved to be extremely popular in 2021. The Visit Belfast window will also be dressed during this period.</p>
3.22	<p>Street Animation</p> <p>A range of 50+ Belfast - based organisations from the cultural, arts and theatre / performance sectors will be engaged to take part in this event and provide the animation over the opening night. The entertainment onsite will be a mix of music, dance, street performance, comedy and theatrical performance under the overall creative banner of <i>Christmas in Belfast</i>.</p>

3.23	<p>2 Royal Avenue</p> <p>Maywe, the council-appointed provider in 2 Royal Avenue will operate an uplifted events programme over the festive period. This will include a Winter's Den in 2 Royal Avenue commencing on 19th November. This will create a welcoming hub for all to enjoy. Visitors will be able to experience a range of sustainable events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-cycling Christmas decoration programme • Up-cycling Christmas jumper workshops • Creating own advent calendars • Sustainable Christmas crackers • 'Swap - shop' • Santa's Post Box (open Thursday-Sunday weekly, with late night opening Thursday and Friday evenings) • Advent Calendars • Alpine Lodge • Teddy Bear Hospital and Toy repair café • Sustainable Wrapping service (cash for Kids drop-off point)
3.24	<p>In addition, a wide range of free events will be on offer also from 19th November in 2 Royal Avenue, this will include twilight pottery and art markets, fashion swap nights, Christmas carolling events, storytelling, music, festive jazz for seniors, family silent discos, sustainable arts and craft and workshops and a Crufty Christmas Fashion Show in aid of Guide Dogs NI. Throughout the festive period the venue will welcome a range of community-based choirs, musical events and musicians both inside and outside the venue.</p>
3.25	<p>Council have also commissioned US Folk, a Belfast-based agency representing some NI's top illustrative and design talent. They will create an overall look and feel for 2 Royal Avenue's Christmas programme - The Winter's Den - this will include a suite of characters and folk illustrations which will come to life via a bespoke AR App made especially for Christmas. Audiences will be encouraged to engage with this AR app on their mobile devices where they will discover the Christmas characters come to life through animation on their screens when they visit 2 Royal Avenue. They will discover a secret treasure hunt via the AR, where they can collect stickers as they discover. The characters will also be incorporated on vinyl décor across vacant shop unit windows on Royal Avenue, as well as in shop windows across the city meaning the public can interact with the designs and treasure hunt via the AR App throughout the city centre during the festive season. This will run throughout the Christmas period from 19th November into January.</p>
3.26	<p>Christmas Market</p> <p>The Christmas Market will run this year from Saturday 19th November to Thursday 22nd December. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) has held the Continental Markets contract for the past 17 years and have been awarded the contract for the next 3+2 years. Changes</p>

<p>3.27</p> <p>3.28</p> <p>3.29</p> <p>3.30</p> <p>3.31</p>	<p>to the contract this year include a larger seating area, an enhanced Christmas experience with themed and animated walkways. There will be over 100 stalls and the new contract also sets out the requirement for 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. There will be a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours, to be extended this year to out of school hours childcare and youth service providers. MPEL also ran the Jolly Big Business Boost offering a free chalet to a young business. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and throughout the city Centre. The Christmas Market and the local Christmas offer in St George's trade side by side very successfully. MPEL has offered a free pitch to St Georges Market traders this year and in previous years to further enhance trade for the local traders.</p> <p>Role of Lord Mayor</p> <p>The Lord Mayor will play a key role in leading the Christmas procession, as well as the official opening of the 2 Royal Avenue Christmas programme on 19th November. An opportunity will also be possible for the Lord Mayor to speak from the raised platform in the city centre on the 19th November to those in attendance at the event.</p> <p>A video message from the Lord Mayor to citizens and visitors to the city will be issued online on Monday 19th November to coincide with the opening of the Christmas programme (this will be pre-recorded on the evening of the 18th in front of City Hall).</p> <p>Marketing and Communications Activity</p> <p>Council will operate a digital campaign with pulse screens and online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 19th November, as well as weekend entertainment thereafter and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. Council will be directing people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL, where the 19th November event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.</p> <p>Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before event details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight 19th November and 2 Royal Avenue in edition to be circulated to just under 160k homes w/c 7th November. A press release will also be issued w/c 7th November to promote the finer and confirmed details of the event schedule.</p> <p>Economic Context</p> <p>Following Covid and within the context of a cost-of-living crisis, Council are cognisant of providing support to city traders, with a focus on hope and optimism at Christmas. Council's Christmas campaign will have the following principles,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainability
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<p>3.32</p> <p>3.33</p> <p>3.34</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Giving back ○ Sense of Home <p>Christmas lights are an essential part of dressing the city, in 2019 Council secured a new lighting scheme which features more energy - efficient lights. In addition, the lighting scheme will be turned on each evening between 3pm / 4pm and will be turned off at 1am. The pole mounted features operated by DFI will operate from dusk to dawn.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals.</p> <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>



Subject:	Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts and Heritage
Date:	9 th November 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture 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"/>
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Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The purpose of this report is to update Members on Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts and Heritage
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the content of Phase One report on Cultural Mapping
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background and Strategic Context</p> <p>As a key action of Belfast's ten-year cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i>, the Culture Unit, in partnership and the Department for Communities, jointly commissioned a report on Belfast's cultural infrastructure. The aim of this report is to analyse what physical space is available for residents to experience culture, and to examine current physical resource allocation for the cultural sector across the city.</p>

	<p>The overall cultural mapping project, of which this report is stage one, is key to the delivery of the city's cultural strategy and the city's community plan (the Belfast Agenda). It will have significant contribution to existing and emerging Programme for Government outcomes and will make a strong contribution to achieving the objectives of other key city and regional plans. The Culture Team are committed to delivering a cultural mapping of the city within A City Imagining implementation plan 2020-2023.</p>
3.2	<p>This work will enable the collation of a large amount of information and utilise it in wide reaching operational and strategic contexts to benefit the city, our broader cultural sector, our strategic and operational partners, visitors and residents. This work is also important to other initiatives across Culture and Tourism, including includes heritage development, our Tourism Strategy - Make Yourself at Home, the development of neighbourhood tourism offerings and of course the collection of Belfast Stories for the forthcoming visitor attraction.</p>
3.3	<p>Cultural Mapping</p> <p>To date, the approach to cultural mapping and understanding gaps in cultural infrastructure in Belfast has been piecemeal. A number of studies of varying size and scope have been completed at city and neighbourhood level. However, a whole city approach in terms of a critical analysis of physical resources for cultural activity, identifying gaps and models of good practice is required – starting with a study of the physical resources for culture.</p>
3.4	<p>The Cultural Mapping project addresses the existing and future needs of our cultural and creative industries sector by ensuring that policy is informed by up to date and accurate data whilst also providing a valuable resource for the public to increase engagement and participation. Furthermore, this data has the potential to be utilised by residents, visitors, artists, cultural and creative organisations, funders and planners. This report is Phase One of a major cultural mapping project which includes the following phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase One - A review and analysis of Belfast's hard cultural infrastructure. • Phase Two – Study & Scoping of the soft infrastructure, identifying cultural resources, networks links and patterns of cultural practice. Research with partners and community networks, wide-reaching public engagement and cluster engagement, crowdsourcing ideas. • Phase Three – An interactive digital cultural map product that will allow residents to browse the city's cultural offerings. This will be similar in concept to Dublin's 'culture near you' project.
3.5	<p>The report, available in Appendix 1, provides strategic recommendations for improving Belfast's creative provisions in the short and long term and can be seen as a tool that can inform broader plans for the city alongside other areas, including, but not limited to, regeneration, heritage, and economic development.</p>

	Recommendations
3.6	<p>A key recommendation in this phase one report focuses on addressing the shortage of affordable artist studio space in Belfast. Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2022, members agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support for this sector. As part of this support, members also agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast which would identify examples of best practice and potential solutions to this issue. This research to be conducted over the coming months, with a number of long-term recommendations presented to Committee in March 2023.</p>
3.7	<p>The report identifies 2 Royal Avenue as a space which could accommodate artists. On 15 April 2022, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the proposal around Meanwhile Use until the end of 2023 at our recently acquired 2 Royal Avenue building, with a focus on cultural, animation and creative activities. The proposal was to create a non-commercial space in the heart of the city and provide citizens and visitors with a free and accessible place to relax and enjoy arts programming and a cultural offering, whilst developing long term strategy use. In July 2022, Council submitted an application to the Levelling Up Fund, proposing a ‘Creative Hub’, for the building at 2 Royal Avenue. The concept was based on a mixture of complimentary commercial, creative and cultural activities across the building to create one holistic offer.</p>
3.8	<p>Recommendations in this Cultural Mapping report also focuses on Cultural Entrepreneurship as it relates to physical space. As members will be aware, The Vacant to Vibrant, 2 year pilot, Capital Grant Scheme has allocated £1mto seek to support local independent businesses and SME’s, social economy businesses and creative and cultural organisations that would provide a unique or distinct offer for the city centre and transform vacant spaces to become vibrant. This scheme has garnered interest from the cultural sector. At the Expression of Interest stage, approximately 33% of the submissions by businesses/organisations were from cultural sector. Many from the cultural sector Eols have indicated that they are seeking maker space and their property requirements also may not align with the parameters of this grant, which will primarily seek to occupy and activate vacant ground floor space in prominent areas of the city centre.</p>
3.9	<p>Long term recommendations in the report include a hotel levy. As members will be aware, this was considered in the tourism plan for Belfast, “Make Yourself at Home”, presented to Committee on 6th April 2022. Within this plan, it was acknowledged that while areas like passenger duty and visitor levies are not within the remit of the Council, we will adopt policy positions based on up-to-date research, consultation and evidence.</p>
<p>Page 11</p>	

<p>3.10</p>	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Phase Two of this Cultural Mapping work will delve deeper into research and scoping of the infrastructure identified in this initial phase. The phase will create a holistic view of the cultural sector and identify networks and artistic and cultural practice patterns. This will also include looking into public participation, cluster interaction, research with partners and community networks, and the people and groups that use these spaces as their workplace. This work is due to be commissioned in November 2022, with a report presented to Committee in May 2023. The overarching objective of this work is twofold to increase and understanding of cultural infrastructure, drive use and participation and secondly to seek to agree long term remedies with partners in areas where gaps in provision are demonstrated. We also continue to work with organisations across the city to locate and source suitable properties where there is an immediate or emergency need.</p>
<p>3.11</p>	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are currently no financial implications attached to this report.</p>
<p>3.12</p>	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA).</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Cultural Mapping - An audit of Belfast’s cultural infrastructure.</p>

CULTURAL MAPPING

An audit of Belfast's cultural
infrastructure.



—DAISY—
—CHAIN
—INC—

BELFAST

Cultural Infrastructure Mapping Project

In collaboration with:
Belfast Culture Team
culture@belfastcity.gov.uk

Consultant:
Daisy Chain Inc
info@daisychaininc.co

Date of issue: 1 September 2022



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"Planning is critical to success in every facet of our lives. Cultural planning offers an opportunity for communities to create a roadmap unique to their needs, aspirations, and strengths. By planning strategically, local governments and arts groups can work together to integrate arts and culture."

Creative City Network of Canada

EastSide Arts Festival, 2021

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This report is a review of Belfast's cultural assets and an analysis of what physical space is available for residents of the city to experience culture. Belfast City Council commissioned this study to help identify gaps and opportunities within the cultural sector and contribute to a shared knowledge base to inform and influence city planning, regeneration development and investment decisions. This report is Phase One of a major cultural mapping project which includes the following phases:

- **Phase One** - A review and analysis of Belfast's hard cultural infrastructure.
- **Phase Two** - Study & Scoping of the soft infrastructure, identifying cultural resources, networks links and patterns of cultural practice. Research with partners and community networks, wide-reaching public engagement and cluster engagement, crowdsourcing ideas.
- **Phase Three** - An interactive digital cultural map product that will allow residents to browse the city's cultural offerings.

Culture Mapping is a methodology for interpreting the city's assets through the lens of its citizens. The report will also examine emerging trends and significant issues related to creative space in Belfast. This project is about capacity, not just measuring it but growing it. It's about developing the knowledge base of what's available and possible. We see this report as the start of a conversation between planning teams, developers and the cultural sector. A key aim of the project is to identify challenges, locate potential blockages, and make room for change.

We provide strategic recommendations for improving Belfast's creative provisions in the short and long term. We aim for this study to be seen as a tool that can inform broader plans for the city alongside other areas, including, but not limited to, regeneration, heritage, and economic development.

1.2 WHO IS DAISY CHAIN INC

Daisy Chain Inc is a creative placemaking consultancy firm. Three of our team are creatives and founding members of Vault Artist Studios, which has grown to be the largest multi-disciplinary artist studio in Ireland. We uniquely understand the social and economic environment within Belfast's creative sector. Having faced the challenge of seeking suitable premises for artist studios in Belfast, we're acutely aware of the challenges around cultural infrastructure in the city. We're passionate about the benefits of grassroots efforts and people-focused interventions. In setting up Vault, we wanted something that didn't exist, so we made it. We intend for this project to build on our expertise in converting space for creative use.

1.3 ARTS SECTOR FOCUS

In the last 12 months, the lack of secure tenancy for artist studios in Belfast has put this sector in crisis. With that in mind and an understanding of the ramifications of the issue, this report leans heavily on our findings related to artist studios. We examine the knock-on effect the loss of artist studios will bring to the broader arts community – and by extension, the tourism and night-time economy. While we offer some potential solutions and recommendations, this issue needs urgent consideration by Belfast City Council.

1.4 BENCHMARKING

Daisy Chain Inc carried out an analysis of the city's cultural infrastructure with comparable cities. The report includes a benchmarking exercise of the five main categories. The cities chosen in consultation with the Culture team at Belfast City Council are Dublin, Edinburgh and Rotterdam. We examine how these cities approach cultural infrastructure sustainability.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

We offer the framework for collecting and analysing the data for this report. We explain the project's challenges and offer insights into how Phase II may further shape the data.

1.6 CASE STUDIES & HIGHLIGHTS

This report utilises case studies for an in-depth look at the following organisations relating to their relationship with cultural infrastructure:

1. **Golden Thread Gallery** and their case for expanding their offering and showcasing a more extensive collection.
2. **Urban Resorts in Amsterdam** offers a closer look at a model for mixed use arts studios in Amsterdam.
3. **Flax Artist Studios & Vault Artist Studios** are highlighted to illustrate what the arts sector could lose if these organisations are driven out of Belfast.
4. **SKAR in Rotterdam** is a studio group model that manages 44 buildings and approximately 900 artists.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Section 02 – Understanding Cultural Infrastructure

- Examines our working definition of hard cultural infrastructure and the relevant policy context, and its role in Belfast's cultural sector.

Section 03 – Our Findings

- Lays out our key findings & data comparison with benchmark cities.
- Case studies for the context of the Arts Sector.

Section 04 – Our Recommendations

- We offer our recommendations for sustaining and growing Belfast's cultural infrastructure offering

Section 05 – Benchmark Context

- We examine the peer cities used in our benchmarking exercise.

Section 06 – Methodology

- We detail our methodology for data collection and analysis.

Section 07 – Phase II Recommendations

- Our proposals for phase II of the project.

Appendix A – List of Category Definitions

Appendix B – Our toolkit for converting empty spaces to creative spaces.



2.0 CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

2.1 HOW DO WE DEFINE IT?

Cultural infrastructure is defined by the physical assets such as buildings, structures, and spaces where culture is: Produced or Consumed

PRODUCED

Places of creative production. Places creative work is made, usually by artists, performers, makers, manufacturers, or digital creators. A few examples are:

- Artist Studios
- Craft Studios
- Makerspaces
- Performing Arts Rehearsal Spaces
- Music Recording Studios

CONSUMED

Places where culture is experienced, participated in, showcased, exhibited, or sold. A few examples are:

- Museums & Galleries
- Libraries
- Theatres
- Sports Centres & Stadiums
- Food Markets
- Community Gardens & Parks

Culture is fluid and can take place in countless contexts. Music can be performed and enjoyed in theatres, hotels, bars, community centres and streets (to name a few). So, while we recognise it is difficult to limit the concept of cultural infrastructure to a fixed definition of venues, we have set some parameters for each category. For this report and Phase One of the project, hard cultural infrastructure is defined as places in which one can experience:

- Creativity
- Heritage
- Sport
- Science
- Parks & Nature
- Visitor Attractions
- Food Culture
- Community Centres
- Education
- Artist Studios
- Creative Industries



A complete list of our 43 categories and their descriptions can be found in **Appendix A**. A few notable exclusions in Phase One are churches, pubs, schools and working men's clubs. While these categories certainly fit within our definition, we determined they are too broad and will require further assessment in the next phase. The list of categories should be viewed as a starting point for the wider project; subsequent steps may see more categories introduced or redefined. The list includes physical infrastructure (buildings) and public realm spaces (parks, squares etc.).

The data in this report is current as of March 2022. It's important to note that this list is changeable. We observed venue closures and new openings in several categories in the last six months. We recommend that BCC does an annual review of the data.

2.2 WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

"The cities that solely see culture as a commodity or a "resource to attract investments and improve branding" recognise only a limited number of cultural manifestations. Cultural vitality is an absolute necessity to city life because it permeates all spheres of living and lies at the foundation of freedoms, the public exchange of ideas, and societal well-being."

-Agenda 21 for Culture, 2016

Belfast's creative industries are vital to the city's success. These spaces provide immeasurable benefits and are crucial to Belfast's sustainability and growth. Cultural spaces facilitate employment, promote tourism, and enrich residents and visitors alike. While measuring the cultural contribution in purely fiscal terms is complex, the city's artists, writers, musicians, and creators certainly fuel the leisure and tourism economy. Ensuring that creatives have the space to work and that residents have access to spaces to experience culture is vital to Belfast's future. Supporting the culture sector will foster innovation and engage communities.

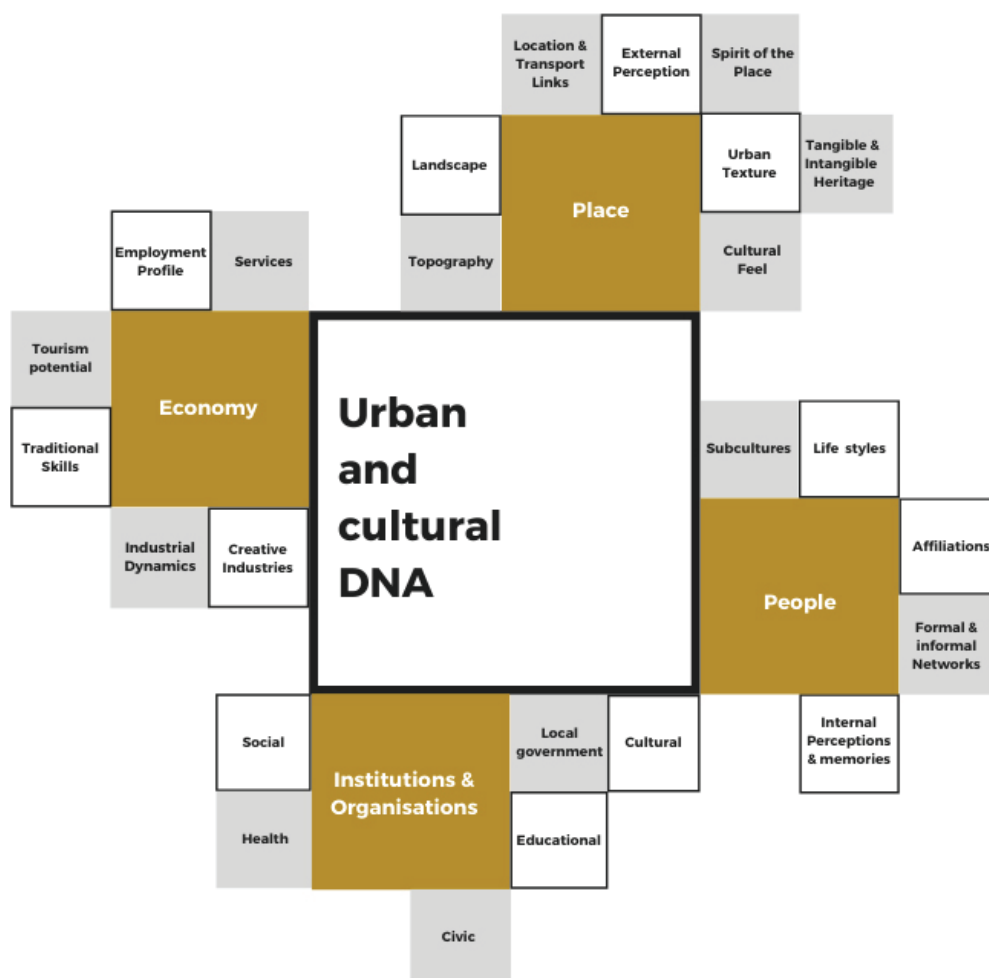
Culture Mapping exercises are typically carried out to understand how a city can do the following for its cultural sector: **1. Maintain 2. Support 3. Diversify 4. Grow**

At this point, the arts sector is stalled at the maintaining phase. We can't begin the work of growing the industry when artists are struggling for adequate workspaces.

2.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARTS STUDIO CRISIS

Arts studios are the fertiliser that provides the growth to populate Belfast's cultural spaces. These groups fill performance and exhibition spaces. Belfast isn't short of grassroots music venues, but it is short on spaces for our musicians to rehearse and create work. Investment in studios' security will have a knock-on effect in continuing to animate our theatres, music venues and galleries. Conversely, a lack of investment in studio spaces will have a detrimental impact on Belfast having a vibrant arts scene – which draws in residents and visitors alike.

The chart below illustrates the footprint that culture can have on a city.



2.4 HARD INFRASTRUCTURE VS SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE

In the context of the wider project, hard infrastructure is about the **physical places** while soft infrastructure considers nontangible elements with a more human-centred approach such as:

- Cultural resources
- Networks
- Venue usage
- Links & patterns of cultural practice
- Needs assessments by artform

Our recommendations around soft infrastructure for Phase Two can be found on page 38.

2.5 THE ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLANNING FOR BELFAST'S FUTURE

Belfast's cultural infrastructure is integral to the local economy, particularly the nighttime and tourism industry. These industries rely on the city's cultural infrastructure and practitioners to solidify their offerings. It is essential to be mindful of how to build and support these industries while the underlying arts and cultural sectors are under continuous threat.

There are lessons to learn from cities that have failed to protect their arts sectors in the realm of urban development. If we look at the example of San Francisco's Mission District, the area no longer attracts artists that made it a vibrant city quarter; they've been forced out due to rent increases. The district is now mostly filled with tech workers and bland coffee shops. Paradoxically, the new residents enjoy the district's artistic vibe, though it is waning as artists themselves can no longer afford to live and work there. Another example is Seattle, which is no longer the mecca for musicians it once was. Seattle's music scene transformed the city's tourism industry, but now that same scene is jeopardised by the tech industry's transformation of the city, and artists have been driven out. Belfast's own Cathedral Quarter was once home to vibrant art studios, which have lost their place due to rising property prices.

These two groups can co-exist, the artists and the corporations, but only when governments play a role in subsidising spaces for cultural production, particularly for the creative practices that fall outside the overtly commercial sphere. BCC's culture statement, *A City Imagining*, shows that the sector is recognised and valued at the council level. Commissioning this very report is further evidence of that. Now is the time to strengthen and protect the arts sector.



Printmaker Linda McBurney in her studio



Studio of Ursula Burns, musician

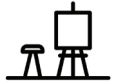
3.0 OUR FINDINGS

"It is now generally accepted that the great cities of the world should be places of cultural production as well as consumption and display"

-Sydney Culture Mapping Report

Understanding the cultural infrastructure landscape of Belfast is key to protecting existing assets and knowing where to focus future development efforts. The comprehensive study includes 43 Categories (category descriptions can be found in Appendix A). The following is a highlight of 5 key categories in the survey: Artist Studios, Galleries & Exhibition Spaces, Museums & Archives, Music Venues, and Theatres. These categories are not meant to represent the entirety of the city's cultural infrastructure but rather provide an in-depth look at some spaces that are vital to our cultural ecosystem. These places were selected based on being widely used by residents, visitors, and practitioners alike.

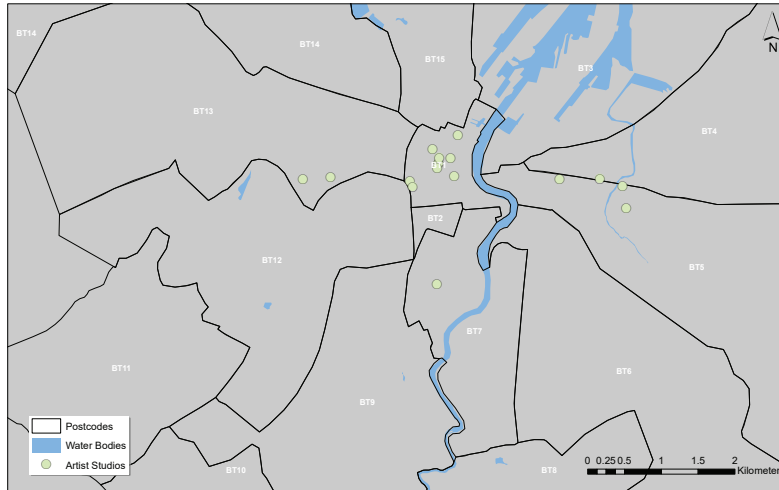
3.1 ARTIST STUDIOS



Classification: Places where artists can rent/utilise studio space for their work

No of Spaces Mapped: 17

Artist Studios in Belfast



PERCENTAGE BY AREA

CITY CENTRE – 65%

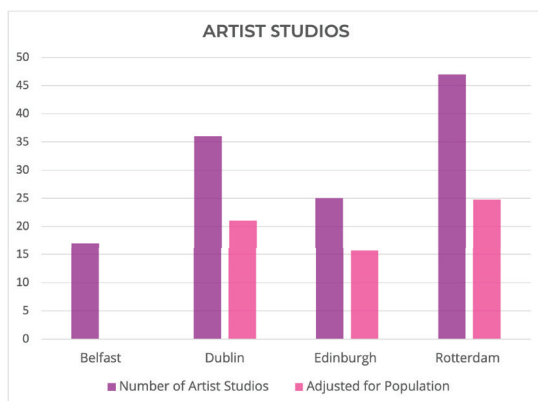
NORTH – 0%

SOUTH – 6%

EAST – 23%

WEST – 6%

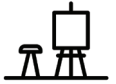
BENCHMARK COMPARISON



- 4th Floor Studios
- Arcade Studios
- Array Studios
- Artists at the Mill
- Belfast Print Workshop
- Creative Exchange Studios
- Embrace
- Flax Art Studios
- Lawrence Street Workshops
- Orchid Studios
- Paragon Studios
- Platform Arts
- Pollen Studios
- Queen Street Studios
- The 343
- Vault Artist Studios
- We Are Born & Bred

KEY FINDINGS & NOTES

- In the last eight months, the two largest studio groups in Belfast went from having a moderate level of security to losing their tenancy. Flax Studios has temporarily relocated to two smaller insecure premises, and Vault Artist Studios will lose their premises in 6 months. This will likely lead to the potential displacement of almost 200 artists.
- Of the 17 studio groups in Belfast, none have long-term secured tenancy.
- The increased price of property and rent in the city centre continues to be a barrier to studio groups. The former trend of relocating workspaces to less expensive parts of the city is no longer practical as property is in high demand across Belfast.



- Artist studios in Belfast have a high and continuous occupancy rate. There has been no decline in demand for workspace from artists. For example, Vault Artist Studios has a waiting list of over 80 artists looking for space.
- There's a scarcity of public funding in the sector to support studio groups.
- We Are Born & Bred is the only studio group with commercial space on the list.
- The distribution of studios by area does not reflect the number of artists in those areas. Currently, the east contains the most artists; however, this is likely to change.
- Further analysis of spaces available to emerging artists is recommended

HIGHLIGHT - FLAX ARTIST STUDIOS

Artist Members: 50

Disciplines: Visual Arts

Locations: City Centre

Gallery Space: Yes

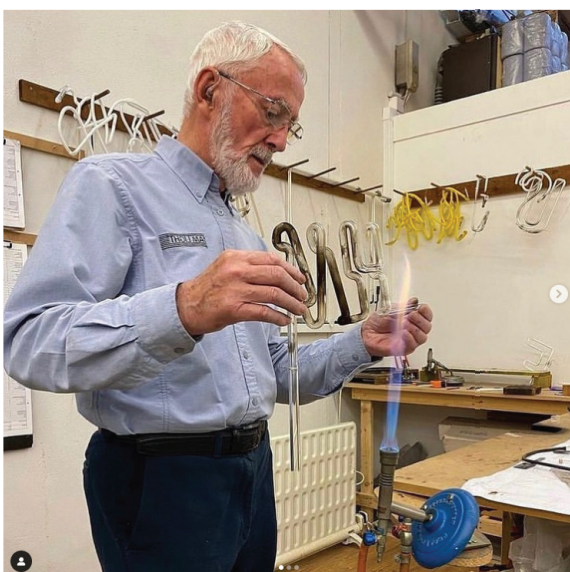
Event Space: No

Description: Flax supports and promotes emerging and established contemporary visual artists from Belfast and beyond through studio provision. Their former premises held sculpture workshop facilities including wood, plaster, casting, digital fabrication, textile, and extensive internal/external workspaces. Having recently lost their tenancy, the group split into two locations and lost provisions for some artists.

Tenancy Situation: Temporary

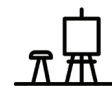
Impact of Loss of Premises:

- 50 Artists displaced
- Loss of exhibition space
- Loss of emerging artists program





HIGHLIGHT - VAULT ARTIST STUDIOS



Artist Members: 115

Disciplines: Multi-disciplinary studios, ranging from visual arts to circus performers

Locations: East Belfast

Gallery Space: Yes

Event Space: Yes

Tenancy Situation: The Tower Street lease will end in March of 2023. The organisation is currently searching for another space.

Description: Vault Artist Studios is Belfast's largest studio collective, housing 115 artists. Since its inception in 2017, Vault has recognised the need for a studio space that is fully multi-disciplinary and is home to visual artists, writers, performers, musicians, makers, dancers and circus artists, to name a few.

In addition to studio space, Vault provides rehearsal and dance space, a gallery, and a theatre. These spaces are available to Vault members and, importantly, to multiple external community groups, arts organisations and practitioners, and private individuals who use our rooms for classes, events and coming together. Vault is also a key venue for the annual EastSide Arts Festival and runs regular arts markets, providing artists, makers, and craftspeople a platform to sell their work.

Vault is also home to Belfast Tool Library, the first tool lending library anywhere on the island.

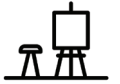
Vault is inherently a community-facing organisation and has built strong bonds within their community in inner East Belfast.

As both community of artists and a venue for the arts, Vault's model is unique within the current art scene in Belfast.

Impact of Loss of Premises:

- 115 Artists displaced
- Loss of rehearsal space for theatre/music/dance/martial arts
- Loss of a theatre for live performance with a capacity for 115
- Loss of dedicated makerspace
- Loss of exhibition space

HIGHLIGHT - URBAN RESORT, AMSTERDAM



Broedsplaats VKG is managed by Urban Resort, a non-profit foundation which operates 18 locations in Amsterdam. Since 2007, Urban Resort has overseen the running of incubators and studios in Amsterdam. Its main objective is to create accessible workspaces — areas where people may live and work — for creative professionals, social causes, and artists. Urban Resort facilitates spaces where the rent is affordable; artists create, and writers emerge; where there is space to organise a festival, offer up-and-coming artists a stage, and casually ask the neighbours for a cup of coffee.

They only take on locations they can lease for 5-20 years. An example is Broedsplaats VKG, formerly the HQ of a newspaper and now a studio space on the lower floors of a trendy hotel & club on the upper floors. After the newspaper moved out, the building was left vacant. Urban Resort moved in, transforming it into one of Holland's largest 'Broedplaatsen' (creative workspaces). Now hundreds of artists, creatives and social entrepreneurs have a reasonably priced place to work. Broedsplaats VKG is home to over 100 artists and creatives such as architects and designers.



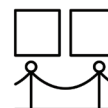
Mixed Use studio building with cafe

Urban Resort has a daughter project, LOLA, which manages temporary and pop-up spaces. Urban Resort is one of many foundations in Amsterdam which provide long-term studio space to the city's artists. These foundations have been able to do this due to a historic and ongoing culture of support for the arts from local and central government.

3.2 GALLERIES & EXHIBITION SPACES

Classification: Places where one can view/buy art (including commercial galleries)

No of Spaces Mapped: 26



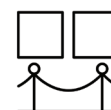
- Art Loves
- ArtCetera
- ArtisAnn
- Balmoral Fine Art
- Belfast Exposed
- Canvas
- Cap Arts Centre
- Catalyst Arts
- Charles Gilmore
- Craft NI Gallery
- Culturlann McAdam O Fiaich
- Framewerk
- Golden Thread
- Gormleys
- Nicholas Gallery
- Platform Arts
- QSS
- Red Barn Gallery
- The Black Box
- The Crescent
- The Duncairn
- The Eakin Gallery
- The Fenderesky Gallery
- The Mac
- The Taylor Gallery

BENCHMARK COMPARISON



KEY FINDINGS & NOTES

- There has been a steady decline in the number of Commercial galleries over the last 10 years.
- Lisburn Road, previously home to many galleries, now has only a few remaining.
- Some galleries that cater to the top end of the market (selling Damien Hirst, Banksy and Picasso) have survived. Others that remain rely on other income streams such as framing, art consultancy, or by doubling as a café.



CASE STUDY - GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY

For the past eight years, Golden Thread Gallery has been working towards developing into a new cultural venue in the heart of the city centre. Our findings have shown that Belfast is lacking in museums and art galleries. Golden Thread's proposed offering would encourage tourists to spend more time and explore more. They believe "the city must broaden and deepen the wealth of its current cultural offer and reimagine the city centre." And we agree.



They have commissioned a feasibility study and two economic appraisals for their proposed plan in those eight years. In 2018 discussions with a developer concluded when no assurances of funding could be given from either BCC or ACNI. In 2019 the gallery made the decision that in the absence of any capital funding being available, they would begin work on acquiring a permanent collection of North Irish art. The goal is for this collection to link contemporary Northern Irish art to its historical roots. They plan to expand and have a collection of art made during, and inspired by "The Troubles" in conjunction with a yearly programme of contemporary art exhibitions.

Golden Thread has raised money for this project from various funds, including the Ampersand

Foundation for acquisitions, the Foyle Foundation, and the Art Fund for storage of assets, fundraising, administration, and digitisation of acquisitions. They are also considering a rebranding to become the Belfast Institute of Contemporary Art.

They envision embedding the gallery into Belfast's city centre in three potential ways.

1 Continue to operate GTG contemporary programmes from the current location on Great Patrick Street with the addition of a satellite venue in Belfast city centre housing a semi-permanent exhibition of the fledgling collective histories collection.

2 A full gallery move to a venue large enough to house the collection and the gallery's contemporary programme, but not to the scale of the gallery's future vision.

3 The realisation of the gallery's vision to transform into the Belfast Institute of Contemporary Art, a visitor destination for the city and the region.

The mapping data shows a gap in this both galleries and museums, one that can be filled with a new Contemporary Art gallery in the city centre.

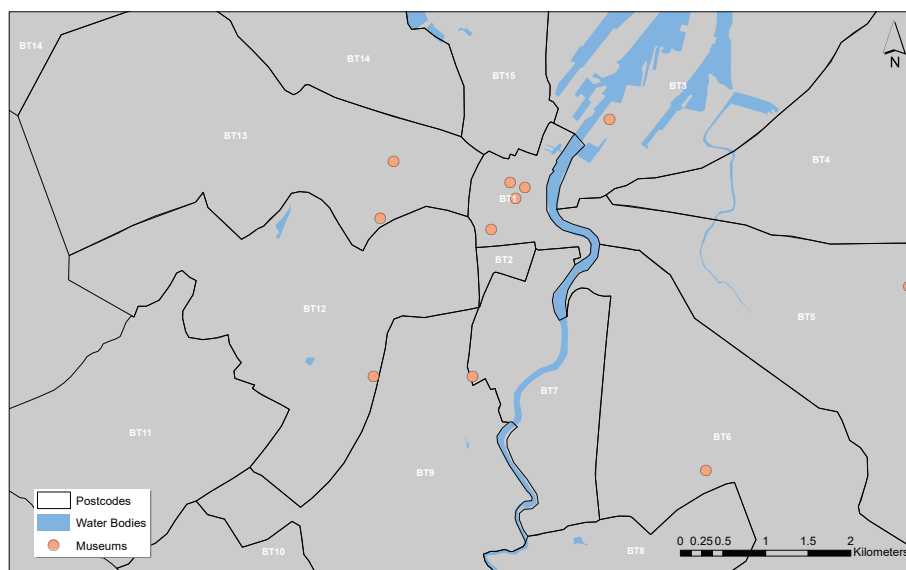
3.3 MUSEUMS & ARCHIVES

Classification: Museums & Archives open to the public

No of Spaces Mapped: 17



Museums in Belfast



PERCENTAGE BY AREA

City Centre – 46%

North – 0%

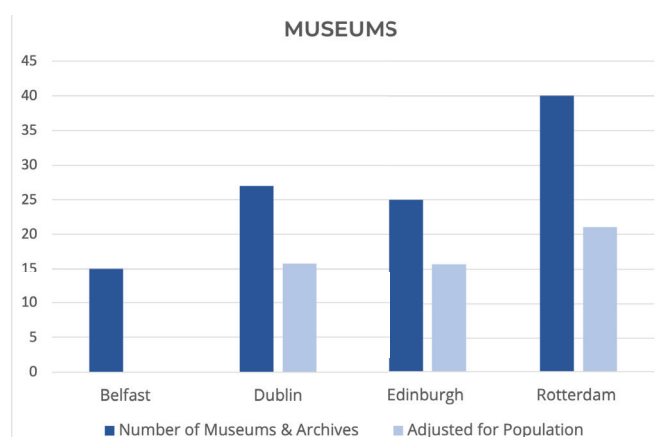
South – 18%

East – 18%

West – 18%

- Belfast Archive Project
- Clifton House
- Discover Ulster Scots
- HMS Caroline
- Irish Football Association Heritage Centre
- Irish Republican History Museum
- Linen Hall Library
- Museum of Orange Heritage
- Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum
- Oh Yeah Music Centre
- Police Museum
- Royal Ulster Rifles Regimental Museum
- Titanic Museum
- Ulster Museum
- W5 Science Centre
- James Connolly Centre
- Public Records Office NI (PRONI)

BENCHMARK COMPARISON



KEY FINDINGS & NOTES

- Almost half of Belfast's museum offerings are quite niche in scope.
- Some of the above offerings have irregular hours or are by appointment only.
- BCC may wish to examine usage and attendance data further in Phase Two.
- In comparison with the benchmark cities, Belfast museum offering is the lowest.

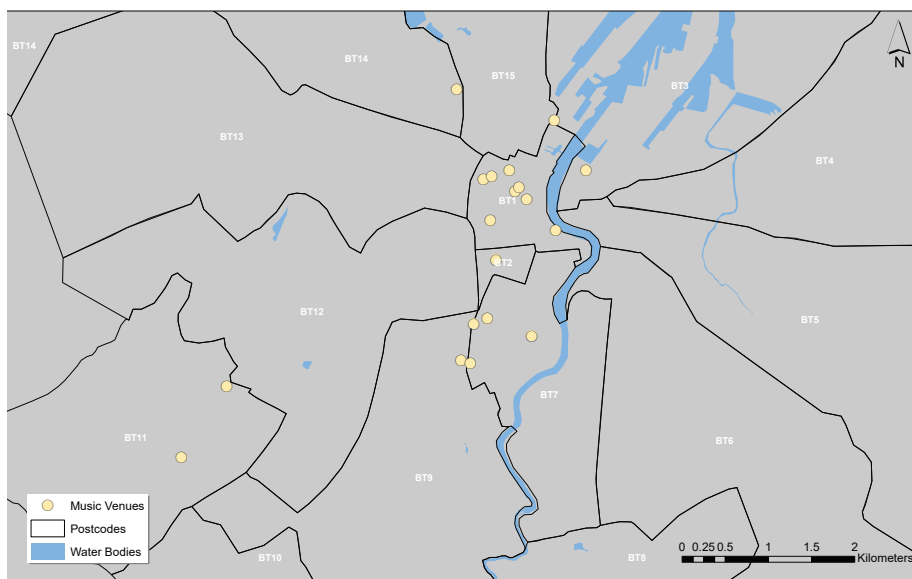
3.4 MUSIC VENUES

Classification: Places one can go to watch live music that offer a regular programme

No of Spaces Mapped: 17



Music Venues in Belfast



PERCENTAGE BY AREA

City Centre – 52%

North – 11%

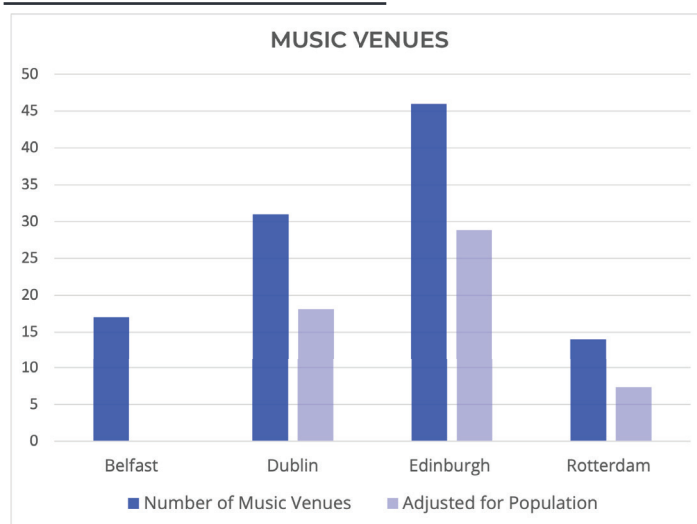
South – 26%

East – 0%

West – 11%

- Crescent Arts Centre
- Elmwood Hall
- Felons Club
- Limelight
- Oh Yeah Music Centre
- SSE Arena
- Sunflower Public House
- The American Bar
- The ARC
- The Belfast Empire Music Hall
- The Black Box
- The Duncairn
- Ulster Hall
- Ulster Sports Club
- Voodoo
- Waterfront Hall
- Whitla Hall

BENCHMARK COMPARISON



KEY FINDINGS & NOTES

- The music category presented the most significant challenge in this phase of the project. In consultation with the BCC culture team, we opted for a narrow definition of venues with regular music programmes.
- Many pubs offer regular programming of music (trad etc.) and should be considered in Phase II. We recommend consulting with the music community directly to further define venues and consider what residents want in searching for music offerings.
- Our research also uncovered issues with access to rehearsal spaces for musicians that should be interrogated further.



- There is also crossover with the church category that should be examined– eg: First Presbyterian Church which operates as both a church and a music venue.
- The geographical spread is heavily concentrated in the city centre and south Belfast.
- Belfast has a vibrant grassroots music culture, and further analysis should be conducted to determine how best to support this. For instance, London began mapping their grassroots venues after noticing a 35% loss. In 2017, 21 of the 96 venues in London were at risk of closing due to increased business rates.
- The loss of studio and rehearsal space will have an adverse effect on this sector and inhibit the grassroots scene from showcasing new music in Belfast.



Old Crow Medicine Show at Mandela Hall in 2014

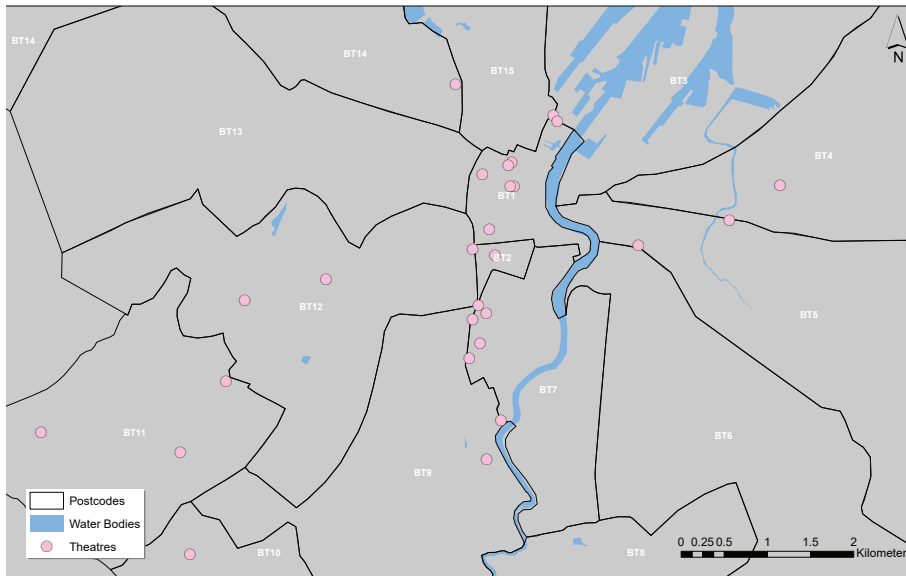
3.5 THEATRES

Classification: Places where one can see live performances/comedy with a regular programme

No of Spaces Mapped: 29



Theatres in Belfast



PERCENTAGE BY AREA

City Centre – 38%

North – 7%

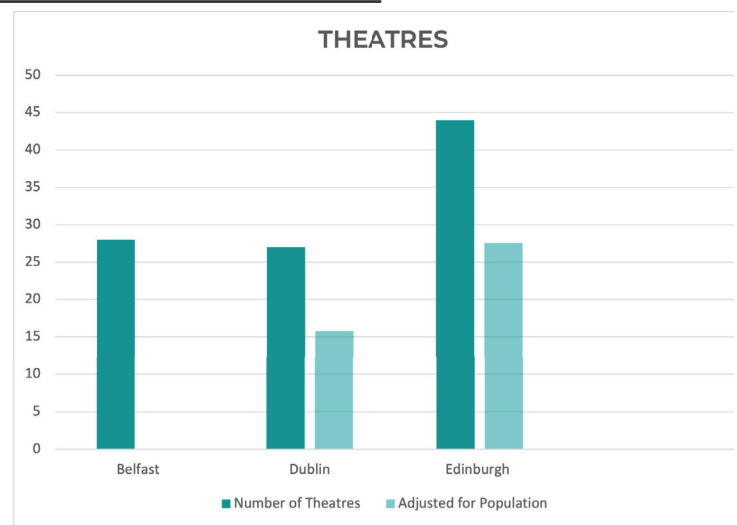
South – 31%

East – 7%

West – 17%

- Accidental Theatre
- Andersonstown Social Club
- Belvoir Players Studio Theatre
- Brian Friel
- Culturlann McAdam O Fiaich
- Elmwood Hall
- Felons Club
- Linen Hall Library
- Lyric Theatre
- SSE Arena
- St. Joseph's Church Sailortown
- Strand Arts Centre
- Stranmillis University College
- Sunflower Public House
- The American Bar
- The ARC
- The Barracks
- The Belfast Empire Music Hall
- The Black Box
- The Devenish Complex
- The Duncairn
- The Grand Opera House
- The Mac

BENCHMARK COMPARISON



KEY FINDINGS & NOTES

- Capacity and attendance numbers were not reported in this initial phase.
- We recommend looking further into capacity and venue usage in Phase II. The benchmark data suggests Belfast's theatre offering is robust, but further interrogation is advised.



Street artist, EMIC

4.0 OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As previously stated, Phase One is an audit of physical spaces, so our recommendations are broad and based on the data relating to physical spaces. Phase Two should bring out more targeted and detailed recommendations by examining usage, attendance, impact and community consultation. As such, we're setting out to recommend an overarching framework of where the detailed recommendations will lie and what areas need further examination.

One of the aims of this mapping exercise was to examine the cultural sphere in Belfast and determine what areas needed attention. Since the start of the process, in consultation with BCC, we have leaned heavily on the immediate need for provision for space for creative people to work – as it became clear this area needed urgent attention. When we began interrogating the main five categories, we found that one sector is facing an existential threat that, if not addressed, will cause severe damage to the cultural fabric of the city.

4.2 ARTIST STUDIOS

With urgency, we recommend addressing the shortage of affordable studio space in Belfast. This should not be limited to visual artists - we include musicians, writers, theatre-makers, and all creative producers. Belfast studio groups have waiting lists, and when art students graduate every year, there is no space for them to work. Brain drain in the arts sector has been a longstanding issue. Many that don't leave must make do at their kitchen table which considerably impacts their ability to grow as artists and creative entrepreneurs.

We spoke with Emma Campbell of Array Studios, who noted that a challenge that groups are facing is the resources required to find new premises. Studio Groups in Belfast have limited paid staff (or none) who can focus on the work of identifying and negotiating suitable spaces. Groups then must rely on volunteers within the organisation. This work is time-consuming, as leads may be chased to no end, making these jobs susceptible to burnout. In speaking with WASP Studio Groups in Scotland, one of their main pieces of advice was that studio groups should focus on securing long-term spaces – specifically only leases that are 5+ years.

WASP notes that chasing short & medium-term leases is not cost-efficient and drains resources. This work takes time and resources that the arts sector lacks. The absence of secure tenancy leads to a more unstable sector and halts growth in the sector.

Another reason for focusing on long-term leases is the costs associated with preparing a building for occupancy. Many buildings available for meantime use have been empty for some time and bordering on derelict and require extensive work (electrical, plumbing, etc.) to make them suitable for insurance purposes.

Belfast should aim to be a place where studio space is affordable and accessible so that we can hold on to our existing artists and attract the next generation of talent. Imagine if Belfast became known for ensuring that artists have access to space to work.

4.3 SHORT TERM PRIORITIES

We recommend further maximizing existing infrastructure with the following:

- **2 Royal Avenue** – The upstairs area of this exciting new venue could accommodate approximately 30 artists. We recommend the space is shared with an established arts organisation that can populate the space.
- **Belfast School of Music** – This listed building has sat vacant for many years, unfortunately leading to dereliction. The space is well suited for studios and could hold approximately 30 artists, with a gallery and event space.
- **Ravenhill Artist Warehouse** – this space seeks to raise funds to purchase this building. The intended plans for the space are ground floor event space (with kitchen) with a 500 person capacity. First-floor workshop/ event space with a capacity of roughly 250. The Third floor will be office, creative use space.
- **Golden Thread Gallery** - There is a gap in the infrastructure for both museums and galleries. Golden Thread's years of planning and consideration for this project make them well placed to get this project over the line and increase the offering of contemporary art in Belfast. (Case study on page 17)
- **Studio Group Plan** - To gain some insight into how local and national governments play a role in supporting the provision of studio spaces we recommend developing a support strategy regarding artist studio provision. Page 26 contains insight into Rotterdam's studio model and an introduction to the role local government can play in stabilising the arts.



HIGH STREET INTERVENTIONS & CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In July 2021, Arts Council England commissioned a report on the potential for bringing more cultural experiences to high streets. Half of the adults surveyed reported wanting to see more cultural experiences on their high streets, and 62% agreed that the presence of cultural experiences on the high street increases their civic pride in their local area.

BCC can only resource cultural activity to a certain point. However, they can focus on giving agency to individuals/groups through Cultural Entrepreneurship as it relates to physical space. Entrepreneurship is not simply restricted to making profits; rather, it is a celebration of the endless possibilities of ideas and the power of taking risks. BCC is in a strong position to foster growth in this area. The practice of supporting cultural entrepreneurship will allow BCC to remain nimble and respond to different cultural categories more efficiently. Some ideas for promoting cultural entrepreneurship are outlined below.

- **Rethinking Pop-Ups & High Street Vacancies**

As the city recovers from Covid-19, people are hungry for in-person experiences. Many retail spaces are empty, and as a result, commercial rent in many areas is decreasing. According to the online shopping platform Shopify “low-budget, short-term, quick-install pop-ups are set to surge in the coming months.” This area is ripe for exploration. We recommend BCC consider sourcing a dedicated pop-up space that can be rotated monthly to support different cultural endeavours. This dedicated space would have the utilities paid for and some amenities (shelves, desk, counter space) in place to allow the resident to focus on selling, performing or simply working. The security of having the lights on and minimal financial outlay will enable users to take risks and see what works and what doesn’t. It will also generate public interest, with people opting to stop by regularly and see what is new in this space. Our tool kit for creating pop ups can be found on page 34.

- **Rates**

Examining physical spaces in Belfast inevitably leads to a conundrum of rates. High rates are barriers to the use/animation of short or medium-term spaces. Rates are one of the reasons why units remain empty, and some buildings are vacant. The barrier of entry created by rates for individuals/groups may be for the following reasons: 1) Potential occupants do not understand the ambiguous rates system. 2) The threat of a rates bill months after occupation.

Belfast City Council has recognised some of these barriers through it’s Vacant to Vibrant programme which provides support to offset costs for businesses or cultural organisations entering new premises. Overhauling the rates system concerning culture is an enormous task (and beyond BCC’s remit). However, Council should advocate for any future review of rating to consider how these barriers could be alleviated.

MAKERSPACES

A major gap we identified in Belfast’s cultural infrastructure provisions is the lack of makerspaces in the city. These venues are a space where people gather to co-create, share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network, and build/produce. The UK has witnessed an explosion of makerspaces, fablabs, and community workshops, growing from a handful to nearly 100 in the last decade. These sites are widely recognised as examples of civic and social innovation.

Artists and their creativity are often constricted by the resources available to them. When provided with a space to innovate and experiment, makers can refine their talents.

Funding a maker space is a direct way to invest in the city's artists. This is a tangible way to provide creative workspaces for our homegrown artists and those from around the world wishing to explore their artistic pursuits in a nurturing, arts-focused city.

In 2019 Belfast Tool Library opened. It's Ireland's first tool library and is currently located within Vault Artist Studios. In addition to providing free tool loans to people from all over the city, many arts practitioners rely on the library for their day-to-day practice. The library recently procured funding for two staff members to further grow the project. Given that they have the infrastructure in place to open more workshops, we recommend BCC consult with Belfast Tool Library to explore the provision of more makerspaces in Belfast to further support the cultural sector.

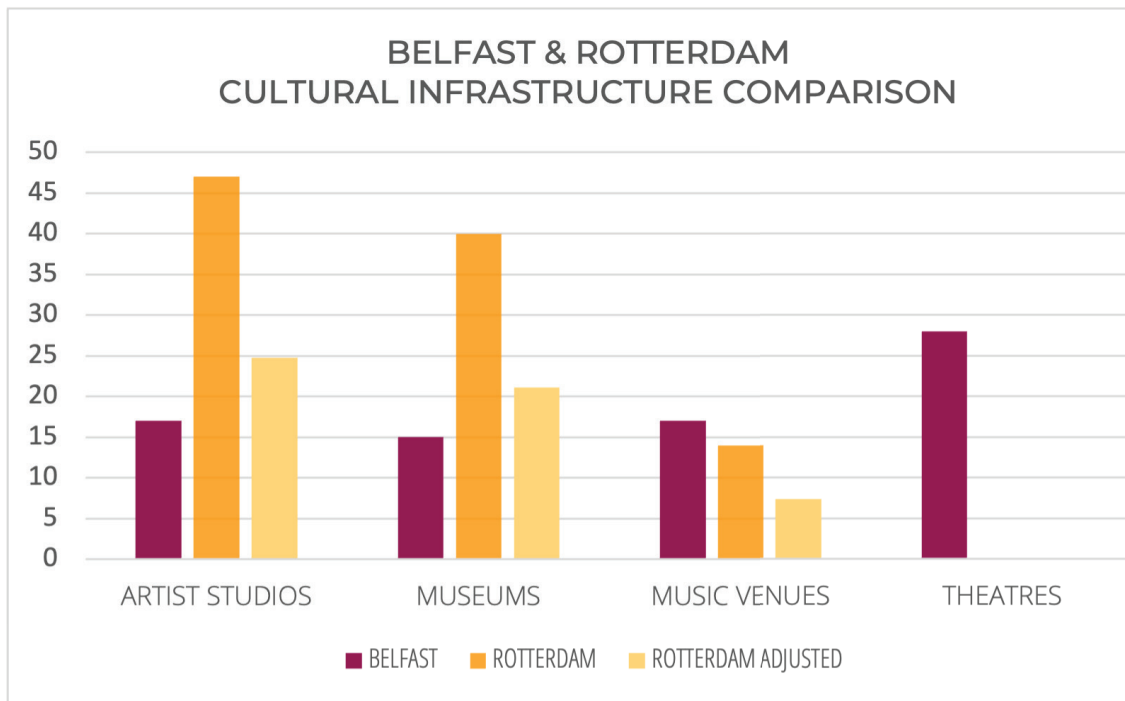
4.4 LONG TERM STRATEGIES

While short-term action is needed to secure the cultural infrastructure of Belfast, some long-term goals would lead to further sustainability in the sector. We recommend BCC consider these areas to plan for a consistent revenue stream dedicated to supporting cultural infrastructure:

- **Hotel levy.** Since 2018 city councils across the UK have proposed/passed legislation to set a tax on their tourism industry. While the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed progress for some cities, this is something to investigate as the tourism sector emerges. Cities considering the tax include Bristol, Bath, Edinburgh & Liverpool. Belfast's vibrant arts & cultural sectors are part of what attracts tourists to the city – so we recommend underpinning these sectors to ensure future stability and growth.
- **Feasibility Study.** In terms of building ownership, some studios may have sufficient income to cover mortgage payments but do not have the cash reserves for large deposits. Commission a feasibility study on financing models and best practices available to the sector. The study could look into co-ownership models for art studios to purchase premises and Community Asset Transfer. An example of Community Asset Transfer is Open House Festival's recent acquisition of the courthouse in Bangor, which has set a precedent, but this process can take some time.
- **Growth Strategy.** Development of a strategy to specifically target the continuous growth and development of Belfast's cultural offering of world-class theatres, galleries, music venues and museums. This strategy should set quantifiable and realistic targets, not just aspirations.
- **Policy Change.** In the last six years, the SKAR studio management group (Case Study page 26) has doubled the number of buildings they manage in Rotterdam. This was achieved due to buy-in from the local municipality. Rotterdam created sustainable growth policies that recognise arts and culture as part of what drives sustainability. Politicians on all sides are on board, and the result is consistent funding in the sector to ensure cultural practitioners have space to work.

5.0 BENCHMARKING

5.1 ROTTERDAM



Size: 324.1 km²

Population: 651,446

About the city:

Rotterdam is a city with several personalities: a rough port city, a city with vibrant nightlife, a city with upscale shopping, and a city with a trendy arts sector. Rotterdam is foremost the Dutch city of architecture and known for fostering innovation. Its skyline is constantly evolving. In and around the city centre, one can find delicious food, a variety of museums and attractions and over 100 pieces of street art.

We did not compare the Theatre category as the data collected was not robust enough to compare. Again, it's noteworthy that the music venue category is complex and may not be a complete representation of their sector (as ours isn't).

We consulted with Olof van de Wal from the Skar Studio Group in Rotterdam. Below is case study of their model that illustrates how they are growing their studio offering despite external threats to the sector.

CASE STUDY - ROTTERDAM STUDIO GROUP

Organisation Name: Skar

Website: <https://www.skar-ateliers.nl/en/>

Year's Active: 30 (doubled their growth in the last six years)

What they do:

"SKAR wants to help the creative sector in Rotterdam to be successful. They offer affordable workspace, creating meeting places and making connections. Together with the creative sector we want to be valuable to landlords, the neighbourhood and the city.

SKAR believes that the creative sector contributes significantly to Rotterdam's cultural, economic and spatial success. The SKAR network of workspaces and creatives will help Rotterdam grow into a creative pioneer city."

Skar operates 44 buildings in Rotterdam that they rent to approximately 700 tenants (which translates to around 900 artists, many studios have shared occupancy). The organisation owns 12 buildings, and the other buildings are rented to them by the city through a partnership agreement.

They currently have a waiting list of 600 artists, so the demand for studios outweighs the available space.

They have a mix of tenancy, 80% freelance artists and 20% being cultural organisations or private arts-focused companies. A few of their buildings are mixed-use and house restaurants and galleries open to the public.

Many of their buildings are multi-disciplinary, and they also have addressed the unique needs of specific practices – such as dance (open space, bars and mirrors) and circus rehearsal spaces (high, structurally sound ceilings).

Recently they have noticed an increase in demand for artists working in fashion.

They are currently working on a new purpose-built studio that will primarily house multi-media artists and support the film and print industry.

How they do it:

A key component of their mission is to offer an affordable and fair rent model. Their spaces are rented at 52 euros per square meter, making them considerably more affordable than other cities in The Netherlands.

80% of their income comes from rental revenue, and 20% is subsidised.

What makes them successful: The buy-in from the local municipality is crucial to their success. The city of Rotterdam recognises the importance of artists in their city and has formed a partnership with SKAR to ensure the city's artists have access to space to work. This was born out of Rotterdam's planning for sustainable growth and recognition that arts and culture play an important role in sustainability.

They have strong support from local politicians across the political spectrum.

Current challenges in the market:

Skar noted that it is increasingly getting harder to hold onto buildings as property developers are encroaching on their spaces. Rotterdam has a housing shortage, so the demand for space has increased. They are currently working on putting some safeguards in place with the city.

There are some independent artist studios in Rotterdam that do not fall under the SKAR model, but the threat to those spaces is even greater as they lack collective bargaining power and resources to stay in their leases.

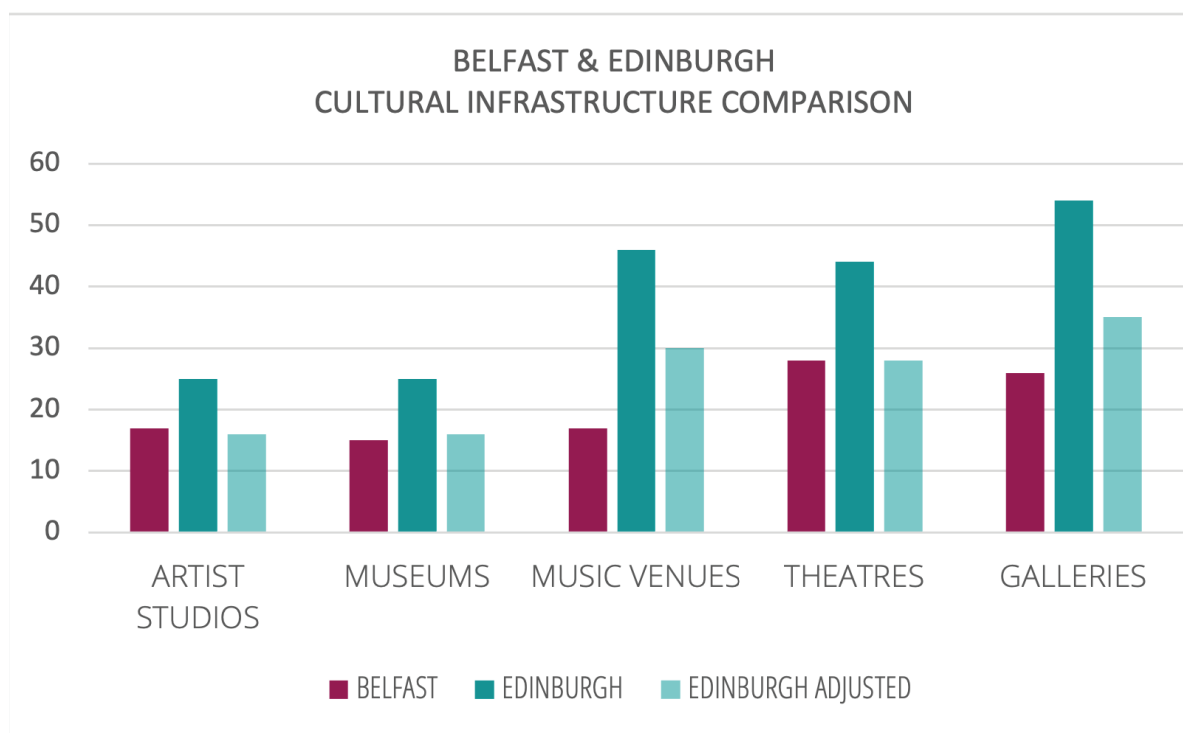


SKAR studio in Rotterdam



Artist Studio in Rotterdam

5.2 EDINBURGH



Size: 264 km²

Population: 548,206

About the city:

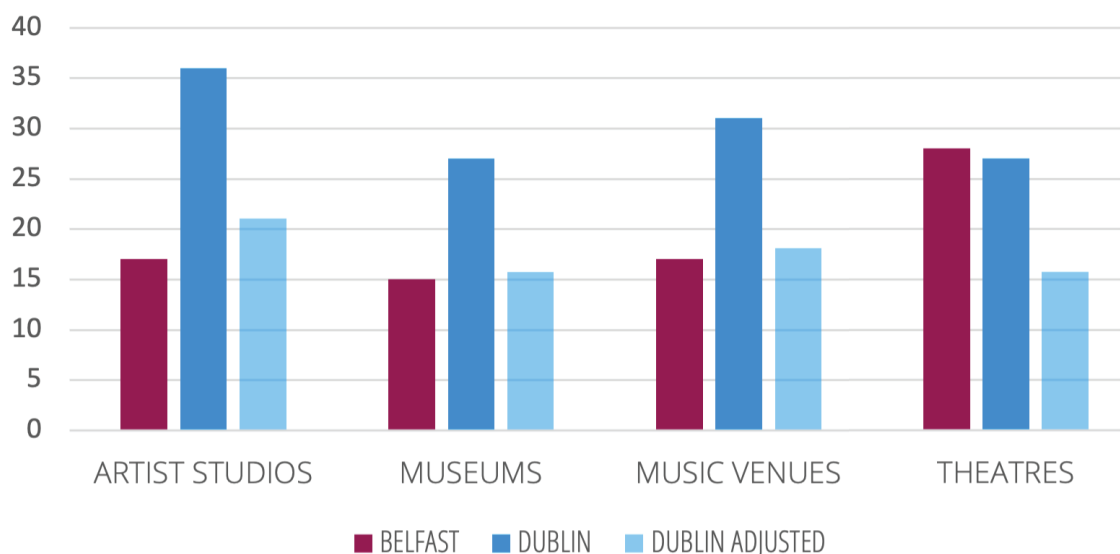
Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, is home to a sizable collection of mediaeval and classic buildings. It is frequently regarded as one of the liveliest cities in Europe, home to numerous museums and tourist attractions including the annual Fringe Festival for performing arts. The first UNESCO city of literature distinction belongs to Edinburgh. The city never runs out of things to do for visitors and locals to enjoy, from year-round events to vibrant nightlife.

In 2019, The Culture & Community Mapping Project of Edinburgh carried out a mapping exercise for the city. They set out to research what citizens value about the city can how they access and engage with cultural events and places. So essentially, the Edinburgh data is the accumulation of what is proposed for Phase II of this project. They note that the project, "investigates questions about cultural identity and access, using cultural mapping as our guiding methodology."

As with the other benchmark cities, the Edinburgh data should not be seen as a like-for-like comparison but rather as a first step in understanding Belfast's cultural infrastructure needs.

5.3 DUBLIN

BELFAST & DUBLIN
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMPARISON



Size: 264 km²

Population: 588,233

About the city:

Dublin is well regarded across the world as a city of arts & culture. The city is full of beautiful architecture and world-famous institutions, the city has a wonderfully rich past. The city centre is full of Victorian parks, elegant Edwardian façades, and Georgian townhouses. Dublin has a rich cultural history of producing great writers and musicians.

In 2021 Dublin City Council commissioned a cultural infrastructure audit in by Turley and OBFA Architects. The purpose of their study was to look at strategic measures and policies to support and grow Dublin's culture offering. As with Edinburgh's mapping exercise, the Dublin report is a more comprehensive analysis than what is provided here and examines both needs and usage of the city's artistic practitioners.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

6.1 STARTING POINT & METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The Daisy Chain Inc team had several initial meetings with the BCC culture team to discuss the best approach for the data gathering phase of the project. Our team researched culture mapping work carried out by various cities – to gain an understanding of the options and approaches that would work best for Belfast. We looked at culture mapping work undertaken by London, Edinburgh, Sydney, Dublin and various Canadian cities. Many toolkits are available to guide groups in this process; however, it's important to note that our research shows that no two cities approached their mapping projects the same. There is no internationally agreed-upon best practice for culture mapping. One reason may be that cities seek varied insights and have different distinctions between soft and hard infrastructure.

We looked at the classification categories used by London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and in consultation with BCC we decided on 43 categories for auditing Belfast's cultural infrastructure. As the project has a broad definition of cultural infrastructure, it was important to set some parameters that made the data collection achievable. The categories and their definitions can be found in Appendix A.

Our team was mindful that one of the intended results of this data is to be shared online in an interactive map for residents. This knowledge guided some decisions in determining the data sets collected.

6.2 APPROACH

The practice of cultural mapping for cities is ever evolving. There are many challenges to categorising cultural infrastructure in a consistent way. In researching these methodologies, we found a wide range of strategies and no two cities adopt the same approach, which is important to note when attempting to make like-for-like comparisons. How we define a theatre may not be how Edinburgh does etc. With that in mind, we recommend considering this research as an ongoing process to build upon, expand and adjust accordingly rather than a definitive guide.

It's important to have clarity around what the end use is for this research. Phase III becomes a resource for residents to seek out culture on their terms. For the end phase to be successful, there needs to be some level of security in those offerings. In this initial phase, we identified trends that required immediate attention from council. So the target audience for this data has been somewhat changeable, and Phase II should allow for a clearer understanding of the scope and purpose.

Our mapping team used qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather data for this project. Our initial approach was to collate existing infrastructure data such as lists previously compiled by BCC for particular categories or active lists maintained by BCC or other organisations (i.e. parks, libraries etc.). For categories where no existing list was available, we conducted desk research to compile these lists. For this stage, we engaged three data collection assistants with relevant experience in the categories they were researching; this allowed us to gain insights into lesser-known venues.

We then sent these draft lists to relevant stakeholders for review. This consultation process helped determine what may have been missing from the lists and what should be added. This step will also help guide the community consultation in Phase II.

The database allows access to data for each entry that can be mapped or filtered by the various attributes according to need. The database was compiled and maintained in excel format as this serves as the starting point for further interrogation and visual mapping. Internet research has been utilised to verify locations and status, and google maps were used for obtaining latitude and longitude coordinates (essential for the phase 3 interactive map). After removing duplication and closed-down venues, our final database recorded approximately 850 cultural places in Belfast.

6.3 DATA SETS COLLECTED

NAME
CATEGORY
SUB CATEGORY
ORGANISATION TYPE
SPECIFIC AREA OR SPACE
OPENING HOURS
BRIEF DESCRIPTION AREA
ADDRESS
LATITUDE/LONGITUDE
WEBSITE
CONTACT NAME
CONTACT EMAIL
CONTACT PHONE
PRIVATE HIRE
ACCESSABLE LINK

6.4 CHANGEABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The places mapped in this project are from a snapshot in time. Mapping both public and commercial/private spaces mean some may be subject to closure at any given time. At the start of this project, we identified Board Games Spaces (places one could buy or play board games) as a relevant category; however, during the pandemic, 3 of these spaces closed, leaving the category somewhat extraneous. This is true of any infrastructure mapping exercise, and if there is capacity, the BCC culture team should review the list annually.

6.5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Our team engaged with stakeholders from various sectors to gain insight into this project's data collection and analysis. These meetings were vital in understanding stakeholders' thoughts on the current state of infrastructure and notable deficits. This area is set to be expanded in Phase II of the project. Below is a list of some of the groups/individuals we consulted:

Culture team at BCC	Music Venue Trust	Vault Artist Studios
Golden Thread Gallery	Rob Hilken, Visual Artist Ireland	WASP Scotland
Emma Campbell, Array Studios	SKAR Studios	
Jane Morrow	Thrive	
Moving on Music	Ulster Heritage Society	

6.6 DATA PROTECTION

We wrote a data protection policy for the collection and storing of the data. This policy applies to the Contact Name, Contact Email, and Contact Phone data sets. However, per our policy, we did not include any responses to those data sets that weren't available online (the venue's website or social media). Also to the best of our knowledge, there were no personal email addresses or phone numbers collected.

7.0 PHASE II RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 NEXT STEPS

Phase Two will delve deeper into research and scoping of the infrastructure identified in this initial phase. The phase will create a holistic view of the cultural sector and identify networks and artistic and cultural practice patterns. This will also include looking into public participation, cluster interaction, research with partners and community networks, and the people and groups that use these spaces as their workplace. This phase is all about usage. Who uses these spaces, how are they used, and where are the gaps?

We recommend exploring the following areas in Phase Two:

1. Spatial Needs Analysis by Artform – a survey of needs including:
 - o Workspace Amenities
 - o Size of Space
 - o Sound Proofing
 - o Secure Bicycle Parking
 - o Wifi access
 - o Ceiling Height
 - o Lighting needs
 - o Equipment Storage
 - o Sink access
 - o Privacy
 - o Kitchen access
 - o Sprung Floor
 - o Heating/Cooling
 - o Elevator access
 - o Out-of-hours access
2. Further analysis of infrastructure available to produce arts and culture and the barriers to animating empty buildings.
3. What will be the impact on residents when theatres, music and community arts venues close? For example, what effect will the closing of Vault's Tower Street location have on east Belfast?

APPENDIX A

CATEGORIES

Arts Centres
Artist Studios
Adult Learning Centres
Allotments & Community Gardens
Antiques & Collectables
Books/Literature/Gift Shops
Boxing Clubs
Cinemas
Commerical/Private Galleries
Community Centres/Halls
Craft & Jewellery
Creative Co-Working Spaces
Cultural Centres and Networks
Dance Rehearsal Studios
Design Education
Festivals & Cultural Event Spaces
Galleries & Exhibition Spaces & Open Studios
Gaming
Gyms and Fitness
Heritage Sites, Historic Monuments and Government Buildings
Interior Design
Languages Schools
Large Media Production Studios
LGBTQ+ Night Time Venues
Libraries
Markets, Fairs
Museums and Archives
Music Recording Studios
Music Rehearsal Studios
Music Venues (all)
Music, Dance, Theatre, Writing Schools
Parks, Gardens & Public Spaces
Public Places of Worship
Public Squares
Skate Parks
Specialist Food Shops
Sports and Leisure Centres
Rehearsal Spaces
Theatre & Performance Spaces
Universities & Colleges
Visitor Attractions
Yoga, Pilates & Meditation Studios
Podcast Studios

APPENDIX B

POP UP TOOL KIT

INTRODUCTION

During lockdown, we learnt to stay in our homes, spend time exclusively with our family and grew accustomed to interacting with a multitude of screens. Now is the time to meet up, now is the time to find spaces, rekindle old friendships and make new ones. This toolkit will show you how to bring communities together in a way that utilises empty spaces without costing money.

If you have money, there are easy ways to socialise and entertain. You can go to bars, coffee shops and restaurants. You can meet with friends to talk, eat and drink. Most of us do this to some extent, but what about social gatherings that have fun and connect people but don't involve spending money?

In the last 50 years, something has happened to our communities. We go to church less, and our community hubs have lost their funding and, consequently their impact. Recently, the internet has allowed people to organise new forms of community. Yarn, literature, board games, film, food and many other forms of art and culture have been cultivated by digital communities, a trend which continues to grow. For the last two years, face-to-face engagements have been suppressed, so we can expect an explosion in social activity.

There's just one problem. Where can you meet if the community is too big for your house (or if you don't fancy inviting many strangers to your home)? The demand for creative space is high, yet many city spaces are empty. In this toolkit we will look at strategies for opening unused space for cultural activity and go through what you need to have in place. It's a concept commonly known as 'pop-up' and we'll take you through the process step by step.

SO WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO DO?

It may be incredibly obvious to say this but what sort of space you need depends on what you're using it for. Opening up pop-up space can be hard so it's worth setting your sites on something appropriate.

For example, if you want to run a monthly knitting circle, you don't need a vacant space. You need the temporary use of a space normally used for something else. Equally, if you want to set up a two-week woodworking workshop to run workshops and promote woodworking, you will need a space that isn't used for anything else during that time.

Let's start with the regular small events.

What you need here is a space that's already occupied but that isn't used all the time - the posh words for this are 'spare capacity'.

OK, so that's the simple one. But maybe you want to do something that requires you to take ownership of an entire space for longer. People have art exhibitions, theatre shows, workshops, radio stations and even artist studios in otherwise vacant spaces. How do you go about that?

1. CHOOSE YOUR LOCATION.

People often think the number on a 'To Let' sign on a shop is a good place to start. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's an estate agent's job to rent the space so unless you want to rent it; they're rarely interested. Occasionally one will get the fact that having the lights on and activity in the space throws a spotlight on the property, which will do their job for them, but usually, that's not the case.

For this reason, getting right to the building owner is essential. Vacant units in shopping centres are suitable because they own the whole space and can often see the benefits of animating individual units so that the centre has a buzz about it. But in general, think of your networks; who do you know? Who do you know who knows people?

The recent acquisition of 2 Royal Avenue by Belfast City Council means that now, right in the city centre, there is a space open for much of this type of activity, so it would be a great place to start. (insert link) Be clear from the outset what your ask is. How long do you need it? How flexible are you? What benefits (footfall, animation) will you bring to the site?

This is absolutely the most challenging part. So if you get over this hurdle, the rest is hard work but doable.

2. MAKE A BUDGET.

Sometimes you can just walk in somewhere, it's been dark for a short time, and everything just works - this is rare.

At the very least, you're going to need a deep clean. You can do this with volunteer time or your own, but some things might need to be paid for.

- Is there furniture? Do you need to buy/rent/borrow some?
- Is the water on? What about electricity? If not, these things take time and money, so be ready for that, and it should be one of the first things you check about a space.
- Do aspects of your risk assessment need resourcing (see below)?

Finally, there's the issue of rates. Will the activity you're doing be liable for rates? Can you prove that it's not? This is complex and worth seeking advice on, but it can really help open doors if you're eligible for rates relief. Landlords will be paying rates on vacant property, so your occupancy can save them money, but YOU could then be hit for those rates, so make sure you know your situation before you take up residency. As a rule of thumb, it's about profit vs non-profit and being a charity helps, but that's not a hard and fast rule.



3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Taking a space generally used for one thing and using it for something else is class fun, but it will always be a bit of work.

Here are some things you should be prepared for to help you manage these risks and make everyone's life easier.

1. Slips, Trips and Falls.

You can never completely remove the risk of people falling, but you can minimise it. Look for loose wires or trip-sized things left where people might be walking or running. Some surfaces are super slippery when wet too. Use your common sense and watch for these things throughout the event.

2. The Space

Scour the place for sharp edges and things people could bump their heads on. Did the previous occupants rip out electrical devices? Did they leave exposed wiring or even plumbing? Basically, check the whole space thinking, 'What could go wrong here?' and then manage that risk.

3. Capacity

Without an entertainment licence you probably won't have an official capacity, but you need to have one appropriate for your space. Don't just think about how many people you can squeeze in. Think about how many exits there are, how wide those exits are, and whether you are on the second, third, or higher floor. What's safe in the event of an emergency where you need to evacuate? Guess, and then take 10% off to be safe without an official certificate.

4. Event Specific Risk

Be aware of the risks involved with your specific activity. Electricity? Art materials? Competitive sports? Fire? Lots of things bring their own risks. The key is to look at everything individually and ask yourselves - 'what are the risks, and how can we reduce them?'

If possible, it really helps to have this all written down in a Risk Assessment. This doesn't have to be complicated, but the most important thing it will record is what you're doing to manage risk and crucially, who's responsible. Having gone through all the trouble of working out how to keep everyone safe make sure you delegate who's doing it. Keeping people safe is always easier when more than one person is helping, so try to make sure all your team knows the risks and what you're all doing to deal with them.

Remember, you can't remove risk, where would be the fun in that, but a little bit of planning can give everyone the confidence to do something transformative.

Ultimately, the common thing about pop-ups is that no two are the same. Still, in general, whether you're running a knitting circle in an art gallery or a cheese toastie business in a car park, relationships will make your pop-up a success. Pop-ups rely on goodwill, and in most cases, they will also build goodwill. Doing stuff in places people don't expect makes them happy. Seeing things that are out of the ordinary or surprising transforms public space and gives communities a sense of vitality and playfulness. Remember that if your pop-up doesn't make financial sense, it needs to make sense to all your partners in many other ways. Goodwill is your most important asset; nourish it with all your helpers, partners and key holders whenever possible.

Pop-ups aren't just a way of filling spare capacity left behind by a shrinking retail sector; they're an opportunity to reinvent space for a more community-focused approach. They're a way to test ideas, a place to show off, but perhaps most importantly, they provide texture and life in civic space and show a blueprint for how these spaces can move on from banking, retail/office led past.



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