

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



**Belfast
City Council**

REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 9th September, 2020 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes (Pages 1 - 26)
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Presentations**

- (a) EuroPride Bid (Belfast Pride)
- (b) Lighting Strategy (Pages 27 - 88)

3. **Restricted Items**

- (a) Finance Update (Pages 89 - 116)
- (b) DFC Covid-19 Town Centre Revitalisation Fund Update on Emerging Proposals (Pages 117 - 130)

4. **Regenerating places and Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Future City Centre programme - Physical and Environmental Improvements (Pages 131 - 138)
- (b) DfI Call for Evidence on a potential Infrastructure commission for NI - draft response

5. **Growing Business & the Economy**

- (a) Inclusive Growth - Update on the Development of the City Charter and Inclusive Growth Network Launch Event (Pages 139 - 144)

6. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) Cultural Strategy Update (Pages 145 - 166)

7. **Strategic/Operational Issues**

- (a) Organisation Recovery - Update on City Centre Public Toilet Opening

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th August, 2020

REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Beattie, Donnelly, Dorrian, Ferguson,
Gormley, Hanvey, Heading, Lyons, Maskey,
McAllister, McMullan, Murphy, O'Hara, Spratt and Whyte.

Also attended: Councillors de Faoite and Flynn.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager - Economy;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Mrs. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager (East);
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Howard, T. Kelly and McLaughlin.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Lyons and O'Hara declared an interest in relation to item 3(b) UKRI Strength in Places Funding, in that they were members of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

Request to Present

Translink - Central Area Track Renewal

The Committee agreed to receive a written presentation from Translink in relation to the Central Area Track Renewal project, in the first instance, with a follow-up presentation at a future remote meeting, if necessary.

Growing Business and the Economy

Belfast Castle and Malone House Potential Re-opening date

The Committee was reminded that Belfast Castle and Malone House were currently closed as a result of Covid 19 regulations and all staff had been furloughed with

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the exception of the operations managers for each building who returned to working part time hours from 6th July in order to manage customer enquiries and bookings.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager (East) advised that management had reviewed the diary bookings for use of the two venues. She explained that officers had considered a range of options for the reopening of Belfast Castle and Malone House taking into account the number of staff currently on furlough, the small number of diary bookings which could be honoured either on grounds of capacity or as a result of the embargo on conference events, the impact of wedding cancellations on the customer and the resulting financial modelling. She concluded that the full reopening of the buildings at this time for normal business was not financially viable.

In liaison with the catering provider, French Village, Neighbourhood Services Manager recommended that a phased reopening of both venues for pre-existing bookings for weddings and catering and to accommodate new permissible bookings focusing on Friday, Saturday and Sundays only, during September and October 2020, and were currently working with the catering provider to put in place a new retail offering in the current context.

She explained that, to ensure the protection of both staff and customers, each venue would have significant Covid-19 Health and Safety measures in place. There would be changes to the numbers of people that can be accommodated in each venue and staff would engage with customers over the coming weeks to support customer understanding of the impact of the Covid risk assessment on their event planning. She confirmed that health and safety measures would be implemented, which included essential signage, one way systems established where necessary, hand sanitising stations, deep cleaning and other necessary arrangements.

She informed the Committee that the situation would be kept under review as circumstances of furlough and NI Executive restrictions on events and gatherings change and it was anticipated that the reopening of the venues would increase the overall deficit by £100k approximately depending on the uptake of new bookings and the success of the retail offering.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the reopening plan for Belfast Castle and Malone House from 1st September, 2020 on a phased basis, subject to business demand.

UKRI Strength in Places Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on a successful collaborative bid by the Belfast Maritime Consortium which has been awarded £33m from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under their ‘Strength in Places’ funding initiative. The report seeks approval for Belfast City Council to**

formally engage in the consortium to bring the project to fruition.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the work undertaken to date as part of the Belfast Maritime Consortium to secure £33m from UKRI's Strength in Places Funding and the potential impact the project will have in the Belfast City Council area
- Note Belfast City Council's engagement on the project to date as part of the consortium and agree to the commitment required to support the delivery of the project to bring it to fruition.

3.0 Main report

3.1 UK Research and Innovation's Strength in Places Fund is a competitive funding scheme that takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding to support significant regional growth. It works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. Since 2017, Belfast City Council has been engaging with Artemis Technologies on their work to bring forward a funding proposal to UKRI. This support has included providing a letter of support for a NI consortium bid (Belfast Maritime Consortium) to develop zero emission maritime transport in Belfast.

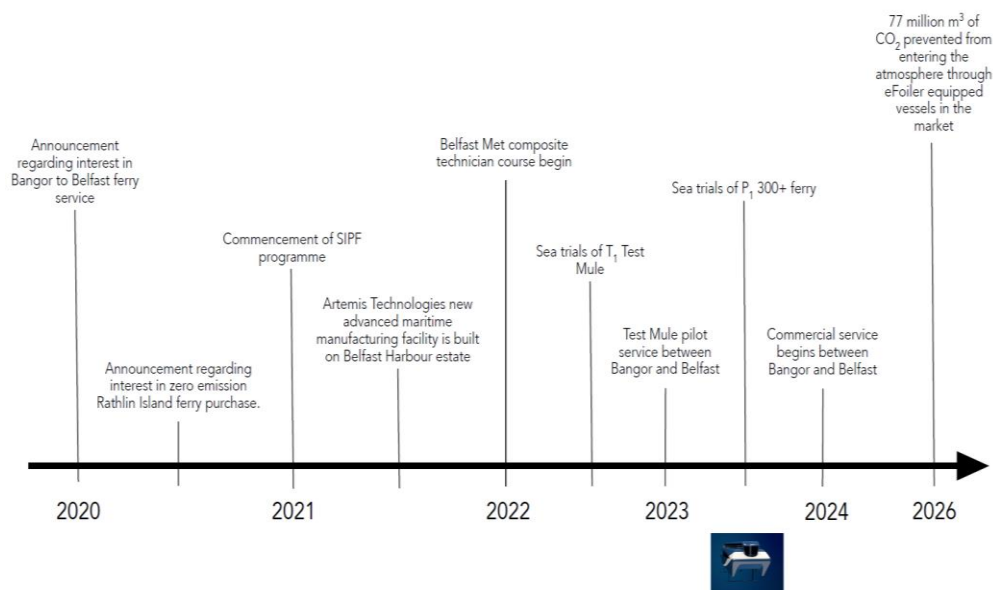
3.2 The Belfast Maritime Consortium, which is led by Artemis Technologies (ATL), consists of a number of industry, academia and local government members including Bombardier, Stena Line, Harland and Wolff, Belfast Harbour, Creative Composites, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, NIACE, Belfast Metropolitan College, Belfast City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Catalyst Inc and Invest NI.

3.3 The project has successfully secured £33m from UKRI for development and delivery work over the next 4 years. It aims to exploit and develop Belfast's expertise in advanced composites to help reinvigorate past maritime leadership in innovative shipbuilding technologies. It will develop an education programme and a route to highly skilled jobs in the Belfast area and will enhance Belfast's environmental credentials with developing niche specialisms in zero carbon maritime transport. The project will ultimately deliver a new

class of zero emission maritime transport vessel design and build capability that has numerous commercial applications. All of this work will combine to establish, in Belfast, a world class maritime capability and deliver a high value product for export.

- 3.4** The Belfast Maritime Consortium will work with the local supply chain to produce the world's first autonomously controlled 'fully submerged' electric hydrofoiling vessel, and develop the technical and operational requirements for a maritime transport system of the future. The project will not only create new commercial opportunities, but also help tackle major environmental challenges in line with wider government policy, which calls for all new vessels to be designed with zero-emissions capable technologies by 2025.

- 3.5** The key stages project milestones are as follows:



- 3.6** To enable the project to commence, Belfast City Council along with each of the other consortium members, is required to enter into a formal collaboration agreement. This agreement outlines the commitment of each of the parties to the project and the terms of engagement. For the council, this includes:

- Contributing to the project working groups when they are established to inform and shape the project
- Supporting the development of a pilot scheme between Belfast and Bangor by establishing, upgrading and otherwise ensuring that all or any infrastructure owned or controlled by the council is available for use.

This element of the project may require a financial commitment from the council of up to £250,000. However this will be subject to future scoping of the requirement, availability of funding and approval from this committee at a later date and will be a commitment in principle only at this point

- Providing marketing support for the pilot scheme when it is live including engaging with customers to undertake research and insights into customer preferences.

- 3.7 This project has the potential to realise a range of economic benefits across the city including the creation of one of the UK's most advanced composite design and manufacturing facilities, in the heart of Belfast Harbour. The project will also have a significant impact on achieving the council's inclusive growth ambitions by undertaking school engagement projects, delivering apprenticeship schemes, and implementing new courses in advanced composites at Belfast Metropolitan College as well as creating employment opportunities in the city, estimated at 165 highly skilled jobs initially, increasing to 400 as it develops.

3.8 **Financial & Resource Implications**

At this stage of the project, Belfast City Council is not required to make a financial contribution. As the project develops any funding requirements will subject to approval of this Committee and available budget.

3.9 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

Equality and good relations implications will be considered as the project progresses. Partners beyond the Belfast City Council area are involved in the project."

During discussion, Members raised the importance of the long-term sustainability of the project, the potential use of apprenticeships, community opportunities and the involvement of local supply chains.

After discussion the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Tourism Update

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in April 2020 the work programme to support tourism development was agreed. Given the current circumstances and the specific ongoing challenges for tourism, the purpose of this report is to update Members on:

- The current status of the work programme relating to tourism development in the city.
- The early forecast relating to the short, medium and longer term impacts of Covid-19 on tourism.
- The initial response and emerging priorities to help stabilise and grow tourism in the city.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and the contribution that the work programme for 2020/21 will make to supporting the recovery of the tourism sector.
- Approve the development of a ten year tourism plan for Belfast and agree to receive a draft of this plan in November 2020.
- Approve participation in the Global Destination Sustainability Index led by Council in partnership with Visit Belfast.

3.0 **Main report**

3.1 Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019 the new ten year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining 2020-30* was agreed. This was further supported by implementation plans for the period 2020-23 and a work programme for 2020-21. Included in each of these documents was a series of priority actions relating to tourism support and development. The intention was that this would be developed out into a specific tourism action plan. It is now necessary to re-examine these priorities in light of Covid-19.

Tourism Growth Pre Covid-19

3.2 In August 2019 Belfast City Council agreed a new ten year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining 2020-2030*, to drive transformation in the city. For the first time, the scope of this strategy brought together under one compelling vision a number of areas including tourism, culture, heritage, arts, events and festivals.

- 3.3 *A City Imagining* acknowledges that whilst Belfast has enjoyed relative growth in tourism over recent years that in turn has supported regional development, it is necessary for the city to push the development of tourism on to the next level. Belfast's first community plan, the *Belfast Agenda*, also articulates the importance of delivering a culturally vibrant city both for residents and visitors as well as acting as an attractive driver for inward investment. It is anticipated that citywide investment in a culturally vibrant place will support changing perspectives of Belfast as a place to visit, live, work and invest. In order to continue to build on the value of out-of-state tourism and welcome more overnight stays in our visitor accommodation it is essential that we collaborate with our tourism sector to evolve, broaden, deepen and expand the tourism offer currently available in Belfast.
- 3.4 Despite significant growth and the success of flagship projects such as Titanic Belfast there is still a gap in scale and maturity of the local industry when compared with other regions. Notably, Northern Ireland lags behind UK regions and Republic of Ireland with respect to tourism as a driver for Gross Value Added. However the positive trajectory in place before Covid-19 had identified tourism growth as both feasible and a necessary part of inclusive economic growth.
- 3.5 It was in this context that Tourism NI set the ambitious target of doubling the value of the tourism industry to £2 billion by 2030. A key element of opportunity further reinforced by ambitions of the Belfast Region City Deal was getting a bigger share of the international visitors coming to the island of Ireland to travel to Belfast and the Belfast region.

Impact of Covid-19

- 3.6 While the full impact of Covid-19 is as yet unknown what is clear is that recovery will require new and innovative approaches in an increasingly competitive market. As the regional driver, Belfast will be hugely significant to this growth ambition, both in terms of visitor spend and the creation of new jobs. It is therefore imperative that our city break destination is developed in a strategic way which maximises the economic benefits which can be derived from tourism for local industries, businesses and communities, as well as increasing visitor numbers and spend and improving overall satisfaction levels.
- 3.7 An initial report on the impact of Covid-19 on Belfast has been commissioned from EY which has made a number of key observations as summarised below. These are important to

consider when seeking to understand the potential level of impact on the city and how the response should be a strategic and sustainable approach to recovery.

Belfast's role in regional tourism

- Belfast is an important attractor for international, high value tourists to the region.
- Belfast's share of out of state tourism spend has been significantly higher than the NI-wide share (83% v 72%).
- Spending by tourists in Belfast has outpaced the NI average, growing by 20% year on year compared to 4.5% regionally.
- Belfast has grown at a faster rate than the rest of NI mainly because of its attractiveness in two high value markets – city breaks and business tourism.

Covid Impact

3.8 As a result of the dominance of these two high value markets, Covid could have a stronger impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors in Belfast for 4 reasons:

1. Belfast tourism relies more heavily on overseas tourism than on domestic staycations.
2. City breaks are less attractive than rural tourism during a sanitary crisis.
3. Cruise tourism is likely to be very adversely affected by Covid.
4. Business tourism is a key driver for Belfast and likely to take longer to recover.

3.9 The recovery forecast for tourism is based on 3 scenarios:

1. **Slow and steady:** Under this scenario, Covid is considered primarily as a health crisis with underlying economic implications. A phased reopening with restriction measures in place until early 2021. By this date the hospitality industry would be in a position to be fully operational. International travel restrictions would mean reliance on RoI and GB markets. Even in this optimistic scenario, Belfast's tourism market is significantly affected due to the reliance on the international market for growth in recent years.

2. **Extended health crisis:** Under this scenario restrictions on the hospitality sector continue for longer than in scenario 1. By virtue of restrictions, there is even more focus on an all-island and domestic market. Under this scenario the all-island spend is predicted to rise from 26% (2019) to 37% (2020). In this scenario GB tourism is not predicted to recover its 2019 level until 2022 with spending falling by 41% in 2020.
3. **Structural health, economic and tourism crisis:** This scenario considers a continued health crisis with a second wave in the pandemic. This would result in a period of further closure of tourism and hospitality industries. Travel by plane or cruise ships would not be permitted. This represents a year on year loss of over £31M to the tourism industry in Belfast. This scenario would disproportionately affect Belfast which is more dependent on out of state tourism than the wider region. The UK and RoI markets would be a key driver of demand for the foreseeable future. The crisis will have led to behavioural changes with consumers opting for safer staycations which align to their values (sustainability, authenticity, local values).

- 3.10 Regardless of which of these scenarios play out, what is clear is that the response must be phased recognising short, medium and longer term priorities within an overall recovery plan. A multi-layered approach will be required that builds on the city's strengths and successful growth in recent years whilst recognising the need to adapt existing models where required as well as introducing new innovative and at times disruptive solutions.
- 3.11 The report sets out a number of recommendations and next steps including the need to target the right market at the right time in order to support tourism demand placing a short term focus on domestic tourism.

Immediate steps

- 3.12 What is emerging is a clear need to support the stabilisation of tourism up to 2022 with a need to then plan for longer term sustainable growth including the recovery of the two priority markets for Belfast, business tourism and city breaks. Council will be working in partnership with TNI and VB to develop and implement a new hybrid business tourism model to secure Belfast's future in a competitive market through combining digital capability with onsite offer.

3.13 Work to develop local tourism continues as a priority and is critical to supporting inclusive growth. This includes a significant programme of capacity building and information sharing to improve the quality of existing products, bringing forward new products and helping develop coherent packages and experiences that are aligned to visitor needs.

3.14 It is proposed that the focus of activity for 2020-21 continues as:

- Use of local conduits where possible to increase engagement and promote the benefits of participation as well as identifying new and emerging partners.
- Capacity building and development work on cluster approach, in conjunction with Tourism NI - involvement of industry experts and practitioners who have first-hand experience of this activity.
- Supporting and commissioning robust evidence base to increase understanding of the market.

3.15 As well as these immediate steps it is also necessary to plan for the future. It is therefore recommended that two longer term pieces of work are initiated. These are:

- Ten year tourism recovery plan
- Global Sustainability Index

10 year tourism recovery plan

3.16 Following the completion of the ten year cultural strategy a detailed tourism action plan was due to be developed. It is recommended that this work proceeds with a focus on tourism recovery through identifying key actions that will support stabilisation, innovation and sustainable growth. This plan will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders including the establishment of a strategic oversight group. A draft plan will be presented to Committee in November 2020.

Global Destination Sustainability Index

3.17 The Global Destination Sustainability Index is the world's leading benchmarking and performance Index for cities, their events and their visitor economy. Its purpose is to engage, enable and inspire cities to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in. In addition to benchmarking a city's environmental strategy and social sustainability performance, the GDS-Index assess criteria that are industry specific: industry supplier support (restaurants, hotels, conference centres) and convention bureau strategy and initiatives.

Alongside benchmarking it helps destination management organisations, convention bureaus, key industry associations suppliers and clients to develop effective strategies and practices in support of sustainability goals.

3.18 Since 2019, over 60 cities have started the process of benchmarking and assessment. The goal is to have 300 cities collaborating by 2023. The Index is based on 69 Indicators broken down into four categories:

- City Environmental Performance
- City Social Performance
- Supplier Performance
- Destination Management Performance

3.19 Once the initial benchmarking is complete – Belfast will receive a detailed report with performance improvement recommendations as well as a ranking; however, it should be noted that the first year's ranking will not be publicly released, giving the city a full year to review and implement initial recommendations.

3.20 It is also recommended that Belfast develops a tourism supply to foster a sustainable economic model creating jobs and improving local quality of life with specific actions including:

- Launch a wide consultation with key stakeholders and locals regarding the role tourism can play in a city like Belfast (e.g. urban regeneration, housing, sustainability, jobs, social inclusion, international attractiveness)
- Focus on the development of resilient tourism attractions (e.g. mix of outdoor and indoor spaces, online content, attractive to locals)
- Identify ways for Belfast or some specific attractions within the City to be distinguished internationally in order to remind domestic tourist about the attractiveness of the region (e.g. awards, UNESCO, travel guides)

3.21 Given the need to differentiate the Belfast offer it is also important to consider key strategic opportunities that could bolster investment in the sector in order to support recovery and future growth. These will be given full consideration as part of the ten year plan and could include:

Strategic Initiatives and Campaigns

3.22 Commitment to long-term initiatives contained in cultural strategy with additional consideration including 2023 and UNESCO City of Music.

Infrastructure

3.23 Delivering tourism pillar of the Belfast Regional City Deal including Destination Hub focusing on:

- Commitment to inclusive growth, ensuring the economic benefit of the Belfast Destination Hub development is spread across and connected into the rest of the city.
- Commitment to the creation of secure and sustainable employment and skills development.
- Commitment to local engagement and participation to ensure that Belfast residents are actively engaged and supported to access opportunities throughout the development and realisation of the project.

Integration and connectivity

3.24 Delivering a long-term fully integrated tourism development model for the city that includes:

- Adopting a place-based approach to the development of our neighbourhoods through local tourism framework and investment that supports product development, jobs creation and destination management.
- Enhancing civic pride and cultural vibrancy to attract locals and visitors.
- Developing a marketing and communications approach that recognises the breadth and authenticity of the city's tourism offer.

3.25 The success of tourism in the city is interdependent on the resilience of the city's culture, arts, heritage and events. A report will be presented to Committee in September to update Members on the impact of Covid-19 on these sectors with proposals on how Council can work with other funders and stakeholders to support recovery.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.26 There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2020/21 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.

All existing programmes are subject to ongoing review with cost savings identified where projects cannot proceed due to Covid-19.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.27 The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Any further investment or significant programmes will include equality screening as appropriate including a new tourism recovery plan and the recommendations set out in the Global Destination Sustainability Index.”**

In response to Members questions regarding local and neighbourhood tourism, the Senior Manager – Culture and Tourism highlighted the multi-layered and phased approach to market recovery, and explained further the short, medium and longer term priorities within the overall recovery plan.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that a report would be submitted to a future Committee in relation to how Belfast’s tourism offer was being represented in city and regional campaigns.

**Economic Recovery Work - Collaboration
with other Local Authorities (SOLACE)**

The Committee was provided with an update on the recent establishment of a working group to support economic recovery, involving partners from all councils, and to set out the high level work programme for the group.

The Senior Manager – Economy advised that, as part of the local government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly its impact on local economies, SOLACE had agreed to establish a number of working groups to take forward collaborative thinking and actions on areas of mutual and collective interest.

She pointed out that two working groups would be established to focus on distinct areas of work: Council Recovery (internal) and Regional Recovery (external). She highlighted that the Regional Recovery working group would be chaired by Mrs. S. Wylie, and comprises economic development representatives from across the 11 Councils.

The Senior Manager explained that the purpose of the group and the work that it would undertake was to:

- Build an understanding of the scale of the recovery challenge in local council areas across Northern Ireland as well as the impact of global economic changes, including the impact of the EU’s exit from the European Union;
- Identify a series of key short, medium and long term interventions that could contribute to economic and social recovery, thereby stabilising local economies and building local resilience;

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- Act as a conduit for engagement with relevant statutory agencies and key decision makers within relevant government departments in order to ensure a collaborative approach to working and to secure additional support for relevant interventions;
- Further the position of local government as a key delivery partner and support the ongoing dialogue around further devolution of powers to local level and the need for place-based responses to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth; and
- Position Local Government as a key player in co-design of a new economic strategy for NI where place based approaches and sub-regional economies were recognised.

She informed the Committee that, since its establishment in May 2020, the group had met on a number of occasions and the work to date had focused on a number of key issues including:

- Sharing information on town and city centre re-opening and recovery plans;
- Identifying key tactical and strategic engagement opportunities to ensure that local government was represented in and able to influence significant investment decisions relating to economic recovery; and
- Engaging with Invest NI to explore opportunities for accessing additional ERDF resources to support business recovery.

She explained that some of the emerging priority areas of work included securing council-level input into regional recovery plans, leveraging access to additional government resources to support recovery work and building a case to argue for additional ED and regeneration powers for councils – with associated core funding models (evolving from the City Deal approach).

She confirmed that as these work packages emerge, officers would report back to the Committee as appropriate, identifying the specific impact and opportunity for the Council.

The Committee noted:

- the establishment of the SOLACE District/Regional Recovery Group; and
- the key areas of collaborative work as agreed with all council partners.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Update on Future City Centre Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Advise Members on the pending review of the Future City Centre Programme in light of the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Update Members on the progression of a number of key projects within the ‘Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements’ work stream of the Future City Programme.
- Note that scheme design options are being developed for the Frederick St /York St junction,
- Update Members in relation to the adoption of the Inner North West Masterplan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to:

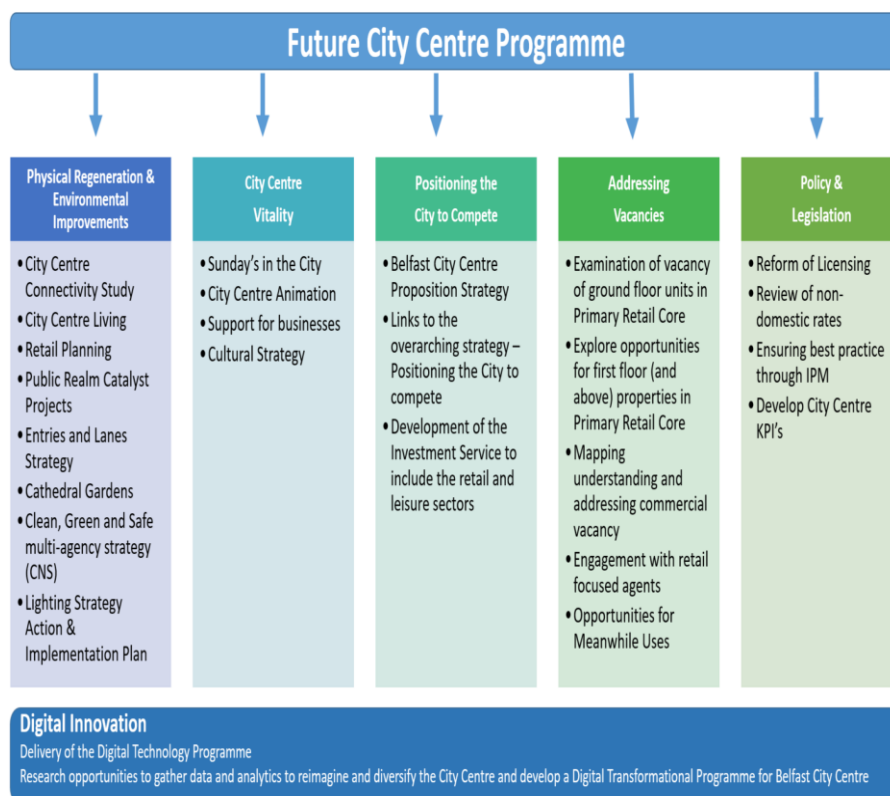
- i. Note that the Future City Centre Programme is being reviewed in light of the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, businesses and the City Centre,
- ii. Note the progress of key projects within the ‘Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements’ work stream of the Future City Centre Programme, notably the Entries and Lanes Initiative; the Public Realm Catalyst Projects; the pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens, and pilot lighting projects developed alongside the emerging Lighting Strategy for Belfast.
- iii. Note the development of design options, in collaboration with DfC and DfI, for the Frederick St /York St junction and adjacent streets, with proposals to be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.
- iv. Note that the DfC Minister has approved the adoption of the Inner North West Masterplan.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2020, Members received the Executive Summary of the Belfast City Centre Retail Analysis as developed by Pragma Consulting Limited. The Retail Analysis identified the challenges facing Belfast’s retail sector and provided recommendations on how best to address these challenges to ensure the City offers a dynamic and experiential destination.

- 3.2 At the same meeting, Members were also informed of the emerging 'Future City Centre Programme' (FCC), which builds on the key findings and recommendations outlined in the Pragma report. The FCC Programme has been developed in line with the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Cultural Strategy (A City Imagining), and has been informed by the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.
- 3.3 While many of the priorities set out in the February report remain valid, there is a need to recast the focus of the Programme in the context of COVID-19 and the significant adverse impact on the City Centre. It is difficult to predict the future trends and challenges that will be faced as the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the City Centre emerges but it is critical that the FCC Programme remains agile in order to respond to rapidly shifting local, national and international factors that will continue to shape the role and performance of the City Centre.
- 3.4 As previously reported to Committee, within the current FCC Programme, the key areas of work fall into five priority pillars and with a further cross-cutting theme of 'Digital Innovation' underpinning these pillars, as set out below. The project elements within each of the pillars are not exhaustive.



- 3.5 Members will be aware that the Council recently obtained partner membership with the Institute of Place Management (IPM). The IPM is an international professional body that supports those committed to developing, managing and making places better. IPM have been appointed by the UK Government to lead the High Streets Task Force in England and deliver support to local authorities and communities working to transform their high streets. They have also developed a COVID-19 Recovery Framework to guide recovery for town and city centres. Officers are currently working with IPM to arrange an independent review of the FCC Programme to ensure its focus is relevant, particularly during these challenging times, and to incorporate best practice and identify priority actions to help address the challenges of the City Centre.
- 3.6 'Addressing Vacancies' is one of the priority work streams within the FCC Programme and will be a key component of short and longer term recovery in light of growing pressures on numerous sectors occupying space within the City Centre. A number of recent high profile closure announcements including Easons and Tesco Metro highlight the challenges faced by city centre businesses including, but not limited to, the retail sector. In this context, the review of the FCC Programme will place particular emphasis on developing a range of options for intervention to tackle the issue of vacant premises in the City Centre. Given the complex range of factors that can lead to vacancy ongoing engagement with a range of City Centre stakeholders will be particularly important.
- 3.7 FCC Programme: Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements
- A number of physical projects are currently underway within the City Centre, and while delivery timescales have been impacted by Covid-19, significant progress has been made in recent months. Clearly these initiatives were developed pre-Covid, but are very much in line with short term reopening and longer term recovery measures aimed at improving sustainable movement and connectivity, enhancing streets and spaces, creating multi-functional places of interest, and growing the recreation function of the City Centre for residents and visitors. A brief progress update is noted below with images included at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 Public Realm Catalyst Projects

Historic developer contributions have been aligned with DfC funding to develop and deliver a programme of public realm improvements in 5 City Centre streets: Chichester St; Callendar St; College Ct; College St and College Avenue. The '5C's' scheme has an estimated value in the region of £2m, with c£750K from developer contributions and remainder DfC funding, and will include resurfacing, lighting, street furniture and soft landscaping. The design team have commenced engagement with key stakeholders, and will be facilitating further consultation with Elected Members in relation to emerging concept designs during August, prior to public consultation planned for September.

- 3.9 Other potential public realm catalyst projects are being developed in a number of locations, including the Fredrick Street /York Street Junction to address the lack of cycling and walking provision at this key node. Officers have met with DfC and DfI officials who have engaged consultants to develop high level design options for this junction. Further collaborative work between Belfast City Council, DfC and DfI will be required to fully develop design information for both the junction and adjacent streets, which will define the scope of improvements that can be delivered using historic developer contributions in this area, alongside potential DfC and DfI contributions. Details of this scheme will be brought to a future meeting of Committee.

3.10 Belfast Entries and Lanes

Work is continuing to transform a number of City Centre pedestrian links. Phase 1 of the Entries and Lanes scheme includes seven entries: Castle Arcade; Winecellar Entry; Crown Entry; Wilson's Court; Joy's Entry; Pottinger's Entry and Cole's Alley. The project involves general repair work, repainting, enhanced lighting, new signage, planting and bespoke artwork. Initial works commenced on-site in July (photographs attached at Appendix 1).

- 3.11 The scheme applies a bespoke place-making approach to transform each entry, making them more welcoming and vibrant as pedestrian links that provide enhanced permeability and connectivity, and act as places of interest and activity in their own right. There is also potential to accommodate the use of external space by businesses in line with wider recovery initiatives. Through increased footfall, a further aim is to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour.
- 3.12 Included at Appendix 1 are some of the painted murals installed to date. Also included is a visualisation of the scheme proposed in Castle Arcade. A hand painted mural will accompany a large

lighting feature that is programmable with music for special events. Officers are working to secure permissions for these elements, with installation planned during early September. While the design response in each entry is bespoke and reflects unique spatial and historical characteristics, a consistent design ethos has been applied across the scheme as a whole, with unifying elements such as signage and interpretation.

- 3.13 Officers have received positive feedback in relation to Phase 1 and have received requests from property owners, business tenants and residents for similar work in additional entries and lanes. Early engagement has shown that there is significant potential to develop a further phase of work, and officers have developed design concepts and are exploring potential funding opportunities. A further report will be brought to Committee as the first phase of work concludes, setting out options for additional work pending any future funding opportunities.

3.14 Cathedral Gardens Pop-Up Park

Work commenced in March 2020 and while there have been programme delays due to Covid-19 restrictions, the expected completion date is now mid-August 2020. The project will deliver a multi-functional family-friendly space that is expected to be in place for approximately 2 years, while a permanent park and public realm scheme for Cathedral Gardens is developed.

- 3.15 The scheme includes resurfacing and installation of play / parkour equipment, electricity points to facilitate events, and enhanced lighting. Fitting of artificial grass (at play equipment), painting of hard surfaces, additional street furniture installation and soft landscaping / planting will also be carried out during August. Appendix 1 includes photographs of work on site as of 27th July.

3.16 Lighting Strategy- Pilot Project

Following on from earlier lighting pilot projects (a temporary neon artwork installation at Castle Arcade and a large scale Xmas 2019 animation (images at Appendix 1), a further lighting installation has been completed in Castle Street. This pilot consists of a series of interactive projector units, installed along a stretch of hoarding to create an image controlled and manipulated by pedestrian movement. The technology has been developed specifically for this project and is designed to provide reflected light while dealing with the issue of dead or closed frontages through visual and audio animation. The creative content for the projectors has been developed by a local visual artist and the two 'animations' are themed on the

rivers that run beneath the city, and the starling murmurations that are seen over the River Lagan. Three units have been installed in Castle Street, with a further six to be located elsewhere in the city centre during September/October 2020. The units are a platform which can be used to upload new content in the future themed to city events, festivals etc. Images are included at Appendix 1.

- 3.17 The learnings from the pilot projects have shaped the considerations and guidance within 'Luminous City, A Lighting Strategy for Belfast', which is currently being drafted. An action plan detailing future short and longer term lighting projects is currently being developed and it is proposed that a full report, with presentation, will be brought to September's CGR Committee.

3.18 Masterplan Adoption

Members will recall that the delivery of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy includes the development of a number of more detailed Masterplans to help support and shape city centre developments. The Inner North West (INW) Masterplan comprises a critical part of the city centre and is intended to guide the development of a mixed use, city centre neighbourhood including residential, commercial, retail and leisure functions, fully connected by high quality public realm. Following a 12 week public consultation the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the updated INW Masterplan in December 2018.

- 3.19 There is a significant amount of publicly owned land in the area which provides the opportunity for the public sector to influence and drive development in a co-ordinated manner. The Masterplan was produced in consultation with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) with a view to close collaboration to support delivery. Council and DfC have subsequently worked jointly to develop the INW Action Plan which provides further detail on the initial proposals set out in the INW Masterplan, and identifies a number of short, medium and long term priorities and projects.
- 3.20 In June 2020, DfC confirmed Ministerial approval of the Inner Northwest Masterplan. This is a significant step in establishing a joint BCC/DfC delivery framework for the regeneration of this part of the City and provides certainty in terms of statutory commitment to the Masterplan, which supports associated work including the ongoing Strategic Site Assessments.

3.21 Finance and Resource Implications

Any costs associated with the development of the Future City Centre Programme and progression of design options for the Frederick St / York St junction will be brought forward within existing CRD budgets.

**3.22 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

The Future City Centre Programme is a high level regeneration plan. The significant projects taken forward within the plan will be screened in their own right by the lead delivery division.

All emerging work strands will be individually screened for Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment.”

During discussion, one Member raised some concerns in relation to the walking and cycling connectivity of the proposed Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme.

Members also raised concerns in relation to the provision of Public Convenience Provision in the City and requested an update on the matter.

In response to Members questions, the Director of City Regeneration and Development provided further information on art work and the Belfast Entries Project. In response to a query raised by a Member, she also advised that further updates would be submitted to the Committee regarding City Centre Living.

The Committee:

- i. Noted that the Future City Centre Programme was being reviewed in light of the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, businesses and the City Centre;
- ii. Noted the progress of key projects within the ‘Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements’ work stream of the Future City Centre Programme, notably the Entries and Lanes Initiative; the Public Realm Catalyst Projects; the pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens, and pilot lighting projects developed alongside the emerging Lighting Strategy for Belfast;
- iii. Noted the development of design options, in collaboration with DfC and DfI, for the Frederick St /York St junction and adjacent streets, with proposals to be brought to a future meeting of this Committee;
- iv. Noted that the DfC Minister had approved the adoption of the Inner North West Masterplan;
- v. Following an issue raised by a Member regarding the enhancement of junctions and improving walking and cycling connectivity as part of the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme, it was agreed that Officers

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Wednesday, 12th August, 2020**

- would engage with the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure on these matters; and
- vi. Following issues raised by Members in relation to the provision of Public Conveniences in the city centre, it was agreed that officers would liaise with Community and Neighbourhood Services and an update report would be brought back to Committee in the near future.

Connectivity and Access

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the current status of the 'Bolder Vision Connectivity Study for Belfast', together with an update on the York St Interchange review and proposals for a framework for community consultation on planning decisions.

A Bolder Vision for Belfast

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that in August 2019, Council, the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) agreed to jointly commission a three-phased City Centre Connectivity Study, a 'Bolder Vision for Belfast'.

She advised that Phase 1 had been completed and 'A Bolder Vision for Belfast' was ratified by Council in March 2020. In June 2020 the Committee had noted that the Ministers for DfI and DfC had been asked to endorse the Bolder Vision and commit to progressing the future phases and seek to embed the Framework in the Programme for Government.

She informed the Committee that, for the next phases, the intention was to develop an action plan to outline scenarios, projects and delivery options based on the Future Vision. This would be used to inform further discussion with key civic partners, businesses, communities, Third Sector organisations, interest groups, statutory authorities and city leaders.

She recommended that the Committee noted that the Bolder Vision for Belfast had now been formally endorsed by both the Ministers for DfC and DfI, along with a commitment to working together collaboratively to consult widely with the public and other stakeholders to agree on a final Vision which would help guide future infrastructure investment decisions. She highlighted that it was proposed to formally launch the Vision jointly with DfI and DfC in the near future and discussions were ongoing with DfI and DfC in terms of progressing with the next phases.

She reported that, as the City begins its recovery post-Covid, and with the challenges that would remain in the coming months, there was renewed emphasis on how we use our City Centre spaces safely, whilst also promoting active travel. Some of the interventions coming forward to help address these challenges align with the ethos of the Bolder Vision and there was an opportunity to build on these, subject to stakeholder support and resources.

York St Interchange

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The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that the DfI Minister had announced that an external review would take place to future proof the York Street Interchange Project in advance of moving to the procurement phase of the project through discussions with specialists and stakeholders. She recommended that the Chairman of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee formally writes to the Minister to welcome the proposed review, and to offer an opportunity for the Committee to engage with the process during the external review.

Ulster University Partnership Project

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reported that Ulster University had been selected to be a part of the UK wide Connecting Communities for Quality of Life Project, which would develop a framework for community consultation on planning decisions, supporting the development of community empowerment and paving the way for more resilient developments in the future. She advised that, as a key city stakeholder, the Council had the opportunity to partner with the Ulster University on this 30 month project. The Project would offer a framework to gain an improved understanding of what communities want, and how best to gain this information through the planning consultation process whilst enhancing social value and an improved process for joined up, long term consultation with communities on planning issues. She highlighted that it was proposed that new formats would be developed based on a review of best practice in community consultation in collaboration with CaCHE - the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (www.housingevidence.ac.uk). As part of the Project the emerging framework would be tested and refined through pilot consultations which would take place in Reading, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh. She confirmed that further details would be brought back to Committee as the work progressed.

The Committee:

- Noted the DfC and DfI Ministerial endorsement of the Bolder Vision for Belfast;
- Agreed to write to the DfI Minister to support the external review of the York Street Interchange, and to offer an opportunity to engage with the review process; and
- Agreed to support a partnership project with Ulster University and other stakeholders in relation to a UK-wide planning community consultation research project.

**Department for Communities Access
and Inclusion Programme 2020-2021**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Belfast City Council is invited to administer the Department for Communities’ (DfC) Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21 on behalf of Belfast based arts, cultural and active recreation**

venues. This Programme supports small-scale capital investments of up to £30,000 and aims to improve access to arts and cultural activities and active recreation facilities, by people with disabilities. Council departments can also apply to this Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- Agree to Council's role in promoting, assessing and managing DfC's Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21 and supporting organisations and Council departments to access the funding.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Department for Communities are inviting all local councils to administer their Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21 within their respective local council areas.

The Council managed the 18/19 and 19/20 Access and Inclusion Programme within Belfast and received support for 24 projects with total value of £412,554, of which five were Council projects. These have included improved access to City Hall and the Tropical Ravine, and specialised playground facilities.

DfC will formally launch the programme as a competitive process on 3 August 2020 with a closing date of Friday 11th September 2020.

3.2 The Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme aims to:

- i. Improve access to arts, culture and active recreation venues across NI for people with disabilities;
- ii. Make arts, cultural and active recreation venues more inclusive across society;
- iii. Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.

3.3 Council owned venues and facilities are eligible to apply for support as well as relevant independent organisations. The Council oversees the assessment and recommendation of projects via an open call, and is responsible for delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.

Active recreation projects can include public walkways, cycle paths, forest trails, children's playparks and similar outdoor recreation sites. The programme is not designed to support the development of sports grounds, but where sports grounds can demonstrate that an application to develop infrastructure is aimed at increasing participation in active recreation by people with a disability, it may be considered.

- 3.4 Capital works and equipment costs are eligible under this programme but funding will not be provided to part fund larger projects. Applicants must confirm that projects will complete on or before 31 March 2021.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

Council funding is not a requirement this year but DfC has indicated that a contribution from Council will be required in order to participate in the Programme in future years.

TCHA unit have experienced staff resources available to oversee this Programme.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

TCHA will work closely with the Council's Equality Unit and DfC to ensure positive equality implications which is the central component of the Programme.

There are no rural needs or good relations implications."

The Committee agreed to the Council's role in promoting, assessing and managing the Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21, and supporting organisations and Council departments to access the funding. Following a suggestion from a Member, it also noted that the Council's Disability Advisory Panel would be included in the consultation process.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Update on Motion - EuroPride (Councillor O'Hara to raise)

Councillor O'Hara provided an update in relation to his engagement with Belfast Pride and their bid to host EuroPride in 2023.

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to communication issues they had experienced with Belfast Pride, together with the potential for capacity building and support for the Bid.

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After discussion, the Committee agreed to invite Belfast Pride to its meeting in September to discuss the EuroPride bid.

The Committee also noted that an update report would be submitted to a future Committee in relation to funding opportunities for culture and arts in addition to cultural multi annual grants (CMAG).

Economic Impact of Retail Unit Closures and Job Losses
(Councillor Heading to raise)

Councillor Heading outlined his concerns in relation to the economic impact of Covid-19 on retail unit closures, redundancies and job losses in the City. He suggested that analysis of what the City might look like in the next one to five years would be helpful to progress the recovery of the City.

The Committee noted that analysis was being undertaken in relation to retail unit closures and vacant buildings in the city and an update would be brought to a future Committee.

Chairperson



Subject:	Lighting Strategy
Date:	9 th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Richard Griffin, Development Manager Brighdin Farren, Regeneration Project Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to: - Support a presentation being made to Members at Committee in relation to the development of a draft City Lighting Strategy as part of the Future City Centre Programme. - Seek approval of the draft strategy, 'Luminous City: A Lighting Strategy for Belfast', subject to consultation.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee are requested to: (i) Note that a presentation will be made at Committee by Park Hood consultants on the draft lighting strategy 'Luminous City: A Lighting Strategy for Belfast'. (ii) Note the findings and recommendations of the strategy and how this work relates to other initiatives within the Future City Centre Programme and city recovery priorities, with proposals to bring forward pilot projects in line with the strategy and emerging Action Plan. (iii) Approve the draft strategy, subject to the consultation process noted below.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background Officers, with city stakeholders, are continuing to explore new and innovative approaches to placemaking and regeneration within the city centre, informed by objectives including enhancing the offering to drive footfall; improving attractiveness and vibrancy; enhancing connectivity and permeability; maximising tourism and cultural opportunities; encouraging more families and young people to use the city centre; and supporting existing businesses.
3.2	This work has continued through the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme, with a clear focus on city recovery in light of Covid, which was reported on last month. The FCC Programme is intended to enable greater alignment of resources to maximise the impact of investment by Council, and to support engagement with external partners to secure buy-in to the priorities within the programme. A key strand of work within the FCC Programme is 'Physical and Environmental Improvements', which includes projects and themes such as connectivity, city centre living, public realm and open space. The development of a lighting strategy for the city is also identified as a priority, one that can make a significant contribution across all other physical (and many non-physical) workstreams within the FCC programme.
3.3	Thoughtfully designed lighting positively contributes to, and even creates 'places', and can have benefits including a reduction in anti-social behaviour and improved ownership of areas adjacent to local businesses and trade representatives through jointly designed and delivered projects. Precinct lighting in Belfast has predominantly been delivered through various departments and agencies without being guided by an overall set of design principles or vision for the city. Lighting of private developments or other feature lighting has been delivered in a similar context, with the opportunity to adopt a consistent approach in terms of key considerations and design ethos often missed. Consequently, the overall beneficial

	impact is less than if lighting within the city had been designed through a shared ambition. The approach to lighting, of buildings, streets, spaces, points of interest, across Belfast lacks coherence and falls some way short of both reflecting the character of the place, and supporting the functions of the city.
3.4	In response, Park Hood were commissioned to assist Council with the preparation of a lighting strategy and action plan for the city, which is envisaged will form a key component of the FCC Programme as it continues to shape and guide delivery of Council's short and longer term response to Covid 19. <u>Luminous City – A Lighting Strategy for Belfast</u> Purpose
3.5	The aim of the Strategy is to develop a well designed, co-ordinated and coherent approach to Belfast's lighting so that lighting design becomes an intrinsic part of urban planning and is understood as a critical material in the work to enhance spaces and create 'places'. It proposes ways to enhance the functional and aesthetic qualities of light in order to support and develop Belfast's social, economic and sustainability targets.
3.6	Across a range of key stakeholders there is a renewed focus on developing an accessible, well connected and sustainable city which supports our social and economic ambitions, celebrating our built environment and heritage as well as improving connections to communities by reducing the severance of harsh infrastructure. Through creative co-design of our cityscape we can reposition lighting as a strategic tool to help create a place that people love to live, work and play in.
3.7	The strategy aims to support and enable this ambition by setting out the key considerations that should inform approaches to lighting, and by providing clear guidance for streetscapes, buildings, and points of interest (e.g. bridges, entries, architectural features).
3.8	The document is intended to inform Council-led placemaking and regeneration initiatives, to promote best practice and collaboration among key agencies including DfI and DfC, and to guide others including developers and property owners, and any other organisation delivering lighting in the public realm.
3.9	Considerations The following considerations informed the approach, recommendations and design guidance as set out in the draft strategy which will be presented at Committee:

	- Connectivity - Sustainability - Quality - Safety - Security - Character & Culture - Human Centric - Accessibility - Economic Impact - Technology - Maintenance - Planning & Delivery Engagement
3.10	The development of the strategy has been informed by an audit of existing infrastructure, analysis of current delivery approaches, and review of international best practice. Given the breadth of interested parties and the often fragmented responsibility for lighting, early and ongoing engagement and consultation has been undertaken with a range of public, private, third sector and statutory city stakeholders including: - All 3 BIDs - Belfast Chamber - Belfast City Centre Management - Visit Belfast - Retail sector (Victoria Square, CastleCourt) - Cultural sector (Cathedral Quarter Trust, Household, Sailortown project) - Belfast Harbour - Titanic Foundation - DfI - DfC (including Historic Environment Division) - Ulster Architectural Heritage Society - IMTAC
3.11	Council departments have also been engaged including Economic Development, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Smart Cities, Resilience, Facilities, and Planning. Wider engagement will be undertaken through the ongoing public consultation process which

	is timetabled to run throughout September and complete in mid-October, presenting an opportunity to capture the views of local communities and residents.
3.12	The recent delivery of a number of pilot lighting projects has enabled further direct engagement with property owners and members of the public, including through interactive 'creative stations' and through Public Engagement Hubs in vacant units.
3.13	Through more recent engagement in relation to city re-opening and recovery, stakeholders have continued to identify the importance of well designed and appropriate lighting as a solution to help with safety, security, accessibility, connectivity, sustainability, and general positive experience of the city for both locals and visitors.
3.14	The feedback gathered from a wide range of groups impacted both in terms of 'end users' and delivery agents has been used to shape the draft Lighting strategy. There are also upcoming presentations planned with BCC's Disability Advisory Panel, The Equality Consultative Forum and BCC's Seniors and Age Friendly group.
3.15	The draft document is currently out for public consultation via Citizenspace, feedback from which will be considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final document, which will be brought back to Committee.
3.16	Pilot Projects The agreed methodology included the delivery of three pilot projects, the learnings from which have informed the recommendations in the strategy: - A series of 9 innovative custom designed and fabricated interactive video projectors. Phase 1 was installed in July 2020 at the DfC owned site at 83 – 87 Castle Street, with Phase 2 installation in another city centre street to follow in the coming months. Site surveys are currently taking place to identify best location. Two newly commissioned animated artworks have been created for the projectors themed on the waterways that run underneath the city, and the starling murmurations found throughout the city. Each unit includes a short throw projector and speaker which are activated via sensor by pedestrian movement. This approach to addressing issues identified in the stakeholder steering group as well as through on site engagement with residents and users of the street, is innovative in its solution and the application of the technology is unique to Belfast.

	- A neon artwork was installed in Castle Arcade as a precursor to the longer-term feature lighting piece to be installed as part of the Entries & Lanes project. Once work progresses with the installation of the new lighting feature in Castle Arcade, the neon piece will be relocated. Site surveys are currently underway to identify most suitable location. - A large scale animated projection was created and delivered as part of Belfast's 2019 Christmas offering.
3.17	Additionally, three new feature lighting installations are progressing as part of the Entries & Lanes project, which have been developed in line with the design principles and guidance in the emerging lighting strategy.
3.18	Delivery While the strategy contains guidance for others, a draft action plan is also in development which identifies planned projects and opportunities for enhanced lighting to feature, as well as new Council-led initiatives. For example, potential incorporation of custom lighting features as part of the Entries Phase 2 and 5C's public realm projects.
3.19	The emerging action plan is developing in line with Council and wider city recovery priorities including the Bolder Vision, and will continue to be reviewed in this context. Lighting is key element of the Future City Centre programme and recovery work more generally both in terms of the Physical and Environmental Improvements and Animation work strands. Projects include considered lighting being incorporated into all physical social distancing hub initiatives across the three BID areas, as well as a dynamic programme of projections and light throughout Sept 2020 – Jan 2021, including a new Christmas lighting scheme with bespoke cross street features.
3.20	Projects will continue to be developed in line with the Cultural Strategy, including potential events and festivals as part of Belfast 2023. Built heritage is also considered a particular area of opportunity and officers will continue to explore, in consultation with relevant bodies, projects such as heritage lighting schemes focused on significant locations/buildings such as Donegall Square and Royal Avenue, using lighting to highlight features and character while incorporating infrastructure that can support more dynamic festive uses. There is also potential to reconsider the role of lighting of public art and other heritage features such as

	the Thompson Fountain, the Big Fish, the Albert Clock, Gasworks tower, Harland & Wolfe cranes, among others. All the above projects are developing in line with the design principles, considerations, and best practice recommendations as outlined in the strategy document.
3.21	It is envisaged that the delivery of future lighting projects / opportunities could be integral to the design of wider projects or subject to funding opportunities that may arise. Certain pilot projects will however be taken forward under existing commitments in line with the draft strategy and the emerging Action Plan. Officers will also continue to explore opportunities to source external funding, and to work with government departments and other city stakeholders to develop new and innovative interventions, and to ensure effective and efficient future management and stewardship of lighting as a key facet of placemaking in Belfast.
3.22	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The finalisation of the Lighting Strategy and Action Plan and delivery of certain pilot projects will be met from the previously approved City Regeneration & Development budget.
3.23	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The Council's Equality & Diversity Officers have been consulted on the draft strategy both in terms of Equalities Screening and Rural Needs Assessment. An extensive consultation programme has taken place with both general public and city stakeholders and partners throughout the development of the strategy and delivery of the pilot projects. There are additional presentations planned with Belfast City Council's Disability Advisory Panel, Equality Consultative Forum and Senior's Forum throughout September and October 2020. The document is also undergoing a 6 week formal public consultation process online. Future lighting projects developed and delivered by Belfast City Council will be subject to separate individual and bespoke equalities screening.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1- Draft 'Luminous City – A Lighting Strategy for Belfast'

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Luminous City

A LIGHTING STRATEGY FOR BELFAST

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Introduction

Belfast is an ambitious international city with a thriving business sector, a rich and eclectic cultural community and arts programme, a diverse built environment and a growing number of visitor attractions. As Belfast continues to develop and grow, the importance of creating a liveable city, with genuine shared space and environments that support and encourage people to live well together is critical. The potential of light to contribute to the creation and transformation of such environments, in both tangible and intangible ways, is well documented.

The Italian writer and philosopher Italo Calvino talked much about subtracting weight, sometimes from people, sometimes from celestial bodies and sometimes from cities.

The concept of removing weight from a city could translate into many of today’s ‘placemaking’ methodologies. Our efforts to reduce clutter, to rationalise and make uniform multiple and competing elements in the urban landscape to limit visual noise, is to address the opacity of the city, making it more permeable, more pleasing, ‘lighter’.

Contributing to the balancing of lightness and heaviness in a city, is the balancing of lightness and darkness.

Thoughtfully designed lighting positively contributes to, and even creates ‘places’. Precinct lighting in Belfast has predominantly been delivered through various departments and agencies without being guided by an overall set of design principles or vision for the city. Consequently, the overall beneficial impact is less than if it had been designed through a shared ambition. In response, Belfast City Council has commissioned a lighting strategy for Belfast which has been guided by collaboration with an interdisciplinary group of cross sector city stakeholders.

The agreed methodology included the delivery of three pilot projects, the learnings from which have informed the recommendations in this strategy.

Luminous City – a Lighting Strategy for Belfast acknowledges the important role of existing delivery agencies, provides analysis of current delivery approaches, researches and identifies key considerations and methodologies, and presents best practice guidance for any agency or organisation delivering lighting in the public realm.

Belfast City Council
June 2020

1. Aims & Objectives



Aims

The aim of *Luminous City – a Lighting Strategy for Belfast* is to develop a well-designed, coordinated and coherent approach to Belfast city centre’s lighting, so that lighting design becomes an intrinsic part of urban planning and is understood as a critical material in our work to enhance spaces and create ‘places’.

This strategy recognises and encourages lighting design which is both innovative and authentic, which does not compromise but increases community safety, security and existing urban amenity. This strategy presents best practice solutions to future proofing through; selection of materials, delivering adaptive design, minimising energy use and managing light pollution. This approach aims to support wayfinding, orientation and accessibility of and to Belfast for all people.

This strategy proposes ways to enhance the functional and aesthetic qualities of light in all its forms, in order to support and develop Belfast’s social, economic and sustainability targets.

The strategy builds on information gathered during the stakeholder consultation process which has shaped recommendations and guidelines.

Objectives

- Provide a more legible and accessible environment by improving the uniformity of light and reducing glare
- Balance, by reducing and enhancing where appropriate, the amount of light used, and improving both colour appearance and colour rendering
- Provide a more 'human scale' of lighting, and improve functionality and aesthetics through the repositioning of existing street and building lighting (i.e. optimising position for human use)
- Celebrate the city's character and create warm, friendly and exciting city experiences by highlighting; heritage buildings and sites, contemporary architecture of merit, iconic landmarks, public artworks and key thresholds and gateway points into and within the city
- Incorporate multi-functional infrastructure within schemes to encourage and support the use of innovative approaches and dynamic light for special events
- Increase safety by ensuring appropriate light levels in identified and perceived dark and dangerous areas to support the prevention of crime through surveillance
- Encourage, guide and inform lighting proposals made as part of new developments, as well as for interim lighting on development sites
- Balance the social and economic benefits of light with the environmental consequences, working with sustainable materials and approaches

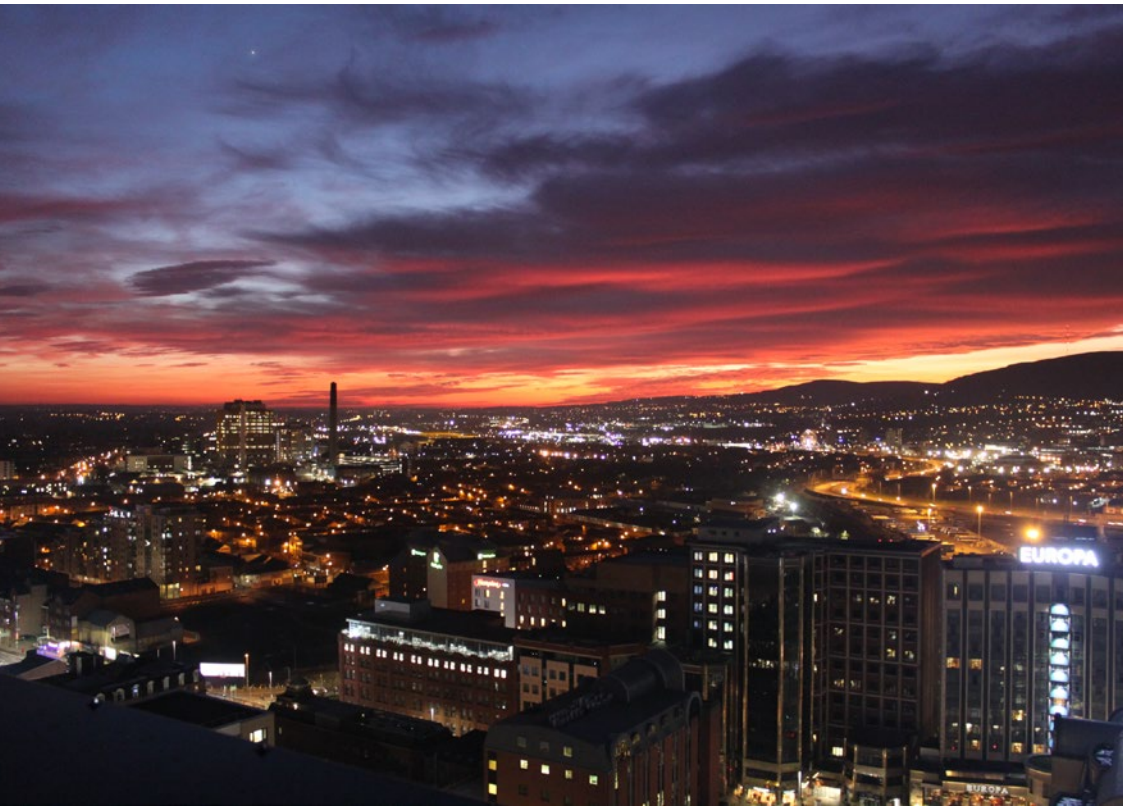
- Focus on minimising light pollution and prioritising a balance between lighting proposals and retaining dark skies
- Identify avenues of funding and delivery of lighting in the city for input into a future action plan

This strategy presents research and observations, mapping current conditions in the city, including existing infrastructure, locations, and standards of lighting, who owns the assets and who maintains and manages them.

It provides a review of current policy documents relating directly and indirectly to lighting, including listing existing lighting guidelines.

To assist in identifying best practice, case studies will illustrate how lighting interventions have impacted in comparable cities. It then presents a series of considerations to build on existing lighting policy such as safety and security, accessibility, and sustainability, as well as a set of design guidance specific to varying urban contexts including: new build, heritage sites, temporary development sites, points of architectural or social interest, and types of public realm spaces such as streets, squares and entries.

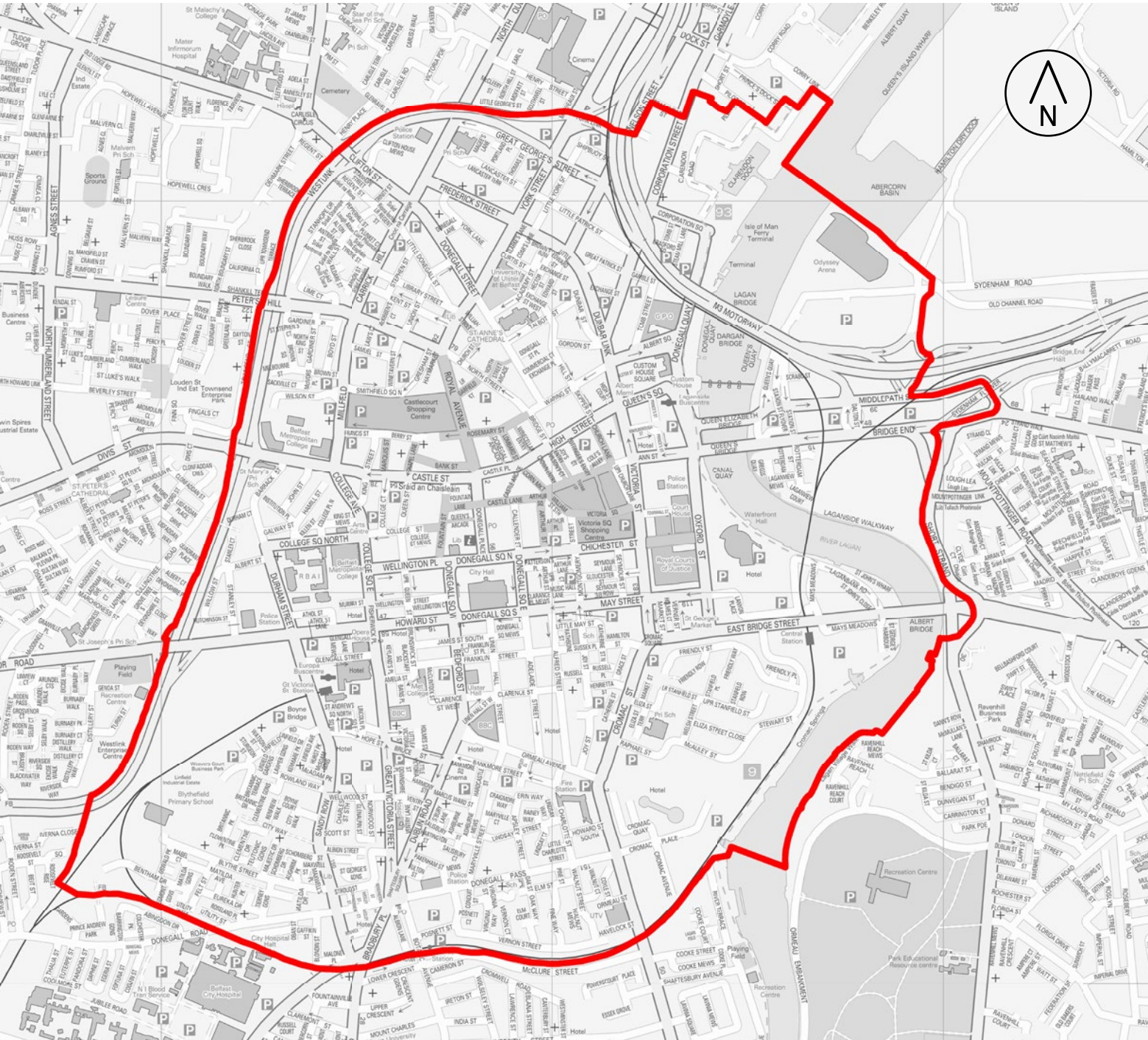
The strategy will act as a proposal for the enhancement of existing precinct lighting by statutory agencies and as guidance for lighting proposals made as part of new developments. It will also provide encouragement for innovative lighting programmes as part of festivals and celebrations and temporary 'meanwhile' projects.



2. Area of Study

Area of Study

The area of focus within this strategy is the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan’s city centre boundary line, although the strategy presents lighting design guidelines which will be applicable across the city.



 City Centre Boundary dBMAP

3. Consultation Process

Consultation Process

May 2019 Belfast City Council (BCC) commissioned Urban Scale Interventions to develop a set of lighting design principles that would inform a lighting strategy for the city and be trialed through the delivery of pilot lighting interventions. The aims of this approach were to:

- go beyond providing standard street lighting, to create concepts that align with the city's regeneration ambition,
- develop concepts that create vibrancy and activity in Belfast by enhancing the physical and social fabric of the streets,
- create a holistic approach to street activation across the city that can be developed, iterated and evaluated through pilot projects.

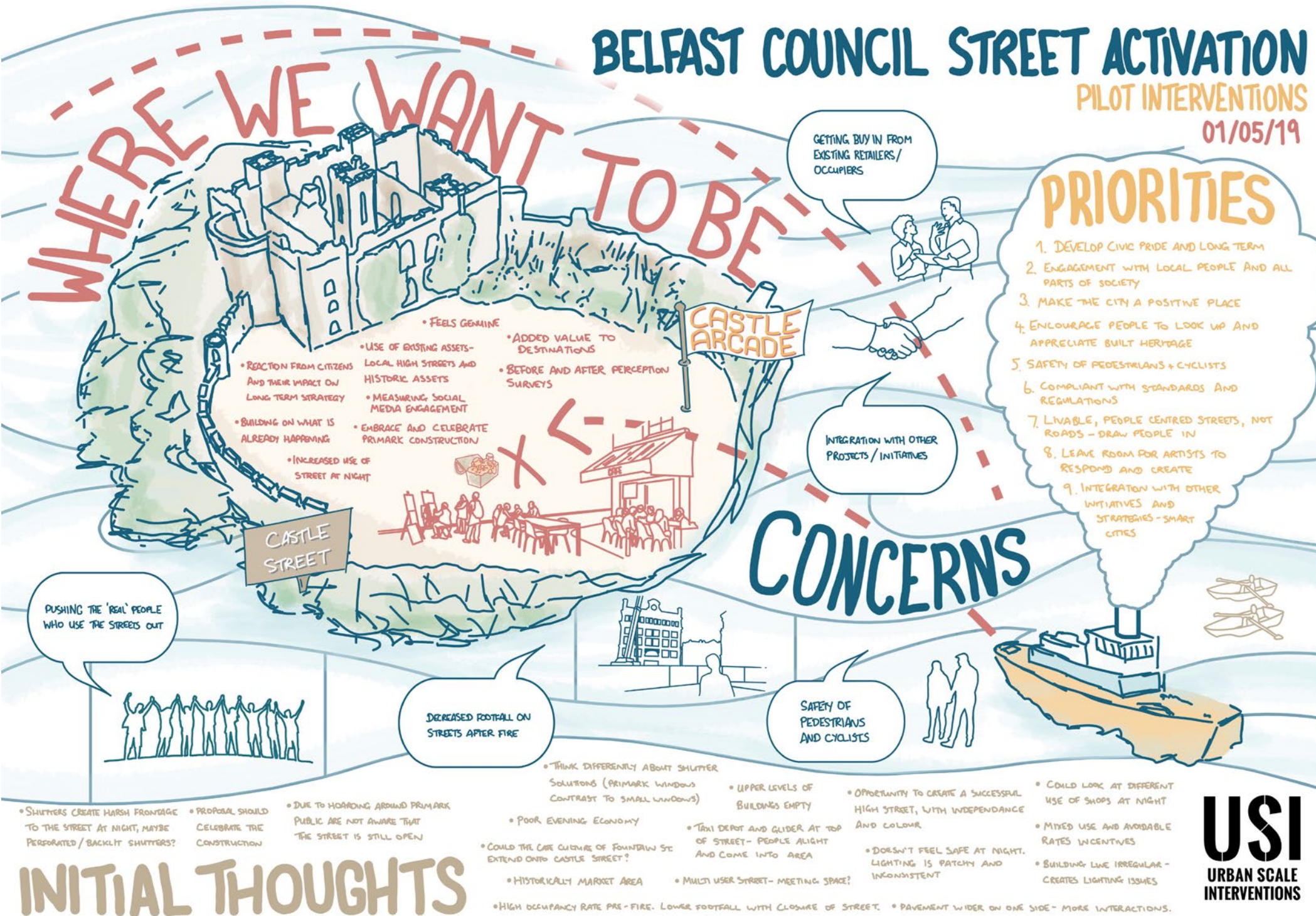
The process of establishing a series of lighting design principles and testing them through pilot interventions was collaboratively designed with key stakeholders as well as citizens. Co-design is important to:

- establish site perceptions and uses to inform the wider strategy,
- understand cultural fit within Belfast,
- get community and stakeholder buy-in for strategy and pilot interventions,
- build an evidence base for behavioural uses of interventions,
- understand key metrics to measure effectiveness of outcomes,
- develop new narratives for spaces.

A stakeholder meeting took place with Belfast City Council departments, Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities, the three Belfast Business Improvement Districts, the Belfast Chamber and Belfast City Centre Management to discuss how lighting can be delivered differently. This meeting also addressed the benefits of taking a creative, co-designed approach that fits into Belfast's strategic goals as well as agreeing the pilot sites for intervention and identifying key priorities, concerns and initial ideas.

BCC also commissioned Urban Scale Interventions to run a public consultation hub in the city centre for six weeks in the summer of 2019 to engage with the city's people on the developing Cultural Strategy - 'A City Imagining'. Over the duration, 1100 members of the public and over 45 different community and interest groups gave their feedback on the cultural strategy, through creative engagement workshops and installations.

The consultation programme included discussions on the city's lighting and aspirations for the future of lighting in the city. As well as drop-in sessions and exercises within workshops, there were specific lighting focused workshops with people of all ages from a variety of backgrounds; a theatre company, young people and city stakeholders.





The following is a selection of feedback and comments regarding lighting in the city, gathered through both city stakeholder and public engagement:

Decreased footfall on streets at nighttime which is negative for the nighttime economy.

Safety, from the point of view of anti-social behaviour, crime, feelings of negativity and isolation, and also for active travel and cycling routes.

Quality of lighting poor when it could be more responsive and appropriate for each site. More site-specific and better considered lighting. Less basic, standard installations that fulfil the bare minimum criteria.

Engagement with existing landlords and shopkeepers on installing new, innovative, or something other than the norm. They can be hesitant to change and not fully support plans.

Current infrastructure is old and has little strategic thought. Some areas are too brightly lit and create a harsh environment, others are not lit at all.

Ownership of infrastructure is difficult to discern.

Current lighting says nothing about the city – there is a lack of creativity and theming.

4. Policy Context

Well considered lighting contributes to meeting our sustainable social and economic targets as outlined in the Programme for Government. Lighting currently informs both regional and local policy documents to varying degrees, as set out herein.

New Decade New Agenda

The Draft Programme for Government contains strategic outcomes which set a clear direction of travel to enable continuous improvement to the essential components of societal wellbeing.

Regional Planning Policy – Regional Development Strategy 2035

The Regional Development Strategy identifies spatial planning, transport and housing priorities to support regional economic and social goals. The Strategic guidance identifies the important role Belfast plays in generating regional prosperity and promotes sustainable approaches across all types of development to strengthen community cohesion and support urban and rural renaissance across Northern Ireland.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland – *Planning for Sustainable Development (SPPS)*, sets out regional planning policies for developing land in Northern Ireland under the reformed planning system. Material considerations that influence lighting decisions include; built heritage, residential amenity and landscaping.

The Belfast Agenda

The Belfast Agenda is our Community Plan and sets out a shared vision and commitment across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors to create a better quality of life for all. It was developed in consultation with the public which identified quantitative and qualitative targets for 2035.

The document acknowledges the importance of developing the city centre for all people, and the critical role of placemaking and urban design.

Belfast Local Development Plan 2035 Draft (LDP)

The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the policy framework for delivering the physical infrastructure required to deliver on the ambitions within the Belfast Agenda, by 2035. The aim of the plan is to enhance environmental quality where possible and protect communities from materially harmful development. In assessing proposed development, the LDP considers issues of environmental quality, including those relating to ground contamination, air, water, noise and light pollution to support the development of more liveable and sustainable places. In respect of light, it acknowledges the need to balance light and dark, appropriate to specific uses and areas.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Belfast City Council is finalising a suite of Supplementary Planning Guidance documents which provide additional clarity and advice on how proposals can support Placemaking and Urban Design, Housing, Retail, Sensitive Uses and Evening and Night Time Economy. SPG is non-statutory guidance that supports the current planning policy framework, including development plans and regional planning guidance. The information set out in each SPG document should therefore be read in conjunction with the existing planning policy framework, most notably the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland and the Belfast Local Development Plan Strategy.

Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 / Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2014

Until the LDP is adopted with legislative powers, the current authoritative development plan for the majority of the Belfast district is the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001. Although intended to be formally superseded by the BMAP in September 2014, BUAP 2001 remains the statutory development plan for most of the council area.

Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS)

Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out the council’s collective ambition for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and surrounds, up to 2030. It contains policies to guide decision making, projects to action and principles to underpin the approach, ensuring maximum social and economic impact. This is a key overarching strategy document with specific policies designed to create, manage and maximise the potential of the city centre to deliver on the ambitions of growing our population, growing our workforce and creating genuine shared, equitable space.

A Bolder Vision for Belfast – Reimagining the City / Connectivity Study

A Bolder Vision for Belfast – Reimagining the City / Connectivity Study examines how Belfast City Centre should develop in a way that is accessible, safe and welcoming for all, through a joined-up approach between the Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure and Belfast City Council. The study will focus on the city core and will present a vision of how traffic (pedestrian, cycle and vehicular) could better navigate the city. Considered and strategic lighting will help deliver on improving the connectivity and permeability of the city core.

A City Imagining – Cultural Strategy 2020–2030

A City Imagining, the council’s ten-year cultural strategy, supports the Belfast Agenda vision for 2035, which imagines a culturally vibrant city. The *A City Challenging* theme within the document focuses on how public space should support and strengthen diversity in the city by cultivating creative environments and creating opportunities for shared experiences.

This theme concentrates on increasing the sustainability and quality of the city’s urban environment through focusing on the relationship between infrastructure and programming, in which the provision of lighting plays a significant role

Belfast Open Space Strategy 2019 – draft for consultation 2019.

Underpinned by the Belfast Agenda, this Strategy aims to protect, create and improve accessibility and connectivity of our open space network. Seven principles have been formulated which include; create welcoming shared spaces, improve connectivity, health and well-being, support placemaking and enhance the built environment, increase resilience, protect and enhance the natural environment and enhance opportunities for hosting events, and educational ventures.

Future Proofed City – Belfast’s Resilience Strategy draft for consultation 2020

The purpose of the Belfast Resilience Strategy is to document the urban resilience capacity of the city to survive, adapt and develop in response to chronic stresses and acute shocks, and to make recommendations to transition Belfast into a more resilient city with an inclusive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy, within a generation. Lighting has the potential to contribute in a number of ways to this objective through projects that stitch together the urban fabric to enhance general city permeability, connectivity, and quality.

Living Places – An Urban Design Guide for Northern Ireland

The Living Places document forms guidance in the determination of planning applications and planning appeals for development affecting all urban places. It seeks to ensure that buildings and spaces combine to create places that are successful in physical, social and economic terms. The document utilises home grown case studies to illustrate good practice in terms of placemaking. High impact outputs and outcomes include; the upgrading of street lighting to perform more efficiently and effectively as both a safety tool and as infrastructure that can facilitate innovative and dynamic activities.

Creating Places

Creating Places is a design guide linked to the sustainable design of housing, which includes inner city residential developments. The guide stipulates the contributions to quality and sustainability that developers in Northern Ireland will be expected to make through the design of new residential developments. A key aim is the creation of attractive places in which people are happy to live, work and play. The considered lighting of these places will support the delivery of a liveable city that is well connected, safe and accessible.

Masterplans

Belfast has a series of Masterplans, each outlining a vision for a specific area in the city, often with its own lighting strategy to guide the development of the area. There are also large areas of privately owned land and property where emerging proposals may have their own lighting strategies and schemes which are submitted as part of the planning process.

Belfast City Council and the Department for Communities have a series of additional interlinking studies, policies, strategy documents and masterplans both finalised and in development, which support the delivery of their ambitions within the corporate strategies above including *Green and Blue Infrastructure, Smart Cities Strategy* and *Inclusive Growth Strategy*.

***Luminous City – a Lighting Strategy for Belfast* is intended to enhance the functional and aesthetic quality of lighting in all its forms in order to support and develop Belfast’s social, economic and sustainability targets, supporting and in line with all the above studies, policies and strategy documents.**



5. Delivery and Governance of Existing Lighting Infrastructure

There are several statutory bodies responsible for lighting Belfast. These include; Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities, Housing Executive and Belfast City Council.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) provide and maintain streetscape and road carriageway lighting across Northern Ireland. They manage the majority of street lighting columns (c. 300,000), traffic signs, bollards, and belisha beacons on public roads and streets across the region (c. 3,400 within our Belfast city centre study area). All roads, car parks and footpaths managed by DfI in urban areas are lit, and the normal hours of operation are from dusk to dawn, with most light fittings controlled by photo-electric cells.

DfI designing road lighting systems, traffic and pedestrian safety at night is the main consideration and the fundamental element of DfI's remit. DfI base their design standards on the needs of road users and the characteristics of the road.

The current Policy and Procedure Guide (RSPPG) which DfI operate for street lighting is E072, and is available from DfI online.

The Department for Communities (DfC) has an important role in developing the inner-city area to look more attractive within their wider regeneration remit. DfC fund and deliver public realm and environmental improvement schemes, both directly and in conjunction with Belfast City Council and other statutory organisations, to improve public areas in residential neighbourhoods, along major roads and within and across Belfast city centre. For eg. DfC funds and delivers the Belfast Streets Ahead public realm programme which includes the installation of lighting columns. Following delivery of these works, responsibility for management and maintenance reverts to DfI.

DfC's main aims include the creation of high-quality public spaces designed and implemented to meet the needs of all section 75 groups and all users. They aim to create a high quality, sustainable public realm in the heart of Belfast City Centre that will improve linkages and connectivity and enhance existing and future commercial activities in the area, positioning Belfast as a premier European regional capital and the primary retail and leisure destination in Northern Ireland.

Belfast City Council (BCC) own and manage an estate which includes City Hall and several parks. BCC manage the lighting within these assets.

BCC is not directly responsible for the installation or management of street and public realm lighting in the city centre, however, The Belfast Agenda and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) outline ambitions which include a Belfast that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all, where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing and a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable. These ambitions are further supported by the draft Local Development Plan.

In progressing towards this vision lighting has become a focus for BCC and is understood as an important and integral element in regeneration and development. As such, BCC has commissioned this Lighting Strategy for Belfast with the recognition and support of delivery agencies in the city.

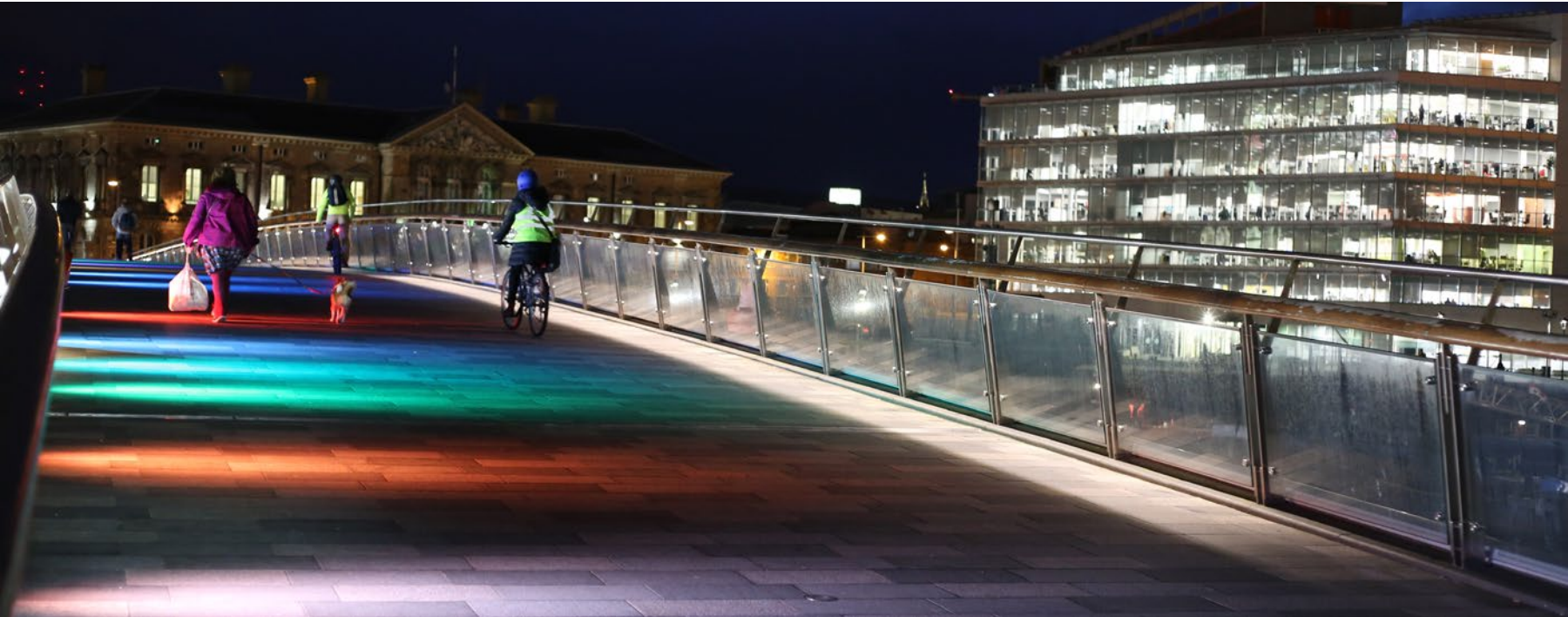
In addition to statutory bodies with responsibility for lighting, **Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM)** is a public private partnership company which has been funded by Belfast City Council, the Department for Communities and the private sector. The organisation assists in improving business life, public spaces and the safety of Belfast city centre. BCCM has maintained and managed Christmas lighting in the city for and on behalf of Belfast City Council.

Private Development

There are individual building renovations or new builds which, depending on use, scale and design approach, have their own lighting plans that come through as part of the planning process.

Management of Estates

There are numerous mixed-use estates, development sites and individual buildings across the city with their own management for lighting in place. These sites include; schools, universities, hotels, retail outlets, mixed use offices, residential and leisure developments. There are also larger bodies responsible for significant amounts of lighting over numerous acres, for example Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Belfast Education & Library Board, etc.



Case Studies

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A series of case studies have been selected that cover a broad spectrum of how lighting has played a major role in the success of projects in other cities.

Coventry Streetscape Public Lighting

In 2010 Coventry City Council undertook a programme to modernise its lighting infrastructure for roads and footpaths in compliance with European Standards.

The project was a five-year programme of investment with a further twenty-year maintenance programme of electrical testing, structural inspections and lamp replacements.

The new technologies allowed for wireless remote monitoring technology, with lighting columns having greater control over their categories of road. In relation to the outputs, 45w or 60w lamps on 6ft high columns were used in residential areas whilst the wider roads had 90w on 8m high columns but maintained a comfortable atmosphere in the residential areas. More trafficked areas increased the outputs to 150w and 250w on 12m high mounting heights. (The lighting design was created to minimise light spillage).

The benefit of this new technology was that Coventry is believed to have been the first city in the UK to install a fully operational Controlled Management System (CMS), allowing the authority to dim light when and where required, whilst monitoring its performance and relaying data to operations to review and manage off site. This system highlights faulty lighting even before it malfunctions, and alerts the management teams accordingly, thus reducing the need for physical inspections.

The dimming system has meant that the authority has greatly reduced its energy consumption and fear of crime in the process. To ensure the CMS process was calibrated correctly the authority undertook three years of trials and assessments on the impact of dimming.



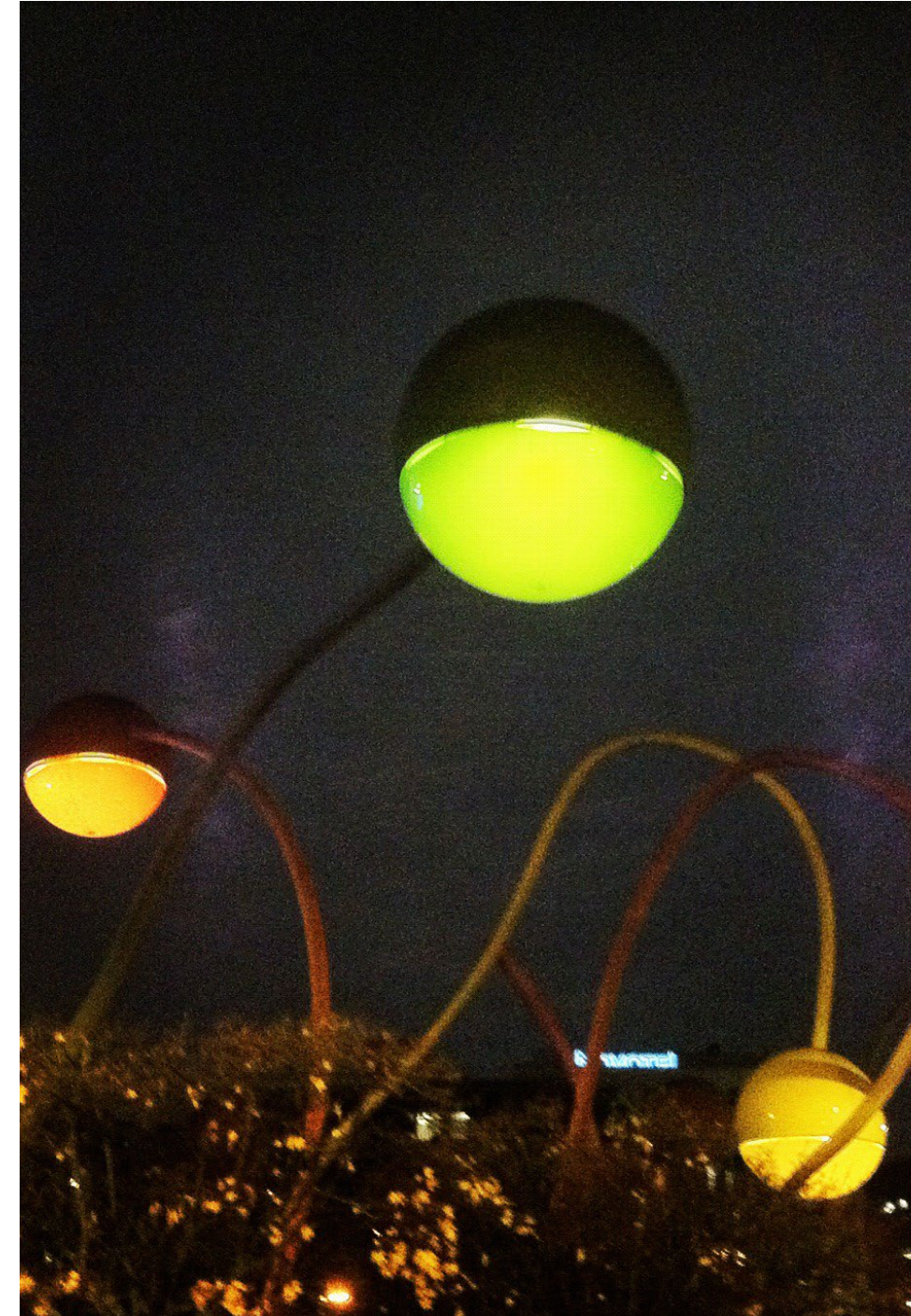
Penelope Wolstenholme Square, Liverpool

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During its heyday, areas of the Ropewalks in Liverpool were a hustling and bustling part of Liverpool's 18th Century rapid expansion. Merchant houses and warehouses occupied the quarter. During the early part of the 20th Century new developments replaced them, with numbers falling during the second World War. From the 1950s onwards the area took a further steady physical decline.

For the Liverpool Biennial celebrations in 2006, The Liverpool Ropewalks Partnership commissioned Jorge Pardo to create an art installation named *Penelope*, within Wolstenholme Square. For many years up until that point the area had only been occupied by people visiting a local nightclub.

With the art piece/lighting installation taking centre stage within the square, it became the catalyst for further private investment and is now a thriving area by day and night within Liverpool's city centre.



Cranhill Water Tower, Glasgow

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Cranhill was an area known for crime and vandalism. The local water towers were regularly broken into, windows broken and in extreme circumstances, water supplies contaminated. The problems were profound and the towers became an icon of the problems suffered by the area. Resented by many, the residents would have been happy to see the water towers demolished. Collective Architecture Ltd (formally Chris Stewart Architects), was approached to look at ways of regenerating the tower and its immediate surroundings. Community meetings were held and the design process was opened out to local people of all ages.

A sculptor joined the team and interpreted the communities ideas. The towers were painted white and broken windows were replaced with durable glass.

Lighting trials experimented with cool shades of blue against green and red to reflect the theme of water. A launch event was held with some great PR and the transformed object became a focal point on the skyline and a catalyst for further regeneration in the area.



Garthamlock & Drumchapel Water Towers, Glasgow

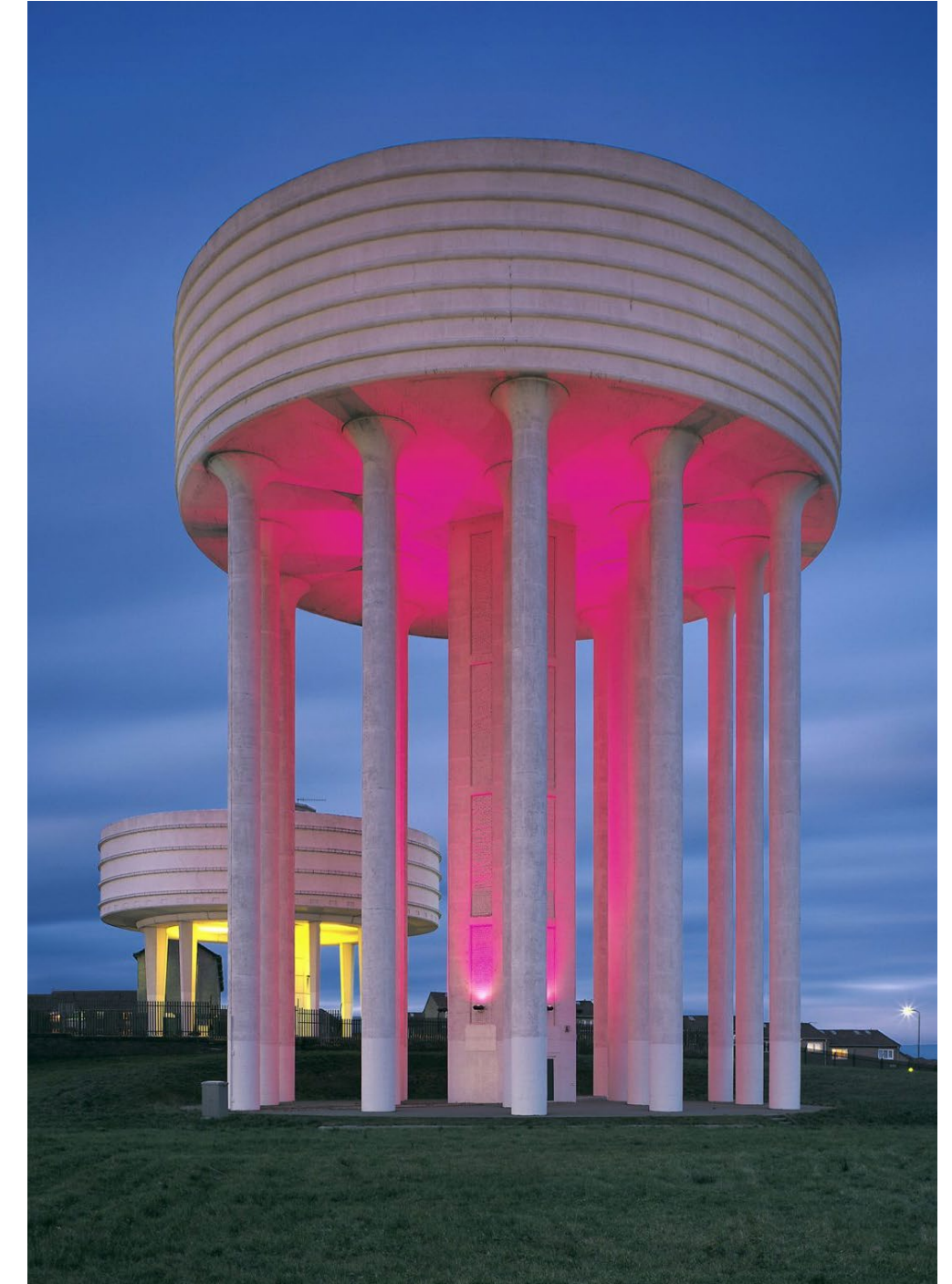
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The water towers are prominent landmarks on Glasgow's skyline and were identified as assets that could symbolise the regeneration of the areas of Drumchapel, Garthamlock and Cranhill, while encouraging a sense of pride and ownership with the local residents of the areas. Collective Architecture was approached again to engage the community and design lighting interventions at these locations to enhance them as beacons on the landscape.

The designs combined the use of strong white light visible from far away, with intelligent colour programming.

Once again, this was a community-led initiative with steering groups and workshops. "The water tower has brought many benefits to the community of Drumchapel, with the most noticeable being the positive attitude that it brings to many of our residents." Steering Group Chairperson

In addition, the B-listed Titan Crane in Clydebank has been transformed in a similar way through lighting.



Bloomberg European Headquarters London

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This building has been the winner of numerous accolades since its completion in 2018 including Winner of the Global Lighting Design awards 2020. In 2018 it was outright winner of the RIBA Stirling Prize. From a sustainability perspective the project achieved a 98.5% 'outstanding' rating against the BREEAM sustainability standard.

Accent lighting is located adjacent to the buildings fin design which projects from each floor, tilted towards the streetscapes below which provides a glow of soft white LED. Each optic has been selected for particular application, with the illumination from within the building providing light to the surrounding public areas and removing the need for external light fittings and issues with glare.



Lumiere Derry-Londonderry

The finale to a year of celebrations as the first UK City of Culture was a light festival across public realm areas, historic buildings, squares, bridges and parkland. The displays told the story of Derry-Londonderry's past and present against the backdrop of the city.

The Festival of Light attracted over 180,000 visitors across the city, bringing a fitting and spectacular end to a hugely successful year.



7. Lighting Pilot Projects

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To inform this strategy, Belfast City Council commissioned Urban Scale Interventions to develop a series of design principles relating to lighting, and various contractors to deliver pilot projects, to trial both the principles and new approaches to the delivery of lighting in the city.

Following on from the engagement with key stakeholders, community groups and the general public it was clear any future lighting interventions should contribute to:



Creating shared spaces
with a positive balance
for all street users



Promote and connect day
and night economies by
opening new routes and
developing new uses



Create vibrant streets
that support people
and businesses and
improve wellbeing



A network of safe
and clean streets
for everyone

3 lighting typologies have
been created that helped
to segment lighting types by
location or occasion, ensuring
lighting is consistently applied
across the city. These are:



TRANSFERABLE

Solutions, such as on Castle Street, can be transferred to other locations across the city



SITE SPECIFIC

Solutions that take account of the social context, developed specific to that site eg. Castle Arcade



POP-UP

Solutions that pop up for specific events or festivals across the city

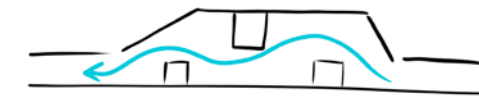


Mock up visuals of Castle Street lighting pilot, 2020. Developed by USI, delivered by C3 Productions.



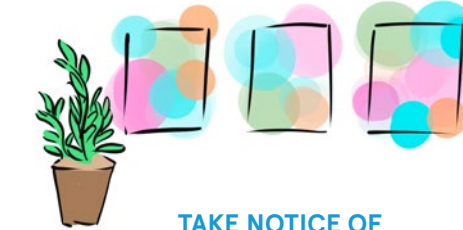
Furthermore, a series of seven design principles were created taking into account insights gathered from the workshops and engagement sessions with city stakeholders.

The co-developed design principles act as a 'checklist' when commissioning and delivering new lighting projects in the city, to ensure lighting is consistent whilst still responding to specific project aims. The seven principles are:



CONNECTING

How might we create spaces to slow down and meet, mix and mingle?



TAKE NOTICE OF PEOPLE AND HERITAGE

How might we create spaces where people can take notice of what is around them?



INTERACT AND PLAY

How might we create spaces people can have fun in?



EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES

How might we support live events happening in the city?



WAY-FINDING AND NAVIGATION

How might we help people navigate the city?



SAFETY

How might we create streets that are safe for all citizens?



DISTINCTLY BELFAST

How might we create something that speaks to the Belfast narrative?

Pilot 1

Castle Arcade

Output

The 'river runs beneath' neon was created as a short term solution responding to the principals outlined whilst improving the lighting throughout the arcade and adding a point of interest. This artwork was installed as an interim measure while designs were being developed for a permanent upgrade to the entry.

Outcome

Detailed behavioural findings from the installation are difficult because of time of year, weather conditions and Covid restrictions, however anecdotal evidence suggests that whilst the installation hasn't increased nighttime footfall through the space, it has made people think differently about the arcade. The brightness of the space has been considerably improved, which has perceived safety benefits, whilst the improvement work has helped to reduce the effect of the 'broken windows theory' by demonstrating that the area is cared for and has value, and lines up anticipation for the longer term entries upgrade.

Spot-surveys with pedestrians passing through the arcade indicated an overall positive response with many commenting on the improved brightness in the arcade and referencing the installation narrative of the rivers underneath. If implemented on a larger scale, with more creative 'wow-factor' installations that are integrated into an overall theme or narrative, the hypothesis is it will dramatically improve city centre spaces and connectivity, particularly at night.



Castle Arcade, interim installation (2019) while designs developed for permanent upgrade (2020). Concept by USI, fabrication and installation by AM LIGHT

Pilot 2 Royal Avenue

Output

Belfast City Council, as part the city centre Revitalisation Programme, produced and co-ordinated a number of initiatives to animate and attract footfall in the retail core of the city during Christmas 2019.

As part of this programme of activity, the council partnered with Belfast One Business Improvement District to develop a bespoke lighting mapping projection in the city centre. The animated story, written specifically for Belfast, was projected onto buildings on Royal Avenue using state-of-the-art projection and sound equipment suited to long-term outdoor use. The main feature animation was accompanied by a secondary projection across the hoardings at the Bank Building site where a large fire took place in August 2018. The animation was accompanied by a specially commissioned soundtrack orchestrated with a full brass band and choir from Belfast.

Outcome

This is the first time a projection of this scale and longevity was placed in Belfast, it was a significant success overall with over 94% of surveyed audiences saying it met or exceeded their expectations. However, there were learnings from this pilot project. Most significantly the effect of ambient light in the area as well as issues with the projection site itself and health and safety issues concerning traffic on Royal Avenue. The council will encourage further largescale lighting and video-mapping projection projects. Location, ambient light, access and road safety will be key considerations in producing future projects like this.



Creative concept by Imitating the Dog, installation by Galaxy Facilities Management



Pilot 3

Castle Street

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The pilot on Castle Street responded to a range of site-specific issues including anti-social behaviour, darkness, a prevalence of non-perforated shutters after 6pm and perceptions of safety and security. This pilot is made of custom innovative projection technology. The 10 projectors are installed above vacant properties and hoarding to project artist generated content onto the facades underneath. The bespoke short-throw projector units also house sound and motion sensor technology to enable interaction with pedestrians. The default content was created by a local artist/coder and referenced Belfast themes – riverways and starling murmurations, and can be easily updated for city events and festivals.

Outcome

The concept allows the street to come alive at night, with immersive audio-visual interactive content, and creates a playful 'corridor' for pedestrians entering and leaving the city via Castle Street, whilst also significantly brightening the street and reducing the 'dead' feeling created by shop shutters.

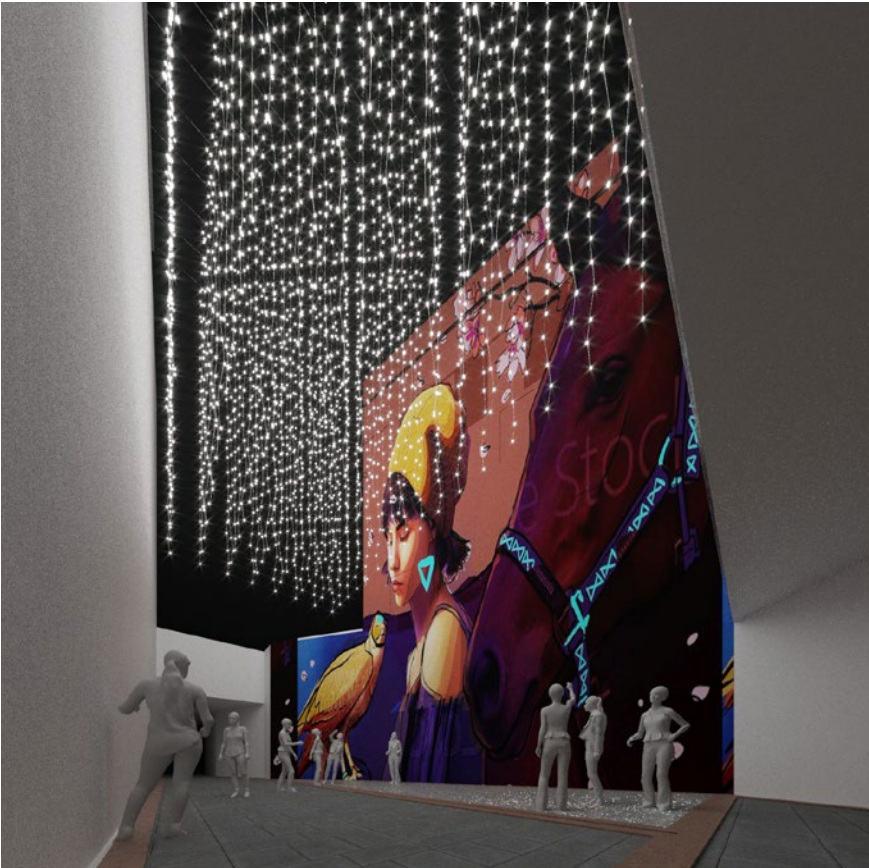


Concept by USI, creative content by Robin Price, fabrication and installation by C3 Productions

Additional feature lighting was also installed as part of a project to upgrade entries throughout the city centre. The aim of the Entries Project is to enhance permeability through creative placemaking, reduce instances of anti-social behaviour by increasing footfall, promote connectivity, and ease navigation through the city centre. As part of the wider entries regeneration programme, Urban Scale Interventions were commissioned to deliver a series of feature lighting installations building on the lessons learnt through the design principles and pilot interventions.

Castle Arcade

A series of suspended lighting ropes drop down to pedestrian level, the rope lights are programmable, and with a changeable spectrum of colour, flows of lights will reflect off the facades responding to a series of murals that wrap the space. An abstract soundscape inspired by the history of this entry will compliment this bespoke lighting feature. The lighting can also be programmed to change colour in response to seasonal city events and the cultural life of the city.



Concept image of proposed intervention for Castle Arcade

Winecellar Entry

A series of organic ocean shapes cluster above this courtyard area where people dwell outside hospitality venues. The shapes reflect the rich maritime heritage of the city and are created entirely with 3d printed recycled ocean plastics. They also change through a spectrum of colours and have speakers embedded for audio programming. This lighting feature is an opportunity to engage the city with climate change and sustainability awareness.



Proposed installation for Winecellar Entry

Crown Entry

A neon strip light shaped as a thunderbolt compliments a punk themed mural that identifies with Belfast's historically rich punk music scene. The placement of the feature responds to architectural forms and functional servicing units that run along the entry. This creates a soft but conscious approach to wayfinding, drawing in passersby and giving a sense of safety, vibrance and 'place' to the hidden routes that connect the city streets.



Proposed installation for Crown Entry

8. Analysis

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A review of the existing lighting infrastructure within Belfast City Centre was undertaken between November 2019 and January 2020. Works involved visual inspections during day and night which allowed for review of both the aesthetics of the various fittings and the performance of the lighting itself to be observed and analysed.

Observations

Reviewed elements include: column design, wall mounted and surface mounted fittings, types of light such as SON-T, CDM -T, and LED, colour temperature and general light and design qualities.

Belfast’s buildings, road infrastructure and public spaces all form a coherent and legible city centre during the daytime, but the same cannot be said after dark. What does hold the character together during the night time experience is the well-ordered lighting infrastructure DFI manage and maintain that is threaded through the majority of the streetscape in the city centre.

Stepping out of the adopted areas managed by DFI, there are some wonderful alternative lighting schemes. For example, areas within the Cathedral Quarter have developed and grown through private/public investment and partnership arrangements. However, beyond this independent initiative and organic development, there is a need for a set of design principles to create a coherent nighttime experience that combines safe routes with ways in which to celebrate the architecture and cultural heritage of Belfast.

In addition to the below considerations, which should be addressed throughout all lighting projects, we’ve broken our site analysis and design guidance into three distinguishable urban areas – Streetscapes, Buildings and Points of Interest. This should give clarity on specific issues and solutions identified and recommended for distinct physical areas and elements of our built environment.

In many cases only subtle tweaks or adjustments to the lighting is required to deliver high impact outcomes. Many of the buildings, structures or streetscapes may already have lighting infrastructure in place although it may be currently switched off or require replacement and more robust maintenance regimes to keep them in good order. Alternatively, they may not be lit due to nothing more than economic reasons.

The creation of attractive urban residential environments with a genuine sense of place is necessary to achieve our growth and sustainability targets. The quality of where we live depends not just on the design of buildings, but on their layout, landscaping and how these developments look and feel at night in terms of safety and security. Improving the legibility of the landscape after dark, allows for the creation and development of the night time character of a city. Belfast has an opportunity to use lighting to enhance the growing number of schemes and sites under construction currently, where new builds and heritage restoration are being tied together with new and/or upgraded public realm, expanding the urban character.



Streetscapes

The elements of a street, including the road, surrounding buildings, footpaths, street furniture, trees and open spaces, etc. taking in retail, office, hospitality and residential areas. Appropriate lighting of the streetscape within each type of area has a huge impact on how we navigate and interact within it.

When LED lighting was first introduced and used within our cities and towns, the LED colour temperature was 6000k, as only at this colour temperature could enough output be viably generated.

A more 'comfortable' setting is used today as the performance of the LED has improved but is still further up the lighting spectrum towards blue than the lamp types previously used (SOX and Son-T). Currently the preferred DfI settings for colour temperature is 4000k. This is based on the fact that previously, the higher the colour temperature (6000k) the more efficient the LED was.

However, modern LEDs are able to achieve the same, if not better, output at much lower colour temperatures, which in effect means lower energy consumption and higher performance.

Generally, today, all DfI lighting schemes or private lighting schemes are designed to the standards recommended in BS5489.

The DfI requirements for lighting levels are categorised below. The categories are based on a range of different criteria which includes frequency of vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist movement. An evaluation and risk assessment and levels of crime and frequency of accidents all have a bearing on which category of lighting will be placed where. These categories are noted as C1: indicates a high level of light intensity, C2: a medium level of light intensity, P2/P3: a low level of light intensity.

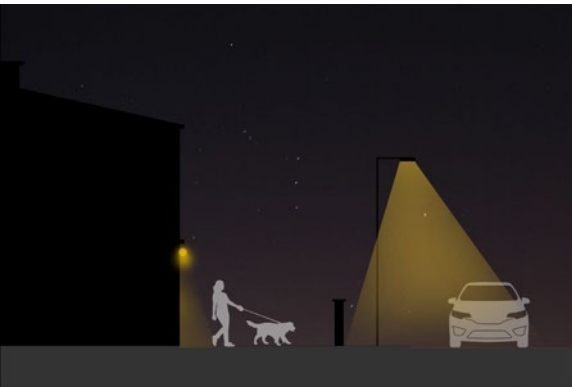
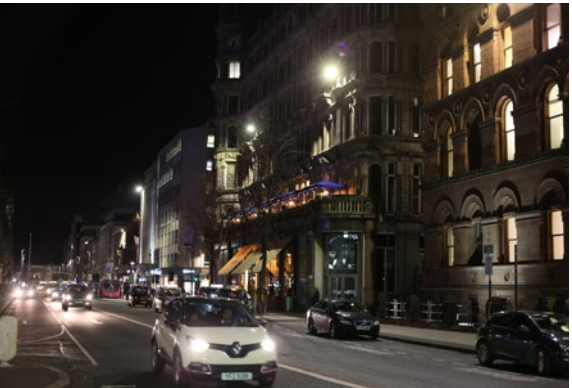
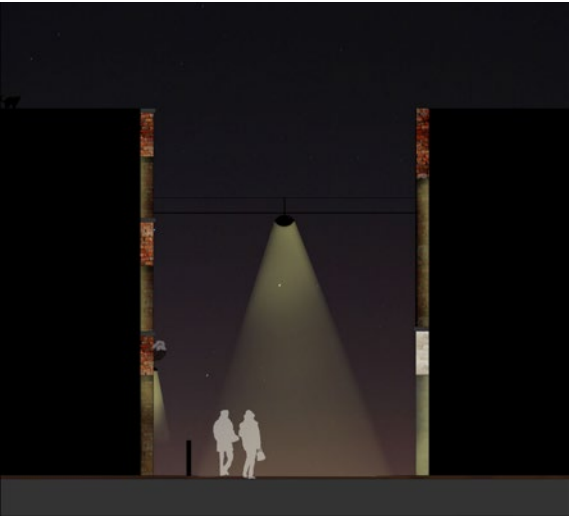
Further detail regarding the requirements and risk assessments involved in determining lighting classes can be found in BS 5489.

DfI have strict guidance on attachments to their columns – banners, advertising assets and city dressing fixed to street lighting columns are not normally permitted, unless the design and fabrication of the column has the required structural integrity.

DfI do not permit third parties to connect into their power sources without prior written agreement.

Streetscape lighting is predominantly satisfactory throughout the city centre, the majority of sites are now fitted with LED fittings, with a few residential areas operating the softer SON-T type lighting. Concerns were identified regarding the location of lighting columns rather than the level or type of light itself, and in several areas, alternative arrangements could be developed to replace the existing columns with either wall mounted fittings or by expanding the catenary lighting which is operational within some of the streetscape of Cathedral Quarter, for example.

In addition, DfC have installed high quality feature lighting on their public squares, for example the Eagle Columns on Bank Square and the Hecklers on Custom House Square.





Fittings/Fixtures

There are a number of different fittings forming the current inventory of lighting types. Although not exhaustive, the range of lighting fittings include mock heritage style lamps, contemporary column mounted, ground level and building mounted fittings.

The fittings also vary in technology and therefore, colour temperature, aesthetics, replacement types and cycles for replacement. Some buildings were found to have different levels of white light which did not highlight the architectural merit and/or character of the building to its full potential.

Key routes through and around the city centre can be identified based on the mounting heights of street lighting columns. Typically, the lighting hierarchy is defined by the volume of traffic flow and the width of the streetscape.



Levels of Illumination

Several areas within the city centre appear to have high levels of illumination. This could be the result of a number of factors including the introduction of third-party lighting to adjacent buildings aimed at enhancing the building facades.

In some cases, the finish of light colour, tone or reflective cladding of the unit itself can also increase the lighting intensity and consequent glare, which is exacerbated when the surrounding surfacing is a light colour, and often emphasised further during rainfall.

In terms of unpleasant 'light spill', advertising screens and shop fronts were evident and play a major role in the dynamically lit streetscape. Many signs, media screens and advertising sites were also visually distracting and competing with the ambient lighting. Areas of dynamic lighting effects include Shaftsbury Square and the digital advertising hoarding along Bruce Street.

Refer to the guidance note from the Institute of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Note 01/20'.

Buildings

Edifices large and small that make up our urban environment. Lighting buildings appropriately can have a huge positive impact on our city and how we live, work and play in it.

Ongoing development across the city centre is providing opportunities for enhancement to the built environment through high performance sustainable projects. Several developments have installed lighting schemes to their frontages which complement the existing streetscape lighting and ensure the two different sets of lighting do not conflict with each other.

Belfast has a high number of buildings with cultural and heritage value. Many of these buildings are instantly recognisable landmarks and allow for subtle wayfinding through the city centre. It is evident that a number of these buildings have more value to offer to the evening and night time experience and with some sensitive lighting schemes could dramatically enhance the city's skyline.

One such building which has embraced lighting design is the City Hall. City Hall provides an instantly recognisable setting and beacon of civic pride and stability for the city and its visitors. Adjacent to City Hall around Donegall Square are several historic buildings which would benefit from enhanced lighting to showcase their architectural features and compliment City Hall and its setting as a civic and cultural centre.

In relation to Belfast's heritage, historic buildings and landmark features, we take reference from Historic Environment Division's design principles.



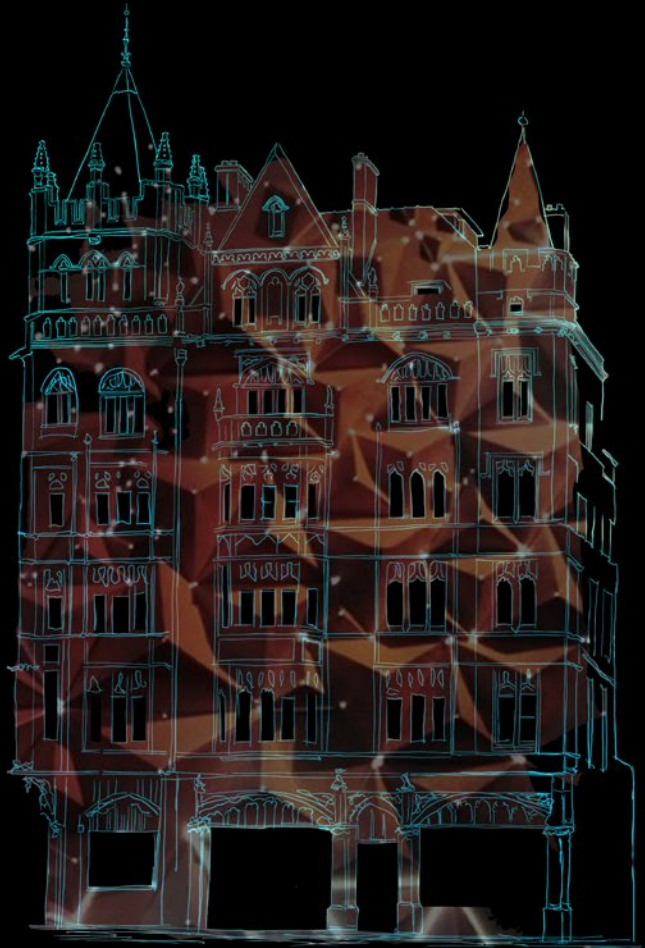
Belfast City Library

Belfast Central Library is an example of a beautiful heritage building which, with some rearrangement of the current external lighting could show off its features to more effect and have much more impact.



Ocean Buildings

Ocean Buildings is an example of a beautiful building which isn't lit at night. Some subtle lighting would highlight its façade and features and add value to this architectural asset in the city centre.



Points of Interest

Various spaces, places, objects and details that can be picked out of the urban landscape and lit to enhance character, encourage better connectivity and define an iconic skyline. Sensible and strategic lighting of these assets can address the legibility and permeability of our city and support orientation, navigation, and wayfinding.

Key Gateways

City gateways have an important role in defining arrival points to a city. They are gateway markers or landmark features that allow us to orientate ourselves and create a sense of anticipation as we approach a destination.

Belfast has its challenges in this respect due to a number of natural and infrastructural barriers around the city, but there are also opportunities to be explored.

Whilst the boundaries of the River Lagan, railway line to the south and arterial roads of the Westlink and M3 respectively define a compact and identifiable city centre. They can also be perceived as adding to the separation of some of the surrounding communities by restricting the city centre from expanding organically.

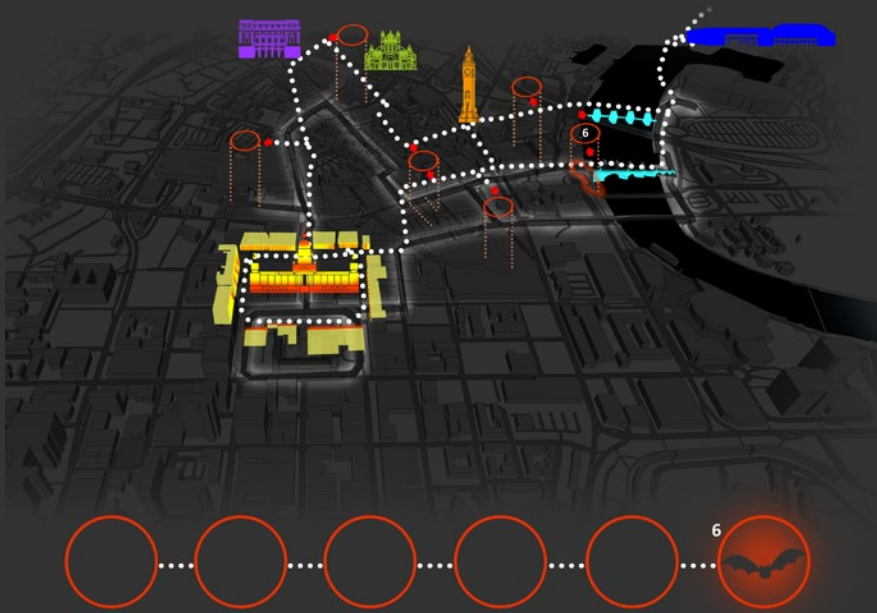
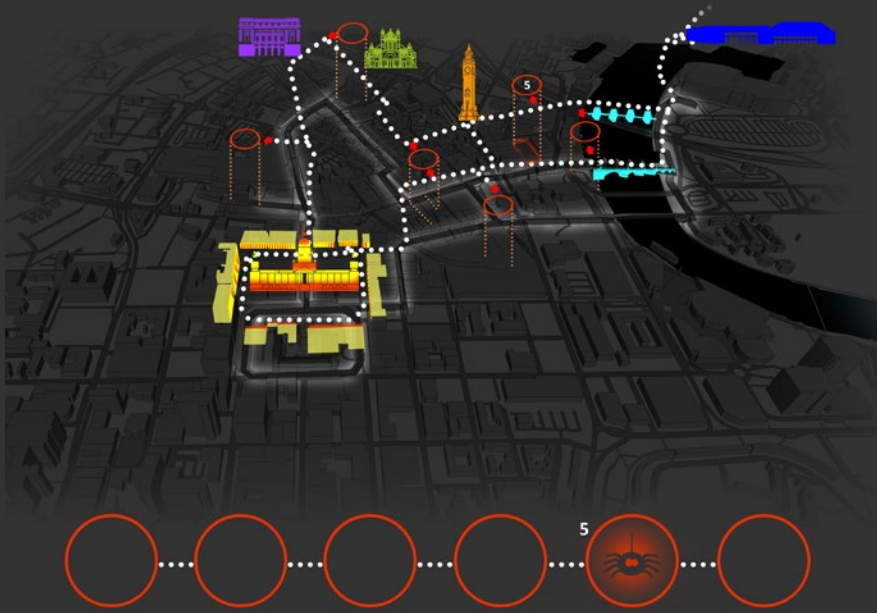
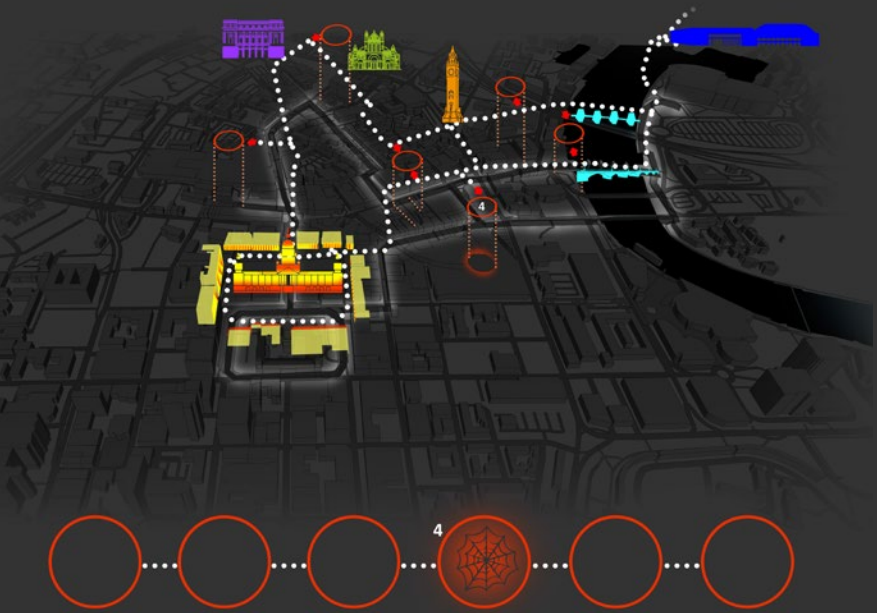
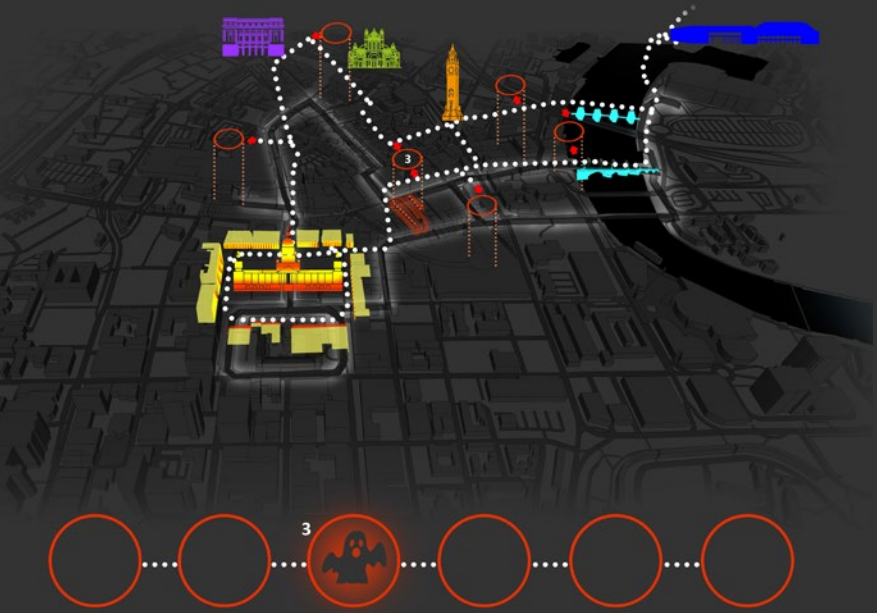
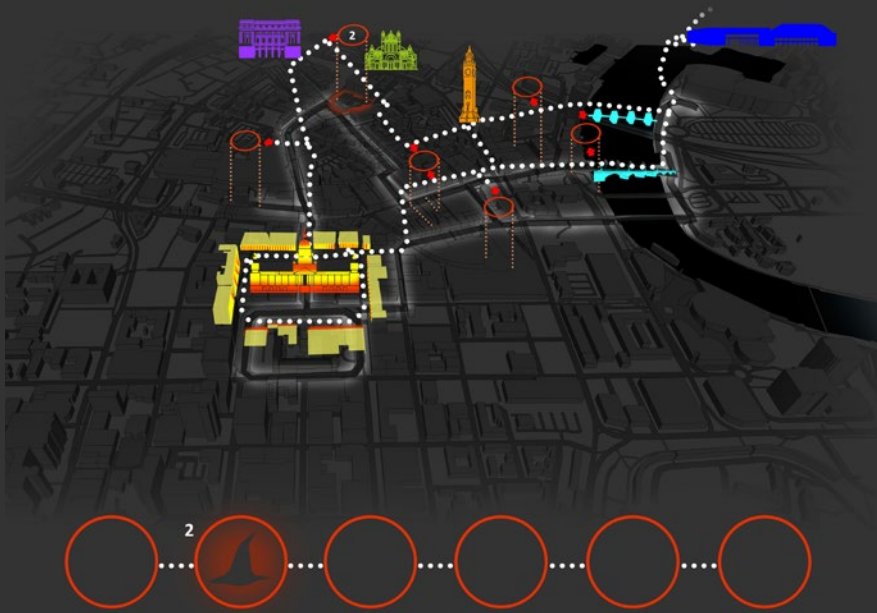
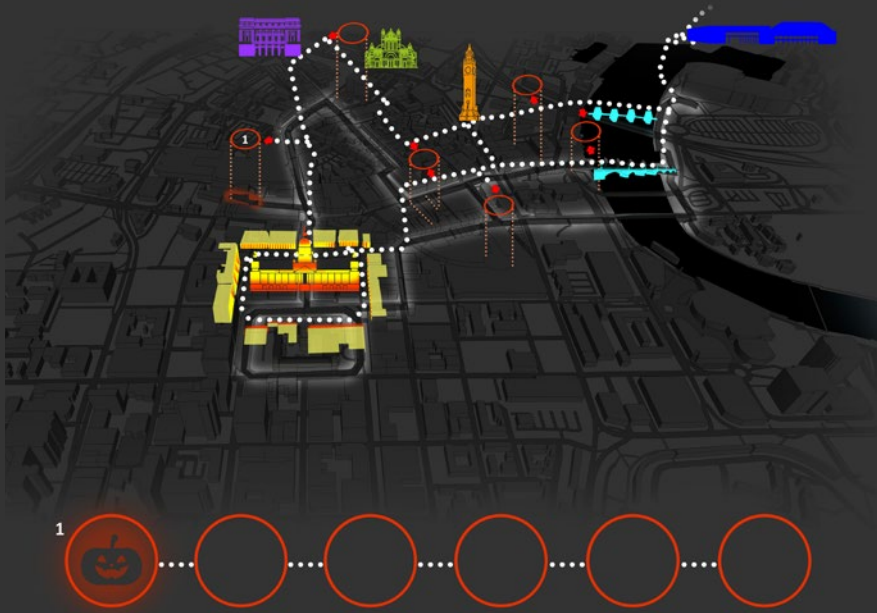
All major arterial routes in and out of the city centre are in need of lighting enhancement to increase visibility and define permeability.

However, the routes located to the west of the city namely along Grosvenor Road, Divis Street and Clifton Street are in need of particular focused consideration to create balance across the various approaches to the city.



Narrative Trail

An example of a Hallowe'en themed projection installation to create a narrative trail throughout the city. Temporary projects like these can be used to guide and generate footfall to certain areas of the city and can work as part of a wider festive celebration.



Landmarks

Cities are most often identified through their skyline and a skyline is most often made up of iconic landmarks. Buildings, architectural features, physical infrastructure and public art can help orientation and navigation as well as being great locations to try some creative visual effects through the use of light.

Selective highlighting of buildings on corners or those that stop views can help reinforce existing vistas and promote visual interest and intrigue whilst promoting and stimulating pedestrian movement.

Notable Belfast landmarks and their type of lighting include, City Hall (LED), Waterfront Hall (LED), Victoria Square's Dome (LED), Custom House (LED), St Patrick's Church (Halogen and LED), the Obel (LED), the Grand Central hotel (LED) the Titanic Building (LED), the lit masts along Donegall Place and the several bridges, which are lit with LED, halogen and CDM -T arrangements. Although the list is not exhaustive, it could develop further through a coordinated design approach to define a bold recognisable skyline for Belfast.

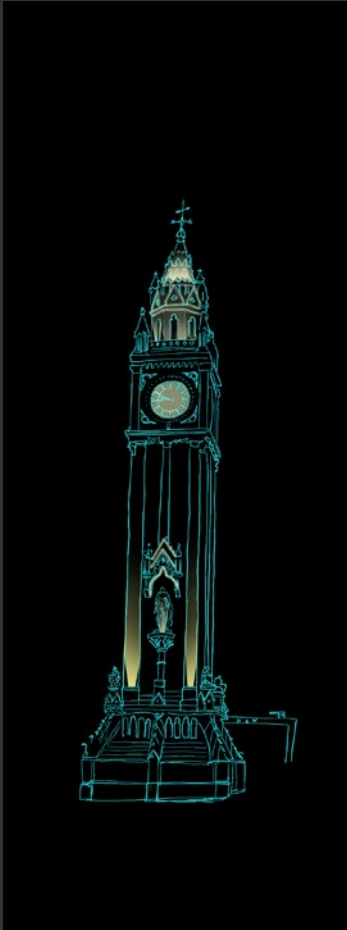
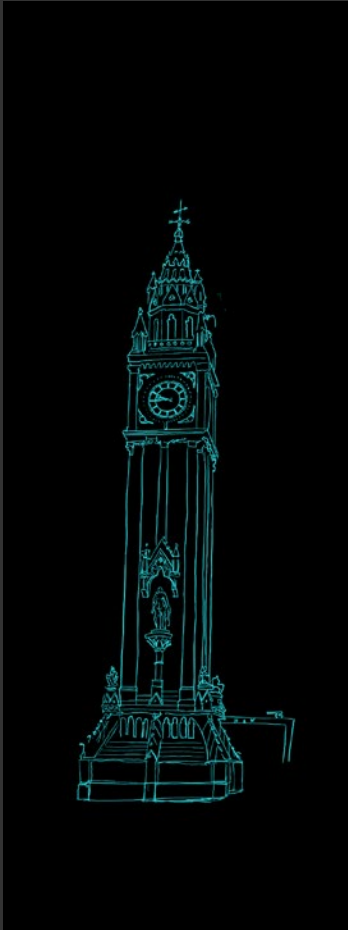
Other sites for consideration are unique destinations just outside the centre, e.g. the Crumlin Road Gaol, the Gaeltacht Quarter, Queen's University and the Botanic Gardens, Titanic Belfast, and Ormeau Park – addressing how these locations at the periphery of the city centre influence travel and experience encountered beyond the city's central district is key.

Public Art and Heritage Features

Several significant sculptures within the city have lighting incorporated to highlight their form, however, a review of existing arrangements should be considered with a view to improvements.

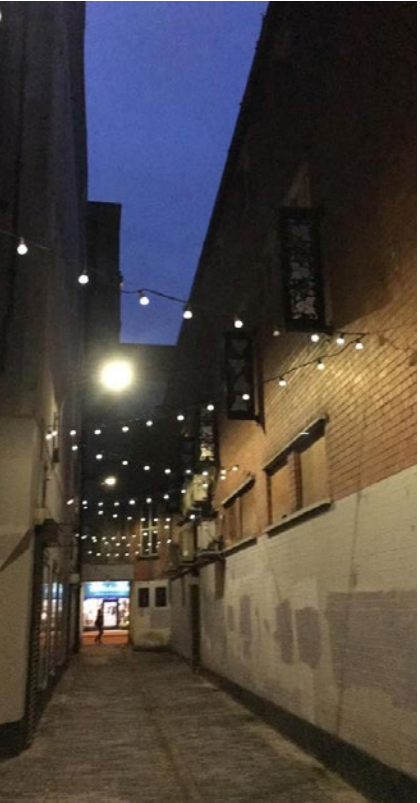
The Jaffe Memorial Fountain is lit well and is a fine example of how public art and heritage features can be sensitively treated.





Entries and Lanes

Belfast's entries have wonderful character that should be enhanced and expanded, however, it is very easy to walk by them without noticing they are there. Subtle highlighting of their thresholds may create an element of curiosity and intrigue and increase footfall and appreciation of these spaces as places. Unique feature 'Instagramable' lighting installed at appropriate points within these pathways can also drive footfall and maximise on these areas as 'free' tourism assets. Such environments have a range of other complexities such as a wide variety of clutter like drainpipes and air conditioning units to play down, which can also be addressed through clever lighting.



Some entries and lanes have already benefitted from years of creative development, while others are still in the early stages of creating their own individual identity. All are developing with public and private investment and to date this approach has been working well.

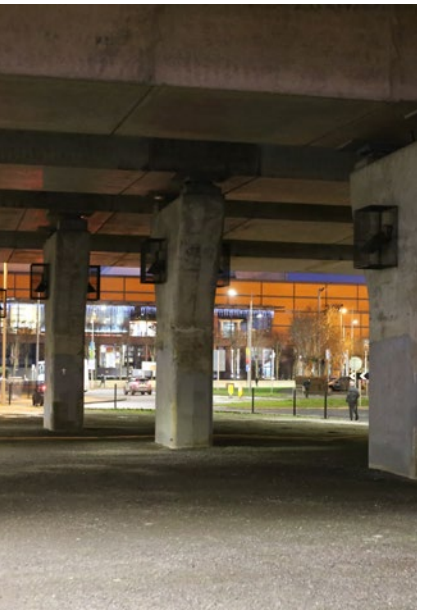
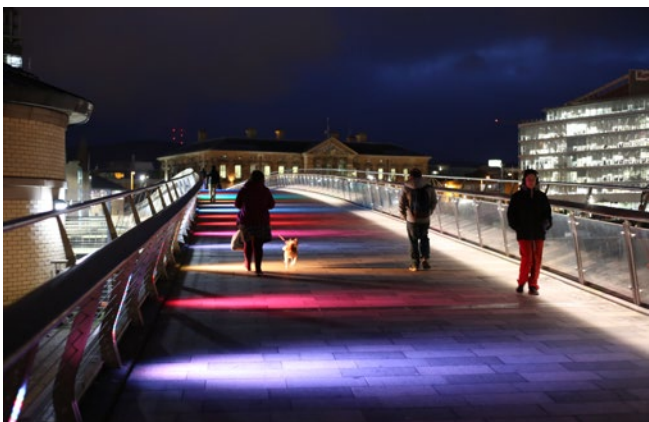
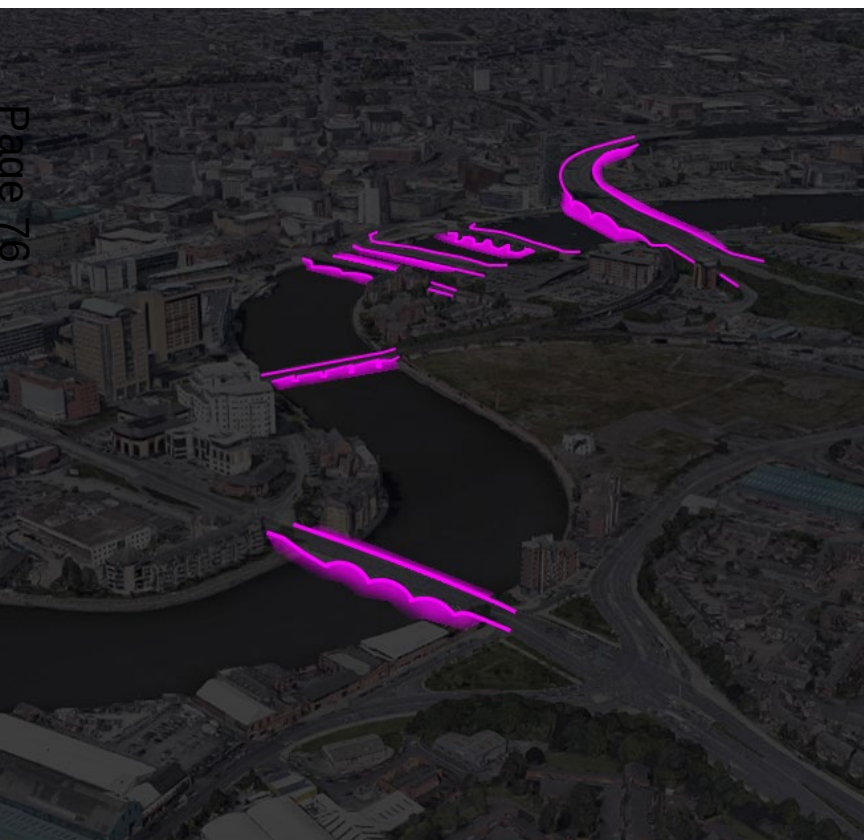
In addition, Linen Quarter BID is currently working on proposals to provide creative lighting of various east-west connections in the Linen Quarter, including the highlighting of key architectural features.

Bridges

Belfast has a series of historic bridges and one significant contemporary pedestrian bridge – ‘The Lagan Footbridge’ which connects the city centre to Queen’s Quay.

Although the bridges are all lit, there is no consistency to the type of light tone used, what features on the bridges are being highlighted, or when they are lit. Each bridge has a range of significant architectural features that could be better displayed and presented at night.

With new bridges and upgrades to existing bridges planned there is opportunity to maximise on the potential of illuminating the riverway.



Underpasses

The underpasses of the M3 spanning the River Lagan are dimly lit and passive surveillance is limited leading to and from both the Harbour estate and on the other side of the river leading to the SSE Arena, Titanic Quarter and Scrabo Street.

With a lighting intervention these large physical barriers can become more welcoming, enhance the pedestrian experience and improve the pedestrian linkages to others areas of the city.

Pedestrian underpasses at Ann Street, and High street are regular routes for pedestrians passing under Victoria Street. The existing lighting is a mixture of LED strip lighting located into the corners of the ceiling and recessed lighting fixed into the walls of the step areas with the recent addition of a further cluster fitting of white LED lighting. The lighting currently installed does not alleviate safety concerns and there is an opportunity here to install creative lighting as a feature and transform the underpass into a more vibrant linkage and a destination in itself.

Vacant, Derelict and Construction sites

Prolonged vacant and/or ongoing construction sites can have a dramatic impact on the local environment both in the short and long term. Such sites can be perceived as unsafe, unwelcoming and can, for a period, of time have detrimental effects on an area, both economically and socially.

Sites under construction are bound by a Duty of Care obligation and through CDM Regulations NI (2016) to ensure they are secured appropriately with security hoarding. Within the city centre environment this often requires the developer to create underpass scenarios for pedestrians to access/egress below scaffolding, which can be intimidating particularly at night, as these routes are generally lit to the minimum compliance.

These interim sites often last for years at a time, severing existing pedestrian linkages from one area to another. Even with careful and considered planning of the hoarding, the public will often take alternative routes

9. Considerations

When carrying out our analysis and making our recommendations we acknowledged the potential of lighting to address and deliver on current concerns and priorities for the city, as detailed in the policy context section of this document, as well building on the design principals developed and taking learnings from the pilot projects delivered.

The following are a set of independent but interlinking considerations which have informed our holistic approach, recommendations and design guidance.

Connectivity

Being able to orientate and move through a city with the use of light after dark creates a safer city for all user groups. It is widely recognised that using light to reveal the hierarchy of streets, buildings and open spaces as well as their dimensions, materiality and detail, can greatly benefit a person’s experience and use of the public realm.

Belfast’s city core continues to evolve to address what has been for many years, isolation or disconnection with the surrounding areas. The expansion of an authentic city character was confined by suburban housing schemes, the Westlink and developments along the River Lagan which segregated it from the core.

The legibility of a city fundamentally improves by delivering lighting projects which define routes and pathways (both by lighting entire routes, or strategically lighting key points along a route), which in turn aids orientation and wayfinding.

This ‘linking’ or stepping stone approach to lighting both large and small routes and sites, creates the perception at least, of a more permeable city which is better connected both within its core and from its core to surrounding communities. To supplement this approach, variations in the quality of light (harsh, diffused, warm, cold) and levels of illumination can be used as tools to create texture and contrast in a city and differentiate between types of spaces and their uses.

Both large lighting schemes delivered by public authorities, and smaller independent lighting projects have a responsibility to understand and acknowledge the impact and potential of their project to contribute to reinforcing the unique character of the city, and to make it easier and more enjoyable to navigate.

Recommendations

- Any and all lighting installations should take cognisance of its potential impact on the visibility and perception of the wider landscape, and where possible and appropriate, orientate their lighting to maximise benefit.
- Ongoing regeneration and public realm work accompanying larger scale developments, should include lighting as an integral element. They should continue to extend and enhance the streetscape in the city centre and where possible expand outward into peripheral areas, to acknowledge and support them accordingly. This approach will create more cohesive linkage within the city core and the surrounding residential areas.
- Public statutory authorities should fund specific lighting projects to address issues of permeability, connectivity and accessibility.

Quality

Quality in lighting design and installation cuts across all elements. Quality of analysis, interpretation and design of the lighting, quality of the infrastructure, fittings and fixtures, and quality of the light itself. All elements must be carefully considered by the appropriate people, and the optimum decisions made based on both the objectives of the project and the wider aims and ambitions of the city.

Existing authentic character within an area can be highlighted, and new developments have the opportunity to develop or create new character which creates a sense of place through thoughtful lighting design and delivery.

Recommendations

- Commissioning the right people for each element of delivery is critical. People and organisations with a proven track record and best practice approach should be prioritised.
- Engagement and consultation are important elements. Involving the right people (public, stakeholders, end users, clients) at the right time and throughout the process in both the design and implementation of lighting is key.
- Lighting fittings can have a major impact on the appearance of a development, both during the daytime and after dark and should be carefully selected in line with the character of the site and area.
- Lighting columns and wall-mounted fittings within our streetscapes and adoptable areas should always be acceptable to the adopting authority as it will ultimately assume responsibility for maintenance and management. The fittings should be durable, resistant to damage from vandalism, easy to maintain, readily available, located both to minimise inconvenience for all, and to minimise any risk of damage to equipment by vehicles.
- Expand the range of new column design for different quarters in the city centre. This allows for subtle styling within the scheme and has worked well in defining an identity or character for areas such as those upgraded through Streets Ahead, Laganside and Titanic Quarter. This approach needs buy in from key stakeholders.
- Utilise best practice from the most up to date credible sources when deciding on the type of light appropriate for each project taking into consideration all necessary external factors. Ensure designers with expertise in lighting are at the forefront of these decisions.

Character and Culture

A city’s character and culture are intertwined, and Belfast has a wealth of both. Our identities have developed historically through the arts, sciences and other forms of human achievement which are celebrated collectively. This uniqueness is represented, manifested and celebrated through our built environment and creative activities.

We have historic and contemporary architecturally significant buildings, monuments, artworks and other important points of interest as well as numerous cultural events that bring our city’s streets and public spaces to life. All this together contributes to the cultural character of the city and helps define a sense of place.

To expand on our cultural events offer and enhance our physical assets, there are opportunities to explore how creative, sensitive and spectacular feature lighting can become an integral part of our delivery, and in turn to bolster the overall experience and increase footfall and interaction.

There is also potential to integrate innovative lighting technologies, such as curated video-mapping projection onto building facades and selected sites. Narratives positioned thoughtfully across the city as a trail would encourage movement, and pathways can be created based on other agendas such as directing people towards certain sites at certain times etc. This type of public realm ‘theatre’ can also contribute to an enhanced evening experience and night time economy.

Recommendations

- Install the CMS to allow controlled isolation, so that individual and/or sets of lights can be controlled in response to special events, activities, celebrations and commemorations.
- Expand the range of column, fitting and fixture designs for different character areas within the city to support individuality and identity, following the lead of the former Laganside Corporation, Streets Ahead Programme and Titanic Quarter lighting columns.
- Ensure flexible and adaptable infrastructure is designed and built into public realm schemes to allow greater opportunities for events, e.g. pop-up power supplies, enclosed locations for the installation of temporary lighting or projection.
- Further review and audit needed to identify key cultural assets with a view to ensuring they are lit appropriately. Elements of the built environment identified in the ‘Points of Interest’ section of this document outline the type of features we should expect to pick out of the fabric of the city and highlight for their historical significance and/or contemporary value.

Human Centric

Studies have shown that there is a discrepancy between natural light and artificial light with regard to intensity, colour and the very nature of lighting dynamics. Natural light is dynamic in that it changes from sunrise through to nightfall, whereas artificial lighting is fixed, in a state of high intensity permanence throughout the night. Constant high intensity lighting through each night has a negative impact on our Circadian Rhythm and our well-being,

The natural intensities for light are;
Morning- Cool light / Low intensity
Afternoon- White light / High intensity
Evening- Warm light / Low intensity

Recommendations

- Further research is required to establish the effects of the fixed permanent state of our street lighting.
- Introduce a wireless Central Management System (CMS) for monitoring and dimming.

Accessibility

People with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments, the senior population, and those with sensory/ neurological processing difficulties can struggle to use the city after dark.

Better consideration of the quantity, quality and uniformity of street and amenity lighting and the reduction of excessive contrast, glare and physical infrastructure itself, will help improve accessibility. Measures to use lighting to provide greater legibility after dark, such as improved lighting to signage and changes in lumen levels will also assist with orientation and ease of movement.

Recommendations

- Further research is required to understand better the impacts of lighting on people with conditions such as dementia, autism and people with learning difficulties.
- Agencies involved in the delivery of lighting schemes should, where appropriate, commit to engaging with people with lived experience of conditions such as those noted above, in terms of the design and implementation of the scheme.
- Avoid glare and high contrast.
- Design lighting on areas where level changes occur, like slopes, ramps and steps, so as to reduce shadow and ensure clear definition.
- Ensure lighting that is built into public realm is at an appropriate level or is angled/shielded to avoid sudden glare.
- Avoid any fast-moving light or repeated patterns of coloured light. If part of a special event, ensure appropriate notices are in place.
- Be aware of the effects of light on different surface types, e.g. the potential of bouncing light off mirrored or metallic surfaces and creating flashes.

Safety

Ensuring safety is a priority and key objective when it comes to lighting our city. The lighting of the main road network is an important layer as it lights both the carriageway and main footpaths, and provides appropriate light levels to highlight physical hazards where pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles traverse and meet.

Safety and the level of illumination should however, be appropriately balanced to ensure light levels are comfortable while being compliant. This is achievable with the use of new LED white light which can make spaces brighter without creating glare, making it possible to improve lighting and reduce illumination simultaneously. This can work particularly well in confined spaces such as entries, alongside locating and/or angling the lighting so as to avoid creating areas of shadow or darkness to avoid making pedestrians more vulnerable. Targeted lighting can also deter antisocial and criminal activity.

Recommendations

- Consider all road and street users in relation to lighting the carriageways so there is a more equal focus on cyclists and pedestrians.
- Light in relation to the topography of the area, taking into consideration changes in surface level, obstacles and light spill from surrounds.
- Provide innovative, responsive lighting control to fittings and maximize visibility and perceptions of safety for users.
- Carefully consider the positioning of lighting columns on the footpath to achieve required light levels but prevent unnecessary clutter and obstruction for all users, especially those with limited mobility, sight loss and/or push chairs. Explore wall mounting options in the first instance.

Security

Lighting plays a key role in the prevention of crime, deterring antisocial behaviour by promoting and assisting surveillance both passive and perceived. It provides the bright environment necessary for CCTV and for the PSNI to carry out their duties more safely after dark.

A reduction of contrast and glare, improvements in lighting uniformity and colour rendering, and the provision of better lighting control, all assist in enabling authorities to improve their response to incidents and safeguard against anti-social behaviour and street crime.

As the city’s population grows, lighting smaller connecting routes behind and between buildings is becoming more necessary to ensure people feel secure and confident to navigate and enjoy the city after dark. Likewise, with the increase in tourism, a sensitively, well-lit city encourages footfall and dwell time and ultimately enhances the overall atmosphere and experience of the place as a destination.

Recommendations

- Consult with relevant authorities and groups to identify conflict and vulnerable areas and take a collaborative approach to installing and managing lighting that fulfills both surveillance and placemaking needs.
- Future installations should reduce contrast and glare by use of LED.
- Focus on streets, laneways, alleys and entries surrounding residential and hotel areas in the first instance.
- Install the CMS with capacity to allow controlled isolation so that sets of lights, down to individual lights can be controlled and managed in response to incidents, changes in the area due to development, and learnings over time.

Technology

DfI are currently in the process of upgrading their street lighting to LED and from C2 class to C1. These new columns also have the capabilities of supporting a Central Management System (CMS).

There are multiple benefits to a CMS including the ability to change the light level and colour temperature throughout the night dependent on the activity or inactivity at any given time. This can be achieved by either pre-programming or by sensors which respond to movement on site. This in turn has proven to reduce energy outputs. A CMS also allows for off site monitoring, simplifying overall management.

This type of dynamic fitting and management system has been introduced across other cities’ pathways and river walks and where there are other environmental factors, concerns and ecological requirements, for e.g. disruption to existing nocturnal activity of bats and their flight corridors. An increasing number of Belfast’s DfI LED light fittings are installed with the capabilities to be linked to an intelligent management lighting control system. Reducing outputs when there is little or no activity greatly reduces energy consumption and CO2 emissions, while also protecting the wider ecology.

Recommendations

- Upgrade all public lighting in the city core to LED, incorporating a Central Management System.
- Provide infrastructure which can be dynamically responsive to incidents including movement and external light spilling into an area.
- Install creative and innovative lighting into public realm, as well as electric points for pop up temporary lighting.
- Review to consider use of renewable energies through procurement.
- The reduction of energy use and CO2 emissions is an ambition for the city, and lighting installations coming forward should be designed and approved with this in mind.

Sustainability

Sustainable lighting aims to balance the social and economic benefits of lighting with the environmental consequences, including energy use and light pollution.

Good lighting can encourage growth in a city’s resident population by providing safer, more liveable areas while acknowledging the need for dimmed, reduced light in these areas as to not affect sleep patterns. It can also contribute to a healthier more sustainable economy through providing appropriately lit retail and socialising areas, increasing social cohesion by providing safer and more pleasing environments for interaction.

Developments in technology have presented opportunities for reducing carbon emissions through both technical design and programming.

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Recommendations

- The existing lighting infrastructure DFI maintain and manage has intelligent lighting management system (CMS) capability. These lighting management systems can monitor use and reduce energy outputs particularly when limited activity is evident. The same technology can also create dynamic lighting effects through the night to change from high intensity to low intensity at any given time and can monitor replacement and performance requirements. This capacity needs to be utilised.
- Reconsider quantity of lighting, and their mounting heights and positions to explore every opportunity to reduce quantity of fixtures, decrease carbon emissions and incorporate energy saving measures.
- Require, as part of the planning application process, that the applicant demonstrate clearly, measures for addressing sustainability targets and best practice with respect to lighting. Consideration should be given to the BREEAM accreditation aims when assessing these.
- Designs should be commissioned to prevent light pollution (note The Dark Skies Movement which promotes the benefits of minimising light spillage), unless it is agreed and where it is achievable and acceptable to do so, to consider light spill as a means of providing surrounding areas with ‘free’ light.
- Efforts should be made to establish the impact of light upon animal and plant life and mitigate accordingly.
- Consideration should be given to the selection of products, life cycle costs of materials and reduction of chemicals used in the manufacturing processes for lamps and columns.
- Ensure any upward lighting is directed at a surface and not into the sky.

Economic Impact

Belfast has a growing night time economy and was awarded Purple Flag status in 2019. The accreditation recognises towns and cities with well-run night-time economies. The city’s three business improvement districts, Belfast One, Destination CQ and Linen Quarter BID, all contributed to achieving this recognition.

Balancing the competing demands of economic development, public safety and quality of life is a challenge and requires the collaboration of statutory and community stakeholders with residents and local businesses.

In 2010, economists TBR valued the total night time economy across the UK at £66bn, employing 1.3 million people. The Night Time Industries Association’s (NTIA) latest reports highlight the significant economic and social contribution the night-time economy makes to the UK. According to the report, there were 1.5bn day visits to the UK in 2014, 300 million of which had a meal or night out as their focus. According to NTIA expenditure on night-time activities represented 21% of the £52bn spent on day visits. In 2010 Newcastle undertook an ‘Alive after Five’ campaign and drew 7.9m additional night time visitors to the city, increasing the city’s night time economic value to £350m.

There are many examples of how the night time economy has played a vital role in revitalising cities and communities and all involve a mixed cultural and retail offering to attract a diverse demographic including both locals and visitors, late into the evening.

Recommendations

- Working with key city stakeholders, collaboratively create a clear set of objectives focusing on increasing and maximising the night time economy.
- There is evidence to suggest that the most successful ventures and night time events are those that consider families and older people. Cities should consider expanding their evening offer to target these groups.
- Invest in bespoke feature lighting installation and spectacular lighting events which draw an international audience and celebrate and showcase the city as a destination.

Planning and Delivery

Clear policy and processes in respect of the delivery and governance of lighting in the city are necessary.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance specific to lighting, in terms of its aesthetic, environmental and amenity impact, and assist in the assessment process of proposals and applications involving lighting, where appropriate.

It is important to understand the management arrangements for lighting assets across the city to allow for quicker requests and responses to be made for creative lighting proposals, reporting of maintenance issues etc.

Recommendations

- Carry out engagement and consultations with DfI’s lighting and operations departments from the concept design stage of any scheme to understand DfI requirements.
- Improve communication and collaboration between statutory agencies and government departments to facilitate new, more efficient approaches to delivery and management of lighting going forward.
- Continue existing relationships between statutory agencies and with key city stakeholders to work together to fund, deliver and maintain innovative, creative and bespoke lighting to enhance the night time experience, for festive periods and for special events.
- Ownership, management and maintenance of statutory and non-statutory lighting/illuminations, (both standard and feature style), needs to be clearly established and agreed during the project planning process.
- Site-specific lighting strategies should be provided as part of the planning process, where appropriate.
- All new proposals involving lighting being submitted for planning consent should refer to this *Luminous City, A Lighting Strategy for Belfast* document for information on considerations and best practice guidance in line with the city’s placemaking agenda, and should include a ‘design and access’ statement covering such, where appropriate.

Maintenance

Maintenance of both standard functional lighting and dynamic lighting infrastructure and features in the city has historically been an issue.

Much of our streetscape and many of our public assets have had good quality functional and/or feature lighting installed as part of their development, however many assets have little to no maintenance budgets for ongoing monitoring and upkeep.

Recommendations

- When public statutory authorities fund projects there is a need to determine who should own, manage and maintain them when the delivery of the project is complete. Allocating these responsibilities is critical and needs to be addressed and agreed through the budgeting and project planning process.
- In line with the recommendations under Technology, the installation of a Controlled Management System (CMS) would allow for off-site monitoring, simplifying and streamlining management and reducing need for visual inspections.

10. Lighting Design Guidance

Lighting Guidance for Streetscapes

- The mounting height of lighting equipment should generally be sympathetic to the height and width of a street or open area such that it either responds to the architecture or human scale.
- The mounting height of fittings can have a visual impact on the streetscape in that the higher the mounting the wider spread of light, this also has an impact upon the building façade and could lead to light pollution. Mounting heights should reflect the scale of the streetscape and elements within the street, for example trees, sculptures etc.

With a city centre having a range of mounting heights it is possible to achieve differentiation of character by using lighting. This can be experienced by both vehicular and pedestrian users. Currently streets are typically lit using 10m+ high columns. This has an impact upon the streetscape with the alignment of lighting columns working with street furniture, trees and service kiosks.

- The streetscapes with a lesser volume of vehicular traffic are lit via < 6m high columns or wall mounted fittings which are commonly found at this height. This approach also frees up space on the ground. Wall mounted fittings can have an impact on the placement of the light fitting on the building façade.
- It is generally accepted that light fittings should, where possible, be mounted on building facades. This will greatly reduce street clutter on the footway and increase the useable areas of footpaths. Consultations and agreement on wayleaves will always be required with landowners. Consideration also needs to be given to how mounting fixtures will affect the building.

- Create distinctive column design and infrastructure that contributes to the local narrative and defines an area.
- Introduce subtle lighting effects into new street furniture, do not rely solely on the street lighting. This will create a rich variety of complementary lighting across the streetscape.
- Depending upon their use, open spaces should be lit through minimum ambient lighting and accent lighting should be applied when creating features of interest within those spaces.
- No flash lighting should be used. However, subtle colour change, whereby there is a changing colour spectrum of lighting over several seconds (managed remotely as part of wider management programme) using DMX systems can enrich spaces with this dynamic approach.
- The Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) has provided guidance on acceptable levels of illumination for light sensitive premises in specific environmental zones, e.g. urban location, town centre, city centre.

Lighting Guidance for Buildings

- As development evolves across Belfast, developers and lighting designers should be preparing lighting strategies that complement their site context, embrace technology and maintain high quality performance.
- The building lighting should consider light quality, light level, positioning, how to reduce visual clutter/external fixtures and ways of incorporating into the material of the building if appropriate, light glare, spill and reflection in relation to surrounding materials and context.
- The building lighting should not clash with the existing adopted street lighting but provide complementary service and differentiation, using warmer white light where possible to showcase the architecture. The Bloomberg Headquarters in London is an example of how thoughtful design and installation can achieve high standards both practically and aesthetically. Rather than mounting fittings to their building, the designers used the facades to reflect lighting onto the streetscape below, complementing the street lighting.
- Each light fitting should be insignificant in appearance during the day and night.
- The lighting type should be a low energy source and output.
- Building features should be selected to pick out their key features and attributes.
- The buildings/ landmark should not be over lit to drown out the actual building feature being highlighted.

- The light type and lighting levels should be consistent across the whole façade (same level of Kelvins).
- Buildings that provide the opportunity to emphasise their depth should be promoted. Features such as inset window and building alcoves for example can create dramatic effects.
- The use of column mounted lanterns should be considered where it can be clearly demonstrated that such an arrangement makes a positive contribution to the design of the public realm or no alternative strategy is possible or practical.

Specific to: Listed, historic buildings

- There is a preference for lighting of listed building facades to be warm white light only.
- Coloured lighting on listed buildings should be restricted where feasible and only on civic occasion and authority should it be applied with prior approval in place.
- Wall mounted and surface mounted lighting should adhere to the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6): Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage – in terms of location, quality of materials and design.
- Light fittings should be mounted on building facades such that they respect the design and visual hierarchy of the building with site specific fixtures and brackets being considered in the case of important listed buildings or structures. Whilst spilling light onto the facades of buildings is often unavoidable lanterns should be specified so as to limit visually inappropriate scalloping or shadows.

Lighting Guidance for Points of Interest

- Each light fitting should be insignificant in appearance during the day and night.
- The lighting type should be a low energy source and output.
- Structure features should be selected to pick out their key features and attributes.

- The feature should not be over lit but lit to carefully emphasise the form and key attributes of the feature.

The light type and lighting levels should be a consistent type across the whole façade (same level of Kelvins).

Bridge lighting should respect the heritage fittings where possible and respectfully upgrade where feasible to do so. The undersides should have more flexibility to bring a colour change element into the design, whilst minimising the impact on local wildlife in the vicinity. The Maritime Mile (Titanic Foundation) and Back to the River (BCC) documents have additional info on the potential of illuminating bridges.

- Wall mounted and surface mounted lighting should adhere to the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6): Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage – in terms of location, quality of materials and design.
- Flashing lighting should be limited to specific locations and limited in most.

- Build on the success of recent pilot projects, festivals and events by creating a purposeful lighting trail around the city, linking the various quarters. This narrative could be told through lighting installations and the wonderful, dramatic effects video mapping can create.

Specific to: Entries

- To ensure creativity continues within these defined areas, the recommendation is to allow them to continue to develop through public and private initiatives. This approach will ensure each entry develops authentically, uniquely and appropriate to the users within them. Funding through arts programmes could expand this further.

- Highlighting the thresholds of the entries more uniformly or consistently would identify them as pathways and encourage exploration.

Specific to: Vacant/Development/Construction Sites

- An approach that has worked well in Belfast and elsewhere is to transform these hoarding sites into temporary lighting features/artworks. Using the hoarding as spaces for projecting or installing onto creates interest, animation and addresses the issues of the hoarding being an eyesore and a deterrent to pedestrian movement. These could be interactive and tie into seasonal activities, festivals and special events.
- Through the planning stages of the development, agreements between Belfast City Council and the developer could be made regarding financing and delivery of creative, meanwhile installations which turn a potential inconvenience into a destination.



11. In Conclusion

Lighting has a major role to play in showcasing the character of the city by highlighting its key assets and landmarks, whilst providing safe night time routes.

To ensure the city centre achieves successful and dynamic lighting there is a requirement for strategic planning across Belfast City Council departments, Department for Communities, the Strategic Investment Board and the Department for Infrastructure, in collaboration with other stakeholders in the public, private and community sectors.

Through research and consultations, recommendations have been developed. They aim to bolster current policy and support authorities, developers, lighting designers and other key stakeholders to create cohesive, dynamic and considered lighting. The recommendations also aim to deliver on a comprehensive approach to improve lighting quality and experience across the city of Belfast.

In many cases where significant, high impact improvements across the city could be achieved, only minor or subtle changes or adjustments to the existing lighting may be required. To what degree lighting plays a part in individual projects should be based on a series of contextual considerations including the project location, surrounding context, character, scale and use. These considerations help to identify whether a bold, or more subtle intervention will work best, and whether that intervention is classic in nature, e.g. sensitively lighting the architecture of a building, or more contemporary in nature, e.g. installing bespoke, feature lighting to be provocative and fun. As previously highlighted during the site investigations, certain

buildings and structures within Belfast have lighting infrastructure in place, although it may be currently switched off or require replacement. With support, owners of such properties or features could be encouraged as to the benefits of lighting their assets thoughtfully, in line with the recommendations within this strategy.

Some areas within Belfast have significant and very distinctive character. These character areas should be celebrated and protected. Other areas are in need of creating their own language and enhancing their existing identity further. The guidance within this lighting strategy allows for flexibility of interpretation and approach, while presenting clear recommendations.

Lighting is a hugely dynamic medium whose language is easy to understand. When applied thoughtfully, lighting allows us to explore and experience the city through colour, texture, intensity, shape and shade. It can be permanent or static, fleeting or animated. It can transform, enhance, obscure, draw attention to or tell a story about an object or a place.

As we focus on developing an accessible, well connected and sustainable city which supports our social and economic ambitions, we can use lighting as a strategic tool to help create a place that people love to live, work and play in.



Published: August 2020

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Subject:	Future City Centre Programme: Physical & Environmental Improvements
Date:	9 th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Richard Griffin, Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to: - Update Members on the 5Cs Public Realm Catalyst Project, including design development, and the stakeholder and public engagement plan, including opportunities for direct engagement with Councillors. - Update Members on the continued progress of projects within the 'Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements' strand of the Future City Centre Programme, including the proposal for a second phase of the Entries & Lanes project.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee are requested to: i. Note the continued progress with the 5Cs public realm project, including proposals for further Member, stakeholder and public engagement in respect of emerging concept designs. ii. Note the proposal to bring forward a second phase of the Entries & Lanes project, including concept and design development work, with officers continuing to explore funding opportunities to deliver the physical interventions. iii. Note the completion and opening of the pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Background</u> The Future City Centre (FCC) Programme has been developed in line with the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Cultural Strategy (A City Imagining), and has been informed by the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. Projects within the Programme are also being considered in the context of COVID-19 to ensure that it addresses the range of challenges facing the city centre, including the need to facilitate social distancing and assist businesses with enhanced external spaces.
3.2	<u>FCC Programme: Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements</u> A number of physical projects are currently underway within the city centre, which align with Council and wider city Covid recovery priorities.
3.3	<u>Public Realm Catalyst Projects- 'The 5 C's'</u> In November 2018, SP&R Committee granted approval to part-fund a pilot public realm "catalyst" project at College Court, College St, College Avenue utilising historic developer contributions (specifically agreed in the legal agreements for public realm) to the value of £475,650 with the remainder of funding to be provided by the Department for Communities. In October 2019, CG&R Committee agreed to proceed with design development and delivery, in partnership with DfC, of further public realm improvements in Chichester St and Callender St, utilising developer contributions (also for public realm) with a value of £293,120, subject to approval by SP&R Committee. DfC subsequently confirmed commitment of additional funding.
3.4	A public realm project with a total value in the region of £2m has now been developed incorporating the streets referred to above, which will include improvements to footway

	surfaces, street furniture, lighting and soft landscaping. The project is being delivered by the Department for Communities in partnership with Council through existing governance arrangements established by the Belfast Streets Ahead Board.
3.5	This project is being undertaken in the context of ongoing work to transform connectivity across the city, and will be delivered in line with the principles set out in the City Centre Connectivity Study 'A Bolder Vision', which has recently received Ministerial endorsement from both DfC and DfI. During the design development stage, opportunities to accommodate emerging best practice in terms of social distancing and enhanced active travel provision will also be explored to ensure the scheme supports short to medium term recovery, as well as longer term sustainable and inclusive growth.
3.6	In January 2020, DfC appointed Doran Consulting as the Integrated Design Team to take forward the project, including engagement with a range of stakeholders. Following Covid related programme delays, a presentation and webinar was hosted for Elected Members on 23 rd June 2020 detailing the scope of the project.
3.7	A BCC Stakeholder and Engagement Group has also been formed to provide cross Departmental input into the design development process. The group comprises representation from Open Spaces and Street Scene, Planning, Resilience, City Innovation and Growth, Safer Cities, Landscape and Development, Children and Young People and the Ageing Population.
3.8	Initial engagement with key stakeholders including DfI has also been undertaken and will continue throughout the project.
3.9	With concept designs now developed for the scheme, further engagement is planned during August and September, with a Councillor virtual workshop being arranged for mid-September, which represents an opportunity for Members to engage prior to public consultation which is programmed to commence at the end of September for a period of 12 weeks.
3.10	<u>Cathedral Gardens Pop-Up Park</u> As reported to Committee in August a pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens was nearing completion, aimed at providing a multi-functional family-friendly space, pending development of a permanent scheme being developed. This has since been completed and was launched by the Lord Mayor on 27 August. Photographs are included at Appendix A. The provision

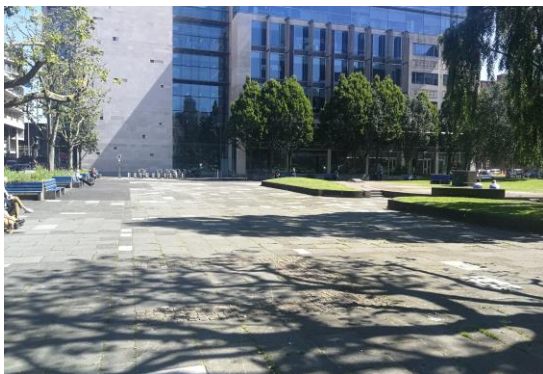
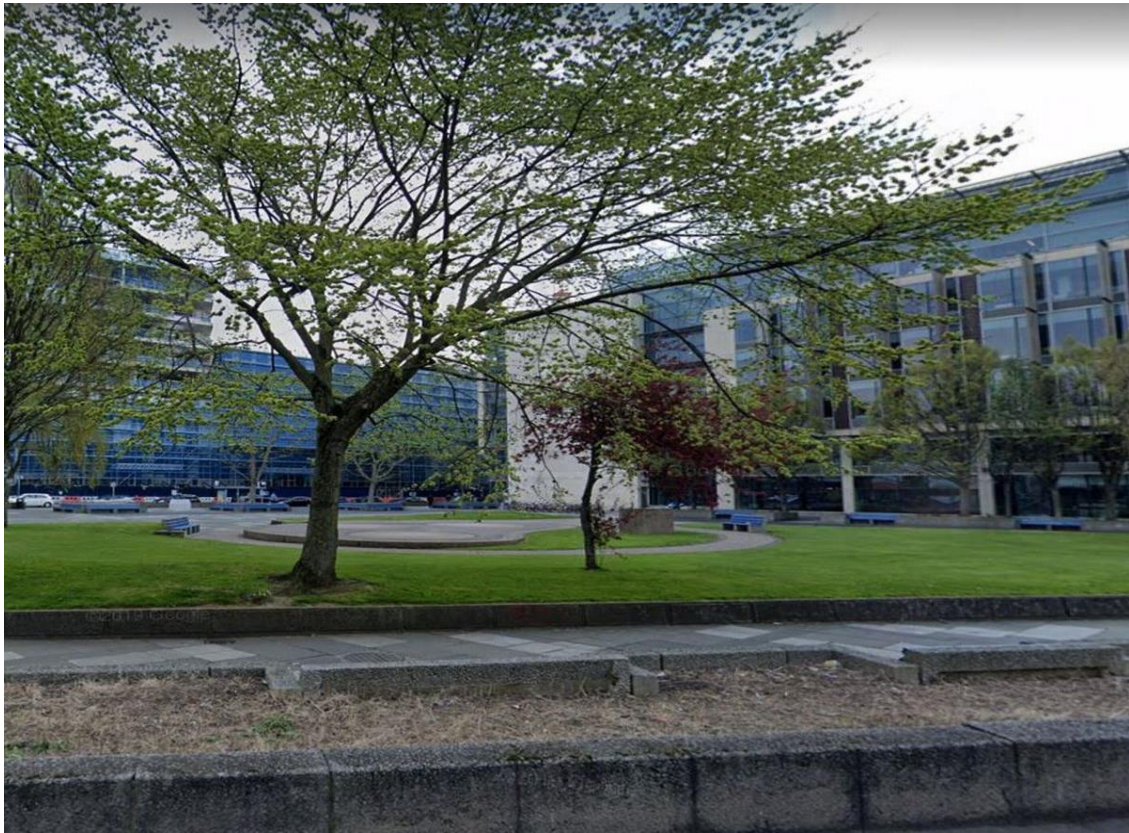
	of this park is seen as a key element in seeking to diversify the city centre and provide more family centric facilities and quality open space. <u>Belfast Entries & Lanes</u>
3.11	As previously reported to City Growth & Regeneration Committee in August the Entries Scheme is well underway and a number of artworks have since been completed, with bespoke feature lighting installation to commence during September. The intention is to ensure these spaces benefit adjoining businesses, particularly in light of COVID-19 and requirements for social distancing. The work has received positive feedback and officers have received further requests from property owners, business tenants and residents to consider additional interventions in other city centre entries and lanes, and on streets directly adjoining businesses who are keen to maximise external space to facilitate the re-opening of businesses and facilitate social distancing.
3.12	Work is therefore underway to begin scoping a Phase 2 Entries & Lanes Scheme with a view to development, design and delivery of additional entries and interventions, subject to funding. Potential funding opportunities for delivery may include the next tranche of the DfC Town Centre Revitalisation Fund, with other external funding opportunities also being explored.
3.13	Entries & Lanes Phase 2 would follow the same place-making approach to enhance the permeability of the city centre and make spaces more welcoming and vibrant as pedestrian links, as well as maximising opportunities to accommodate the use of external space by businesses in line with COVID 19 recovery initiatives. Additionally, through increased footfall, a further aim would be to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour.
3.14	<u>Finance & Resource Implications</u> The Council's contribution to the 5Cs public realm project is being provided from developer contributions (which total £768,770), subject to SP&R approval in relation to the developer contribution element of £293,120 for the public realm improvements for Chichester St and Callender St. Approval was previously given to the use of developer contributions to the value of £475,650. The remainder of funding is to be provided by the Department for Communities. Work to support the design development of the Entries Phase 2 Scheme will be met from the previously approved City & Regeneration budget. External funding opportunities are being explored to progress delivery.

3.15	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The Department for Communities have completed an Equality Screening for the 5Cs project which is published on the Department's website. Belfast City Council Equality Screening is currently being undertaken.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix A – Cathedral Gardens

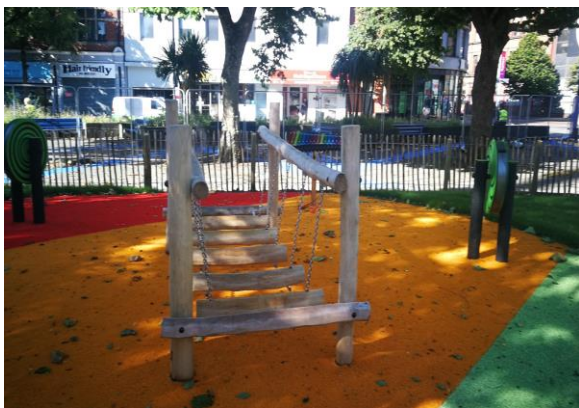
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Appendix A: Cathedral Gardens

Pre-construction



Post-construction





Subject:	Inclusive Growth Update on the Development of the City Charter & Inclusive Growth Network Launch Event
Date:	9 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Christine Robinson, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Manager Clare Hutchinson, Policy and Performance Analyst

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	In March 2020 the council's commitments to Inclusive Growth document was published. One key commitment was the development and implementation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for Belfast. Since then a cross council team led by Strategy, Policy and Partnerships has been progressing the development of this charter. The purpose of this paper is to provide a short update on progress to date and proposed key activities going forward.
1.2	In addition we would like to inform Elected Members that the Chair of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, Councillor Christina Black and the Deputy Chair, Councillor Sarah Bunting, have been extended an invitation to attend the virtual launch event of the Inclusive

	Growth Network (IGN), of which Belfast City Council is a member, on Thursday 17 September from 3-4pm.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that Members: a) Note the progress to date in relation to the development of the charter and agree to an elected members workshop / engagement following the initial developmental stages. b) Note the proposed key stages of work going forward to shape the council's future ambitions with regard to the development and implementation of a city charter for Belfast. c) Note the proposed attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee at the IGN virtual launch event. This report has already been agreed by SP&R on Friday 21st August 2020.
3.0	Main report
	Inclusive Growth City Charter
3.1	Members will be aware that in 2019 they tasked officers with the production of a cross council 'strategy' to reflect their growing ambitions in relation to inclusive growth. The result of this process was the production of the councils 'Commitment to Inclusive Growth'. This document sets out a clearly defined list of ambitions and linked actions as to how the council, in its capacity as a corporate body and as a city leader, will deliver against its commitment in the next two years.
3.2	The document contained commitments that Belfast City Council would progress over the next two years, including the development of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic / neighbourhood engagement.
	Inclusive Growth City Charter Working Group
3.3	An initial employer workshop was held in partnership with Allstate NI in Jan 2020, with over 70 employers from a wide range of sectors represented. It was agreed that a small working group would be convened with broad representation from this group, to help council shape and co-design the charter (nominees were received but the work was paused until May 2020 due to COVID).

3.4	The first working group virtual meeting was held on July 21 2020 with almost all members in attendance. The meeting aims and outcomes were to: • Bring working group members together to co-design the charter • Discuss and test emerging ideas, building on the January workshop, to scope the charter • Agree the purpose and role of the working group • Agree high level actions and responsibilities for the next 3 months
3.5	Initial feedback from the working group was very positive in terms of support for the charter. They felt that that given the unfolding COVID-19 crisis and the significant impact on the economy, the charter could be an opportunity to demonstrate a collective commitment to an inclusive recovery, creating a stronger, more resilient, and fairer city economy and society. The need to be ambitious in our thinking and to work in collaboration were highlighted as key design principles going forward.
3.6	This work is being completed in partnership with officers from Place & Economy and Finance & Resources to ensure the charter, when developed, fully reflects corporate priorities and ambition associated with, amongst other things, employment, procurement, young people and skills progression. Proposed Next Steps
3.7	Over the coming months the cross council team will complete the following steps: • Draft scoping note – draw up an initial scoping document (reflecting members ambitions and best practice from elsewhere) of a what a charter for Belfast could potentially look like by end August 2020. This scoping document will set out in draft form options of, what the charter could be, who it's for, it's principles, focus, and suggestions as to how it could be developed and implemented for Belfast. This document will be used to guide the discussions as part of our further engagement with stakeholders. • Extensive engagement – engage with wide range of stakeholders to co-design the charter and seek their views on its design, during September to November 2020.

We recognise that for us to achieve our aim of a fit for purpose charter that is for all of Belfast and not just a council initiative, we must ensure our engagement is broad and has appropriate representation from key sectors. This stage is vital if we are to design a charter that that will meet the collective aspirations of the working group of being ambitious and making a tangible difference to the lives of citizens.

We will carry out meaningful engagement with a range of stakeholders including anchor institutions and other employers; community and voluntary sector; other public sector partners; communities; trade unions; those individuals that the strategy would focus on supporting (i.e. our four target groups) and representative bodies.

We have identified the purpose of the engagement as:

- Helping businesses and organisations understand what inclusive growth and a charter are;
- Testing the emerging ideas in the scoping note to co-develop and refine the Inclusive Growth City Charter;
- Achieving buy-in and ownership of the Inclusive Growth City Charter;
- Encouraging early adopters of the Inclusive Growth City Charter.

We will use the feedback already gathered from the consultation on the Inclusive Growth Commitments to inform our discussions and we will ensure we engage with those hard to reach groups who often face additional barriers to economic growth eg. those with a disability, those with dependants, those from a migrant community.

We will also carry out engagement through the strong sectoral partnership relationships in Place & Economy and will drive development of the structure through the Community Planning Partnership.

- **Members Workshop** – following the above we will host a development workshop with elected members. (December 2020)

	Following our engagement we will summarise key findings and refine key principles and areas of focus to arrive at a final draft charter, including how it should be implemented and monitored. • Public consultation - Hold a focused public consultation on the draft charter. We will carry out a focused public consultation on the draft charter using our on-line platform and some further focused sessions and make any final changes/amendments • Charter launch - Plan pilot and launch of the charter. We will design a delivery plan and materials and agree a communications strategy and identify partners to launch the charter and carry out a pilot.
3.8	Inclusive Growth Network The purpose of the IGN is to support areas at the forefront of the inclusive growth agenda with the practical evidence, knowledge and expertise to advance local ambitions for more inclusive, green and sustainable economies. The IGN is hosted by the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP) and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) As an IGN member Belfast has access to a facilitated peer network and a package of support designed to inform and advance our local activity. Other IGN member organisations include Barking and Dagenham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool City Region, North Ayrshire, North of Tyne, Sheffield City Region and West Midlands.
3.9	IGN Launch Event – Thursday 17 September, 3pm- 4pm The Chair of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, Councillor Christina Black and the Deputy Chair, Councillor Sarah Bunting, have been invited to attend a closed online roundtable discussion on Thursday 17 September from 3-4pm. Confirmed speakers include Lord Jim O'Neill and Meghan Harte, Director of LISC in Chicago and former Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Rahm Emmanuel.

3.10	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There are no additional financial or resource implications.
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> As agreed within the initial Inclusive Growth Commitments equality screening, a separate screening will be undertaken as part of the draft charter design process. The findings from the initial screening are already being utilised to inform the engagement design and content.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Cultural Strategy Update
Date:	9 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Senior Manager – Culture and Tourism

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in April 2020 the annual work programme to support year one of the ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, <i>A City Imagining</i> was approved. Given the current circumstances and the specific ongoing challenges for the cultural sector, the purpose of this report is to update Members on: - The current status of the work programme relating to the delivery of the cultural strategy. - The current and projected impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector.

	- The initial response and emerging priorities to help stabilise and support cultural development in the city.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Note the contents of this report and the contribution that the work programme for 2020/21 will make to supporting the recovery of the cultural sector. - Note the further detail supplied on specific projects within the overall programme and the breakdown and allocation of existing budget to specific projects as outlined at 3.27 and Appendix A. - Grant delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Place and the Economy to award grants up to a maximum of £20,000 following open and competitive processes in relation to specific projects within budgetary controls as outlined at 3.27 and in Appendix A. - Agree to make a submission to the Department for Communities on the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector including Council's position on emerging priorities and response as set out in this paper.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that at the August meeting of City Growth and Regeneration an update on tourism was presented with an agreement that a further update on cultural activity would be provided in September 2020.
3.2	A new ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast was approved by Council and became operational in April 2020 supported by a one-year work programme. The strategy was the culmination of extensive public and sector engagement. It recognised the need for long-term commitment over a decade in order to drive transformation. However, it also presented a dynamic model for change to ensure resilience to external factors and potential social, economic and environmental shifts. Consequently, while the full scale and impact of Covid-19 remains unknown and the level of structural change to the city's overall and cultural ecosystems is uncertain, the strategy remains valid presenting a strong framework for any recovery plans.
3.3	Background <i>A City Imagining</i> provides a framework for the city's transformation through cultural engagement and participation and supports wider council strategies such as the Belfast Agenda. It is now critical that the implementation of the strategy recognises the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector, responds accordingly and plans for long-term stability. The

	strategic aims and projects contained within the strategy can now become vehicles for recovery if public and private sectors stakeholders work collectively to ensure that the sector is protected and supported whilst recognising the cultural dimension to successful economic and social recovery.
3.4	The immediate impact of the pandemic illustrated the importance of engaging with the arts and creativity. This reinforced the relationship with education, health and wellbeing highlighting that the personal and societal benefits of cultural participation cannot be wholly measured through an economic lens. The public health restrictions have limited the possibility of shared cultural experiences, and research has indicated that 93% of people surveyed felt that the absence of live events has had a detrimental impact on quality of life, highlighting the intrinsic value of arts, culture, events and festivals in our lives.
3.5	In addition, the cultural sector generates significant levels of revenue and ancillary work that supports employment and skills. As articulated in our cultural strategy, a vibrant cultural offer is core to the city's appeal locally, nationally and internationally and is a bedrock of our tourism and hospitality, which alongside the arts are currently one of the most challenged sectors in Belfast.
3.6	Current analysis of impact Whilst the impact of Covid-19 is ongoing, the majority of economic sectors are now operating again though often at reduced levels. Unfortunately, the cultural sector remains one of the sectors severely limited in what can be operationally delivered within the current restrictions. Should these limitations be reduced opening up the possibility of return of cultural programming, further work is still required to analyse the viability of re-opening and to better understand audience sentiment and confidence. Further consideration also needs to be given to the complexities associated with cultural engagement in a participatory environment.
3.7	The Arts Council has estimated that the cultural sector in NI is facing an estimated initial loss of box office income of £25 million and have stated that it could take up to a year-and-a-half for the arts sector to recalibrate itself after the crisis. Given the level of cultural infrastructure and workforce in Belfast this has clear implications for the city. Recent findings include: - Cultural organisations in NI are reporting losses of £9.5 million in box office revenue to date since March.

	- They also expect losses of £5.3 million in ancillary income. - On average, cultural organisations lost 72% of their anticipated 2020-21 box office revenue. - £1.3 million has already gone towards refunds and vouchers from cancelled performances or programmes this year.
3.8	The business operating environment is extremely challenging across the city for all organisations due to the immediate impact on revenue streams and functionality. The ongoing restrictions on physical contact, cultural performances, group gatherings and public events have meant that the cultural sector and the hospitality and tourism sectors it works in tandem with, continue to have major barriers to re-opening and generating income. This includes not only box office but other investment such as sponsorship and project specific restricted grants. This should also be considered in the context of existing financial and operational vulnerabilities prior to Covid-19, including lower public investment in the arts in comparison with the rest of the UK and ROI and restricted ability to generate income due to regional audience reach and corporate footprint.
3.9	ACNI has also stated that as a result of the pandemic, the creative sector in Northern Ireland is projected to lose 20% (6,000) of its creative jobs and see a 23% (£300 million) drop in creative industries Gross Value Added, while the funded arts sector currently supports approximately 7,500 jobs as per the Annual Funding Survey 2018/19 published by ACNI. It must be borne in mind that the cultural sector also supports a huge range of individuals working freelance or as independent artists who are part of the overall ecology of the city. The timing of the pandemic has also coincided with organisations addressing the potential implications of Brexit on project and partnership development, revenue, and artist mobility. The long-term impact of the pandemic is as yet unknown however it is likely to include: - Loss of sectoral knowledge (organisational) - Loss of talent (individuals) - Behavioural changes (audiences)
3.10	Given the commitment set out in the cultural strategy and the role of Belfast in the region it is important that Council formulates a response to the pandemic that supports cultural recovery through mitigating actions in each of these areas that ensures practical support aimed at stabilisation as well as long-term strategic initiatives to support resilience and transformation.

3.11	Summary of government support to date <i>Department for Communities and Arts Council NI</i> As the lead body to distribute central government cultural investment, ACNI has operated the Artist Emergency Programme (AEP), since April distributing up to £500,000 of National Lottery funding. Over 200 artists have so far benefited from grants of up to £5,000. ACNI have commenced distribution of a £4m funding package called the Creative Support Fund, allocated from Department for Communities to support the arts, creative industries and cultural sector during the current pandemic. - This includes Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme (IERP), worth £1m from the Department for Communities and an additional £100,000 from Future Screens NI, offering individuals up to £5,000 each. - The Organisations Emergency Programme (OEP), is worth almost £2m to support 150 small and medium sized arts organisations with grants of up to £25,000 each. - Some resources are yet to be committed.
3.12	In addition and as a result of the Barnett consequential Northern Ireland will receive a £33m support package as part of the £1.57 billion investment in cultural, arts and heritage announced by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The allocation of this funding will be determined by the Northern Ireland Executive.
3.13	In line with the Cultural Strategy for Belfast there is an opportunity for this funding to help mediate the current crisis whilst also supporting innovative approaches that will promote longer term stability, resilience and transformation in the cultural sector in order to overcome longstanding structural issues
3.14	Current status of restrictions On 12 May 2020, the NI Executive published a five-stage recovery plan to easing the current restrictions. This has been based on scientific evidence, the ability of the health service to cope, and the wider impact on our health, society and the economy. The current status of restrictions is updated regularly but currently still limits cultural engagement: - Under the current regulations, theatres, live performances in active venues, and concert halls remain closed for audiences. These venues had been due to reopen

	on 8 August 2020 but this guidance was revised due to an increase in Covid-19 cases diagnosed. - Indoor gatherings are restricted to six people from two households, and up to 15 people outdoors. - Whilst museums, galleries, some sporting facilities and libraries have been able to reopen as long as they adhere to restrictions on capacity etc, some organisations have been reluctant or unable to open due to operational or physical adjustments required (e.g. staff being on furlough, limited staff for rotas, training, preparation of venues such as installation of signage, panels, etc)
3.15	Impact on programming and audiences <i>Attending live events and venues</i> Various recent UK-based reports (After the Interval, Does Culture Matter, and the Scotinform Cultural Survey) reveal that audiences are concerned about safety at indoor venues. Recent research has indicated that audiences wouldn't feel comfortable attending live cultural events even if restrictions were lifted, and this figure has held true during both 'early lockdown' (May through mid-June) and 'later lockdown' (mid-June through July). Only 16% of survey respondents were currently booking events. More than two thirds would feel more confident if measures were in place such as 2m distance, avoiding queues, hand sanitiser and signage, and limits on attendance. This in turn poses issues for cultural organisations in terms of the economic viability of operating events. Furthermore the majority of organisations deliver extensive engagement and participation based programmes. These introduce an additional layer of issues in terms of contact, interaction and social distancing.
3.16	<i>Accessing cultural content online</i> According to research (Thrive's <i>After the Interval</i> and NESTA), approximately half of people in the UK have never engaged with cultural content online, and of those, between 1/5 and 1/3 are new to online cultural content. This shows us that cultural organisations now have new audiences online, and this has been backed up through recent client surveys conducted by Thrive in partnership with Belfast City Council.
3.17	It will be important for organisations to capture and maximise audience development opportunities as a result of this time of experimentation and new ways of engagement. However similar to other sectors while there is an ongoing need to build the digital capability of the cultural sector this is not a long-term replacement for live performance.

3.18	<i>Innovation</i> Many of the city's cultural organisations have demonstrated great resilience in the face of challenge including new online platforms, digital engagement, and experimenting with open air events such as promenade theatre, inside-out galleries and cinemas, drive-ins and open-air cultural events. Many arts organisations have demonstrated their ability to adapt their business and operating model to engage audiences in new ways.
3.19	Festivals and other organisations across Belfast have attracted new audiences and increased reach connecting with new audiences in US, Australia, and Singapore through digitised programmes. Despite challenge most of Belfast's festivals are still taking place by operating 'blended' programmes and experimenting with different presentation models. Festivals such as Feile an Phobail and ArtsEkta's Mela broadcast high quality performances online of differing lengths and artforms, whilst EastSide Arts Festival hosted socially distanced outdoor events.
3.20	However, we also know from the Belfast Baseline research into audience engagement that there remain sections of society less likely to actively participate in the breadth of cultural life. An additional factor such as the current pandemic can increase access issues. Belfast's arts organisations have again taken innovative approaches to staging performances to engage those most vulnerable in our society and hard to reach audiences. For example, Replay Theatre Company are touring the homes of families with children with complex needs and performing in gardens /public spaces. Implementing the necessary safety measures live performances have also reached outdoor settings at care homes and hospitals.
3.21	Belfast City Council Response While government continues to take the lead on delivering direct support package it is important that Council is active in supporting cultural recovery through: - Engagement with the sector - Reframing of existing work programmes to ensure that they effectively support recovery - Advocacy and strategic input into wider regional responses and interventions.
3.22	To date the work programme agreed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in April 2020 has provided critical support to the cultural sector. This has included

administering of grants to support core and programme costs as well as ongoing development work in a number of areas:

- Cultural organisations have benefitted from Belfast City Council support through A *City Imagining* cultural strategy investment programme including commitment of full or majority of core funding in 2020/21 to:
 - o 49 arts and heritage organisations, (11 one-year Transition grants, 9 four- and 29 two-year Cultural Multi Annual Grants)
 - o 18 festivals and events (2 one-year grants, 4 four- and 12 two-year Cultural Multi-Annual Grants)
- Engagement with stakeholder groups in order to gather information and ascertain the cultural sector's needs over the short and longer term to ensure effective implementation of strategy.
- Development and delivery of the following programmes of support to directly target sectoral need at this time in line with work programme presented to Committee in April 2020:
 - o Delivering sectoral capacity building programme rescoped to ensure impact of Covid-19 is addressed.
 - o Supporting new collaborations and artistic development including up to four long-term cultural commissions exploring themes celebrating the city, building towards 2023.
 - o Ongoing review of city events including Culture Night Belfast and Belfast Maritime Festival including identifying new models of delivery.
 - o Delivering cultural animation programme to support city centre and neighbourhood recovery supported by Department for Communities Revitalisation funding.
 - o Ensuring strategic alignment between cultural strategy and new 10 year tourism recovery plan including maximising opportunities for sustainable tourism development through local and cultural initiatives.
 - o Developing leadership, capacity and profile for the wider music sector considering the high level of impact on this sector.
 - o Commissioning research into new approaches to audience development including new ticketing model and integration of digital models piloted during pandemic.
 - o Cultural mapping including infrastructure audit to identify cultural facilities and activities, and utilise digital innovation to create a civic resource and promote cultural engagement and participation across the city.

	○ Ongoing support for city and sectoral local, national and international work through existing and new partnerships and collaborations.
3.23	<i>Responding to the pandemic</i> It is however important to note that the work programme as set out in April 2020 required further project design and development with a view to further updates being provided to Committee as appropriate. This work has been ongoing and has provided an opportunity where appropriate to rescope commitments in light of the impact of Covid-19. Further detail on this work programme and how it is responding to the specific needs and priorities emerging from the pandemic is included at Appendix A.
3.24	It has been categorised into 6 main strands of work in line with existing approvals and budget. These are: Strand 1: Stabilisation by optimising existing organisational support programmes and ensuring a joined up response across public and private stakeholders including: - Administration of CMAG grants and wraparound support service - Cultural mapping and audit Strand 2: Developing the sector through opportunities to support new, emerging and transitioning organisations including: - Award of up to 4 development grants at a maximum value of £20,000 Strand 3: Increasing capacity through tailored, cross-cutting and new approaches to co-design including: - Delivery of capacity building programme targeting agreed groups and cognisant of the impact of Covid-19. Strand 4: Rewarding innovation through support programmes specifically targeting individual artists, practitioners and producers including: - Award of 10 creative bursaries in support of strategic initiatives such as 2023 and City of Music. Strand 5: Building audiences through increased understanding, research and engagement including:

	- Commission detailed audience research to ascertain the longer term impacts of Covid-19.
3.25	Strand 6: Promoting cultural place-making through the delivery of cultural animation, activation and programming in the city centre and neighbourhoods. - This is a new strand of work in direct response to Department for Communities Revitalisation Fund however it is clearly aligned to existing priorities within the cultural strategy linked to use of public space and cultural participation.
3.26	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2020/21 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with the work programme approved in April 2020.
3.27	However, this report presents an additional level of detail aligned to existing approvals following programme design and consideration of the impact of Covid-19 as set out at 3.24 and in Appendix A including: - 4 development grants at a maximum of £20,000 per grant - 10 creative bursaries at a maximum of £10,000 per bursary - Audience data and research in partnership with Thrive at a maximum of £30,000
3.28	All existing programmes are subject to ongoing review with cost savings identified where projects cannot proceed due to Covid-19.
3.29	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Any further investment or significant programmes will include equality screening as appropriate.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix A: <i>A City Imagining</i> - Supporting cultural recovery

**A CITY
IMAGiNING**

Belfast

SUPPORTING
CULTURAL
RECOVERY

Context



Belfast in 2020

Belfast is an international city with a rich and eclectic cultural community and arts sector, a diverse built environment, thriving business sectors and a growing number of visitors.

However since March, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact worldwide and has altered Belfast's physical, economic and social landscape. It has caused us all to rethink how we work, live and interact within public spaces and with each other, and has triggered a need to reconsider our plans on a strategic and operational level.

Yet it is in this reexamination of our priorities that the hope articulated in Belfast's Cultural Statement

resonates with a belief in:

‘the transformative power that culture, art and creativity have to spark a new relationship with ourselves as individuals, communities and as a city.’

As we embark on the road to recovery it is our cultural and creative sectors that can help imagine our future city.

Creative interventions are fundamental to aiding our city's recovery and will contribute to the evolving and new use of public space in the city centre environment and in our neighbourhoods. It is through cultural placemaking that a safe, vibrant and welcoming city can continue to thrive.

VISION FOR 2035

BELFAST WILL BE A CITY...

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Strategy

A City Imagining, a ten year cultural strategy for Belfast, was the culmination of extensive public and sector engagement. It recognised the need for long-term commitment over a decade in order to drive transformation. However, it also presented a dynamic model for change to ensure resilience to external factors and potential social, economic and environmental shifts. Consequently, while the full scale and impact of Covid-19 remains unknown and the level of structural change to the city's overall and cultural ecosystem is uncertain, the strategy remains valid presenting a strong framework for any recovery plans.

The framework supports cultural engagement and participation by aligning to wider council strategies such as the Belfast Agenda.

It is critical that the implementation of the strategy recognises the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector, responds accordingly and plans for long-term stability.

The strategic aims and projects contained within the strategy can now become vehicles for recovery if public and private sectors stakeholders work collectively to ensure that the sector is protected and supported whilst recognising the cultural dimension to successful economic and social recovery.

The immediate impact of the pandemic illustrated the importance of engaging with the arts and creativity. This reinforced the relationship with education, health and wellbeing highlighting the personal and societal benefits of cultural participation.

Financial Impact

Whilst the impact of Covid-19 is ongoing, the majority of economic sectors are now operating again though often at reduced levels. Unfortunately, the cultural sector remains one of the sectors severely limited in what can be operationally delivered within the current restrictions. Should these limitations be reduced opening up the possibility of a return of cultural programming, further work is still required to analyse the viability of re-opening and to better understand audience sentiment and confidence. Further consideration also needs to be given to the complexities associated with cultural engagement in a participatory environment.

The Arts Council has estimated that the cultural sector in NI is facing an estimated initial loss of box office income of £25 million and have stated that it could take up to a year-and-a-half for the arts sector to recalibrate itself after the crisis. Given the level of cultural infrastructure and workforce in Belfast, this has clear implications for the city.

The operating environment is extremely challenging across the city for all organisations due to the immediate impact on revenue streams and functionality. The ongoing restrictions on physical contact, cultural performances, group gatherings and public events have meant that the cultural sector and the hospitality and tourism sectors it works in tandem with, continue to have major barriers to re-opening and generating income. This includes not only box office but other investment such as sponsorship and project specific restricted grants.

This should also be considered in the context of existing financial and operational vulnerabilities prior to Covid-19, including lower public investment in the arts in comparison with the rest of the UK and ROI and restricted ability to generate income due to regional audience reach and corporate footprint.

ACNI has also stated that as a result of the pandemic, the creative sector in Northern Ireland is projected to lose 20% (6,000) of its creative jobs and see a 23% (£300 million) drop in creative industries Gross Value Added, while the funded arts sector currently supports approximately 7,500 jobs as per the Annual Funding Survey 2018/19 published by ACNI.

The cultural sector also supports a huge range of individuals working freelance or as independent artists who are part of the overall ecology of the city. The timing of the pandemic has also coincided with organisations addressing the potential implications of Brexit on project and partnership development, revenue, and artist mobility.

Recent findings include:

- Losses of £9.5 million in box office revenue to date.
- On average, cultural organisations lost 72% of their anticipated 2020-21 box office revenue.
- Losses of £5.3 million in ancillary income.
- £1.3 million has already gone towards refunds and vouchers from cancelled performances or programmes this year.

Impact

Impact on audiences

Research conducted by Thrive in partnership with Indigo Consulting offers an important insight into audience sentiment and confidence. Data captured within two *After the Interval* surveys, in May and July, collated information from a wide range of cultural charities and not-for-profits in NI and ROI.

Audiences were asked how they felt about returning to arts events, booking tickets now and in the future and missing out on live events during lockdown

Only 19% would feel comfortable attending events as soon as venues reopen.

More than two thirds would feel more confident if measures were in place such as 2m distance, avoiding queues, hand sanitiser and signage, and limits on attendance.

64% of respondents in July would not consider booking for live events for at least another three months.

96% of people are interested in culture outdoors, and over three quarters said they would pay for it.

93% of people surveyed in May were missing live events.

Only 16% of respondents were currently booking events.

80% of people are interested in digital cultural content, and two thirds would consider paying for it.

Sector support packages

As the lead body to distribute central government cultural investment, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) has operated the Artist Emergency Programme (AEP), since April 2020 distributing up to £500,000 of National Lottery funding. Over 200 artists have so far benefited from grants of up to £5,000.

ACNI have commenced distribution of a £4m funding package called the Creative Support Fund, on behalf of the Department for Communities to support the arts, creative industries and cultural sector during the current pandemic.

This includes Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme (IERP), worth £1m from the Department for Communities and an additional £100,000 from Future Screens NI, offering individuals up to £5,000 each.

The Organisations Emergency Programme (OEP), is worth almost £2m to support 150 small and medium sized arts organisations with grants of up to £25,000 each. Some resources are yet to be committed.

In addition and as a result of the Barnett consequentials, Northern Ireland will receive a £33m support package as part of the £1.57 billion investment in cultural, arts and heritage announced by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The allocation of this funding will be determined by the Northern Ireland Executive including the level and type of investment made in the cultural sectors.

In line with the Cultural Strategy for Belfast there is an opportunity for this package to help mediate the current crisis whilst also supporting innovative approaches that will promote longer term stability, resilience and transformation in the cultural sector in order to overcome longstanding structural issues.



Belfast City Council Response

Strand one: Stabilisation

To date the response has focussed on protecting the investment made in cultural infrastructure through the new multi-annual funding scheme that became operational in April 2020. This has included support for:

- ✓ 49 arts and heritage organisations through: 11 one-year Transition grants, 9 four-year grants and 29 two-year grants.
- ✓ 18 festivals and events through: 2 one-year grants, 4 four-year grants and 12 two-year grants.

This support has been important in helping to give organisations some level of security in recent months. However, there is now a requirement for all funders to work together to ensure the stabilisation of the sector in what remains uncertain and challenging times.

The pandemic has understandably exposed some of the existing fault lines in the sector and there is an opportunity to ensure that any recovery phase considers the potential to rebuild the sector in a more sustainable way including:

- Audit of existing infrastructure identifying primary areas of need that will ensure that the investment in capital and soft infrastructure to date is protected and resourced.
- Gap analysis of infrastructure including identification of under provision in cultural infrastructure such as secure, sustainable maker space and studios (as identified in *A City Imagining*).
- Greater understanding of the ecology of cultural workforce including relationship between funded organisations, freelance artists and producers and the wider creative industries and supply chain.

It is therefore recommended that Belfast City Council in partnership with government agencies and departments undertakes to produce the following:

- ✓ report on infrastructure prioritised for culture and creative industries
 - analysis of existing strategies, studies and reports as well as primary research, to ascertain immediate, medium, and long-term physical resource needs
 - benchmarking with other cities to compare our provision and identify gaps
 - analysis and mapping of current and potential availability, quality, and suitability of sectoral accommodation, e.g. galleries, dance space, theatres, space for clustering, workshops and studio resources
 - recommendations on alternative and innovative investment models including public sector, private sector and partnerships
- ✓ report on soft infrastructure of culture and creative activity
 - collect, record, analyse and synthesise information to identify the cultural resources, networks, links and patterns of cultural practice
 - data collection will include desk research, primary research with partners and community networks, public engagement, crowdsourcing, etc.
- ✓ Digital cultural map product
 - Build a digital cultural map for city centre and neighbourhoods with interactive functionality (potential to apply approach regionally)
 - data monitoring, tracking and live updating to ensure ongoing relevancy and accuracy

Strand two: Developing the sector

Transform

The cultural strategy recognised that one size fits all was not an effective investment model for culture in the city. The priority was to replace the core multi-annual funding scheme that was due to come to an end in March 2020 with a new fit for purpose programme. The new cultural multi-annual grant (CMAG) scheme has been operational since April 2020.

At this time a commitment was also made to consider the wider investment model required to fully realise the ambition set out in the strategy. This included a number of strands of investment including:

- Project grants
- Development grants

While it has not been possible to progress with a new project funding scheme due to the impact of the pandemic it is recommended that initial plans to design a new development grant are progressed. This type of grant recognises that project funding alone cannot support the development of new, transitioning or innovative organisations or challenge areas of under representation. These development grants would support organisations that did not have the capacity to meet the full criteria for CMAG however have clear ambition to grow and develop. Following benchmarking with other grants of this type it is proposed that these 'Transform' grants would include:

- Support for either an individual supported by an organisation or an organisation.

- A health check to establish specific areas of support.
- A tailored support programme including training, mentoring, exchanges etc
- Commissioning - to support the development of new work or the delivery of an identified strategic initiative.

An initial investment of £20,000 would be made in up to 4 organisations following an open call and competitive assessment against criteria.



Strand Three: Increasing capacity

Across all initiatives aligned to the cultural strategy is a capacity building dimension. However the Equality Impact Assessment that was conducted as part of the strategy development and further analysis of specific programmes has identified the need for a tailored and more innovative approach to building capacity across the city to support and celebrate the cultural diversity of our people and communities.

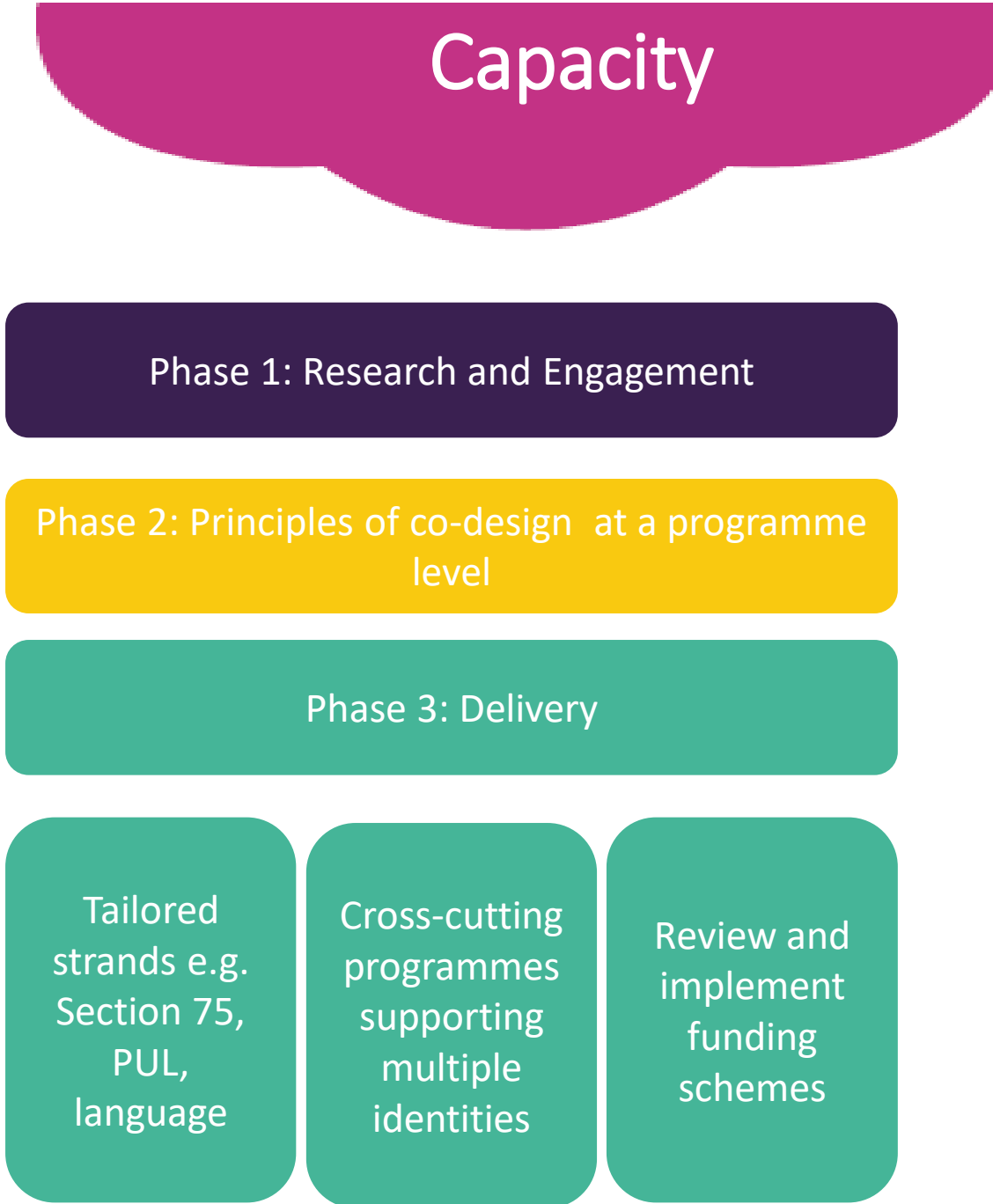
The programme therefore will foster creativity at all levels considering how capacity can be enhanced in relation to:

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- Employability and Skills (career level)
- Co-creation
- Participation
- Audience
- Volunteering

Capacity is created and creativity thrives when the relationship between each of these dimensions is understood and supported. This programme will therefore take a new approach to developing the connection between individual agency, community capacity and inclusive society and will include:

- Cultural mapping and understanding barriers (research and engagement).
- Building confidence and creating opportunity (development programme such as training, mentoring, peer learning etc)
- Supporting cultural expression (project funding)



Strand Four: Rewarding Innovation

The development of the new cultural strategy and approach to culture in the city has demonstrated the richness of our cultural offer and the creative potential of our city that could be realised if we create the environment where ambition is to be encouraged and rewarded. There has been recognition, now more than ever, that in order to maintain civic momentum, secure buy-in from city partners, build the capacity of our cultural sector and give Belfast's culture the global recognition it deserves then a well-considered and planned for cultural programme of the scale and ambition for 2023 is critical as we respond, recover and rebuild our city post COVID-19. However we also know that the success of any such initiative is dependent on the individual artists and creatives that are currently struggling to maintain their livelihoods.

A key ambition of the cultural strategy and the initiatives contained within it such as 2023 and City of Music, is to build the capacity of our creative sector, encourage risk taking and develop serious ambition with regards to scale and creativity among our artists. Therefore in line with existing commitments it is proposed to progress with a dedicated bursary programme as a vital part of this much needed development for the sector, now more than ever as many artists and arts organisations struggle to recover from the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic.

Through this programme we will support 5 artists across all artforms. A further 5 artists will be supported who specifically work in music across a variety of genres as an essential pillar for developing the city's music strategy as we build our application for UNESCO City of Music status in 2021.

These 10 artists will be awarded bursary support to give the financial stability that allows them to develop their own practice and ambition. This will give these artists the space, time, expertise and tools to shape an ambitious, home-grown project of scale as part of the 2023 programme. This commissioning process and bursary scheme is deliberately flexible and will be responsive according to the needs and ambitions of each individual awardee to allow for real innovation and experimentation. Council will work with these artists through the 2023 creative project team, who in turn will help identify local and international partnership opportunities, skills development programmes and potential mentorship schemes to develop and take forward new commissions.

Each awardee will receive £10,000 in the first year of this programme, anticipated to commence in October 2020. The awardees will be considered as the city's artists in residence with opportunities for civic engagement and celebration. This is an important addition to existing programmes that focus on organisational support. This will be an authentic co-design process that is designed to support and develop individuals in a co-operative approach strengthening the links between the city, communities and artists.

Strand Five: Building audiences

Since the beginning of lockdown, thrive (dedicated audience development agency for culture) has been conducting research to hear from cultural audiences on a range of topics including when they are likely to return to live events, and how they have been engaging with culture online. It is recommended that Belfast City Council works in partnership with thrive on the following research proposal.

We know from the most recent analysis of the type of data cultural organisations collect, and how they use it, that there remains a gap in information that will help to develop relationships with audiences. The information most commonly gathered is demographic and geographic. While this is useful, it does not help us to understand how audiences live their lives and how culture fits within this.

We know that cultural organisations are open to gathering audience information that will help to shape their plans however the capacity to run regular audience research is limited.

What we want to do

- Provide a way for cultural organisations to continue to hear from audiences on a regular basis, and about relevant issues
- Continue to move to an “artistically led, but audience focused” mind set within the sector
- Make sure we are hearing from a range of voices including those underrepresented in cultural engagement, vital if we want to build back a sector that can contribute to the social and economic recovery of Belfast.

How we will do it

The Audiences

- We want to create a panel of people who will be regularly consulted on a variety of issues throughout the next 12 months. We know that people’s thoughts and behaviours change with the rapidly evolving circumstances therefore it will be important to continue to monitor intentions alongside actual behaviours at regular intervals.

We will use a mix of data collection methods:

- Monthly polls or short surveys to take temperature checks on specific issues
- Quarterly focus groups to allow for deeper consultation on more strategic or long term concerns
- The panel will be recruited with the help of cultural organisations and will be a mix of regular, and less regular attenders. We will also do a general population call out. We will collect basic demographic information and will proactively recruit those whose voices are not heard as often.

The Cultural sector

- The Audience Panel is an opportunity for sector wide insight. However for it to have maximum insight, the information collected needs to be informed by the needs of the sector.
- Thrive will act as the bridge between the sector and their audiences. They will have regular conversations with both individual organisations and wider groups (like Belfast Visual Arts Forum and Festivals Forum) about the information that they collectively need and want.

Strand Six: Promoting cultural place-making

Cultural animation and creative interventions are fundamental to aiding our city's recovery and will contribute to the evolving new and mixed use of public space and the city centre environment. These interventions have a place-making role in helping to create a multi-purpose city centre and neighbourhoods that are welcoming, vibrant and attractive but also prioritises people's health and safety, adhering to the restrictions placed on public space due to COVID-19.

Respond, Rebuild, Recover

We are working with key stakeholders to develop Belfast Recovery & Cultural Animation Programme 2020-21 which will support the first phase of the city's response, rebuild and recovery plan.

This animation programme will be rolled out in several stages commencing in Autumn 2020, a significant part to be delivered during the festive season in the lead up to Christmas and into January 2021. The programme will seek to offer a suitable and safe response to the devastating impact of COVID-19 and effect positive change on Belfast's physical, economic and social environment. It will involve a combination of safe and socially distanced creative interventions such as street performance, music, window dressing, street art, lighting installations and creative solutions for external queuing, barriers and signage associated with social distancing and phased reopening measures. These programmes will help build confidence and create a safe and welcoming environment for people to visit and work. This is a critical part of the recovery process and will continue to help us reimagine and develop the city as an attractive space.

Programme overview

An overarching creative framework will be developed to support activity. This will be developed under one core theme supported by a series of sub-themes. The purpose of the programme is to recognise the role of cultural placemaking to:

- Improve the quality of the city centre and neighbourhood experience
- Support orientation and connectivity across the city
- Support business recovery
- Challenge anti-social behavior by improving the look and feel of the city centre
- Develop an authentic and diverse Belfast offer reflected in marketing and communication campaigns.

Thematically the programme will build over autumn with clear messaging around back to Belfast culminating in strong creative theme for Christmas marketing campaign supported by street activation, animation and programming.