Public Document Pack

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

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 14th June, 2023 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

   (a) Apologies

   (b) Minutes

   (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Restricted Items**

   (a) Future City Centre Programme - Vacant to Vibrant (Pages 1 - 10)

   (b) Zoo - Quarter 4 Update (Pages 11 - 16)

   (c) Belfast Zoo - Scale of Charges 2023-24 (Pages 17 - 20)

   (d) Zoo - Conservation Projects Donation Request (Pages 21 - 24)

   (e) Belfast 2024 update (Pages 25 - 40)

   (f) Markets Unit Update and Development Plan (Pages 41 - 56)

3. **Requests to Present**

   (a) Renewed Ambition Taskforce (Pages 57 - 60)

   (b) Queen's Island Transport Plan (Pages 61 - 64)

4. **Positioning the City to Compete**

   (a) Major Events Update (Pages 65 - 78)

   (b) Belfast Stories update (Pages 79 - 348)

   (c) Update on the development of Neighbourhood/Local Tourism (Pages 349 - 358)

   (d) Future of Cultural Multi Annual Grants CMAG (Pages 359 - 418)

   (e) Update on Music Strategy (Pages 419 - 426)

   (f) Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24 (Pages 427 - 430)

   (g) Christmas Programme Update (Pages 431 - 452)

5. **Growing Business and the Economy**

   (a) 10X PLACE - draft consultation response (Pages 453 - 464)

6. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

   (a) Notice of Motion - Update (Pages 465 - 472)

   (b) Belfast Bikes Quarter 4 Report (Pages 473 - 484)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH & REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Request to Present – Renewed Ambition Partnership
Date:	14 June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
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**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Committee to receive a presentation from representatives of the Renewed Ambition Partnership at its Committee Meeting on the 9 August 2023.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to; • Agree to receive a presentation from representatives of the Renewed Ambition Partnership at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 9 August 2023.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Renewed Ambition Partnership (RAP) is a joint public-private initiative that is delivering a programme of work aimed at ensuring Belfast is positioned to continue to attract investment to underpin regeneration, development and infrastructure activities in the city required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions.
3.2	The Renewed Ambition Partnership is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners. Partners comprise of Belfast City Council, all Belfast City Region Deal partner Councils, Invest NI, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Housing Association representation, the local development community and representatives from key city infrastructure, regeneration and development projects.
3.3	From a Council perspective, this partnership is an important lever within our wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition which seeks to build on the city's reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism, development and supporting inclusive economic growth.
3.4	On the 8th September 2021 the City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed to Council's participation within the RAP 2022 / 2023 programme as a member of the public private partnership.
3.5	Running from 1st April 2022 to the 31st May 2023, the 2022 / 2023 programme delivered a structured programme of work focussed on the five key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; Communications and Repository aligned to securing investment and regeneration for the Belfast region. Outputs included focused stakeholder, investor and media engagement; attendance at showcase events including UKREiiF 2022 and 2023, and MIPIM 2023; advocacy and research aligned to the real estate investment market and with a very clear focus on securing investment to deliver on city priorities.
3.6	The 2023 / 2024 programme is currently under development and will continue the five pillared approach with a key objective of continuing to build awareness of the Belfast investment proposition aimed at attracting inclusive investment, creating employment opportunities and facilitating investor engagement to support the delivery of regeneration projects across the city, with a focus on creating the economic and social infrastructure/assets required to deliver inclusive sustainable growth.

3.7	The Partnership is governed via a Taskforce comprised of representatives of the public and private sector, including the Chief Executive and senior officers from Belfast City Council, and chaired by Joe O'Neill, Chief Executive, Belfast Harbour.
3.8	Representatives from the Renewed Ambition Taskforce have requested the opportunity to present at the August meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update Members on the 2022 / 2023 programme; and proposed 2023 / 2024 programme of work, including priority issues and objectives for the Partnership moving forward.
3.9	**Financial & Resource Implications** None associated with this report.
3.10	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment** None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Request to Present: Queen's Island Transport Plan
Date:	14 June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officers:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Chris McNaney, 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		☐		

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek permission from the Committee to receive a presentation at a future meeting of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee from Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) and Titanic Quarter Limited (TQL) to provide an update on the development of the Queen's Island Transport Plan (QITP).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to: - Agree to receive a presentation from the BHC & TQL at a future meeting of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee to provide an update on the development of the Queen's Island Transport Plan.
3.0	**Main report**

3.1	BHC and TQL, are developing the draft Queen's Island Transport Plan (QITP) to help support more sustainable travel options and development on Queens Island between now and 2035.
3.2	By 2035, BHC and TQL aim to have delivered the next phases of investment at Queen's Island. This investment aims to help support the socio-economic goals of the Belfast Agenda and Belfast's transition to an inclusive, zero emissions, climate resilient economy by providing new places to live, work, visit and stay, in a way that promotes sustainable travel and creates a low-car environment.
3.3	The QITP sets out new measures to change behaviours and promote smarter, healthier choices. The introduction of a series of significant interventions to encourage sustainable patterns of travel aims to help deliver on the shared vision of an iconic and forward-looking waterfront destination. The QITP undertakes to deliver a 30% reduction in traffic volume and a reduction of 98,518 tonnes CO2e by 2035.
3.4	In March 2023, a second round of consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders and the wider public via an online survey and a stakeholder workshop to inform the draft report. The report, which remains subject to further engagement with DfI, has evolved to reflect the findings and analysis of the consultation carried out to date. BHC and TQL remain in consultation with DfI, in advance of finalising the plan, and have requested the opportunity to present the report to a future City Growth and Regeneration Committee to update Members on the emerging draft document.
3.5	While the QITP will, as outlined above, seek to support more sustainable travel option and development on Queens Island it should be recognised that it is a non-statutory document. Members should be aware that the Department for Infrastructure are currently undertaking the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), and BHC/ TQL are currently engaging with the DfI to establish the relationship the draft QITP could have to the BMTP.
3.6	The QITP may assist by informing some of the decision making in relation to the future of the Queen's Island development area. However, the processes that contributed to its development are very different from those required to be undertaken to put in place the statutory local and transport plans that provide the context for the consideration of proposals across the city.
3.7	**Financial & Resource Implications**

	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.
3.8	**Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**
	There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Major Events
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry Mc Mullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
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**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Major Events programme; including: • An update on the Maritime event; • the Way Forward approach to St Patrick's Day 2024-2026 • an update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil na h'Eireann • an update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: – Note the contents of this report on the Maritime Festival.

	– Note the contents of the update on St Patrick's Day including the procurement approach for 2024-2026 – Note the update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil, give necessary approval for Officers to continue with the bid process for future years, approve the budget for 2023-24 associated with the bid process (including attendance of a delegation at each event including attendance by Lord Mayor at the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar in August), note the costs associated with 2024-25 and 2025-26 – Approve the Letter of Offer for Ards Comhaltas for 2023-2024 activity to a value of £22,000 – Note the update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Belfast Maritime Festival 2023**
3.2	The Belfast Maritime Festival will take place on 9th & 10th September 2023. The event will deliver a diverse programme of local talent, local produce and local crafts aligning to the Cultural Strategy, with the creative theme 'Made in Belfast' incorporating the best of Belfast. This will be accompanied by a strong Belfast brand displayed throughout the site.
3.3	A focal point will be the Made in Belfast Village, showcasing local producers and performers – with concepts such as Performed in Belfast, Distilled in Belfast, Stitched in Belfast, Crafted in Belfast, and Baked in Belfast. In addition, there will be a full programme animating all available public realm from Donegall Quay to the Titanic Quarter. There will be a number of other focal points – visiting vessels along Queens Quay, workshops/community design at Hamilton Dock, with Abercorn Basin hosting a range of street performances. As always, the festival will showcase the heritage sites along the Maritime Mile, from St Joseph's Church in Sailortown to the recently re-opened HMS Caroline. Titanic Quarter's STEM sector will offer an insight into industry and innovation within the site.
3.4	A new Governance Structure has been established in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust and Maritime Harbour Commissioners to ensure a more cohesive approach to event planning and to drive forward the ambition set out in the Maritime strategy. The Programme Board will oversee a number of working groups with Maritime Belfast Trust delivering elements of the festival programme, managed via an SLA. The value of this will be circa £85,000 and this will include delivery of the community co-design piece.
3.5	The 2023 Maritime event has been successful in securing Tourism NI International Events funding to the value of £60,000, to provide international market visibility and enhancement of the event Officers are regularly engaging with TNI in respect of Council obligations under this arrangement.
3.6	**Way Forward St Patrick's Day 2024-2026**

	The purpose of this part of the report is to provide Members with a summary of the 2023 event, and the approach on the way forward for 2024-2026.
3.7	Each of the current providers has provided a de-brief to Council Officers. Beat Carnival, Duncairn 174 Trust and Feile An Phobail concluded that their respective offering built upon the pilot of 2022. • Beat Carnival, with logistical support from the Council Events team, delivered the city centre parade/pageant. • Duncairn 174 Trust, again with logistical support from the Events staff, delivered the St Patricks Eve Concert at Customs House Square. • Feile An Phobail delivered their city-wide Trad Trail. • Maywe LLP reported a successful project albeit on a lesser budget than 2022. Tales of our City 2023 was a short workshop series combined with a public facing exhibition of stories at 2 Royal Ave from the residents of the city.
3.8	In addition, Council secured £37,000 of TNI Product Development funding to test new Tourism experiences within the City; this included Ceilli Sessions at the Castle and a trad and taster tour. Through the on-going engagement with Ards Comhaltas, in relation to the Fleadh bid, events took place at St George's Market and 2 Royal Ave. Operationally, there were no issues of note, although feedback from Translink requested consideration on the length of road closures in Donegall square North to accommodate the parade.
3.9	The feedback received on the St Patrick's Day events has been positive. • The socio-economic survey presented that the overall estimated direct spend for the St Patrick's Celebrations excluding accommodation was £679,800.00, and the public rating of the events: • 68% gave the Concert a rating of 8- 10, including 32% who rated it as 'Extremely good', while 79% rated the Parade between 8-10. • 93% of visitors agreed that the event improves NI's reputation as a host for events like these, with 97% believing that events like this encourage people to come to Belfast, and 94% said that such events improve their sense of well-being and community. • 92% felt the St Patrick's Celebrations were inclusive for all people from all cultural heritages. • 67% said that the alcohol free policy had a positive influence on their decision to attend the concert.
4.0	Anecdotally other feedback suggested the 2023 festival provided a more cohesive event programme. The additional programming has further served to enhance the visitor experience and connectivity across the event assets.
4.1	Officers felt that the Parade (Beat Initiative), Music Trail (Feile) and Storytelling initiatives (Maywe) clearly work, and have scope to develop. The St Patrick's Eve Concert at

Customs House Square (Duncairn) currently requires additional delivery support and as such can present hidden costs, in addition it is unfortunately subject to inclement March evening weather and can result in low attendance numbers with low conversion in tickets requested and on the day attendance. It is possible that this element could be revisited as a series of smaller, indoor performances throughout the City over the celebrations.

4.2 Members should note that the four organisations have made significant efforts to deliver in 2022, and 2023, with the latter year demonstrating event development. It is clear that the initial two years of investment has built foundations for future activity.

4.3 **2024 Way Forward**

At the April Committee, the Tourism and Events Workplan was presented, and members approved the allocation of £300,000 to St Patricks Day 2024.

4.4 Given the considerable investment Council has, and the wider City initiatives around St Patricks Day, there is an untapped opportunity to promote the City offering to international markets of appeal. From the £300k, £10k of the 2024 budget will be used for the purposes of international marketing. Therefore, it is proposed that £290k is available to support programming, If any successful submissions require logistical support from Council, as has been the case previously, this will be considered when allocations are being determined.

4.5 **New Commissioning Approach**

Committee were informed at Sept 22 that a new process would be put in place, and therefore a new procurement process is required. A Tender Initiation Request form for a tender for St Patrick's Celebration Events will be presented at Strategic Policy & Resources on 23 June 2023.

Indicative Timelines:

Task	**Timeline**
Finalise ITT and Specification	By end of June 2023
Advertise and issue tender docs	First week of July
Tender Close	Mid August (min 30 days advert plus extra days to take into account July holidays)
Evaluation Period	Last two weeks of August
Internal approvals	First week of September
Mandatory Standstill	Mid September
Contract Award Date	Third week of September

4.6 Officers have, in the interim period, drafted a specification which will seek proposals for events and activities for 2024 and beyond.

4.7	It is anticipated that a framework of the events and activities akin to 2022 and 2023 will be established. The number of successful awards from this tender will be determined by the financial asks and the finite resources available. Criteria have been established to ensure alignment to the Cultural Strategy, while other criteria will address value for money and the long-term support of Council: • Previous Experience of similar scale cultural programmes/projects • Capability and Capacity • Concept and Feasibility • Co-Design & Inclusivity • Financial Sustainability • Partnership Approach • Cost
4.8	It is proposed that the tender will be for a period of three years (1 + 1+ 1) to allow for product development. However, projects will be evaluated on an annual basis. Successful organisations would be expected to co-ordinate activity in support of each other.
4.9	**Future Proofing - An Executive Summary - A new approach to St Patrick's Programme in Belfast** The Council's in-house Creative Lead conducted a review of the current approach to the delivery of the St. Patrick's Programme, including a bench marking exercise of St Patrick's Day celebrations across Ireland and has made recommendations for an enhanced operating model moving forward. The St Patrick's Programme in Belfast is currently commissioned annually by Belfast City Council (BCC) and delivered by outside providers. The benchmarking exercise has shown that there is considerable scope to develop impact, audience and additional investment. To address this, Council should consider allocation of an Executive work package with responsibility of attracting funding, developing partnerships, enhancing the Programme's international profile, and leading the creative commissioning process. Importantly, this role would also ensure and oversee a staged transition of fundraising responsibility out of the Council taken on by the external suppliers in Year 2 and Year 3. The sustainability of the event relies on broadening the stakeholders involved and of the evolution of a mixed investment model.
5.0	The report suggests that the St Patrick's Programme requires a cohesive creative approach across all elements, supported through the dual roles of a Creative Director responsible for the parade and a Creative Programmer responsible for the wider programme of engagement and events around the city, to develop the creative concept and commission the artists, artworks, and experiences. However, given resource pressures within the unit it is proposed that requirement is fulfilled via submitting organisations nominating a lead Creative Director/Programmer and factored into respective project budgets. This individual will be expected to work closely with Council officials in an oversight capacity for all aspects of programme co-design and creative

	delivery. They will also work with other peers from other successful contractors or delivery partners.
5.1	**Using Belfast 2024 as a pivot** Belfast 2024 will enable additional investment in the St Patrick's programme in 2024, potentially allowing for time the additional finance to be sourced for the following years of the tender and will enable development within Council of a collaborative 'producing' model for the future. Governance structures put in place for Belfast 2024 will provide a blueprint for ongoing cultural oversight.
5.2	**All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil Na h'Eireann** With members approval Council participated in the bid to host the Fleadh Cheoil in 2023 & 2024, however, the event was awarded to Wexford, who have been bidding for the event since 2016. It is anticipated that Wexford will host the event in 2024 and likely in 2025. As Belfast are now invested in a successful bid for future events, there is an expectation that the city will bid again for the 2025 event.
5.3	Normally, bids would be submitted in December. Therefore, for the 2025 bid, it is anticipated that the bid will be required to be submitted by mid December 2023. In addition, there is the expectation of further visits from the committee as per previous years in January & February 2024.
5.4	**2024 Bid Review & Lessons Learned** The Belfast bid received very positive feedback from all sources. Members of the Ard Chomhairle suggested that the Belfast bid had created a new standard for bids. As well as preparing the bid document, BCC officers also secured a number of letters of support which were appended. Some further correspondence was also sent to senior and influential members of the Ard Chomhairle from the US Ambassador to the UK and Consul General Narain.
5.5	There were specific areas for improvement highlighted by voting members and trusted advisors that are detailed below: - More Irish language content within the bid document - More detailed engagement with Provincial Comhaltas - Greater attendance at Conventions - Greater focus on disabled access - More involvement from Ards CCE
5.6	<u>More Irish language content within the bid document</u> After reviewing other bids, it is clear that it is not normal to produce a dual language bid document. The other documents do seem to have some key messages in Irish, acting as taglines for the bid document; this was absent from the Belfast bidding document.

5.7	More detailed engagement with Provincial Comhaltas As well as the four provincial Comhaltas who are voting members of the Ard Chomhairle, a North American Comhaltas and GB Comhaltas are also voting members. In the previous voting cycle, we engaged with the Ulster Provincial Council, GB Comhaltas and North American Comhaltas. Our information confirms that we received support from voting members of these three Comhaltas. The information received to date indicates that the vote was split with the vote being decided by votes from the Chair and General Secretary with the most significant influencing factor being on those votes being the lack of engagement with all 4 provincial councils. This lack of engagement was due to pressures on human and financial resources. Given the weighting and importance of engagement this approach has been revisited for future requirements.

5.8	Greater attendance at Conventions
	A breakdown of potential future engagement events in 2023:
	• All-Britain Fleadh 24-25 June (Stirling, Scotland)
	• Connacht Fleadh 29 June - 2 July (Ballina)
	• Leinster Fleadh 6-9 July (Dublin)
	• Munster Fleadh 13-16 July (Tralee)
	• Ulster Fleadh 20-23 July (Dromore, Co. Tyrone)
	• Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, 6-14 August, Mullingar
	  o Ard-Ollamh Award Gala dinner (Wednesday night, 9 Aug)
	  o Overseas Reception (Thursday night, 10 Aug)
	  o Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra event (Friday night, 11 Aug)
	• Tionól Ceoil Leo Rowsome, 1-2 September (Monkstown)
	• Comhaltas Christmas Dinner, December (Dublin)

5.9	Greater focus on disabled access Accessibility matters will be further considered in revised bid book.
6.0	More involvement from Ards CCE The Belfast bid is in conjunction with the local Fleadh Executive Committee, Ards/Bangor Comhaltas Branch, who must be seen as fronting the bid. This Comhaltas is made up of volunteers. Previously Committee agreed to supporting the work of Ards CCE via a Letter of Offer (£7,500 CGR approval September 2022).
6.1	Given the feedback from the unsuccessful bid, it is anticipated that the contribution of the Ards Branch requires an uplift from the previous bid. This uplift will take the form of partnering on convention visits, increased performances at conventions and other key engagements. This will of course incur additional expenditure for members of the Ards Comhaltas which in turn should be recognised given their status as a voluntary organisation. As with all funding agreements council will only recognise verified costs and any balance remaining will be returned to council. Members should note that Ards CCE will be asked to provide summary information on their objectives on each occasion e.g. lobbying, research; and report back to Council on lessons learned.

6.2	Members are also asked to note that while this funding will cover the current financial year, the Ards Branch will require a similar funding for 2024-25 and the following year. The full resource requirements are appended at Appendix 2. This provides members with a summary of expenditure associated with the on-going bid process, by year, and also identifies the Ards CCE support, which has been carefully considered. It is anticipated that this expenditure will not be exceeded.
6.3	**Council Attendance at future Fleadh events including Mullingar** 5.2.5 addresses the role of the Ards Branch, and the costs associated with supporting the local Comhaltas throughout the bid process. Members are reminded that the Council, as the key funders of any successful bid, must also maintain a profile at particular events, as outlined in the Costs appended.
6.4	**Next Steps** Officers are seeking members approval to submit a bid for the event in 2025. While it is unlikely that Belfast will be successful it is normal practice for bidders to continue to bid. Work to the revised Bid book will include inclusion of Irish language, and a greater focus on disabled access. There is also a requirement for a delegation including Lord Mayor to visit the 2023 Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar in August to show commitment and therefore garner votes. Representatives from Belfast (Council/Ards) are expected at other events.
6.5	**Bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028** Officers are working closely with key bid stakeholders (Tourism NI, IFA, Central Bid Team and UK Sport) in the interim period, before the official bid announcement in the Autumn. It is further anticipated that preliminary feedback from UEFA on the UK and Ireland bid is imminent and the opportunity to provide clarification to UEFA will have an end of June deadline. Responses will be coordinated in partnership with TNI and the IFA. Further host City briefings from the Central Bid Team are also planned over the Summer months.
6.6	**Financial & Resource Implications**
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals. The current events development budget for this financial year is £40,000. Members are asked to note if participation in another bidding cycle for the Fleadh Cheoil is to be undertaken that the current provision within the pre-agreed Events Development Budget may not be sufficient to consider other events development work on other major events bid campaigns.

6.7	**<u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u>** The Cultural Strategy - *A City Imagining* - carried out an extensive EQIA covering the duration of the strategy 2020-2030. Major events are one of the major outputs of the Cultural Strategy with wide and varied ambition. Promotion of opportunity for all Section 75 groups to be celebrated within the programme is important to it's success.
7.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 Breakdown of all costs associated with the future bidding for the Fleadh Cheoil

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Date
2023 - 2024
Aug-23
Dec-23
Feb-24
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Apr-24
Aug-24
Dec-24
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tbc 2025
Mar-25
2025 - 2026
Apr-25
Aug-25
Dec-25

Event
All Ireland Fleadh
Comhaltas Christmas Dinner
GB Comhaltas Convention
Ulster Comhaltas Convention
Munster Comhaltas Convention
Connacht Comhaltas Convention
Leinster Comhaltas Convention
Bid Book Revision, associated bid materials e.g. video & design work. Other Professional Services
Contingency
2023-24 Total
US Comhaltas Convention
All Ireland Fleadh
Comhaltas Christmas Dinner
Ulster Comhaltas Convention
Munster Comhaltas Convention
Connacht Comhaltas Convention
Leinster Comhaltas Convention
GB Comhaltas Convention
Bid Book Revision, associated bid materials e.g. video & design work. Other Professional Services
Contingency
2024-25 Total
US Comhaltas Convention
All Ireland Fleadh
Comhaltas Christmas Dinner
Bid Book Revision, associated bid materials e.g. video & design work. Other Professional Services
Contingency
2025-26 Total

Location	BCC Attendees	Ards CC Reps & Musicians	Type of Expense	Total Estimated Cost	Estimated Ards CC Cost
Mullingar	BCC x 4	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£10,000	£8,000
Dublin	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **16**	T & S	£2,000	£1,500
London	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£6,000	£5,000
Ulster	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Munster	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Connacht	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Lenister	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
				£20,000	
				£5,000	
				£51,000	**£21,300**
Buffalo, USA	BCC x 2	Ards CCE x **10**	T & S	£20,000	£15,000
Wexford	BCC x 4	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£10,000	£8,000
Dublin	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **16**	T & S	£2,000	£1,500
Ulster	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Munster	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Connacht	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
Lenister	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£2,000	£1,700
London	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£6,000	£5,000
				£20,000	
				£5,000	
				£71,000	**£36,300**
TBC	BCC x 2	Ards CCE x **10**	T & S	£20,000	£15,000
Wexford	BCC x 4	Ards CCE x **13**	T & S	£10,000	£8,000
Dublin	BCC x 3	Ards CCE x **16**	T & S	£2,000	£1,500
				£20,000	
				£5,000	
				£57,000	**£24,500**
			Total	**£179,000**	**£82,100**

Notes:

House & hotel
Bus return

Significant flight costs
House & hotel
Bus return

Significant flight costs
House & hotel
Bus return

Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Belfast Stories Update
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Wendy Langham, Programme Director
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Strategic Lead

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: - Update Members on the Belfast Stories programme as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) including the findings of the public consultation exercise. - Outline activity to support the next development phase up to the end of RIBA Design Stage 2 and the submission of the Outline Business Case.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Note the contents of this report and update on progress against the delivery of the Belfast Stories programme. - Note the findings of the public consultation exercise, the Equality Impact Assessment and the Rural Needs Screening as summarised in the report and detailed in Appendices 2 & 3. - Agree the actions as set out in the Engagement Plan detailed in Appendix 4 and summarised at 3.38 to 3.43. - Note the findings of the Stories Audit detailed in Appendix 5 and summarised at 3.50 to 3.52. - Agree the actions as set out in the Stories Action Plan detailed in Appendix 6. - Agree to set up a Members' Working Group to provide advice and oversight on the progression of Belfast Stories as set out in the draft Terms of Reference included in Appendix 7.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal and is due to open in 2028/29.
3.2	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed at its meeting on 19th November 2021 to progress a number of key pieces of work, in order to ensure we meet the 2028/29 anticipated opening date including: the appointment of the integrated design team; the appointment of the exhibition design team; and commencement of the stories collection. In May 2022 City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed to undertake the first public consultation exercise on proposals to date.
3.3	Since then, several important milestones have been achieved and are included in the updates provided below. Activities included in the next stage of development are set out for agreement and detailed in Appendix 4: Engagement Plan and Appendix 6: Stories Action Plan. **<u>Programme Update</u>**
3.4	Progress against the agreed programme is ongoing.

3.5	*Site Acquisition* Members will be aware that the majority of the site (95%) was secured by Belfast City Council for Belfast Stories in 2021 with site assembly now complete with the acquisition of the remaining two smaller properties on the site since the last Committee update in May 2022.
3.6	*Business Case* An interim Outline Business Case was completed in 2020 in advance of the purchase of the site. This work is now being updated to reflect progress and project development with an updated Outline Business Case due to be submitted for approval in 2024, when concept designs will have been further developed to RIBA Stage 2. At this stage the project will then move to departmental casework review with Tourism NI and the Department for Economy. If successful a contract for BRCD funding will be issued.
3.7	*Design Teams* Work is progressing with Council's physical programmes department to appoint the design teams to enable the project to move to the next phase of development. The procurement of these professional services is ongoing with appointments anticipated in Autumn 2023 of the following teams: - Integrated Design Team - Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team - Project Management and Design Assurance Team.
3.8	*Net Zero Carbon Ambition* To align with Belfast City Council's Net Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast and the Resilience Strategy, a feasibility study was commissioned to assess the viability of using geothermal technology to meet the building's heating and cooling requirements. The study concluded that geothermal energy is a viable option for the site to be considered alongside other sustainable energy solutions. The scope of works for the design teams has included requirements to meet our ambitions including BREEAM 'Outstanding' sustainability standard to be obtained for the whole project and CEEQUAL 'Outstanding' sustainability standard for the civil/public realm aspects of the scheme. In addition, the building is to be designed to require low energy demand for heating and cooling, as well as utilise onsite renewables. The building design is required to meet Passive House 'Plus' standard to support this need. Further design work will be

	undertaken by the design teams to determine how these ambitions will be met. Members will be updated in due course.
3.9	*Benefits Realisation* A Benefits Realisation Framework for Belfast Stories has been developed to define and refine the range of benefits and outcomes linked to the project investment spending objectives and BRCD requirements. A key objective is "to create and sustain a diversified, vibrant city – an attractive place to live in, invest in and work in" and within this objective we have been examining the potential impacts on the city centre and neighbourhoods, local communities, local residents and the local economy. Crucial to realising the impacts will be identifying the enabling mechanism(s) to deliver against the expected benefits.
3.10	An important aspect of the wider benefits of Belfast Stories is the social value opportunity, including better jobs and skills, building ethical and resilient supply chains and promoting wellbeing for citizens. An independent evaluator will support the Belfast Stories team to ensure ongoing review of the benefits and outcomes with an evaluation report due by the end of 2024 to coincide with development of designs to RIBA Stage 2, submission of the outline business case and completion of the second public consultation.
3.11	*Inclusive Growth* An Inclusive Growth group has been established to ensure that the breadth of opportunities during pre-construction, construction and post opening are maximised. Skills audits considering opportunities in construction, tourism and hospitality, and creative and digital technologies are being completed by the BRCD team and officers will work to ensure these are aligned to corporate priorities across Council including the culture and tourism functions within economic development to support areas such as neighbourhood tourism capacity building.
3.12	It is important in the development of the outline business case to be able to demonstrate delivery against social value outcomes. As part of the consultation and engagement process the work strands of the Engagement Plan (Appendix 4) have been developed to ensure all opportunities are maximised that in turn will feed into the overall project Benefits Realisation Framework. This approach will be embedded into all aspects of the programme including opportunities through gathering of stories.
3.13	**<u>Public consultation</u>**

	Belfast City Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework describes a broad spectrum of two-way communication (from consultation to engagement to involvement) between the council and its residents and stakeholders. It recognises that effective dialogue helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit. It is in line with this that Belfast Stories seeks to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at its core, supported by a co-designed and inclusive process.
3.14	Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent Consulting to provide specialist guidance and support, to plan and assist with Belfast Stories consultation and engagement including the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA).
3.15	The overall approach seeks to build long-term relationships while using a variety of methods to engage people on the terms they want to be engaged. There are two broad strands to engagement between May 2022 and September 2024. The process includes public consultations at the beginning and end of this development phase with the first of these now being complete with key findings detailed below. The second strand is ongoing engagement with stakeholders including priority groups and the general public.
3.16	As an initial step it was agreed at City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2022 that a public consultation would be carried out early in the process.
3.17	*Public Consultation* The first public consultation on Belfast Stories was delivered from August to November 2022 running for 14 weeks The consultation focused on: - Raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development. - Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and Story Collection Framework. - Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement.
3.18	The Belfast Stories Public Consultation document is included at Appendix 1.
3.19	*Consultation tools and tactics* Consultation activity was delivered using different tools in different settings and with different audiences and interest groups. Stakeholders were asked for information that was relevant and

	useful to the decision-making process. This included the Your Say Belfast online consultation hub that hosted: - Online survey - Polls - Downloadable consultation documents - ISL and BSL videos
3.20	Overall, the online consultation hub welcomed 2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors. The documents and videos were downloaded or viewed 234 times, and 149 responses were received to the online survey and two online polls.
3.21	*Equality, diversity and inclusion* In August 2022, the Belfast Stories equity steering group was set up comprising of 10 experts by experience including: people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities. Two representatives from Belfast City Council's Belfast Stories and Good Relations teams also joined. There were 4 equity steering group meetings during the public consultation, which were attended by an average of 8 people.
3.22	Working through the equity steering group, Belfast City Council and other networks, Smith and Kent facilitated 16 workshops with people and groups who are generally more at risk of missing out. These were attended by 136 people. Smith and Kent also carried out 10 one-to-one meetings with organisations representing or advocating for people and groups at risk of missing out.
3.23	*Engagement with sectoral stakeholders* Belfast Stories team ran 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, the voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives, including consultees previously engaged by Lord Cultural Resources in the development of the Stories Collection Framework.
3.24	*Engagement with the general public* Five public meetings took place across the city with information boards also displayed at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre.
3.25	

Creative Engagement

In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc., a creative practice, to help raise awareness and build excitement for

3.26 Belfast Stories using an innovative and participatory approach to engagement.

Between September and November 2022, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. engaged a total of 683 participants through a range of creative tools including on-street interviews, street portraits, events and workshops and physical and pop-up consultation hubs in the city centre and surrounding locations.

3.27

Summary of key performance indicators

What we did	How well we did it
- 2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors to Belfast Stories online consultation hub - 234 unique visitors viewed or downloaded the consultation documents and videos - 149 responses to online survey and polls - 65 consultation workshops - 1,148 participants engaged through consultation workshops and events	- 100% of workshop participants surveyed enjoyed the consultation - 96% of workshop participants felt listened to - 60% of survey respondents were female - 21% of survey responses from LGBTQ+ community - 20% of survey respondents had caring responsibilities for an older person or disabled person
What difference it made	
- 82 per cent of those completing the survey or responding at consultation and engagement events are now excited by the concept of Belfast Stories - In the survey, 58 per cent of respondents offered stories, experiences, knowledge and networks they could share to help develop Belfast Stories	

3.28

Feedback

The consultation exercise was also an opportunity for Belfast Stories to better understand what works well and where there are ongoing challenges in engaging with groups and individuals. Lessons were learnt on the consultation tools that were most effective and where a revised approach should be applied in future. The public consultation produced a wealth of useful information that will be carefully considered to inform the development of Belfast Stories and the next stages of consultation and engagement.

3.29

3.30	The full details of feedback received are included in Appendix 2. A summary is outlined below presented in line with the three consultation strands of: *Building excitement*; *Making sure Belfast Stories is for everyone*; and *Continuing the conversation*.
3.31	*Building the excitement* Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories. However particular areas of feedback focused on: - Positive feedback on regeneration and restoration of the heritage building - Concerns over divisive 'us' and 'them' perspectives on one hand or the 'sanitisation' of the city's stories on the other hand - Concerns over displacement and/or lack of investment in existing infrastructure.
3.32	*Making sure Belfast Stories is for everyone* Responses to these questions indicated that the main barriers that would stop people enjoying Belfast Stories included: concerns over the experience not being considered inclusive; potential to be politically partisan; or lack of trust in how the stories would be represented.
3.33	Specific barriers in relation to using the building included: - Cost - Feelings of it 'not being for us' - Specific design considerations - Lack of interest/ relevance - Duplication with what is on offer elsewhere.
3.34	The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people was emphasised throughout the consultation, to ensure that people most at risk of missing out were engaged with and barriers to access were addressed.
3.35	Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that the right people had been identified to be part of the equity steering group.
	The majority of people (7 out of 10) agreed that the themes developed as part of the Story Collection Framework are a good foundation for gathering stories. Feedback in this area included:

3.36	- Themes considered most resonant were Authentic, Home and Place. - Potential barriers identified included lack of authenticity, trust, unconvinced by concept and not inclusive. - Importance of prioritising the role of local people in collecting stories. - In practice high levels of willingness to share personal stories. - A substantial number of consultees raised questions relating to the ethics of story gathering, preservation and presentation.
3.37	*Continuing the conversation* The information published about the consultation emphasised that this was only the first step in six years of planned engagement. For some people, this early stage made engagement difficult with uncertainty over what could meaningfully be fed back at this stage. However, the final question of the public consultation survey asked, "What stories, experiences, knowledge and networks can you share to help us develop Belfast Stories?" Seventy-three substantive responses were received, equating to nearly three in five respondents (60 per cent) who offered a suggestion for the next stage. This information has informed the actions set out in the Engagement Plan detailed in Appendix 4.
3.38	**Recommendations** The Public Consultation Report made a number of recommendations in relation to ongoing engagement. These are summarised below and detailed in Appendix 2.
3.39	**Recommendation 1**: Publish findings and set out details of next stage of engagement informed by consultation. **Recommendation 2**: Continue breadth of engagement with stakeholders however ensure specific activities are delivered that address: - Communities – building trust and relationship with particular actions to reach geographic communities on the outskirts and in the immediate vicinity. - Sectors – moving beyond silos to engage on different terms that focus on specific expertise for example interest in or contribution to Belfast Stories – story gathers, tellers, curators etc. - Tourism sector – need to have specific engagement actions to ensure Belfast Stories can support the overall visitor experience and enhance existing products and providers.

3.40	- Commitment to Irish Language and Ulster Scots engagement to explore good relations opportunities, story collection and themes, representation within the building with the option to consider a language policy for the project and specific EQIA if required. **Recommendation 3:** Not all planned activity to raise awareness was able to go ahead during the public consultation. A Communications Plan should be developed and integrated with the Engagement Plan. This should include: - Key messages and a consistent identity with signposting to an updated Belfast Stories website and engaging social media. - Potential to embed Belfast Stories activity in the calendar of events and festivals across the city. **Recommendation 4**: There are a number of suggestions of platforms to support ongoing engagement. These have been considered against current resources and it is proposed that the following are established at this stage of the project with a commitment for further review at the end of this design stage: - City Stakeholder Forum. This has been revised and it is proposed that this should be a Stories Network to ensure a clear focus to engagement. It is also proposed that within this Network a user panel and/or inclusive design group could be established. Further consideration will be given to this following the appointment of the design teams. - Equity Steering Group (to continue). The equity steering group has provided vital insight into equality, diversity and inclusion including facilitating conversations with individuals and groups that would otherwise not be known to the Belfast Stories team. The membership of the equity steering group should be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that we are hearing from voices that may otherwise go unheard.
3.41	
3.42	- Stories Panel with a remit to include ethical framework. This would ensure that the Council accesses the necessary expertise and specialist advice to integrate an ethics function into the story gathering processes and tools. **Recommendation 5**: There are plans to start gathering stories in 2023. The Engagement Plan includes recommendations for engaging around story gathering. This should focus on active learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstances), in particular older people and the very elderly, whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost. It should also: - Build on best practice that currently exists, in particular in relation to safeguarding and ethics.

3.43
- Uncover the stories and archives that already exist, including at community level.
- Bring different sectors and stakeholders together to share knowledge and experience and build a community of practice through a conference or event.

3.44

Recommendation 6: There is a need to ensure that the project team continues to evaluate the effectiveness of its ongoing engagement by adhering to the evaluation framework and using tools.

3.45 Details of actions against each of these recommendations are included in Appendix 4: Engagement Plan.

Stories Audit

The collection of Belfast's stories underpins the Belfast Stories concept and is key to the success of the project in meeting its ambition and delivering the benefits. To support this work, Council commissioned Lord Cultural Resources to develop a Stories Collection Framework. The purpose of the Framework is to support the development of the Belfast Stories project and delivery of Council's wider ambitions as set out in the *Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy*, the *Belfast Agenda*, the ten-year cultural strategy *A City Imagining* and the recently finalised tourism plan, *Make Yourself at Home.* This will provide a Framework for future

3.46 plans and recognises the important role that many city partners representing the community, cultural and tourism sectors have in telling Belfast stories across the city and throughout the year.

Members will be aware that the Belfast Stories project seeks to strengthen existing structures and networks to ensure that the benefits of the project are realised on multiple levels. The initial concept for Belfast Stories identified the opportunity for a significant new anchor in the city

3.47 centre that would not only deliver regeneration in the immediate area but also act as an anchor that would help establish a hub and spoke model to strengthen connectivity and flow of visitors across the city.

Working in collaboration with key stakeholders and subject matter experts across the city we developed the Stories Collection Framework (SCF) in 2022. The Stories Collection Framework outlined the proposed direction on a number of areas including:

- Guiding principles – programmes such as the Decade of Centenaries have established good practice in setting clear guiding principles that inform Council's position and partnership approach.

	- Ethical parameters – there are important ethical considerations that must be assessed, and necessary processes put in place to ensure best practice is reached across engagement, collecting and telling of Belfast stories. - Themes – the purpose of the thematic framework is to assist in what will be a considerable undertaking to collect and arrange stories. This is an organisational tool and is not how the stories will be presented or told as this will be addressed at the next stage when the curatorial approach will be developed as part of public engagement and design processes. - Partnership approach – this sets out a phased approach to a wider programme and partnership model to support cultural and tourism development in relation to collecting and telling Belfast stories. Whilst this will in turn support the building project, the potential benefits are much wider.
3.48	- Governance – Council is not a collecting organisation. This requires significant infrastructure and expertise. The governance is linked to the partnership model that locates Council within a wider stories ecosystem for the city and acknowledges the considerable expertise that exists in partner organisations. The Stories Collection Framework is a flexible tool that will evolve over time. It is critical to ensuring the authenticity and diversity of the stories represented in Belfast Stories and across multiple initiatives. In its present form, the framework seeks to: - Explore new ways and perspectives of telling the stories of the people of Belfast. - Bring the people of Belfast into the heart of the initiatives. - Increase accessibility of existing collections across the city and beyond. - Identify and address gaps in stories that have not been collected or that lack visibility. - Encourage long term active engagement with partners creating a network across the city and beyond that will increase opportunities to participate in the cultural life and support neighbourhood tourism. - Identify efficient and sustainable ways of sharing and putting collections to their best use.
3.49	One of the key recommendations from the Story Collection Framework as agreed by City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2022 was to undertake an initial Stories Audit to better understand what stories have been collected and current levels of access to these collections. The scope of the audit was to: - Complete an audit of stories, archives and collections relating to the city of Belfast in line with the mapping tool developed as part of the Story Collection Framework.

3.50

- Analyse findings including identification of trends and gaps.
- Identify any access issues or barriers to partnership working.
- Recommendations and roadmap for ongoing story collection and partnership programmes.

The detailed audit is included at Appendix 5. The research began with sector mapping to identify the range of organisations and bodies involved in collecting. A series of discovery conversations with stakeholders and experts in the field were held, revealing a wide variety of specific collections to be audited and highlighting the depth of knowledge and insight to be gained from collection holders, community representatives and subject matter experts. These complemented the extensive engagement already undertaken as part of the development of the Story Collection Framework and on an ongoing basis by the Belfast Stories project team.

3.51 Drawing on these discovery conversations four story collection case studies were developed with each one highlighting important considerations for ongoing partnerships, including ethical considerations, accessibility, representation, rights and preservation of collections that can be applied across the audit.

The report presents key findings, an initial analysis of the catalogue of story collections, highlighting collections by sector, overarching themes and content tags to provide a sense of

3.52 the variety of story collections, their context and contents. Finally, the report considers barriers to ongoing partnership working and accessing collections and offers several key recommendations to overcome these. It also proposes a roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes.

The roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes is included in Appendix 5 with further detail on the actions to be delivered against this roadmap as part of the Stories Action Plan detailed in Appendix 6. These include:

- Establishing a Stories Panel to include relevant expertise and specialist advice.
- Deliver a pilot programme for gathering stories.
- Work with the culture and tourism team to embed a partnership approach to heritage

3.53 and neighbourhood development and investment in the city.

- Support the creative and engagement programme of Belfast 2024 in the role of Strategic Delivery Partner.

Next Steps

3.54	It is proposed that the actions set out in the Engagement Plan (Appendix 4) and the Stories Action Plan (Appendix 6) are delivered in line with the next project development stage that will culminate in a second public consultation, completion of RIBA Design Stage 2 and submission of the Outline Business Case to the Department for Economy. An update will be provided to Committee later in 2023 with detailed engagement with Members throughout 2024.
3.55	Given the strategic importance of the Belfast Stories project, the level of investment and the range of benefits to the city, it is proposed that a Belfast Stories Members' Working Group is established. This group would support regular engagement between Members and the Belfast Stories team and provide advice and oversight as the project develops. Draft Terms of Reference for the group are included in Appendix 7.
3.56	**Financial & Resource Implications** There are no new financial implications to this report. The budget for the delivery of this phase of development was approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November 2021. **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment** An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is included in Appendix 3. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed, and it was identified that the programme would be unlikely to impact people in rural areas. People in rural areas were invited to consult during the public consultation. The Engagement Plan (Appendix 4) supports ongoing engagement to ensure that Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs implications continue to be addressed and includes integration of mitigating actions identified in the EQIA.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	Appendix 1: Belfast Stories Public Consultation Document Appendix 2: Public Consultation Report Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment Appendix 4: Updated Engagement Plan Appendix 5: Stories Audit Appendix 6: Stories Action Plan Appendix 7: Draft Terms of Reference Members' Working Group

BELFAST STORIES

Public Consultation

August - November 2022

Belfast, in its own words.



Belfast is a city filled with stories.





It’s time for you to have your say.

BELFAST STORIES

What you need to know and how you can have your say on Belfast’s new visitor attraction.

Public Consultation
August - November 2022

Belfast Stories is the life and times of a legendary city, told exclusively by the people who call it home. The term ‘visitor attraction’ describes its intention, but hardly does it justice, because this is an opportunity for everyone connected with this vibrant, brilliant and complicated place to have their story recorded and recounted. It’s a celebration of untold tales and unsung heroes. It’s a new angle on the familiar, a different perspective on what we thought we already knew.

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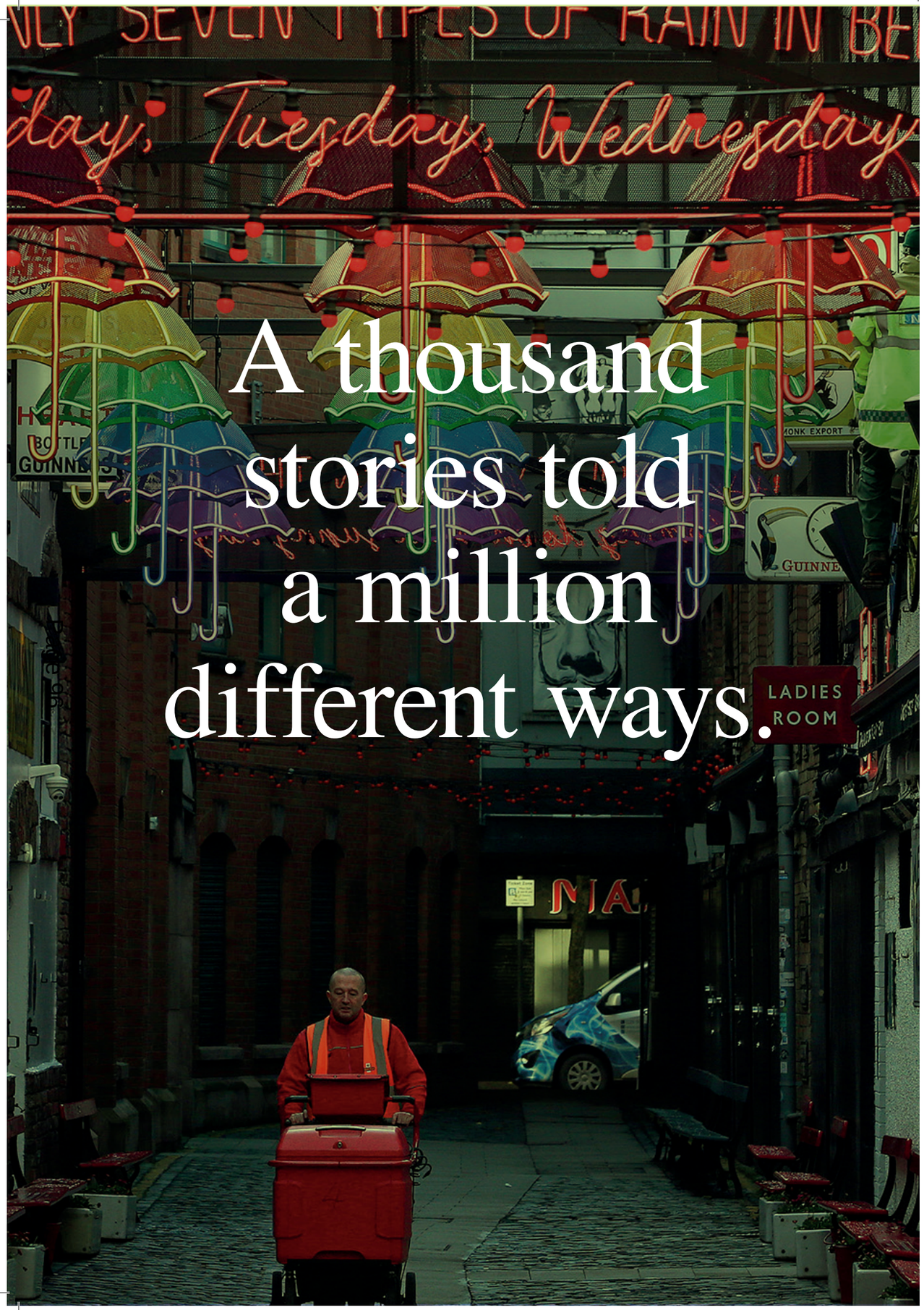
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How to use this document

This document brings together key information about the concept of the Belfast Stories visitor attraction. It is intended to give you enough of an understanding of our ideas so you can:

- think about how Belfast Stories reflects the stories and experiences of people like you
- think about how you might access and use the building.

To help you share your views and ideas, we have come up with some questions which you will be able to answer by completing a short online survey at **yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk**. We have included these questions throughout this document in the relevant sections that provide further information.

You can also ask for a printed copy of the survey, and we will try to make this document and the survey available in other formats or languages if you require them.

To discuss this further, contact the Belfast Stories team on:

028 9032 0202

belfaststories@belfastcity.gov.uk

028 9027 0405

Use our sign language interpreter services by visiting **belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/main-council-offices#176-2**

There are also other ways to share your views or learn more about Belfast Stories. We have listed these at the end of this document.

Share your views by answering the questions in this document via the online survey at

yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk

Why are we consulting?

Consultation is a process by which Belfast City Council communicates with its residents and stakeholders so that it can make better decisions about things that affect them.

Consultation can help people feel informed, connected, heard, involved and valued. It also helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit.

Belfast Stories will be a success if the people of Belfast love it, are proud of it and feel that it is truly theirs.

We cannot make this happen without engaging the organisations that work in the city and the people who call it home. Together we have the knowledge, insight and ideas to bring our stories to life.

What we want to talk about now

In December 2021, Belfast City Council announced its plans for a new visitor attraction in Belfast city centre.

From early 2023 we will be developing the design brief for this new visitor attraction. The design brief describes – in general terms – what we are trying to do, why, when and how much it will cost.

This stage is also known as RIBA 2. RIBA are stages in a plan of work recommended by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Ahead of starting to further develop the design brief, we will run a public consultation from 10 August to 14 November 2022, and it will gather ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief. It will focus on:

1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. making sure that Belfast Stories is for everyone. This means making sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories. During the public consultation we will do this in three main ways – by asking you to share your thoughts on our draft
    - **equality impact assessment**
    - **rural needs impact assessment and**
    - **framework for gathering stories.**

Belfast Stories : Public Consultation

How we will continue the conversation

The public consultation is not the end of the conversation. It is an important step before we begin the process of gathering stories from early 2023. We will continue to engage with different people and organisations to help shape Belfast Stories right up until it opens – and beyond. Key dates for the rest of the project are outlined on the following page.

What we’re working on

Stage

01 — **AUG - NOV 2022**
Public Consultation - Design Brief

02 — **FEB - AUG 2023**
Concept Design (RIBA 2)

03 — **2023**
Stories Collection

04 — **JUN 2023 - FEB 2024**
Second Outline Business Case Development

05 — **AUTUMN 2023**
Public Consultation - Concept Design

06 — **JAN 2024 - FEB 2025**
Spacial Coordination & Technical Design (RIBA 3 & 4)

07 — **AUG 2024 - FEB 2025**
Planning Permission

08 — **FEB 2024 - END OF 2028**
Full Buisness Case Development

09 — **APR 2025 - END OF 2028**
Construction & Fit Out (RIBA 5)

10 — **END OF 2028**
Opening (RIBA 6)

01. We’re raising awareness of Belfast Stories and gathering ideas to help make sure it is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories.

02. Information from the first public consultation will help us come up with a picture of how the building – its stories, screens, learning spaces, social spaces, public spaces etc. – might fit together.

03. We will start to test ways to gather stories based on what you have told us during the public consultation.

04. Here, we check with our funders and make sure that Belfast Stories is still a good investment.

05. There will be a second public consultation to ask your opinions on the concept design and will take a look forward and we will begin gathering ideas to shape the next stage of the project.

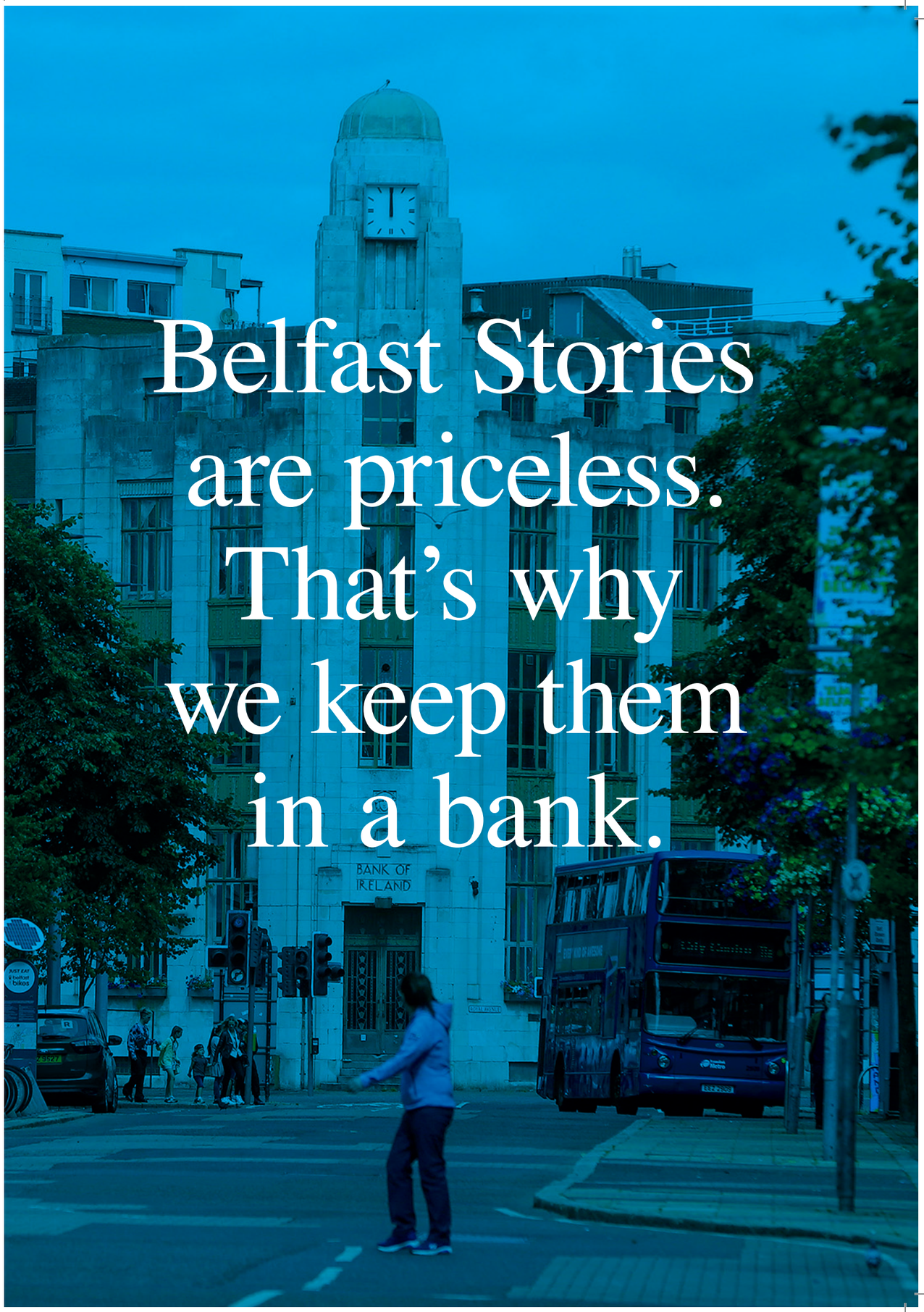
06. Information from the second public consultation will help shape the spacial coordination and technical design stages, which will give us the building layout and detailed designs for its construction.

07. We will ask for formal approval to build Belfast Stories. The law states that we must also have a public consultation during this stage.

08. This is when we seek to secure the remaining funding necessary to go ahead and build Belfast Stories.

09. Hard hats at the ready! We start building Belfast Stories.

10. Belfast Stories opens its doors and welcomes everyone.



About Belfast Stories

Belfast is a city of stories. It's time for us to create a home for them.

By 2028, Belfast Stories, a new visitor attraction, will open on the site where North Street and Royal Avenue meet including the former Bank of Ireland buildings.

An exciting and authentic experience with Belfast's people and personality at its heart, it aims to attract both tourists and locals. As part of the Belfast Region City Deal, it also aims to help regenerate the city and surrounding areas.

There are three main experiences within or parts to the visitor attraction: stories, screen and social.

Stories

These will be first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home.

These stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story gathering programme that will include:

- uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others
- gathering new stories, particularly those from people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard

The stories will be exhibited using a range of media – words, pictures, photographs, animation, film, virtual technology and so on – in 2,000m^2 of exhibition space including a library of stories, a main exhibition space and temporary exhibition spaces. Visitors will be guided through the space by a trail which will end at a viewing platform on top of the building where they can reflect on the story of the whole city.

Inspired by experience and curiosity, visitors will be encouraged to explore the rest of the city and beyond – uncovering the mosaic of attractions that make up the best Belfast has to offer.

Screen

Film is a powerful way to tell stories.

Belfast Stories screen centre will house a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema (including an outdoor screen), offering, for example, premieres and new releases from around the world, film festivals and special events.

It will also contain NI's digital screen archive, which visitors can explore, supported by a year-round programme of talks and interactive events.

The screen centre will also support the local film industry with developmental space, flexible learning spaces and a story lab. There will be a particular focus on children and young people.

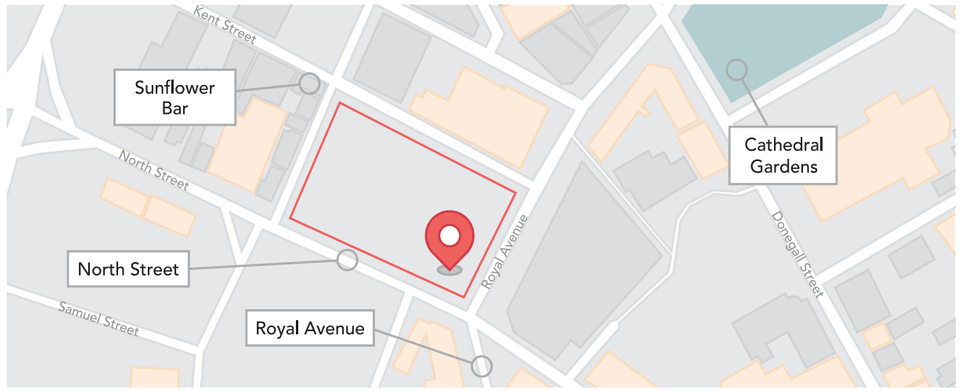
Belfast Stories : Public Consultation

Social

The exhibition space and screen centre will be connected by public spaces where people can meet, eat, shop and relax. Examples could be:

- a central open-air courtyard
- pocket squares and laneways
- roof gardens
- cafes, restaurants and bars sharing local produce and cuisine – Belfast's "food story"
- shops selling local products

These spaces will be brought to life through a programme of events, pop-up shops and street food.

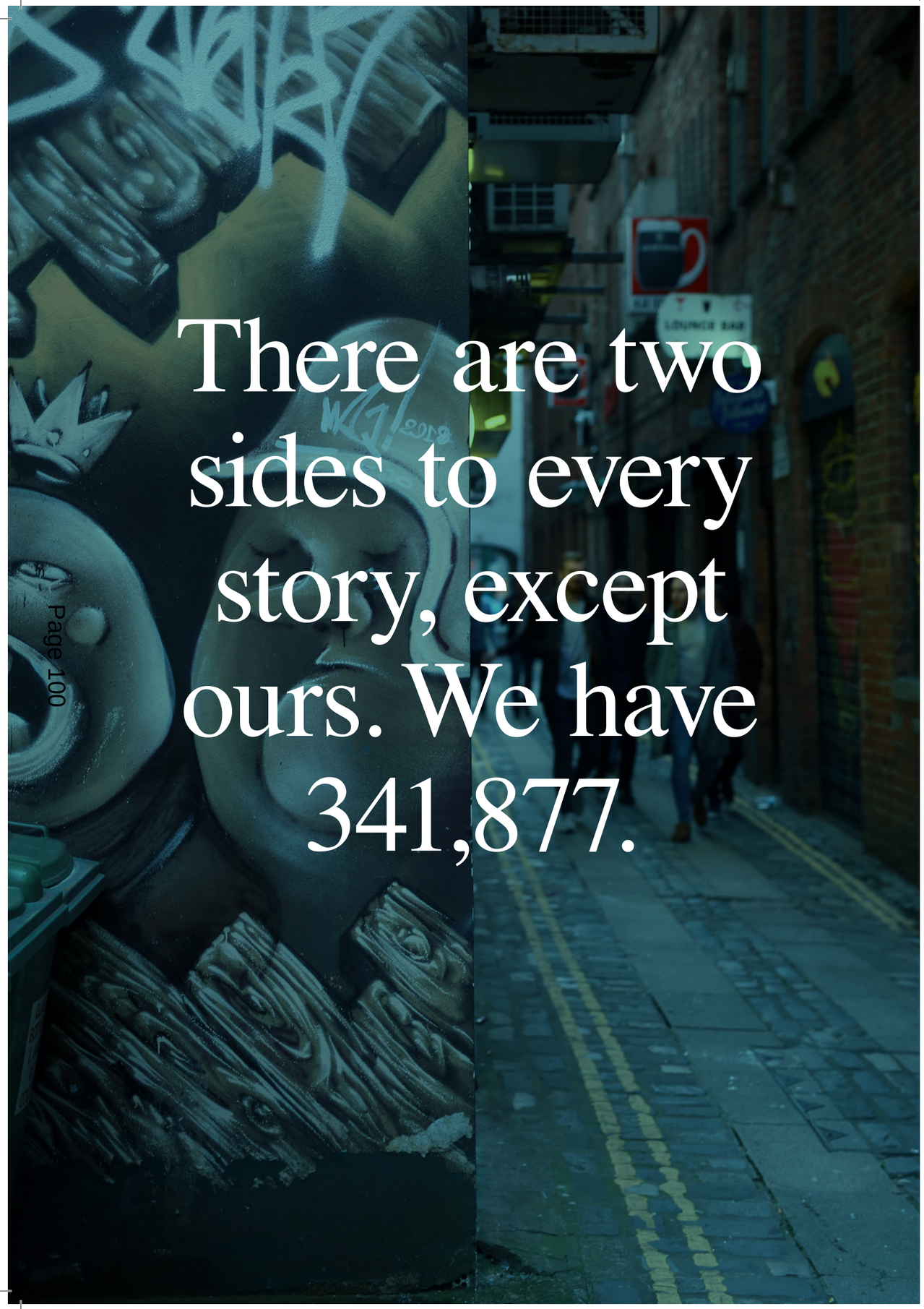


Have your say

Q1 Are you excited about Belfast Stories?

Q2 Why do you feel this way?

Complete the online survey at yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk



Making Belfast Stories for everyone

Belfast City Council must make sure that their policies, services and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any groups of people who are protected by law.[1]

Equality impact and rural needs impact assessments are tools that help us understand the different needs of different groups of people, how they might be affected by what we want to do and how we could make changes to promote equal opportunities or good relations for different groups. We've thought about how we can reach out to people to make sure they have an opportunity to be involved in the project and tell us what they think.

How you can have your say

Impact assessments will be available on our online consultation hub at **yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk**, where you can:

- read our equality impact assessment and answer a quick survey
- read our rural needs impact assessment

We will also have a physical consultation hub at 2 Royal Avenue and pop-up consultation hubs throughout the city.

We will test our findings through group and one-to-one meetings with:

- Belfast City Council's Equality Consultative Forum
- the Belfast Stories equity steering group
- residents groups in rural areas within the council boundaries
- any other key organisations representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method

We will use Belfast City Council and Belfast Stories social media, the Belfast Stories website and City Matters magazine to keep people up to date with what is happening and ways to get involved.

Our partner organisations will also help us promote what is happening and ways to get involved through their websites, social media and other communications channels.

[1]That is people of different genders, religious belief, political opinion, ethnicity, age, marital status or sexual orientation; persons with a disability and persons without; and people living in rural areas.

Equity steering group

We want to make sure that everyone has the same opportunity to take part.

Equity recognises that not everyone starts from the same place. It gives people the different resources and opportunities they need to take part.

For Belfast Stories, this means that some people and groups may be more at risk of:

- not hearing about the project
- not taking part in the public consultation
- not having their stories told or seeing stories of people like them represented or
- not having access to the building, its spaces and experiences

We have set up an equity steering group to make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of Belfast Stories.

The steering group is made up of:

- "missing voices" - people whose identity or circumstances mean that they are likely to be less often heard or listened to
- people who are more at risk of missing out because they may face additional barriers to visiting or experiencing Belfast Stories

This includes:

- People from different faith, political and cultural backgrounds
- People from minority ethnic communities
- Deaf/users of BSL/ISL, disabled and neurodiverse people
- Older people
- Children and young people
- Women
- Carers and people with dependents
- LGBTQIA+ people
- Other minority groups

The steering group will be supported by a facilitator with expertise in equity and co-design.

What they will do

The equity steering group will be based on the principles of co-design. Co-design is a way of thinking and working that recognises people are part of the solution because they are experts in their own experience. It invests in equal relationships and supports everyone to make decisions about what affects them.

Belfast Stories : Public Consultation

Between August 2022 and August 2023, the steering group will:

- identify and connect to "missing voices" and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an engagement programme that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce engagement opportunities throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the accessibility of consultation materials
- act as a critical friend, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

The equity steering group will continue to run after August 2023, when it will co-design its new priorities, which might include, for example:

- building the confidence and trust of missing voices to share their stories
- marketing and communications

The membership of the steering group will change as one of its roles will be to continually ask itself "Who else needs to be part of the discussion around this table?"

Have your say

Q3 What might prevent you from enjoying Belfast Stories?

Q4 Have we identified the right people for the steering group?

Q5 Are there any other groups of people at risk of missing out?

Q6 How else can we engage with people at risk of missing out?

Complete the online survey at yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk



Gathering stories - principles and themes

Belfast City Council has developed a framework for gathering stories with the support of Lord Cultural Resources and over 50 stakeholders from Belfast.

This framework sets out the approach to how stories will be collected. We want to test this with people in order to help develop the next stage of the project which will be about how we will tell these stories.

Stories will be told in the first person (that is, using words like “I” and “my”). This means that they will keep their distinctive, human and relatable voice, told from a personal point of view rather than by an official or authority.

Stories can be about the past, present or future.

“I am Belfast” is the voice of a person at the core of the framework.

There are seven key themes, each with their own individual sub-themes.

The framework is designed to be flexible, helping to gather, sort and celebrate a wealth of Belfast stories without constraining them. Stories may fit under more than one theme. If stories do not fit under a particular sub-theme, a new one can be created.

The themes are underpinned by five principles.

1. Equality and inclusiveness
2. Increased accessibility and co-creation
3. Pressure free
4. Respect
5. People centred

Stories will be mostly Belfast-focused, but they will have common threads that will show how Belfast connects with global history and current affairs (such as Black Lives Matters, climate change or #MeToo).

Have your say

Q7 Is this a good foundation for gathering stories?

Q8 What might stop you telling your story?

Q9 What support might people in your community or organisation need to share their stories?

Complete the online survey at yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk

What's your story?



Our story wheel based on draft themes.

Themes

There are many storylines under each of the proposed themes.
These are just examples and we will keep adding more.

Home

01. New Beginnings - New life, new home, new place.

02. Where Is Home? - Where the essence of home is strongest.

03. Land Stories - Family stories with roots from land or place.

04. Leaving Home - Reasons and impacts causing one to leave home.

05. Migration - Stories related to immigration and emigration.

06. Borders - Partition of Ireland and the peace walls etc.

07. Finding My Place - Self defining place where you feel connected.

08. Family Ties - Family bonds tied to home or place.

09. Communities - Neighbours, shop vendors, family and friends.

10. Place or Feeling? - Is home an emotional feeling or physical space?

11. Neighbourhoods - Places that have formed strong connections.

12. Lost Home - Reasons for and the impacts of losing your home.

13. Safe Spaces - The importance of safe spaces in the city.

Innovative

01. Industry Powerhouses - 17th, 18th, 19th century industry leaders.

02. Industrial Impact - How these industries changed Belfast.

03. Shipbuilding Era - Significance of shipbuilding and the Titanic.

04. Trade and Commerce - The past and present of Belfast trading.

05. Tech Age - Health tech, fintech, new jobs and increased migration.

06. Entrepreneurial Spirit - Pioneers and change-makers of Belfast.

07. Green Spaces - Repurposing existing spaces to add sustainability.

08. Cultural Innovation - Exploring culture through music, theatre & film.

09. A city transformed - How the city transforms through innovation.

10. Belfast & the World - Regional and global perspectives of the city.

11.Gastronomic Inventions - The top chefs, eateries and concoctions.

Resilient

01. Spirit of Belfast - The fortitude and tenacity of the city's people.

02. Healing From Conflict - Efforts made by the city's people to heal.

03. The Troubles - The physiological, psychological and logistical impacts.

04. Shared Memories - Collective storytelling activities that empower.

05. Reflecting on the Past - Reflect and recall past events and memories.

06. Advocacy - Supporting and acting toward global causes.

07. Tackling the Past - Safe spaces and ease of sharing for past trauma.

08. Resilient Community - Collective growth through shared experience.

09. Truth & Reconciliation - Truth, acknowledgement and atonement.

10. Looking Forward - Focusing on the future, reflecting on the past.

11. Connection with World Events - Moving away from 'exceptionalism'.

12. Humour in Dark Times - The use of humour to address difficult times.

13. Religion & Class - How these can both impact and shape a life.

14. Climate Resilience - Building a safer, more sustainable city.

Change

01. A City in Transformation - The changes that led Belfast to it's scale.

02. Culture & Society Shift - How these shifts changed the city.

03. Forgotten Places - Places that no longer have a strong prominence.

04. How We Live - Changes to how we live, and the causes of them.

05. Changing Climate - Belfast's climate then vs. now.

06. The Pandemic - Impact and the changes brought from Covid-19.

07. Diversity & Inclusiveness - Inclusivity and accessibility in the city.

08. Then Vs Now - Exploring Belfast's changes through time

09. Community Change - Community being integral to change.

10. Historic Milestones - Moments and landmarks in Belfast's history.

11. Belfast's Future - Changes we can and want to see in the future.

12. Poverty & Social Economy Gaps - Addressing poverty and these gaps.

Place

01. Place-Making - Plan & design of physical & digital spaces for good.

02. Belfast Architecture - Iconic buildings and the city's heritage.

03. Sight & Sound - What we see and hear - church bells, rivers etc.

04. Historic Landmarks - Physical spaces marked by historic events.

05. Geological Features - Rock formations, waterways, topography.

06. River Systems - Impacts of the rivers on life and community.

07. A Port City - Stories on Belfast as a bustling harbour.

08. Landscapes - Change over time through history and climate change.

09. Sustainable Future - Promoting sustainable life, repurposing spaces.

10. Climate Impact - How climate change impacts physical spaces.

11. Rendezvous - Belfast places used for encounters and connection.

12. Inclusivity - Equal representation spaces for marginalised groups.

13. Places of Significance - Spaces remembered and related to.

14. Places of Expectation - Places associated to specific behaviour.

15. Places of Imagination - Exploring representations of imagined places.

16. Sites of Healing - Creating and using physical city sites for healing.

Authentic

01. Distinctly Belfast - Things, people and places unique to Belfast.

02. Shifting Identities - As both a city and individuals.

03. Faces of Belfast - The many different identities of the city itself.

04. Societal Values - Values that are important to the city of Belfast.

05. Identity & Belonging - Who we are and where we belong.

06. Extraordinary Ordinary - The nuances of everyday lives.

07. Belfast Reborn - The city reawakening and feeling renewed.

08. Voices of the City - Capturing distinction through voice.

09. Language Roots - Similarities with other languages.

10. Identity Through Humour - Humour unique to Belfast.

11. Religion & Life - Religion being an intrinsic part of the city.

12. Social Change - The support of activism to spark change.

13. Food & Drink - Popular food unique to the city and its people.

Creative

01. Belfast Street Art - Street art and murals that bring life to Belfast.

02. Underground Music - Belfast's vibrant dance and music scene.

03. Musical Heritage - Music in the city's history, culture and tradition.

04. Film Industry - A growing site for film production and development.

05. Exhibitions & Events - Focusing on a large cross-section of culture.

06. Sport - Football, rugby and ice hockey being a big part of Belfast.

07. Photography - Seeing the city through photography.

08. Festivals - Events that feature the city's song and dance culture.

09. Folklore - Traditional stories that are part of the city's culture.

10. Literary Figures - Those known for literary contributions.

11. Visual Arts - Visual arts being part of the city's landscapes.

12. Cultural Heritage - Tangible and intangible parts of history and culture.

13. Belfast Theatre - Theatre's part in culture and its societal impacts.

14. Epicurean Arts - The food and drink culture within the city.

How to get involved

Stories are our reason for being. It is essential that the framework is meaningful to the people and groups we want to share their stories. You can tell us what you think by completing our quick online survey at **yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/**.

We will test the principles and themes for gathering stories through:

- Creative workshops at 2 Royal Avenue and other venues throughout the city
- Other engagement opportunities designed with the equity steering group targeting missing voices
- Workshops with:

  – stakeholders involved in the development of the draft framework for gathering stories

  – existing story collections and collectors (museums, archives, libraries, local history groups and so on.)

  – storytellers (writers, photographers, artists, producers and so on.)
- Online quizzes and polls on our online consultation hub, which you can find at yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/

If the principles and themes for gathering stories are broadly welcomed and felt to reflect everyone in the city, the next stage will be to develop and test ways to gather, record, store, select and share stories.

Continuing the conversation

The public consultation is not the end of the conversation. We will continue to engage with different people and organisations to help shape Belfast Stories right up until it opens and beyond. At the next stage of the project from 2023 we will be launching a programme to help gather stories.

Q10 Have your say

What stories, experience, knowledge and networks can you share to help us develop Belfast Stories?

Complete the online survey at
yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk



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What we will do with what you tell us

Because you are sharing your time, expertise and ideas, we want you to know that you have been heard. We will summarise what we have heard and learned and what we plan to do about it at key points during the engagement.

These findings will then be published on the consultation hub at yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk and shared through our groups, forums and networks.

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

How to share your views and ideas

Online

The Consultation Hub
Log on to our consultation hub by visiting **yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk.**

It will contain all the up-to-date information on the development of the Belfast Stories and ways you can be involved.

You can also sign up to receive email updates.

The survey
You can complete the online survey by visiting **yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk.**

You can also ask for a printed copy of the survey, and we will try to make it available in other formats or languages if you require them. To discuss this, get in touch with us.

Social media
Follow us on social media for the latest news.

@belfaststories

@belfast_stories

In person

We will be delivering workshops and other activities in 2 Royal Avenue from 24 October to 4 November 2022. We will also be in a number of other locations across the city before this.

There will be more opportunities to take part, so keep up to date. Sign up for emails on the consultation hub or get in touch via one of our contact channels. If you are interested in hosting an event or would like us to attend a group that you are involved with, please get in touch.

Get in touch

Contact the Belfast Stories team on:

028 9032 0202

belfaststories@belfastcity.gov.uk

028 9027 0405

Use our sign language interpreter services by visiting **belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/main-council-offices#176-2**

Images used in this document are courtesy of Belfast Exposed, Emma Kenny and Mal McCann.



Ambitious story gathering with Belfast's people and personality at the heart.

BELFAST STORIES





A million tales well told.

Belfast Stories.
The life and times of a city, in its own words.

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BELFAST STORIES

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BELFAST STORIES



FINDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

JANUARY 2023

Smith and Kent Consulting

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INTRODUCTION

Belfast Stories,[1] **a new world-class visitor attraction** planned for the city centre in 2028, will be a success if the people of Belfast love it, are proud of it and feel that it is truly theirs.

In February 2022, Belfast City Council appointed **Smith and Kent Consulting** to develop a consultation and engagement plan for the next stage of the project and provide specific equality, diversity and inclusion expertise.[2]

BACKGROUND

The Belfast Stories Engagement Plan brings together a range of consultation, engagement and involvement approaches built on best practice, statutory requirements and stakeholder expectations.

Engagement around the concept of Belfast Stories (previously known as Belfast Destination Hub) has been ongoing since 2014 when the need for a new major visitor attraction in the city was identified. It has subsequently been formally consulted on during public consultations on the council's Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and the A City Imagining and Make Yourself at Home culture and tourism strategies.[3] Belfast's residents and stakeholders have a **legitimate expectation** of continuing to be consulted about Belfast Stories.

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

Belfast Stories' **Equality Framework** recognises that the Belfast Stories vision can only be achieved if equality, diversity and inclusion are at its core, supported by a co-designed and inclusive process throughout all aspects of the project. It recommends equality screening and public consultation at key milestones, supported by ongoing engagement throughout.

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

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

[1] This is the working title and may change.
[2] Including equality impact and rural needs assessments, which are the subject of separate publications.
[3] Variously referred to as a destination or creative hub

- **good relations** between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

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

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

THE BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN

In May 2022, the draft Belfast Stories engagement plan was approved by Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The engagement plan covers Royal Institute of British Architects **(RIBA) stage 2.** During this stage, concept designs and plans will be produced for:

- the layout of the building
- the design of the exhibition space
- the framework for gathering stories

The planned engagement falls into two broad strands:

1. **Public consultation**, which took place between 10 August and 20 November 2022, focused on:
    i. **raising awareness** of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development
    ii. making sure that Belfast Stories can be a **positive experience for everyone**, including consultation on the EQIA and framework for gathering stories
    iii. asking people how they would like to **continue to be involved** in the ongoing engagement.
2. **Ongoing engagement**, June 2022 to August 2023, which is structured around four work strands:
    i. Equity
    ii. Sustainability
    iii. Partnership
    iv. Experiences

A copy of the engagement plan approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2022 is included at appendix 1.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report gathers together the findings from the public consultation, which took place between 10 August and 20 November 2022. It considers in particular what the public consultation says in relation to:

1. awareness and excitement,
2. making sure Belfast Stories is for everyone and
3. ongoing engagement.

Quotes have been reproduced word for word as provided by consultees.

A separate report has been prepared on the findings relating to the EQIA.

WHAT WE DID

This section describes the activity carried out during Belfast City Council's public consultation on Belfast Stories, which took place over 14 weeks from 10 August to 20 November.

CORE QUESTIONS

Reflecting the focus of the public consultation, Smith and Kent devised a core set of questions (below), that was published in consultation documents.

Building excitement

1. Are you excited about Belfast Stories?
2. Why do you feel that way?

Making sure Belfast Stories is for everyone

3. What might prevent you from enjoying Belfast Stories?
4. Have we identified the right people for the equity steering group?
5. Are there any other groups of people at risk of missing out?
6. How else can we engage with people at risk of missing out?
7. Is the story collection framework a good foundation for gathering stories?
8. What might stop you telling your story?
9. What support might people in your community or organisation need to share their stories?

Continuing the conversation

10. What stories, experience, knowledge and networks can you share to help us develop Belfast Stories?

CONSULTATION TOOLS AND TACTICS

The core questions were then adapted to be used in different tools, different settings and with different audiences and interest groups, ensuring that all stakeholders were asked for information that was relevant and useful to the decision-making process. This included adaption for:

- online survey
- easy read consultation document
- focus group script, which was used by Smith and Kent, Belfast City Council and the equity steering group
- semi-structured interview script, used by Smith and Kent, Belfast City Council and the equity steering group
- toolkits for partners, community groups and the equity steering group

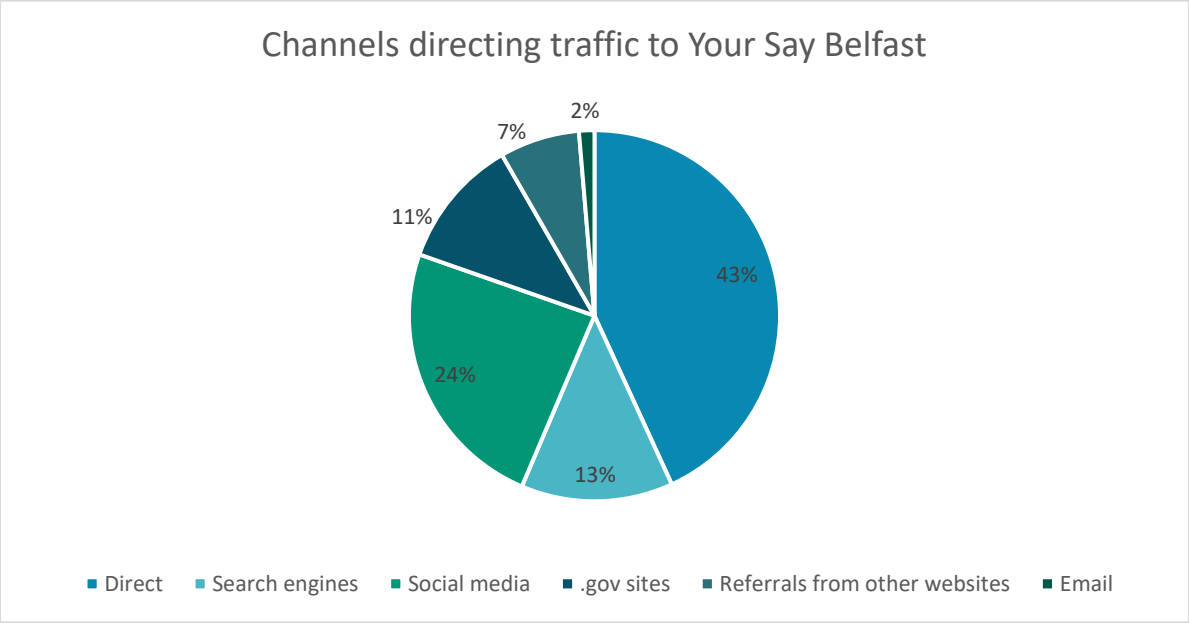
- postcards for use at workshops and at consultation hubs

YOUR SAY BELFAST

An online consultation hub was built on Belfast City Council's Your Say Belfast web platform.[4] It comprised:

- an overview of the project
- a video overview in Irish sign language (ISL) and British sign language (BSL)
- downloadable copies of the consultation document including versions in easy read[5] and HTML[6]
- an online survey
- a video version of the survey in ISL and BSL
- two online polls
- dates and booking forms for workshops and public meetings

Overall, the online consultation hub welcomed 2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors. 43 per cent of visits accessed the hub direct, and 13 per cent used a search engine. 24 per cent were referred from social media. 18 per cent were from other websites, of which 7 per cent came from a .gov site (presumed to be www.belfastcity.gov.uk). Other website referrals included from Craft NI, Community Arts Partnership and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce.



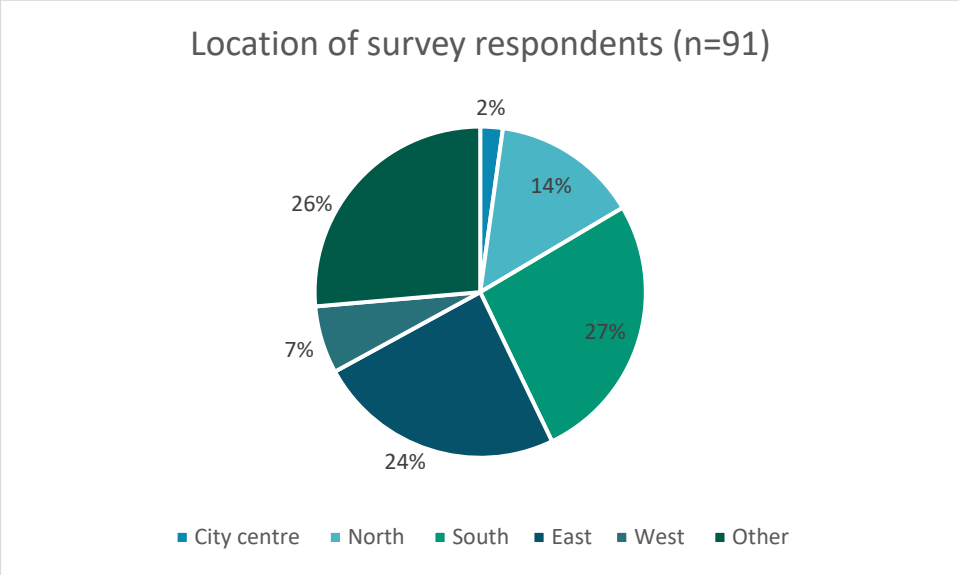
The documents and videos were downloaded or viewed 234 times, and 149 responses were received to the online survey and two online polls.

[4] https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk
[5] A format originally created to help people with learning disabilities understand information easily
[6] For screen readers

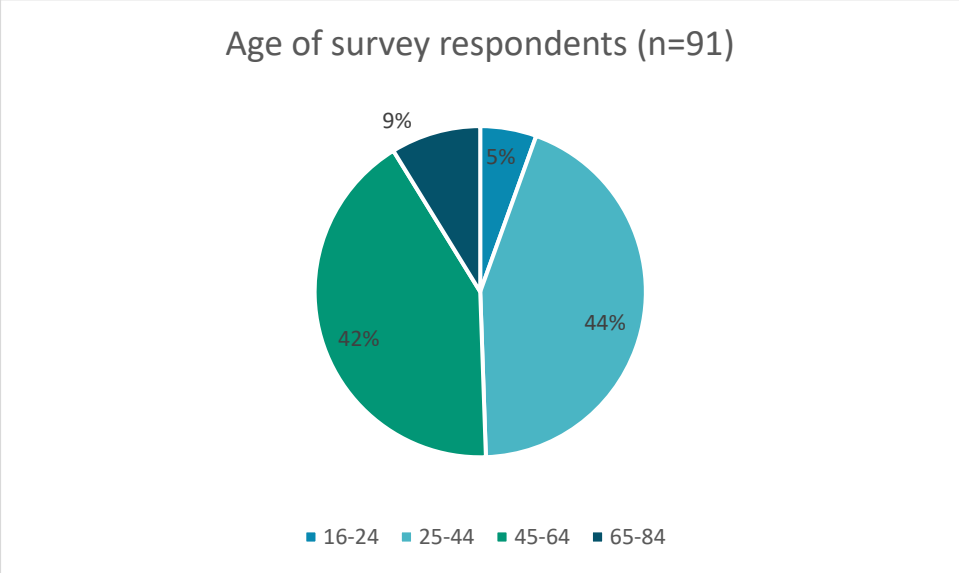
SURVEY

One hundred and 27 responses were received to the online survey.

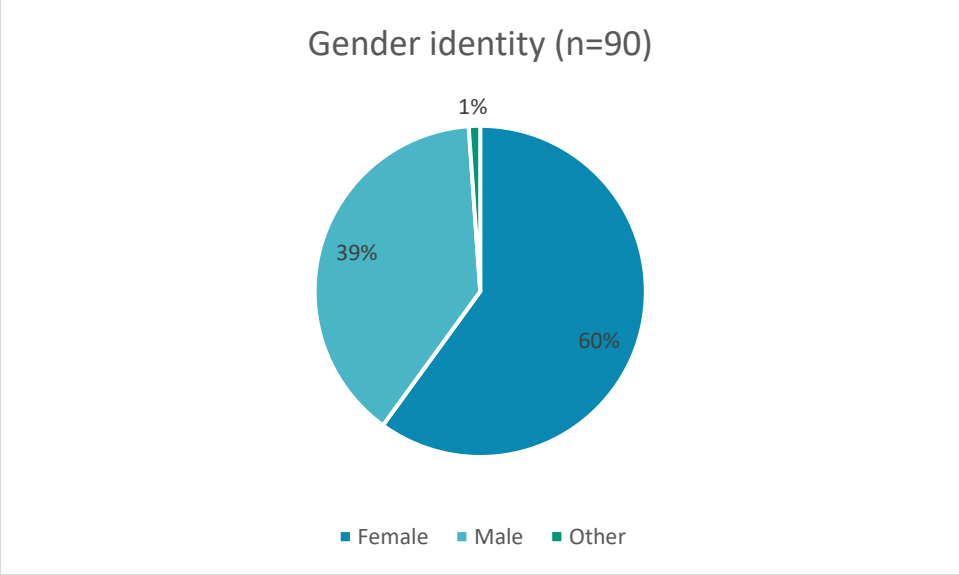
Most respondents were from the south and east of the city. Those who described where they lived as “other” included people who lived outside Belfast but within NI and people who described themselves as “from” Belfast but currently had an address elsewhere.



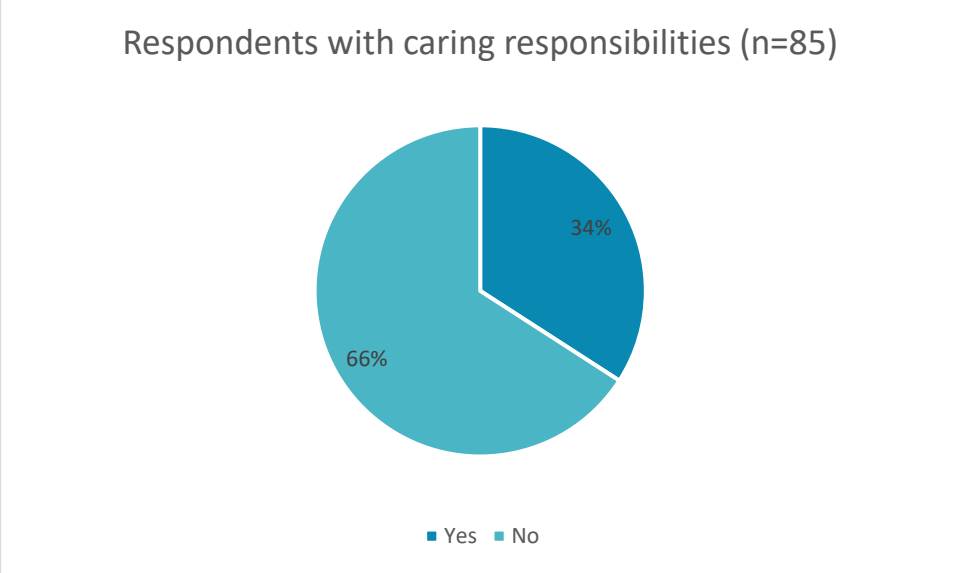
The survey was particularly effective at engaging 25- to 64-year-olds, who made up 86 per cent of respondents.



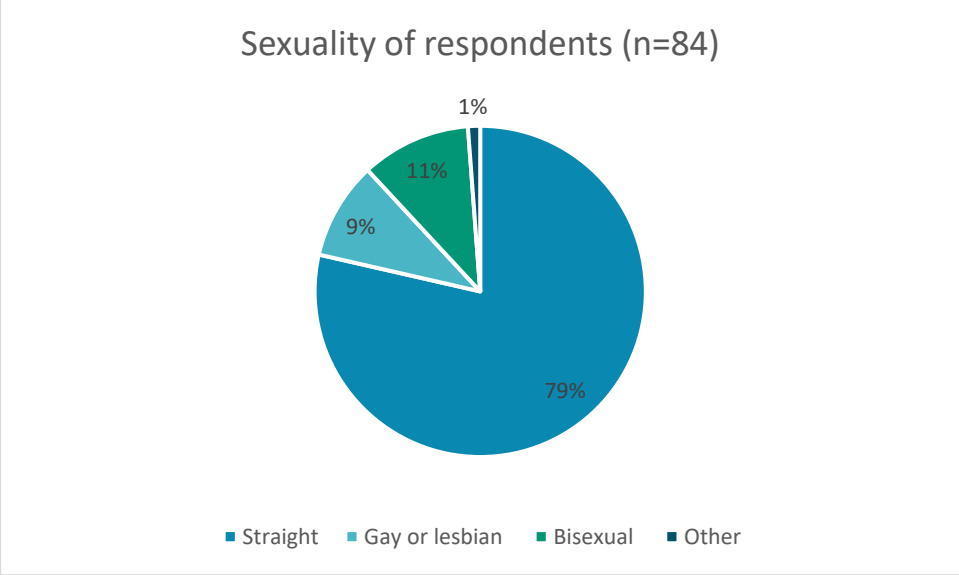
60 per cent of respondents were female and 39 per cent male.



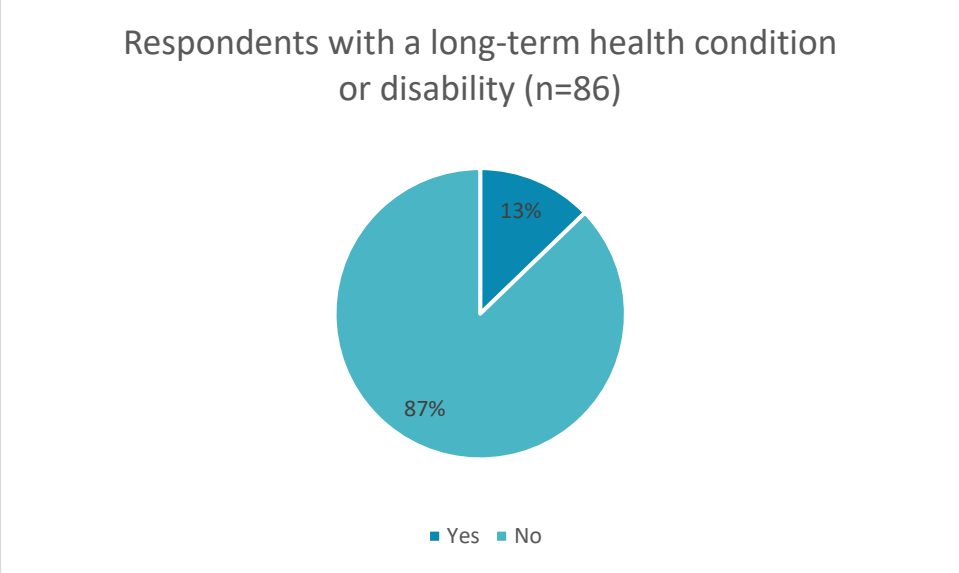
34 per cent of respondents reported that they had caring responsibilities, and the survey was particularly good at engaging carers with responsibility for an older person or disabled person (20 per cent).



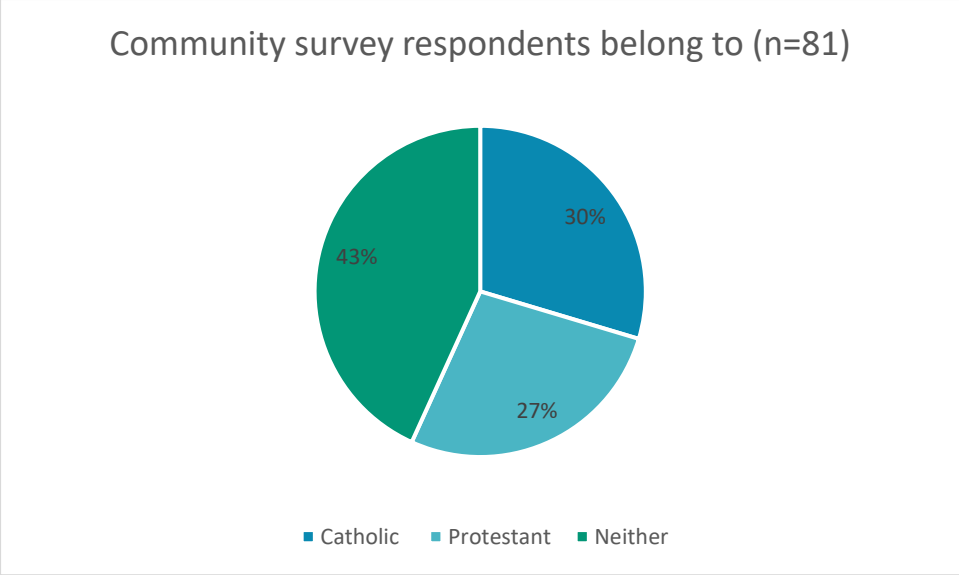
79 per cent of respondents identified as straight (heterosexual) and 21 per cent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other ("queer").



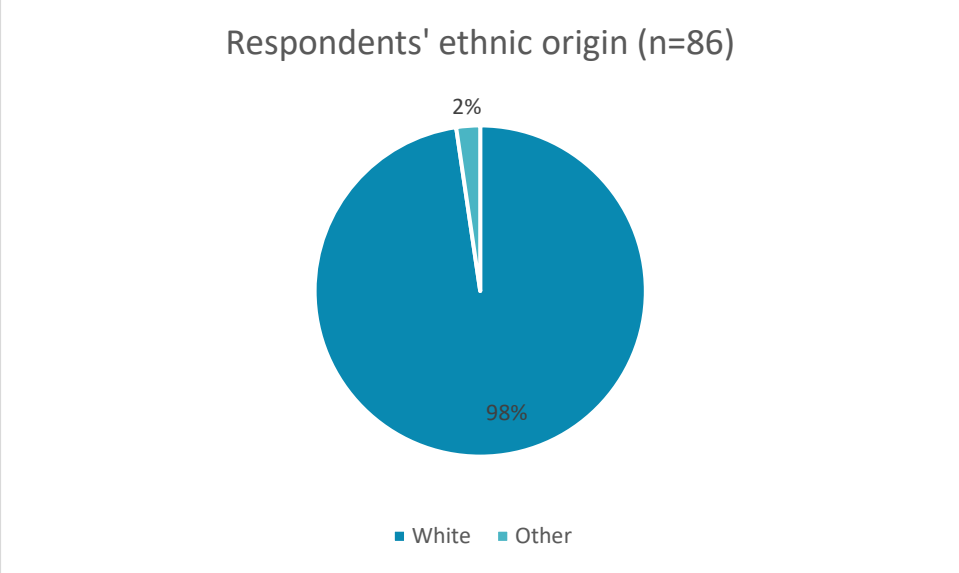
13 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a long-term health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activity.



The survey was particularly good at engaging people from outside the two main religions (43 per cent). 30 per cent of survey respondents identified as belonging to the Catholic community, and 27 per cent identified as from the Protestant community.



98 per cent of respondents identified as white, and 2 per cent identified as other.



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In August 2022, Smith and Kent Consulting set up the equity steering group comprising 10 experts by experience including people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities. Two representatives from Belfast City Council's Belfast Stories and Good Relations teams also joined.

There were 4 equity steering group meetings during the public consultation stage, which were attended by an average of 8 people (31 in total).

Working through the equity steering group, Belfast City Council and other networks, Smith and Kent facilitated 16 workshops with people and groups who are generally more at risk of missing out. These were attended by 136 people (9 on average).

Smith and Kent also carried out 10 one-to-one meetings with organisations representing or advocating for people and groups at risk of missing out.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

Belfast City Council ran 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, the voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives, including consultees previously engaged by Lord Cultural Resources in the development of the framework for gathering stories.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Belfast City Council also organised five public meetings. These took place geographically across the city and were attended by 15 participants.

Information boards were also displayed at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre.

THRIVE AND DAISY CHAIN INC.

In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc., a creative consultancy, to help raise awareness and build excitement using an innovative and participatory approach to engagement.

Between September and November, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. engaged a total of 683 participants through a range of creative tools including on-street interviews, street portraits, events and workshops and physical and pop-up consultation hubs in the city centre and surrounding locations. Engagement also took place online.

Question used by thrive and Daisy Chain included:

- If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?
- What is the most Belfast thing you've ever seen or heard?
- What is your first memory of Belfast?
- Why are you here?
- What is your favourite place in Belfast?

Using people's responses, thrive and Daisy Chain were also able to test the framework for gathering stories developed by Lord Cultural Resources.

This approach was particularly good at engaging younger people with over a third of participants (36 per cent) aged under 35.

A copy of thrive and Daisy Chain Inc.'s report is included at appendix 2.

MCE COMMUNICATIONS

MCE is a strategic communications and brand marketing agency. They were appointed by Belfast City Council to develop Belfast Stories' key messages and social media, and they designed material for the public consultation, including the consultation document, easy read format, postcards, exhibition boards and leaflets.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONSULTATION

Participants were asked to complete short evaluation postcards at the end of workshops. Twenty-seven postcards were completed by participants at three workshops. All participants enjoyed taking part in the consultation ("Lots of thoughts and opinions", "Very informative and open to ideas"), and 26 participants (96.3 per cent) felt listened to ("Yes all comments noted. Great facilitator", "Yes everyone had their views heard").

As the public consultation progressed, it generated a positive feedback loop. Increasingly consultees came to meetings and workshops with awareness of the project, generally through word of mouth, and Belfast City Council received increasing numbers of phone calls from people wanting to share their story.

Nevertheless, there is agreement among the extended Belfast Stories team (that is the council, Smith and Kent, MCE, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc) that the raising awareness strand should be strengthened in future engagement. The planned central consultation hub in 2 Royal Avenue could not go ahead when the building closed for refurbishment; thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. found that reference to Belfast City Council inhibited responses to their research and so limited opportunities for awareness raising; and there were inconsistencies in branding and key messages, including across the Your Say platform, Belfast Stories website[7] and social media, which was confusing for the public and stakeholders.

The survey responses show higher than average responses from people from the LGBTQ+ community and people with caring responsibilities. This may reflect the work done through the equity steering group to reach those who may otherwise be less heard. While this did not buoy survey responses across all groups (for example, only 2 per cent of respondents identified as other than white), the equity steering group worked hard to effectively engage people through other means, including Autistic and neurodiverse people, blind people, the d/Deaf and sign language communities, the Roma and Traveller communities, people from other minoritised ethnic groups, women, young women, young men, older men, older people, carers and the LGBTQ+ community.

Some geographic communities proved difficult to engage, and while there was spread across the city, areas closest to the site (and so most likely to be interested and affected) and those furthest away (least likely to be interested or benefit) require further effort as the project develops.

[7] www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfaststories

While the main consultation document was most often viewed or downloaded from Your Say, feedback from in-person engagement was that the easy read format was particularly welcomed, the first choice of many consultees, particularly (but by no means exclusively) among younger and older people, the d/Deaf community and others with different language abilities.

There was some criticism that the language (presumably in the main consultation document) was too corporate and "government speak". A small number of respondents did not understand all the survey questions or understand why they were being asked particular questions, which may reflect on the public's expectation of consultations (at or after decision-making, rather than concept stage), rather than the questions themselves.

Other consultation tools, such as guidance to help partners, community groups and equity steering group members carry out their own consultations were not well used, probably reflecting a lack of knowledge, interest or confidence this early in the project.

Nevertheless, the public consultation produced a wealth of useful information that the council will now carefully consider to inform the development of Belfast Stories and the next stages of consultation and engagement.

SUMMARY OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

What we did	How well we did it
2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors to Belfast Stories online consultation hub	100% of workshop participants surveyed enjoyed the consultation
234 unique visitors viewed or downloaded the consultation documents and videos	96% of workshop participants felt listened to
149 responses to online survey and polls	60% of survey respondents were female
65 consultation workshops	21% of survey responses from LGBTQ+ community
1,148 participants engaged through consultation workshops and events	20% of survey respondents had caring responsibilities for an older person or disabled person

What difference it made

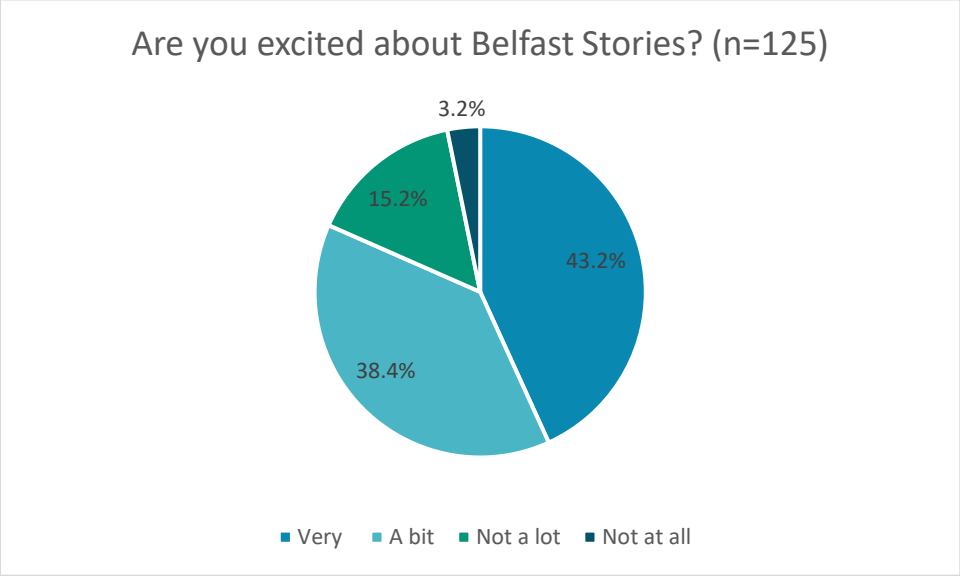
82 per cent of those completing the survey or responding at consultation and engagement events are now excited by the concept of Belfast Stories

In the survey, 58 per cent of respondents offered stories, experiences, knowledge and networks they could share to help develop Belfast Stories

WHAT WE HEARD

BUILDING THE EXCITEMENT

Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories, with 43.2 per cent saying they felt "very" excited.



Most participants were simply intrigued by concept and were keen to share their story or learn about stories relevant to them. Indeed, on several occasions, workshop facilitators struggled to get through a presentation for participants eagerly telling stories.

> *"So important to capture the stories of our city by the people who make it, particularly those of senior citizens whose views are often seen as irrelevant."*

> *"I love Belfast – I think it's beautiful and unique and resilient and a bit battered but hopeful and determined. I think what makes it special is the fact that so many different stories co-exist within it. We're also great at telling them – it's part of our culture and heritage, and part of our personality. […]Stories bring the colour. They bring the nuance and the feelings that make things real and true, without making it about competition or right or wrong. They honour what's been difficult, and they highlight what's wonderful. They are what we need to remember the past, and to look to the future!"*

Other main reasons people felt excited included:

- regeneration of the area, which many felt was run down, unwelcoming or even unsafe ("the area is a mess a disgrace so it will be a shot in the arm for the area")
- regeneration of a key heritage building. Many consultees regard the Bank of Ireland building as iconic and were pleased with the proposal to preserve and repurpose it.

For older consultees in particular, who frequently referred to it as the "White Bank", it represented a period of time when the bottom of Royal Avenue and inner north Belfast was a vibrant social and commercial hub, and they were hopeful that Belfast Stories could be a catalyst for rejuvenation.

- attracting tourists, creating new jobs, boosting local business and the wider economy

> *"I'd love Belfast people and visitors to get a feeling of what all parts of the city is like and leave with a feeling of shared history and future"*

- opportunity to change the usual negative, narrow or "us and them" narrative of Belfast.

> *"Think it's a great opportunity to tell stories of the city and its people that transcend tired and unrepresentative binary views."*
>
> *"Belfast's past is overshadowed by the news stories of the Troubles. We need to hear more real life stories about our past about people like my mum born in the 50s in Andersonstown when it was countryside and seeing so much change in her lifetime. If the stories aren't told and heard, they will be lost."*

- potential boost to pride, both at a civic ("It's an exciting way to change some of the less positive narratives around Belfast") and individual ("The idea excites us. The Roma have never been included in anything like this") level.

> *"So important to capture the stories of our city by the people who make it, particularly those of senior citizens whose views are often seen as irrelevant."*

Among participants who were unsure about the concept, the main concerns were:

- Not knowing enough about it. Some struggled with being consulted on a concept, rather than on set plans or physical designs.
- Time scales. As the building is not due to open until 2028, some participants were not sure how it was relevant to them currently or felt that it was too far in the future to be of interest. Similar to the above, this may reflect civic participation in current consultation practice whereby participants expect to be asked for their opinion on fixed options at a fixed point in time.
- Suspicion about the political narrative, specifically that Belfast Stories would "just" tell the usual "us and them" narrative or, for some people, concerns that it would just tell the story of "them".
- Authenticity, which qualified a lot of opinions, including those who were otherwise excited for Belfast Stories. For example, "I am excited if it is not watered down" or "Disne[y]fied" or is if it is "true to me".
- Displacement, raised by stakeholders in the tourism, community and voluntary and cultural sectors, as well as by the general public. Overall, at this point in time,

tourism sector stakeholders may be least likely to have unqualified support for Belfast Stories.

Opinions were also frequently qualified with the need to support existing infrastructure, particularly the existing tourism offer, for example, by signposting the Belfast Stories visitors to other attractions, experiences, restaurants and bars in the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. There was also concern from one large cinema operator that Belfast Stories would displace customers from other cinemas in the city.

Among those who were not excited or disagreed strongly with the concept, the main concern was that the investment would be better spent elsewhere and is diverting funding from other priorities, such as preserving other heritage buildings or investment in existing arts and cultural infrastructure.

> *"I don't see the point to be honest […] It would be better to better staff and fund the museums we already have."*

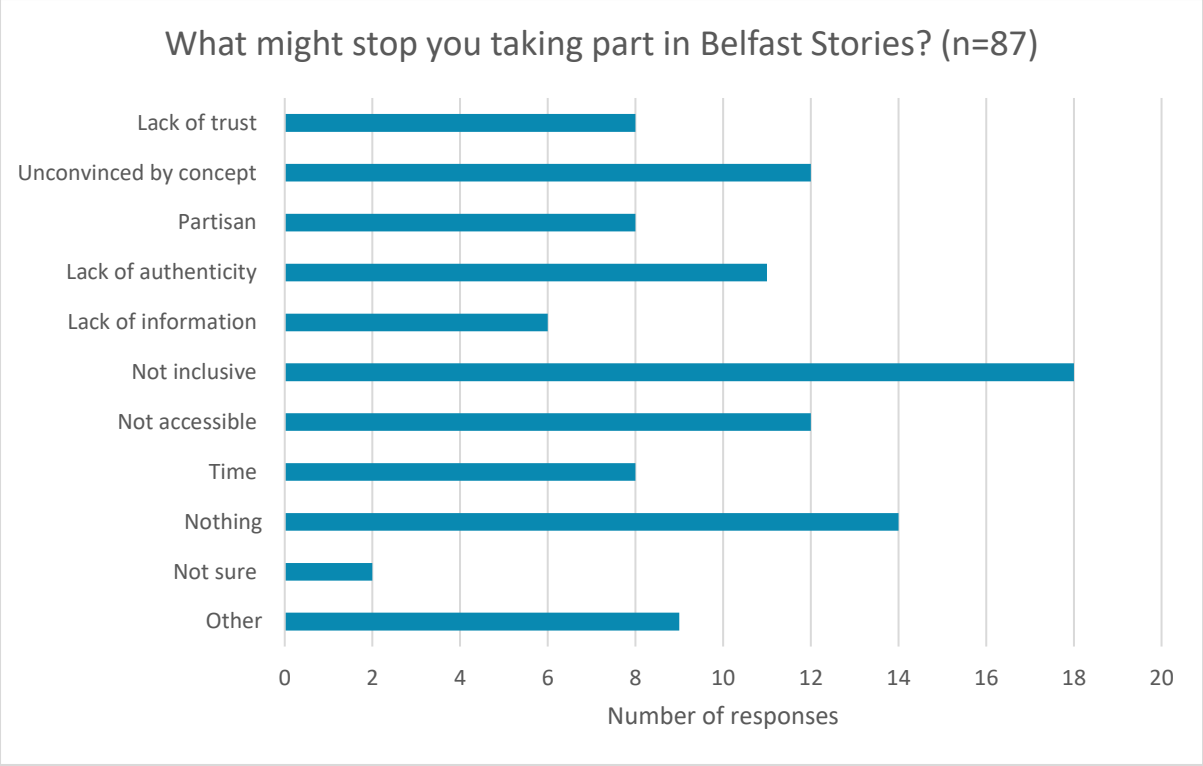
> *"I feel it's somewhat ironic to have a building celebrating the history of Belfast, built on the rubble of historical Belfast."*

There were also some concerns that the content would not be interesting, particularly for tourists.

> *"The concept it is very vague. I imagine it'll be so safe, for fear of offending one community or other, that it'll be utterly bland and meaningless"*

MAKING SURE BELFAST STORIES IS FOR EVERYONE

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE ENJOYING BELFAST STORIES



The survey asked "What might stop you taking part in Belfast Stories?". Eighty-seven responses were received. Most related to the participation in the story collection process, rather than visiting the physical building.

Eighteen responses related to a perceived or potential lack of inclusivity. This included people who felt that their culture would not be welcome ("one sided narratives", "if it is classist or erases minorities", "because I know my faith and culture is not wanted") and people living outside Belfast (26 per cent of respondents (24 people) were from outside Belfast), who were unsure whether they were included in Belfast Stories.

Twelve responses related to access including the location of the building (getting there and perceptions of safety), cost and lack of adjustments.

Among the 12 responses that were unconvinced by the concept of Belfast Stories, there were concerns that it is a waste of money, that the content is unappealing and that there is too much virtue signalling.

> *"Woke-ism gone mad."*
>
> *"If I felt like the focus was so far onto marginalised groups that ordinary, educated, white middle-class people aren't encouraged to also apply and feel like we have a chance too."*

Eight responses also indicated concern that the content would be politically partisan.

Lack of confidence included not having a story to tell or an interesting story and that the process might be too difficult.

Lack of trust included in the process and the presentation, including that anonymity would not be protected.

> *"I have concerns that edited versions of what I say will be used insensitively or unsympathetically – or dismissed!"*

THE BUILDING

Across all engagement strands, barriers identified that would stop people access the building included:

- Cost. It was automatically assumed there would be an entrance fee to access the whole building. Many consultees also assumed that the fee would be prohibitive. It was felt that at least some of Belfast Stories (such as social spaces, retail, restaurants and bars) should be free to enter and that different pricing models for locals and tourists should be explored.
- Not feeling welcome. Some consultees felt that the building might not be "for the likes of us". Consultees reinforced the importance of staff training and skills to create a warm welcome.

> *"A clear welcome to immigrant and newcomer communities would be important for me: people who chose (or had to accept) this place as their home, despite where they were born. We have adopted Belfast as our home, so these "outside/inside" perspectives feel important to invite and include"*
>
> *"there will be people who would not enter the museum, out of fear of being treated badly. The Roma are badly treated in many places in Belfast: shops, cinemas or other public places."*
>
> *"It does not matter what goes into it – if it is old or new or falling down – if you do not feel welcome. If you feel welcome the roughest place can feel good. A good welcome and being treated well is most important."*
>
> *"if there were good people working there, people with a heart, not racists."*

- Lack of activity for children. Consultees wanted family friendly activity and a play area.
- Young people not welcome. It was felt that there is a lack of space in Belfast where young people can just "hang out" safely, particularly away from alcohol.
- Whole family appeal. Consultees indicated a lack of activities in Belfast that would appeal to different generations, from toddlers to grandparents.
- Safety and fear of anti-social behaviour. The area around the Belfast Stories site was described by various consultees as "run down", "collapsed", a "desert" and "husks". Consultees reported concerns about litter, street cleanliness, broken pavers, poor lighting, rowdy nightlife, drug use and rough sleepers. This was a greater issue for

older people and disabled people, particularly when combined with lack of transport which increases the risk of people being left alone and at night. People from minoritised ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community also described being subject to racist and homophobic abuse – for example, “The current approach along Royal Avenue involves being shouted at by preachers declaiming the LGBTQIA+.”.

- Transport. This was a major concern, particularly among older people, disabled people, minoritised ethnic communities, carers and people living in working class areas. Concerns included lack of parking spaces and accessible parking and cost of parking. There was also felt to be poor public transport links and a scarcity of taxis, both of which are worse at night, further hindering the evening economy. Consultees would welcome a free shuttle bus down Royal Avenue and better transport links, particularly at night and to rural areas.
- Building design. This was of particular concern to older people, neurodiverse people and disabled people. It was also recognised that inclusive design would benefit the rest of the population, in particular children and parents. The new wing of the Ulster Hospital was cited as an example of good, inclusive design. Other ideas included:
    - Architects, designers, restaurant tenants, Belfast Stories staff and so on all to benefit from dementia-friendly training
    - Carers, people with dementia and older people to work with the building design team
    - Colour-coded floors
    - Laminate floor should run the length of the grain (otherwise creates perception barriers)
    - Clear signage
    - Way out signs *inside* toilets
    - Quiet areas throughout the building (not just one for whole attraction or exhibition, but in the lobby, restaurants and social spaces as well)
    - Red and blue plates for people with dementia so they can see pale food
    - Assisted or lightweight doors
    - No or dropped kerbs and level access from parking areas and in to the building
    - Access for mobility scooters
    - Plenty of toilets including changing places
    - Accessible toilets (not “disabled” toilets)
    - Gender neutral facilities and spaces
    - Plenty of seating
    - Wide lifts
    - Firefighting or evacuation lifts
    - Good lighting
    - Good acoustics
    - Soft surfaces to absorb sound
    - Vertigo warnings on the roof garden and viewing platform
- Unilingual signage. This was felt to be a particular barrier for the Irish language community.

For carers and disabled people, a good practice buddy ticketing system was essential. It was also felt that older people may need more encouragement to go out after the pandemic and that the centre should facilitate group visits.

THE EXHIBITION

Barriers identified across all engagement strands that might stop people enjoying the exhibition included:

- Cost. This was the main issue raised in relation to the exhibition for local people. It was felt that Belfast Stories should explore different pricing models for locals and tourists.
- Static exhibition. This was raised almost as frequently as cost. Consultees presumed that the exhibition would not change and so would not appeal for repeat visits.
- Duplication of other stories and experiences. Consultees did not want a new experience and were concerned that Belfast Stories could displace footfall other attractions (see also Maximising the handprint).
- Lack of interest or relevance. This barrier was identified most frequently in the survey. As ensuring relevance was the part of the main purpose for many workshops, this barrier came up less frequently in person. Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included engagement with minoritised groups and combining visual and audio archive footage with first-person stories for older people and people with dementia.
- Different language and literacy abilities (such as children and newcomer, Roma and d/Deaf communities). Generally, people preferred the exhibition to be “not too wordy”, favouring “more powerful” visuals. A mix of media was also felt to better “help get someone’s identity”. Suggestions included changing colours, lighting or music to reflect the stories or how people are supposed to feel in response.
- Too much digital content and film too dominant. Again, it was felt that mixed media would be most appealing.
- Lack of animation. Some consultees felt that there should be less static, more programmed activity, such as workshops.
- Triggering content, including “Dark stories” that could traumatise or retraumatise, flashing images and loud noises
- Lack of outreach. Outreach would extend the engagement approach after the building has opened to ensure people and groups more at risk of missing out have the opportunity to take part.
- Marketing that is not inclusive of diverse communities (“Not just white princesses from Frozen”)

Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included:

- Simultaneous translation
- Phone or digital apps to engage with the exhibition in own language

- Interactive activities, games and augmented reality
- Workshops, performances and animation
- Programmable community performance space
- Programmable community exhibition space
- Community spaces (for example, for a monthly d/Deaf community meet-up)
- A changing programme marking civic or cultural events (such as Christmas and Chinese New Year)
- A changing programme to attract local visitors back for repeat visits
- Parental guidance-type warnings
- Quiet spaces
- Use of images showing diverse communities (including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people and people from minoritised ethnic communities)
- Price promotions
- English and Irish signage, exhibition text, marketing and other materials

PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR RISK OF MISSING OUT

The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people, was emphasised throughout the consultation. This included the sector in its widest sense including community centres, residents associations, sports clubs, historical societies, interest groups and arts organisations. Consultees also emphasised a need to go to where people and communities are, rather than expect them to come to a consultation or event, and several organisations volunteered their service.

There was also concern that this should not be an additional burden for the community sector in lieu of a well-resourced Belfast Stories team.

> *"Connecting with organisations who work with these communities already – but also having a robust outreach team of your own: making it welcoming and straightforward for the staff and volunteers of existing organisations to help people in their communities get involved at their own pace. Reaching out to people without adding to the work of under-resourced people and groups"*

Other suggestions for engagement people at particular risk of missing out included:

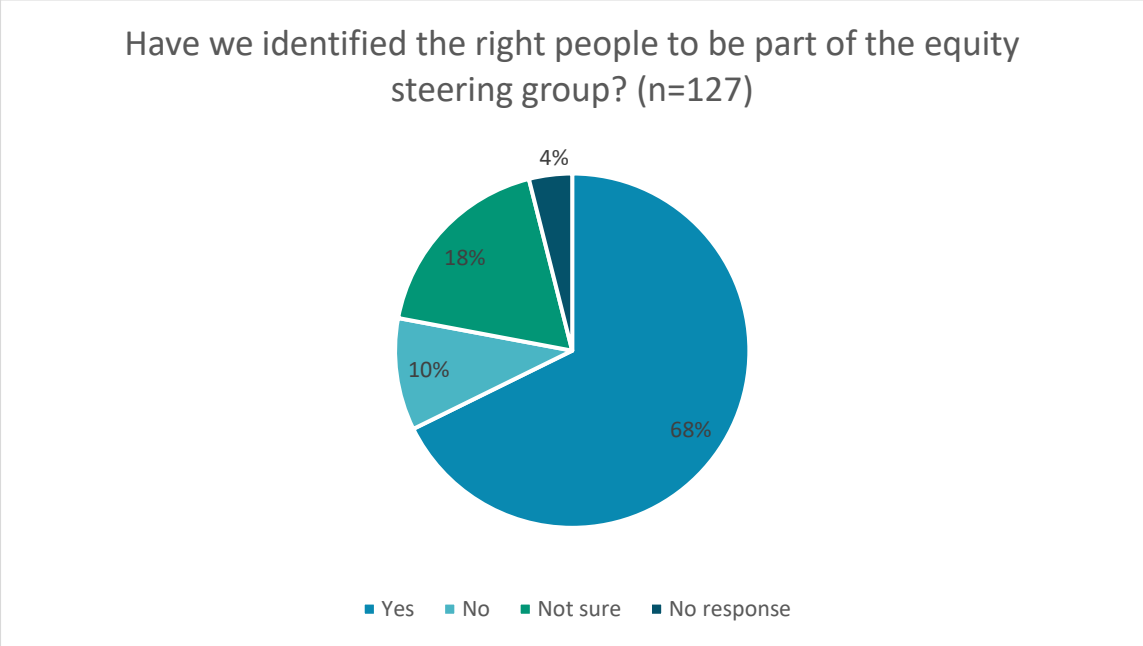
- press
- social media
- print, radio and TV advertisement
- leaflets
- information available in a range of formats including visuals and video
- events targeted at particular minority groups
- engagement with the Education Authority and schools
- engagement with large employers and their employees
- engagement via libraries

- arts and storytelling events
- pop-up “audience by surprise” events
- sensory and relaxed events
- events in other community settings (such as job centres, hairdressers, bowling greens, play parks, supermarkets, pubs and bookies)
- drop-in hubs
- Zoom consultation sessions
- community ambassadors
- celebrity ambassadors
- word of mouth

> *“You need ambassadors in the communities to tell their story to their community so that people can feel safe about coming to the centre to share their story without being marginalised.”*

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that we had identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group.



Other suggestions for the equity steering group included:

- Migrant communities
- People with refugee status or seeking asylum
- Men
- Middle-aged men
- The very elderly
- Students
- People of no faith
- Integrated education alumni

- Irish speakers
- Those who no longer live in Belfast or NI
- Parents
- Foster carers and guardians
- Younger children
- People with care experience
- Underprivileged children
- Long-term unemployed
- Different socio-economic classes, in particular people living in poverty
- “Normal working every day people”
- “Less educated people who struggle to read large blocks of text”
- Blind people
- People with dementia
- People from geographic communities
- People living at interfaces
- Homeless people
- Drug addicts
- Tourists
- People who are not affiliated to groups

One person suggested:

> *“Be flexible in the make up of the steering group so that it rotates and members can join and leave without it becoming a burden or precious to just a chosen few.”*

Some respondents considered more “professional expertise” would be advantageous.

> *“Experts! How are individual people within this massive group of “diverse identities” going to interact with each other? You can’t just pooled such diverse people together and expect to get good quality data”*
>
> *“Museums professionals need to be involved otherwise it won't be a proper museum”*
>
> *"Industry professionals and their businesses that could also become anchor tenants within this development"*
>
> *“Storytellers already working in and around the city”*

Others were concerned that the equality focus was misguided or that the steering group was just “box ticking” or “woke”.

> *“While the need for equality and diversity is necessary – any focus groups should also be representative of Belfast. Ethnic minorities represent approx 5% of the population, LGBT approx 6–8%. How about under-privileged white children from Ballymurphy or inner East Belfast. Someone's who is long term unemployed from Whiterock – they're the “real” people of Belfast.”*
>
> *"If everyone has an equal voice then the result is not proportionate.”*

> *"disagree with some of the political agenda behind some of the 'causes' above. The group needs to be narrower and just focus on real physical accessibility issues rather than perceived cultural and social ones. This project is at risk of a backlash from council ratepayers who object to large amounts of money going into the wrong type of consultation."*

IRISH LANGUAGE

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector.

Consultees "warmly welcome[d]" Belfast Stories and were "hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city". However, there were concerns that "the Irish language community have been, so far, completely omitted from the Belfast Stories concept". Rather,

> *"it is incumbent upon Belfast City Council to ensure that these rights are catered for in council projects through language visibility. To overlook the language rights of this growing and vibrant community, who have long campaigned for equality and respect, to access such an innovative and important resource through their native tongue would be doing a huge disservice to them, in breach of international and domestic treaty rights and would be contradicting the council's own Language Strategy"*

As well as welcoming the Irish language community, such an approach could also help good relations by "normalising the language [as] research has consistently shown increased visibility leads to increased tolerance and understanding".

While there was recognition of Irish as a native minority language that should not be categorised with other minority groups, it was also suggested that "members of the Irish language community [should be] on the project's equity steering group, given that all other minority groups across the city are represented."

> *"The impact of being unable to access such a magnificent resource in one's own language is something which should certainly be taken into consideration when evaluating those who may be at risk of missing out. This would ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are truly at the heart of the Belfast Stories project."*

Consultees also suggested that the council develop and implement a language screening assessment for all new council policies, practices and projects.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR GATHERING STORIES

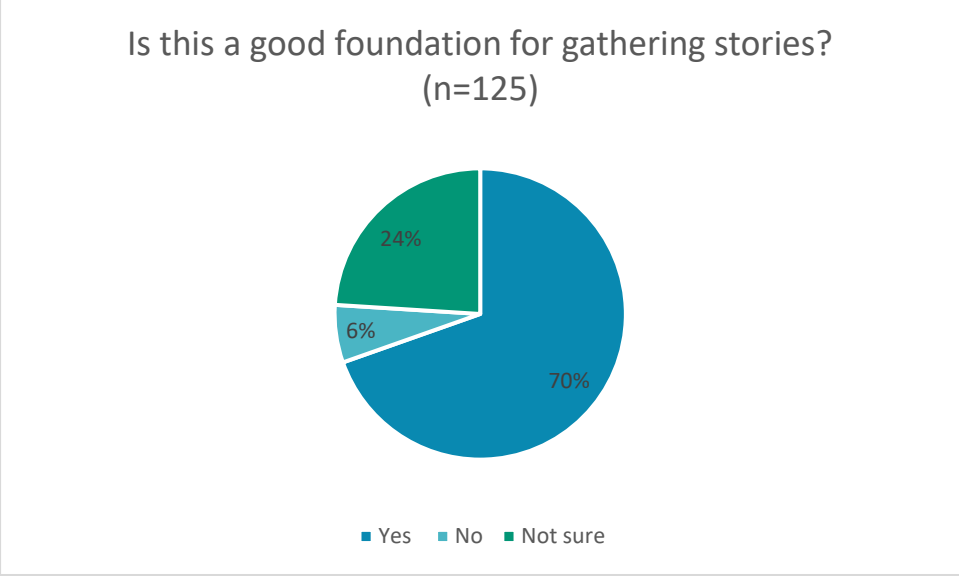
The framework for gathering stories sets out the approach to how stories will be gathered. Stories will be told in the first person (that is, using words like “I” and “my”). They can be about past, present or future, and there are seven overarching themes.

1. Home: A sense of belonging and connection
2. Resilient: Strong and spirited
3. Place: Relating to spaces
4. Authentic: Embracing all identities
5. Innovative: Entrepreneurial zeal
6. Change: A city transforming
7. Creative: Inspiring expressions in many forms

FEEDBACK ON THE FRAMEWORK

Consultees were asked to consider if the framework for gathering stories was a good foundation for gathering stories.

The majority agreed that it is a good foundation. For example, 7 out of 10 (70 per cent) survey respondents agreed it is a good foundation.



Consultees wanted stories that are entertaining, educational – “I want stories I can relate to and make me think – that stay with me” – and leave them feeling inspired by others and for the future – “People from Belfast don’t think they can be successful”.

However, nearly 1 in 4 (24 per cent) were unsure, and 6 per cent disagreed. The main concern among those who disagreed with the framework for gathering stories was that it had been “highjacked” by “causes” and that the focus on equality, diversity and inclusion would tell the stories of “a small minority of people rather than mass majority [...] to the detriment of others”.

Similarly, concerns about authenticity were again raised: that in trying to be all things to all people, Belfast Stories would be "wishy-washy", "hijacked by generalities", "a jumble" no more than a sum of its parts.

> *"it suggests that Belfast is trying to be something that it is not (i.e. a multi-cultural, diverse city like Bristol, Manchester etc)[…] Be true to ourselves, we've differences but deep down we're genuine people, we're friendly – we're different, we're us. Don't be pretentious and pretend we're something we're not. Celebrate who we are and be proud of it."*

> *"Are we going to have something that reflects Belfast or is it just a collection of Belfast Stories where somebody is going to tell the tale of Buck Alec going up the back of his garden with a tiger and knocked over a bin, or somebody is going to tell the story that my granny met the queen, which are all perfectly good stories, but are they the Belfast story."*

There were also concerns that the stories would come from a "self-selecting group of contributors" or "the same old, same old people".

There were also objections to the first-person approach: that it is "far too contrived"; that it could promote narratives that are misleading, partisan or unverified; that individuals could be unduly venerated; and that it misses rich oral, collective, community and folkloric traditions.

> *"Oral histories, stories of Belfast, are often those that already come through several layers of cultural and spoken perception. The proposal attempts to void this natural way of storytelling and would simply cause interviewees to focus on their use of the first person and not the story."*

Indeed, during workshops, participants frequently signposted to history books, fiction, existing museum collections and archives that do not present a first-person viewpoint. Consultees were also interested in eras of history that would be difficult, if not impossible (for example, the Bronze Age in Belfast) to hear about first hand.

Existing story collections, whether in museums and official archives or gathered through community and cultural projects, were consistently identified as a rich seam for Belfast Stories, particularly for people and groups that may be less willing or able to tell their stories anew (for example, due to trust, culture, confidence, language, literacy, age or disability; see also Barriers that would stop people telling their stories).

Others sought further detail on the story gathering process, in particular, how the framework and the story gathering process would safeguard stories and storytellers, which is covered in more detail in the Ethics section below.

STORY GATHERING THEMES

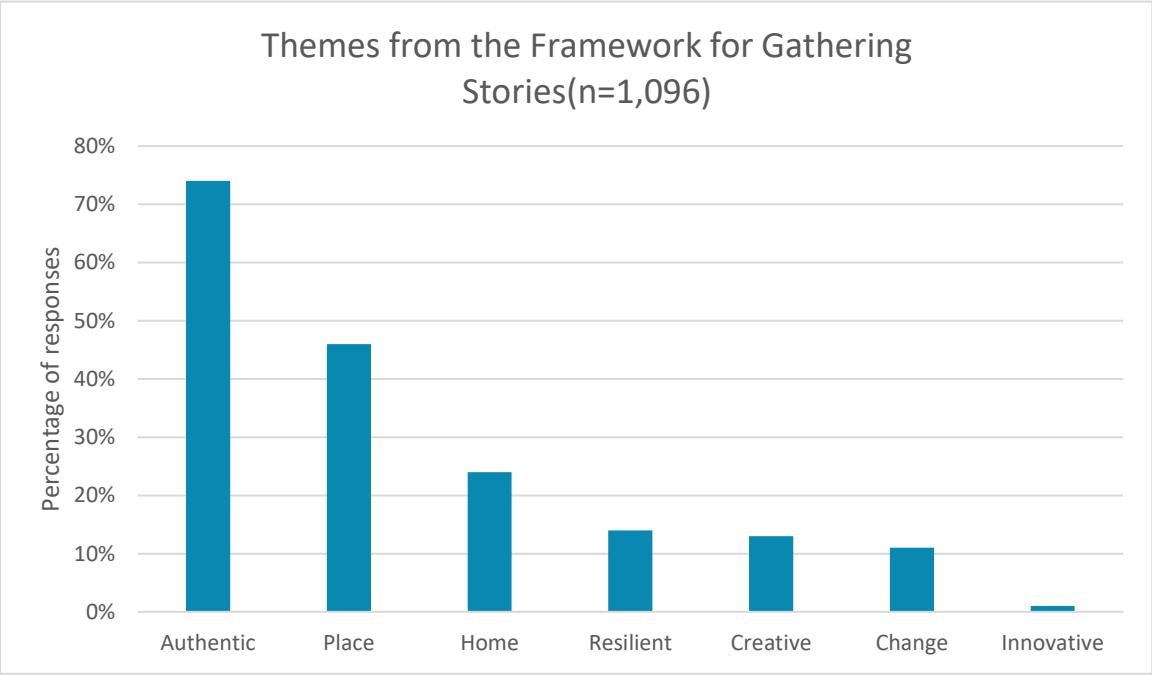
thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. used short, fun questions to further test the story gathering themes at special events, during on-street interviews and pop-up engagement sessions (for

example, in pubs, taxis, shopping centres, St George's Market and takeaways) and on social media.

The questions were:

- If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?
- What is the most Belfast thing you've ever seen or heard?
- What is your first memory of Belfast?
- Why are you here?
- What is your favourite place in Belfast?

They received 1,096 answers from 683 participants. They then mapped responses back to the story gathering themes.[8]



Authentic

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. found that Authentic was the most common theme, accounting for nearly three quarters (74 per cent) of all responses. Under this theme they catalogued references to language, food, humour, situations or behaviours characteristic to Belfast.

In the general consultation, participants particularly welcomed the focus on people, blending well-known faces and voices from the past and contemporary culture with "extraordinary ordinary" and just plain "ordinary" people like "the milk man, bread man, lemonade man".

> *"Seek out 'emotive' stories of all sorts – it'd be like knowing real people who you could be telling you their story at the bus stop."*

[8] thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. have prepared a separate detailed report on their findings.

There was also an interest in the ordinary lives of well-known people, for example, politicians' wedding days or what they ate for breakfast.

Humour came up frequently in the wider consultation as well. People perceive that Belfast has a unique, dark humour. This also came through in many of the stories told and the way they were told – even sad stories tended to be told in a wry style, and funny stories often evoked pathos. However, there was some concern that these could be lost in translation. On a practical level, would tourists be able to understand Belfast accents, banter and colloquialisms ("Are youse getting?", "wee", "smick", "youse uns", "peelers", "Yer da sells Avon" and so on)? And if there had to be translation or paraphrase, would the stories still be authentically funny or poignant?

On an emotional level, could someone's sad story be incorrectly presented or interpreted as funny? As one consultee put it, "Not all stories are for consumption."

> *"Over-exposure, glamorisation […] People's histories are unique they can all too easily be exaggerated to turn them into 'legends' as a marketing angle. When they become tea-towels and calendars they stop being 'real people'."*

Some people expected that stories would be illustrated with artefacts and that there was an opportunity to display objects otherwise hidden, for example, in Ulster Museum stores or even in people's homes (a people's museum model).

There was also concern for the loss of built heritage and that Belfast Stories would mainly reference and signpost to buildings that have already been lost or are at risk (and "A lot can be lost between now and 2028.").

> *"Stories need to have a root in history, like a building or an artefact, otherwise they just float away like hot air."*

Sometimes stories are artefacts; one consultee suggested that there is a wealth of media (slides, cassette tapes, home videos and so on) lurking in attics and garages that individuals can no longer access and that these would make a good addition to the stories collection.

There was also some scepticism about the term or concept of authenticity: that to make Belfast Stories attractive to tourists or palatable to all political persuasions, it would become "Disne[y]fied", glamorised or "wishy-washy".

> *"There is authentic and then there is authentic authentic."*

Irish language

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector. Consultees "warmly welcome[d]" Belfast Stories and were "hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city". They underlined that:

> *"this project must not ignore the rich and indeed, diverse history of the Irish language in the city, nor should it ignore the growing community who are choosing to live their lives through the medium of Irish."*

Requests included that:

1. the Irish language is woven throughout the Belfast Stories themes, including celebration, diversity, education and the story of the language itself.

> *"Stories from and about Irish speakers must be fully integrated through all thematic aspects of the project in addition to specific focus on the growth of the Irish language community as a particular phenomenon within the city"*

> *"everyday lives are lived through the medium of Irish and therefore if the themes are deemed suitable for the non-Irish speakers there is no reason why they wouldn't pertain to Irish speakers too."*

2. there should be bilingual resources throughout Belfast Stories including external and internal signage, exhibitions, marketing and other materials.

Ulster Scots

A meeting was held with the Ulster Scots Agency, and other interest groups also participated in workshops.

The opportunity to foster further understanding the cultural identity of Ulster Scots was broadly welcomed. It was felt that this should include stories of the language, of "celebrated" and "lesser known" individuals, of industrial heritage and diaspora and international connections.

In general throughout the public consultation, there was concern that there could be an imbalance or bias in content and presentation. One consultee also welcomed further reflection of other Ulster identities and ancestries (for example, Anglo-Ulster, Franco and Italianate).

Place

Place was the second most common theme identified by thrive and Daisy Chain Inc., accounting for nearly half of responses (46 per cent). Responses categorised under Place referred to spaces around the city, such as pubs, shops, buildings, streets, parks, arts and cultural venues.

In the wider consultation, there was particular interest in stories about the Bank of Ireland building itself (for example, stories of the bank staff, and the bank itself is built over castle ramparts and a graveyard; it was suggested an archaeologist should be part of the design and build teams) and about the surrounding area (for example, Castle Court traders, the "Gay Quarter", residents of the Half Bap and Sailortown, the fadgies of Millfield/Smithfield, dance halls, commerce and business, as a "gateway to the north" and so on).

There was also an interest in architecture, from the vernacular, such as redbrick terraces, to the monumental, such as, again, the White Bank.

> *"I'd tell the story of my first memory of Belfast. I remember coming in in a pram and Belfast was red – all red brick and brown shiny terracotta tiles"*

However, this was tempered with concern for the loss of built heritage and that Belfast Stories could reference and signpost to buildings that have already been lost or are at risk.

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. considered that responses also reflected the different "personalities" of the four quadrants of the city. However, when tested on the equity steering group (which includes representatives from across the city), they contested that any variances in responses simply reflect the location of the engagement and cannot be considered representative of larger populations, particularly in a city of complex geographies where identities can change from one end of the street to another.

Home

Home accounted for almost a quarter (24 per cent) of responses to thrive and Daisy Chain Inc's questions. Under Home they catalogued responses mentioning family, friends or the idea of making Belfast a new home.

In the wider consultation, people were particularly interested in learning about:

- social history
- migration, including why people come or chose to live in Belfast (generally, from other countries, but in one case, from Armagh); diaspora stories; and the stories of people returning to the city. The history of Jewish people in the city came up frequently in the wider consultation. One consultee was keen to see Anglo-Ulster, Franco- and Italianate influences on ancestry and culture explored alongside Ulster Scots.
- what people from other countries thought about Belfast
- particular neighbourhoods or communities, right down to how people lived their lives on particular streets ("History of smaller parts") over particular periods of time (including streets that no longer exist, such as Pound Loney and Gaffikin Street)
- the expansion of the city, and how suburbs and even inner-city areas were once rural

Consultees also reinforced the importance of seeing different cultures reflected in Belfast Stories. This would help minoritised groups feel "at home", while challenging stereotypes would benefit others by enhancing understanding and empathy.

> *"Any sort of representation will unlock hope" (a consultee from the d/Deaf community)*

> *"Tell stories of the connections between ourselves that bind us together."*

> *"Say there was a story of some office worker over the moon about getting a job – and then the picture with it looks nothing like a typical office worker. A surprising element to teach you not to judge."*

> *"They see us not as themselves they see us as wrongdoers but they have not met us so they think this through stories they hear. They could see through our stories we are like them."*

> *"It may help other people become more familiar with us, the Roma, and they may look at us differently, with better eyes."*

> *"You look at people in a different way because of the story behind them."*

This could be further enhanced by providing

> *"A place to start conversations and carry them on. There needs to be space in the building to talk – to own party and to new people"*

Consultees saw an opportunity to change the exhibition programme to reflect key festivals, events and celebrations, from Easter, Christmas, Chinese New Year to Belfast Pride.

> *"We tell, they tell – everyone could tell stories about Christmas and family and food – it is the same for us all but we do it differently."*

Some consultees felt that their identity or community should have its own theme within the framework or section within an exhibition. This included stories relating to women, the LGBTQ+ community and Irish language.[9]

Others felt that their stories would be a particular driver for tourists from within their community, offering interest and relevance missed elsewhere alongside a strong sense of welcome. This included d/Deaf and LGBTQ+ tourists.

> *"a visitor from USA asked why would I go see Titanic – were there any black people like me on it?"*

Notably, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. found that love was one of the main reasons people moved to or lived in Belfast. However, few stories told during the wider consultation were about love.

Resilient

Troubles

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. categorised stories or mentions of the Troubles as Resilient, which accounted for 14 per cent of responses. They found that people over the age of 40 were most likely to talk about the Troubles. In their report, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. also reflected that stories about the Troubles "were rarely about resilience and more about trauma. When respondents spoke of the Troubles, it was about how vivid those memories

[9] Irish language consultees also felt that Irish language should be integrated throughout the themes and building.

were and the impact the Troubles had on their mental health and on their relationship with Belfast".

Examples from consultees included:

> *"I remember the barricades, in the 70s, you'd come up shopping when you felt safe enough."*
>
> *"I hate to be grim but standing on the roadside on Ligoniel Hill on a dark evening in 1969 and watching the glow of fires burning across the city. Aged 5."*

Wider engagement, however, indicates that the Troubles should not be categorised within one theme. Rather, for many, it was a backdrop against which Home, Place, Creativity, Innovation and more continued. There are particular sensitivities about defining people, such as victims and survivors, in relation to the Troubles, and we heard repeatedly that people may want to share stories that reflect other aspects of their identities. People were particularly interested in hearing more oblique Troubles stories, for example, of how certain people or communities (such as the d/Deaf, minoritised ethnic and interface communities) continued to live their lives.

Overall, unsurprisingly, there was little consensus as to how the Troubles should be told. Some felt that Belfast Stories should avoid the Troubles (and politics) altogether; others cautioned that it is part of our brand, identity or unique selling point ("Violence is what people think about Belfast and why they come here"). There were also concerns that Belfast Stories should "add value" to existing Troubles narratives, but the first-person perspective was inherently problematic as it could not be "navigated by starting with facts" (a principle of the Decade of Centenaries, for example). In general, an approach that told "the Troubles without the Troubles" or "Belfast beyond the violence" appears more welcome.

> *"How do we ensure that we don't have a repeat of the Troubles archive at the Ulster museum. We all know how many iterations of that archive were rejected before it was so anodyne that it offended nobody, and excited nobody."*

Communities

The equity steering group reflected that the Resilient theme may work better at a community, rather than an individual level, whereby areas of and communities within Belfast had endured significant stresses and strains over eras, bouncing back or adapting to survive or thrive.

Individuals also expressed interest in learning about how other communities survived and thrived. For example, young people on one side of an interface would welcome further insight in to stories from the other side.

Resilience was also identified by communities of interest as the collective story they would like to tell – for example, the development of Belfast's gay scene and LGBTQ+ rights.

> *"We need to tell the story of community as well as individuals. Stories of kindness and empathy."*

This theme in particular was felt to be an opportunity to show tourists our "best side".

> *"My Belfast story would be that it is full of kind people. Lost purses are returned. We say thank you – a lot!"*
>
> *"Be a beacon for kindness."*

Creative

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. included references to culture and arts under the theme of Creative, which accounted for 13 per cent of responses.

In the wider consultation, there was frequent reference to sport, particularly sporting figures (leaning towards "unsung heroes", "not just George Best") and sports that were felt to transcend traditional religious or political boundaries, such as cycling.

Arts were identified as a tool to help people tell their stories – from creative writing, drama, music and photography to quilt making, art "allows them to share without looking like they are sharing", and it can also transform stories so "what is sad becomes powerful".

There was also interest in stories about music, stories set to music, music that is story and well-known literary and artistic figures.

A number of consultees were also concerned that the emphasis on first-person accounts excluded fiction and folklore.

> *"folklore is very important and endangered if not already gone."*
>
> *"Stories in the third person are equally valid and can add a breadth of knowledge that writing in the first person doesn't allow."*

Change

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. found that Change referred mostly to places that did not exist anymore, accounting for 11 per cent of responses.

During the wider consultation, when asked what stories they would expect to see or experience, consultees generally referred to stories in the past including the Bronze Age, Vikings, "golden age" of industry and architecture, two world wars, the Blitz and the Troubles.

When asked about the stories they would tell, consultees generally told stories relating to family or social history from the last three generations to the near present. (However, there were very few, if any stories of the pandemic.)

Consultees were particularly interested in hearing older people's stories, and, indeed, capturing them (in the words of an older consultee) "before they are lost for good".

While no one explicitly offered a story of the "future", a number of consultees did ask that these are included.

Consultees appear to expect or desire that stories are told chronologically. This would help them understand their own story within the wider context of history and time. It also provided for intergenerational stories that illuminate change such as "mother, daughters, granddaughters – going to dances over the years, Flora[l] hall and so on". There was also reference to first-, second- and third-generation immigrant stories.

> *"Could have stories with time lapse videos showing how places have changed from the past to today – show how things have improved – been redeveloped – to inspire hope."*

Similarly, there was an interest in different versions of the same story or different perspectives on the same event or subject matter.

Of course, people, stories and how they relate to each other change over time, and what was present or future inevitably becomes past. This was of particular concern for some consultees during the public consultation, which was six years in advance of the building opening. Young people and people with refugee status or seeking asylum status in particular may not want to be identified by those labels or by a story told by their past self caught perpetually in time. Others still were concerned that they should have ongoing control over the storage, presentation and of their story (see also the section on Ethics).

And the city itself is constantly changing. Consultees felt that the stories and exhibition should also change, not least to ensure repeat visits from local people. Several suggested that visitors (local and international) should become part of the Belfast story, for example, by leaving their reflections or stories for posterity. In such a way, Belfast Stories can validate Belfast's sense of itself as a place worth showing, visiting and telling.

Innovative

thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. included trade, such as the Belfast shipyards, under the theme of Innovative. However, this amounted to only seven responses (1 per cent) to thrive and Daisy Chain's questions.

Consultees talked more frequently about trade and industry during the wider consultation. Older people in particular were more likely to talk about the industries of the "golden age" of Belfast, such as rope, linen, ships and tobacco.

There were also frequent references to Belfast food.

There were fewer references to contemporary industry, although younger people were slightly more likely to talk about film and animation.

Other

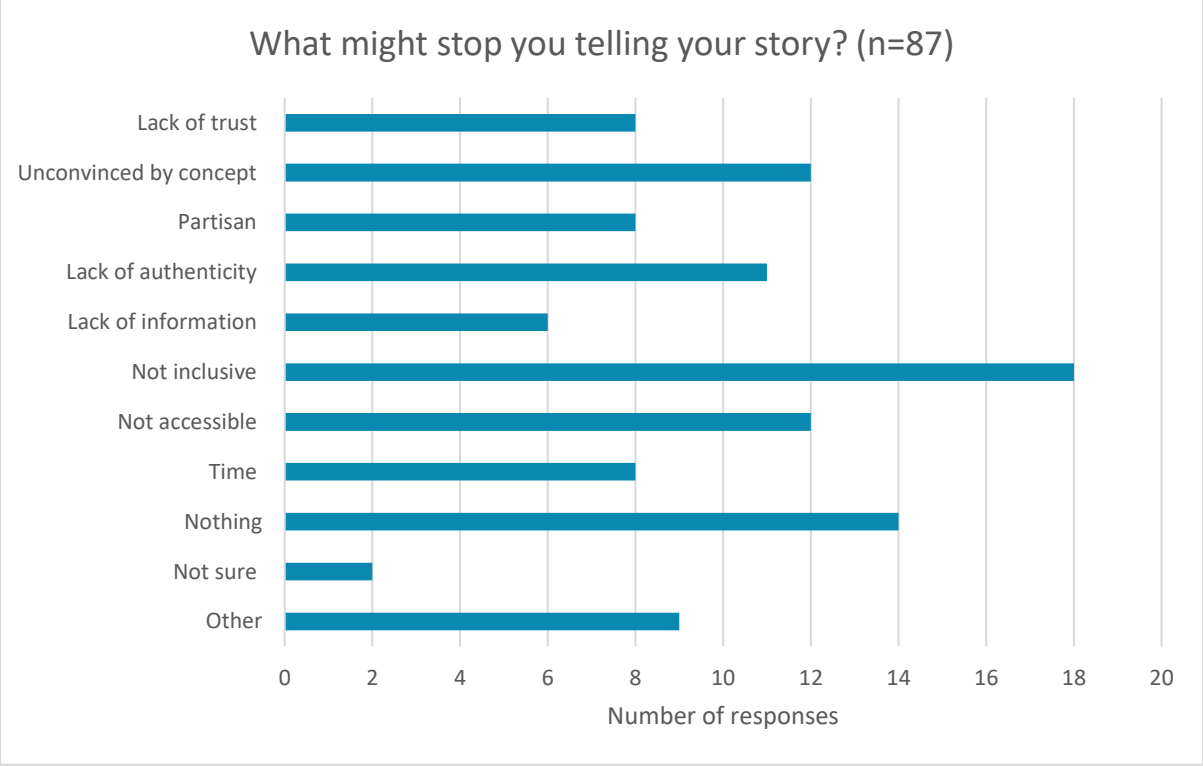
13 per cent of thrive and Daisy Chain Inc's responses were not categorized. Integrated education was twice identified as a gap by consultees during the wider consultation, although depending on the tenet of the story, this could also be classified as Innovative, Resilient, Change or Authentic.

One surprising category that came up again and again was animals, from elephants at the zoo to Buck Alec's lion and pet ferrets walked around on leads. Mostly these were humorous (or incredulous) and could be classed as Authentic or Home.

In their report, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. considered that "themes and subthemes within the Framework all have a positive connotation. During the engagement, it was noted that people's opinions of Belfast and their stories are often more nuanced, sharing the 'good' as much as the 'bad'."

Overall, most stories, like people, tended to speak across several story collection themes (and much of the categorisation above is arbitrary).

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE TELLING THEIR STORIES



The survey asked "What might stop you telling your story?". Responses broadly mirrored the responses to the "What would stop you participating in Belfast Stories?" question. However, there was deeper reflection on the personal impact of storytelling including relating to lack of confidence ("Fear of being laughed at, not clever enough or my story not being important."); privacy including concerns about "being misquoted or only parts told that show inaccuracies"; "fear of reprisals" and "illegal activities in the past"; and the need for trauma-informed practice.

There was a desire to tell authentic stories married with concern that this would not fit in to a received narrative.

> *"Belfast is often as a city very pessimistic of itself. It's important to reflect the past but […] the concentration should be on embracing the future."*

> *"Feeling that my story whatever that might be isn't representative of the Belfast being presented through the building. We need the world to see the real Belfast. Why residents have stayed in the city and love it. Why they have built their lives instead of leaving despite the political upheaval and civil unrest we have experienced in the past."*

In practice, during workshops and other in-person engagement, the vast majority of people were very willing to tell their stories. Indeed, many shared or offered to share their story during workshops, and most groups asked that the Belfast Stories team returns at a later date when the process for story gathering is more fully developed and ready to be tested or rolled out.

Some people indicated that they would be more comfortable telling their story to another person. This would be more conversational, prompting them to open up or dive deeper. It would also help overcome barriers around literacy and language abilities, from dyslexia, other first languages or simply embarrassment at poor spelling.

Others would prefer to write or record their story direct, whether finding this approach more creative or less exposing.

During in-person consultation, only a very few felt that they had no story to tell ("Who would be interested in my story?"; "Other people have told stories better"). Generally, young women appeared more reticent than young men, and women more reticent than men in general. Young people were also very concerned with their public profile and would only tell their story (in 2028) "if they were successful".

Group dynamics helped people overcome initial reticence. For example, at the carers workshop, those who felt their stories were not interesting enough were chivvied along by peers who championed carers as "unsung heroes" who are "not recognised enough". They were quickly boosted, and stories were shared.

In other group settings where it might be perceived that there could be a lack of trust, for example, with minoritised ethnic groups, they were again happy to open up within their peer group. It may be less likely that they would have told their stories individually.

Still, others may prefer the privacy of individual story gathering, particularly those who have sensitive or traumatic stories to tell. There was concern about the potential for storytelling to retraumatise. Organisations such as the Victims and Survivors Service have excellent, tried-and-tested policies and practices co-designed with the intended beneficiaries. This includes having counsellors on hand before, during and after story gathering and giving

participants full control of the use and assignment of their stories. (This is also discussed in the Ethics section.)

Another barrier that emerged through in-person engagement is storytelling fatigue. This may particularly affect people whose stories are of academic interest; victims, survivors, older LGBTQ+ people (particularly men), ex-combatants and -prisoners, for example, may already have told their stories, sometimes more than once, to researchers. There were additional frustrations when the stories were perceived to have become shelfware and not made a material difference in policy or practice.

Many “ordinary” people’s stories have also already been collected through community groups, reminiscence projects, local history associations and so on. In general, participants indicated they would prefer that this activity is shared or showcased, rather than stories recorded anew.

This also points again to the need for a foundation of trust. While the majority of participants in the consultation had little reticence sharing their stories with the facilitators, who were generally unknown to the participants, many of the workshops were organised or supported by trusted intermediaries, whether a local community group or respected individual “of” that community, which helped reassure participants. Survey responses explicitly referenced Belfast City Council as a barrier to sharing their story, and thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. researchers reported interviewees walking away when the council was mentioned.

One person felt that people collecting the stories should be local people. Another felt that collectors should be “of” the community stories are being collected from (so, for example, someone with Irish language should collect stories from the Irish language community). Another felt that the stories should be interpreted by Belfast people. Overall, “It shouldn’t be two white men”.

The use of trusted intermediaries is likely to be particularly important for vulnerable or marginalized groups. Consultees suggested that where stories had not already been collected, tools that could be used included training and resourcing (for example, with interview scripts, facilitators, digital recording devices and so on) community groups to collect stories, training peer facilitators and using arts to help people open up and approach stories more obliquely.

Where an unknown facilitator is used, there was caution that it takes time to build relationships and trust. Consultees were also alert to bias. Some storytellers may be more likely to self-censor if talking to someone they don’t know for shame or fear of exposure; equally, others may be less open when talking to someone they do know, for example, due to embarrassment or fear of causing offense.

In the survey, a number of respondents also identified the risk of literally incriminating themselves as a barrier to telling their story. Others may be limited in what they can say because of repercussions for their wellbeing, safety or security (for example, in the case of

someone seeking asylum, it might be retraumatising or jeopardise their application for asylum). This needs further careful consideration in relation to ethics.

Some would be happy to have their words used, but not their voice (because they dislike the sound of their voice on recordings); others would be happy to have their voice used, but not their face. Several consultees, particularly among minoritised ethnic groups and young people, wondered whether they could use an avatar instead.

There was concern that the collection process could be difficult or cumbersome, particularly for those with different literacy or memory loss.

Other suggested tools and techniques that might help different people and groups share their story include:

- "story stations" or booths distributed throughout the city
- storytelling hubs in libraries
- storytelling booths in Belfast Stories (including onsite during the build)
- provision of example stories
- reminiscence workshops ("Best asset is the film archive – use this to generate stories; let people remember, then tell stories.")
- walking/talking tours and consultations
- poetry and creative writing workshops
- other arts and crafts including drama, photography, music and quilt making
- "living libraries"[10]
- community ambassadors
- use of technology to mitigate barriers such as physical access for disabled people and people living in poverty (for example, an online forum to record or submit a story)
- provision of transport to Belfast Stories or for story collectors to go to storytellers
- provision of resources to communities, such as recording devices, guidance and facilitators
- community outreach, for example, through story collection days or hubs in community or public spaces
- an ethics advisor
- assurance as to how stories will be used, safely and with respect
- trauma-informed practice and processes
- trained, skilled and properly resourced story collectors and facilitators. Consultees stressed the need for excellent people skills to put people at ease and listening skills to tease out and collect stories accurately
- clear messaging assuring people their stories are valuable and welcome
- clear messaging welcoming the stories of minority communities
- provision of collateral in a range of languages and formats including Braille, large print, audio-visual, BSL, ISL and Irish

[10] See, for example, www.community-relations.org.uk/news-centre/living-library-where-people-are-books

Two respondents suggested that story tellers should be paid for their stories or profits from the centre invested back in their communities.

Others felt that “A relaxed atmosphere – a cup of tea and a chat” or “a warm space” would be sufficient. One person said they would “Be glad [to] give stories back to the bank”.

Generally, it was felt that Belfast Stories would need to have a broad spectrum of safe, robust and engaging story collection approaches.

ETHICS

A substantial number of consultees raised questions relating to the ethics of story gathering, preservation and presentation. This is an important area of work that Belfast City Council is already considering.

Key points raised by consultees include:

- The council should consider how it safeguards stories and storytellers at every point in the process from collection to storage, curation and presentation.
- People should understand the purpose of their telling, and it should not just be to be put on a shelf: “Move along the agenda to inclusion and belonging”.
- It is important that storytellers also understand what won’t happen to their stories, for example, if it is to be stored or added to an archive, and that they get something in return for giving their story, whether it is enjoyment, pride, a cup of tea and a chat, the feeling of belonging or being part of something bigger.
- Storytellers may want to decide how their story is aligned to the “curatorial wheel” and what key words, for example, are used to catalogue it. There were concerns about stories being misclassified, “used insensitively or unsympathetically”. People may want to say why their story is meaningful in their eyes, rather than important to a curator, historian, academic or viewer.
- Not all stories can be “consumed [You] need to think about this and be honest when gathering stories.”
- At some point in the future, storytellers may want to withdraw permission for their stories to be stored or used, for example, if their circumstances or opinions change.
- Some storytellers may not want their stories shared until some point in the future (for example, after their death).
- Belfast Stories should periodically check that they still have permission to store and use stories.
- Belfast Stories must consider how it would handle any information disclosed about serious offences.
- Caution should be exercised about venerating living people or contemporary figures.
- Counselling should be available where there is risk of harm to storytellers, audiences and even staff.

- Academics and archives have extensive experience in the collection, use and retention of primary research and can provide support and advice.
- The Victims and Survivors Service has a detailed guide, Recording Lived Experience: A Toolkit for Victims and Survivors, that was co-designed by victims and survivors
- Belfast Stories should allow storytellers to describe themselves, for example, person seeking asylum rather than an asylum seeker ("How they are named informs their dignity.")
- People have multiple identities and can choose to tell different stories. For example, a disabled person does not just want to share their story of being disabled; they could also be a runner, an artist, a knitter, a mother and so on.

> *"Guard against boxing people in to telling the stories you expect of them – LGBTQIA+ have stories other than about misery – happy, love, fun, and also stories that are not about being gay."*

- The council should consider appointing an ethics advisor.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

> *"The idea excites us. The Roma have never been included in anything like this, and we hope it is going to happen and that we won`t be left with just promises."*

While some people struggled with consultation on a liminal concept, the information published about the consultation emphasised that this was only the first step in six years of planned engagement.

The final question of the public consultation survey asked, "What stories, experiences, knowledge and networks can you share to help us develop Belfast Stories?" Seventy-three substantive responses were received, equating to nearly three in five respondents who offered a suggestion for the next stage.

The following section briefly considers some of the findings from the survey and the wider consultation as they relate to the strands of ongoing engagement as set down in the engagement plan.

MAXIMISING THE HANDPRINT

TOURISM

The tourism sector perhaps least receptive of the concept of Belfast Stories. This may be because Belfast Stories could be considered competition if it is not properly integrated with the current tourism offer. Others were concerned that the market proposition was not fully thought out and the visitor experience was "oblique": "It can mean everything or nothing."

There was concern about displacing business from existing cinemas, bars and restaurants in particular. However, consultees felt strongly that Belfast Stories "should be the city's shopfront", providing tourism information and signposting to attractions and offers elsewhere in the city, including other heritage buildings, food and drink and city centre and neighbourhood offerings.

Other suggestions included:

- "Storycations" could be packaged and branded to encourage people to stay longer in the city
- Links from the new Transport Hub, including storyboards
- Belfast Stories "modules" in other key venues around the city
- Walking and cycling tours from the building
- Space for small businesses to advertise
- Signposting to other parks, the Belfast Hills and their stories from the roof garden and other green spaces within Belfast Stories

Overall, consultees were keen for Belfast Stories to positively influence Sunday openings, the night-time economy, the number of tourists coming in to the city centre and duration of overnight stays. There was also recognition that these are issues that need further strategic intervention (for example, lack of public transport in the evenings and taxis in general).

> *"We are all fully aware of the amount of tourists that come and they tend to stop around the Titanic. Is this going to be an opportunity for ourselves to get those cultural tourists back into us, to be able to be signposted to us, to help us to thrive into the future."*

HERITAGE

> *"There are parts of the city (and it does seem like these parts are growing) which feel like husks. The dilapidated infrastructure, collapsing, often historic buildings, propped up by scaffolding and sometimes whole streets in decay. From Great Victoria Street through Castle Court to North Street, there is, by many accounts, a sense of decline."*

Many consultees were supportive of the concept hoping that it would help regenerate the local area ("it is a social desert, run down needs doing up"), but there was also a small, but strong voice of scepticism.

> *"How about conservation instead of conversation"*
>
> *"A lot can be lost between now and 2028."*
>
> *"The redevelopment of the whole block is an exciting, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Belfast City Council to ensure that the level and standard of beauty that once existed on this site over 100 years ago is at the very least equalled. It is our view that there is no reason why the beauty of the original streetscapes cannot be bettered. This will be the test."*

Consultees emphasised the need to preserve existing built heritage to ensure that there is relevance between stories and the world around them ("Stories need to have a root in history, like a building or an artefact, otherwise they just float away like hot air.")

Others were concerned that Belfast Stories would lead to gentrification of the area, which would push out artists and businesses that occupy the "Gay Quarter" and Cathedral Quarter in particular.

> *"I'm just thinking with the burning down of the Cathedral buildings recently, the arts in Belfast, the vibrancy which brings the city to life, are being priced out of the area, and this brand new space, as lovely as it's going to look, and it is probably going to be beautiful, but it's not for the people of Belfast, it's not for the arts in Belfast, it's for people, tourists coming in."*

Organisations in the heritage sector specifically asked Belfast City Council for support to help develop curatorial skills so they, in turn, could help the story collection and presentation process.

ARTS

Many arts organisations are receptive to Belfast Stories. They already tell stories through an array of artforms and are excited for further opportunities for collecting and creating. Further suggestions for Belfast Stories include artist residencies, office space, exhibition space and programmable space.

There are, however, some concerns including the risk that they may be pushed out of a gentrified Cathedral Quarter (see the Heritage section above).

Others noted that the investment in Belfast Stories dwarfs the funding they receive from Belfast City Council in particular and the government in general. The sector feels particularly precarious as it emerges out of the pandemic to be met with escalating operating costs.

Community Arts Partnership organised a focus group with the community arts sector, which felt the concept reneges on previous policy decisions published in Belfast City Council's A City Imagining strategy.[11] Discussion included:

> *"The very simple message seems to be that the arts has disappeared and the whole direction over the past number of years has been towards tourism. Clearly this is entirely a tourism project and leaves the question, 'Where is the support for arts, arts infrastructure, arts capacity building, arts delivery doesn't seem to be there.' The original talk of the Tourism levy supporting arts and so on. I don't see it."*

> *"Where is any commitment to arts, never mind Community Arts as a subset within arts? I have no hope at all that there's a place for us."*

[11] No representatives of Belfast City Council or Belfast Stories attended.

> *"I think the space for organisations like everybody here, who are used to working in a collaborative, cooperative manner, in community, through community, by community, has been sidetracked. That then calls into question this notion of cultural democracy and equality of representation."*

> *"I am a bit disappointed to learn that all these tenders have already gone out as that undermines the consultation process."*

Among more positive voices at the focus group ("I am positive, I think it is a wonderful idea"; "I think I would go with the positive route"), there was an interest in helping to further shape the contents of Belfast Stories and how it connects to communities and community arts.

> *"We can spend our time banging our head against this monolith which is unstoppable, or we can put our heads together and start looking at a proposal of what we would like to see."*

MINIMISING THE FOOTPRINT

In relation to environment impact, tourism consultees in particular encouraged Belfast Stories to "aim high on sustainability" as this is the standard demanded by many tourists and conference and business tourists in particular.

SCREEN

There was general enthusiasm for the screen element of Belfast Stories. Some people were less interested when they learned that the screens would not show "blockbusters", and others suggested a middle-ground of locally filmed mainstream productions (such as Star Wars 7 and 8 and Game of Thrones).

Young people were particularly interested in career and skills development opportunities in film, animation and gaming.

People from minoritised ethnic communities in particular felt that films need to reflect the different cultures in Belfast – their culture represented on screen is an important part in seeing themselves as part of the Belfast story.

The screen sector was particularly enthusiastic about opportunities to train young creatives, support early career filmmakers and for the centre to function as a meeting place or hub for the sector.

Other suggestions included having a life-long learning centre.

SOCIAL

The general public was very interested in Belfast Stories' proposed social spaces, perhaps reflecting a deficit of free, safe, welcoming and attractive space in the city centre where people (particularly younger and older people) can just "hang out".

There was also demand for programmable space, community space, exhibition space, community exhibition space and networking space.

There was concern that the viewing platform and rooftop garden would be overshadowed by other buildings.

> *"In this regard the planners need to implement a policy of 'protected views'. This should include views from the city to the Belfast Hills but also views of certain buildings and the streetscape. (e.g. the view up Donegall Place to the City Hall)."*

FOOD AND DRINK STORIES

Similar to feedback relevant to Maximising the handprint, consultees felt that Belfast Stories could have an important role signposting visitors to other food and drink around the city. Rather than compete, it could also address gaps in the current offer, which were identified as street food and brunch.

Consultees were also enthusiastic about using food and drink to animate the space, for example, with demonstrations, workshops and experiences changing according to the seasons or the wider Belfast Stories programme.

It was also considered important to tell the stories of local food and local food producers. This includes different world cuisines and the stories of the people – first, second and third generations – who brought their food to Belfast. Recipes are often passed down through generations and can also be stories.

An incubation space for new food businesses would be welcome. Pop-ups, markets and a regularly changing offer would also attract locals back for repeat visits.

Mixing recognisable brands (such as Coca Cola and Guinness) with local products was particularly important for younger people, who also look for Instagrammable experiences.

RETAIL

Consultees wanted local products in Belfast Stories retail spaces. They would also be interested in a market.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

> *"The people at most risk of missing out are people who aren't in any of the circles that are likely to hear about this project. Or people who, even if they hear about it and are part of these groups may feel like they have*

nothing to contribute or are too scared to take part. There is an element of privilege in having the drive and ability to participate."

Other ideas relevant to the next stage of consultation include:

- Using networks trusted by consultees such as community groups, churches and schools (particularly for minoritised groups)
- Have Belfast Stories ambassadors such as "ordinary people" and key people within the sector who can then communicate key messages
- Further engagement with young people
- Engagement through schools, universities and colleges including Irish medium
- Children and young people design the building and exhibition space (for example, using Lego)
- Further engagement around the Irish language
- Further engagement in the medium of Irish language
- Irish language representation on the equity steering group
- Further engagement with older people
- Older people, carers and people with dementia to work with the design team to make the building and exhibition space age- and dementia-friendly
- Prioritisation of older people's stories
- Have a sign language users working group
- Work with victims and survivors and advocacy organisations to co-design best practice, ethical guidance
- Arrange go-sees to other cities and attractions with key stakeholders
- Support artists and arts organisations to start building relationships and developing story collection practice and processes with people and communities
- Engage with existing creative writing groups
- Engage with existing historical societies
- Work with the community and voluntary and culture and heritage sectors to uncover existing story collections
- Joint working and partnership projects with the cultural sector
- Use the NI Screen Film Archive to prompt story collection
- Have an open consultative forum, always asking, "Are we getting to the right people?" and "Who else do we need to involve?"
- Storyboards and exhibitions placed strategically around the city
- Clear, consistent communications for the general public
- Promotion through City Matters
- Programme consultation and events as part of the city's annual cultural calendar and 2024 City of Culture

There was recognition that good engagement needs investment (“Deaf people are expensive”) and that the Belfast Stories team needs resourced with people who have good people and professional skills.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NEXT

There were exceptionally high levels of support for the concept of Belfast Stories during the public consultation. The next stage of engagement is an opportunity to continue to raise awareness and build on excitement and goodwill to start to shape a building and an experience that the people of Belfast can feel proud of and feel is truly theirs.

THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The approach to engagement was generally very well received, and feedback validates the planned next steps. For example, planned work strands themed around sustainability, partnership and experiences will harness the “professional expertise” suggested as lacking by consultees during the 14-week public consultation.

Nevertheless, the engagement plan and stakeholder mapping should be revised in light of lessons learned during the public consultation and new stakeholders that have emerged, engaged or showed themselves to be champions.

STAKEHOLDERS

At a community level, ongoing engagement should continue to focus on those most at risk of missing out. It can take time to form relationships and build trust, often more than is practical within a fixed-term public consultation. This should include focus on communities on the outskirts of the city who may not feel or be as connected to the centre. There should also be focus on communities in the immediate vicinity of the Belfast Stories site who will be most affected by its construction and operation. The public consultation has also shown that Belfast residents are also very interested in hearing very local stories.

During the public consultation, engagement happened in sectors. The ongoing engagement may be an opportunity to bring different sectors together in terms of what expertise they can bring to Belfast Stories, for example, as makers, narrators or curators, rather than film, arts or heritage organisations.

There should also be focus on the tourism sector.

LANGUAGE

The Belfast Stories concept was broadly welcomed by the Irish language community as an opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the language and the city’s Irish language community. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to a native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.

Belfast Stories should continue to consult closely with Irish language and Ulster Scots stakeholders, including in relation to the development of the building, story collection,

exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should be subject to an equality screening and (if required) a full equality impact assessment.

LAUNCH THE FINDINGS AND NEXT STAGE OF ENGAGEMENT

The council should organise a story-themed event to share the findings of the public consultation, continue to raise awareness of Belfast Stories and highlight the ongoing engagement.

GENERAL PUBLIC

Not all planned activity to raise awareness went ahead during the public consultation. A communications plan should be developed and integrated with the engagement plan. This should include key messages and a consistent identity with signposting to an updated Belfast Stories website and lively social media.

CHAMPIONS

The Belfast Stories engagement plan recommends that the city stakeholders network is open to all interested organisations. The council should consider developing a platform that similarly empowers interested individuals. Initially, this should include an ezine where individuals can sign up for updates and behind-the-scenes or insider information and opportunities (such as site tours, walking consultations or peer research training).

AMBASSADORS

The city stakeholders network is to be open to all interested organisations. But different organisations will want to be involved in the development of Belfast Stories at different levels. There are already a number of organisations that have emerged strongly as supporters or storytellers.

The council should consider how they further harness this goodwill and empower such organisations to become ambassadors. Initially, it is recommended that relationships with such organisations are managed by the Belfast Stories team on a one-to-one basis. The partners' toolkit can also be refreshed. A more formal programme, similar to champions, could be developed at a later stage.

EQUITY STEERING GROUP

The equity steering group has provided vital insight in to equality, diversity and inclusion including facilitating conversations with individuals and groups that would otherwise not be known to the Belfast Stories team.

The membership of the equity steering group should be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that we are hearing from voices that may otherwise go unheard.

RESOURCES

Belfast Stories engagement should be adequately resourced. Good engagement costs money and takes time (one reason why some groups are sometimes found to be hard to reach). Consultees also cautioned that the development of Belfast Stories should add to, not further burden the community and cultural sectors, which could also be resourced through collaborative, action-learning projects (for example, to test story collection processes or tools).

STORY COLLECTION

Belfast City Council plans to start gathering stories in spring 2023. The engagement plan includes recommendations for engaging around story gathering. This should focus on action learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstances), in particular older people and the very elderly (no one aged over 85 responded to the survey), whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.

It should also:

- build on best practice that currently exists, in particular in relation to safeguarding and ethics
- uncover the stories and archives that already exist, including at community level
- bring different sectors and stakeholders together to share knowledge and experience and build a community of practice through a conference or event.

INTERGRATED DESIGN STEERING GROUP

The Belfast Stories engagement plan includes an outline for an integrated design steering group. This group should have a crucial role in ensuring that Belfast Stories reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.

ETHICS

The council should integrate an ethics function in to the story gathering processes and tools.

EVALUATION

The Belfast Stories team should ensure that it continues to evaluate the effectiveness of its ongoing engagement by adhering to the evaluation framework and using tools such as the evaluation postcards.

THANKS

The following organisations gave generously of their time expertise during the public consultation.

Thanks also to other individuals, groups and organisations who took part but cannot be named below.

Aisling Productions Ltd

AMMA Creative Learning Centre

An Droichead

Arts and Business NI

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Aura Digital Studios Ltd

BBC NI

BBC Rewind

Belfast Buildings Trust

Belfast City Council ABLE Forum

Belfast City Council Disability Advisory Panel

Belfast City Council Equality Consultative Forum

Belfast City Council PROUD Network

Belfast City Council Women's Network

Belfast Exposed

Belfast Festivals Forum

Belfast Film Institute

Belfast Harbour

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Carers Network

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Physical and Sensory Disability Services

Belfast International Airport

Belfast Media Festival

Belfast Migrants Forum

Belfast One BID Ltd

Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group

Belfast Toastmasters

Bigg Life Arts

Blackstaff Residents Associates

British Council NI

Cara Friend

Cathedral Quarter arts Festival

Causeway Pictures

Cinemagic

Circusful/Festival of Fools

Clifton House

Coiste na nlarchimi

Colin Glen Trust

Conway Mill Preservation Trust

CQ Trust

Creative Schools EANI

Creative Tours Belfast

Crescent Arts Centre

DAERA

Destination CQ Bid

Digital Arts Studios

DOCS Ireland

Doubleband films

DU Dance (NI)

East Belfast Community Development Association

Eastside Partnership

EastSide Visitor Centre

Equity Steering Group

Excalibur Press Ltd

Failte Feirste Thiar

Feile an Phobail

Fighting Words NI

Film HUB NI

Food NI

G6 Older Peoples Forum

Gallaghers Films Ltd

General Public attendees

Grand Opera House

Greater Shankill Partnership

Greater Village Regeneration Trust

Green Shoot Productions

Harriott Communications

Hastings Hotel

Heart Project

ICC Belfast

Indian Women's Association

Innate Films Ltd

INTO Film

Italic Pig

James Connolly Visitor Centre

KarmaDinosaur Media

Kippie CIC

Libraries NI

Linenhall Library

Maiden Voyage Dance

Makematic Ltd

Maritime Belfast Trust

National Autistic Society NI

National Lottery Heritage Fund

National Trust

NI Environment Link

NI Opera

NI Science Festival

NI Screen

NI Screen – Digital Film Archive

Oh Yeah Music Centre

On the Square Emporium

PaperxClips

Portview Trade Centre

PRONI

Queen's Film Theatre

Queen's University Belfast

Ramada by Wyndham Belfast

RNIB

RSUA

Sailortown Regeneration

Screen Skills

Shared City Partnership

Sign Language Users Forum

Sonic Arts Research Centre

Source Photographic Review

Spectrum Centre

Strand Arts Centre

Sustrans

The Beannchor Group

The Clover Group

The Horatio Group

The MAC

The Nerve Centre

Titanic Belfast

Tourism NI

Townsend Enterprise Park

U3A

Ulster Architectural Heritage

Ulster Orchestra

Ulster Scots Agency

Ulster Tatler

Ulster Touring Opera

Ulster University

University of Atypical

Victims and Survivors Service

Visit Belfast

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Advisory Panel

Volunteer Now

Walking Tours Belfast

West Belfast Heritage Community Initiative

White Pot Studios

YEHA

Young at Art

APPENDIX 1: BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

WHY WE ARE ENGAGING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VISION AND MISSION

The purpose of the engagement plan is

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

Our mission is

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

WHAT IS COVERED IN THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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

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

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

1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The public consultation will run for 14 weeks. The public consultation will focus on:

i. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development
ii. making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and story collection framework
iii. asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement (below)

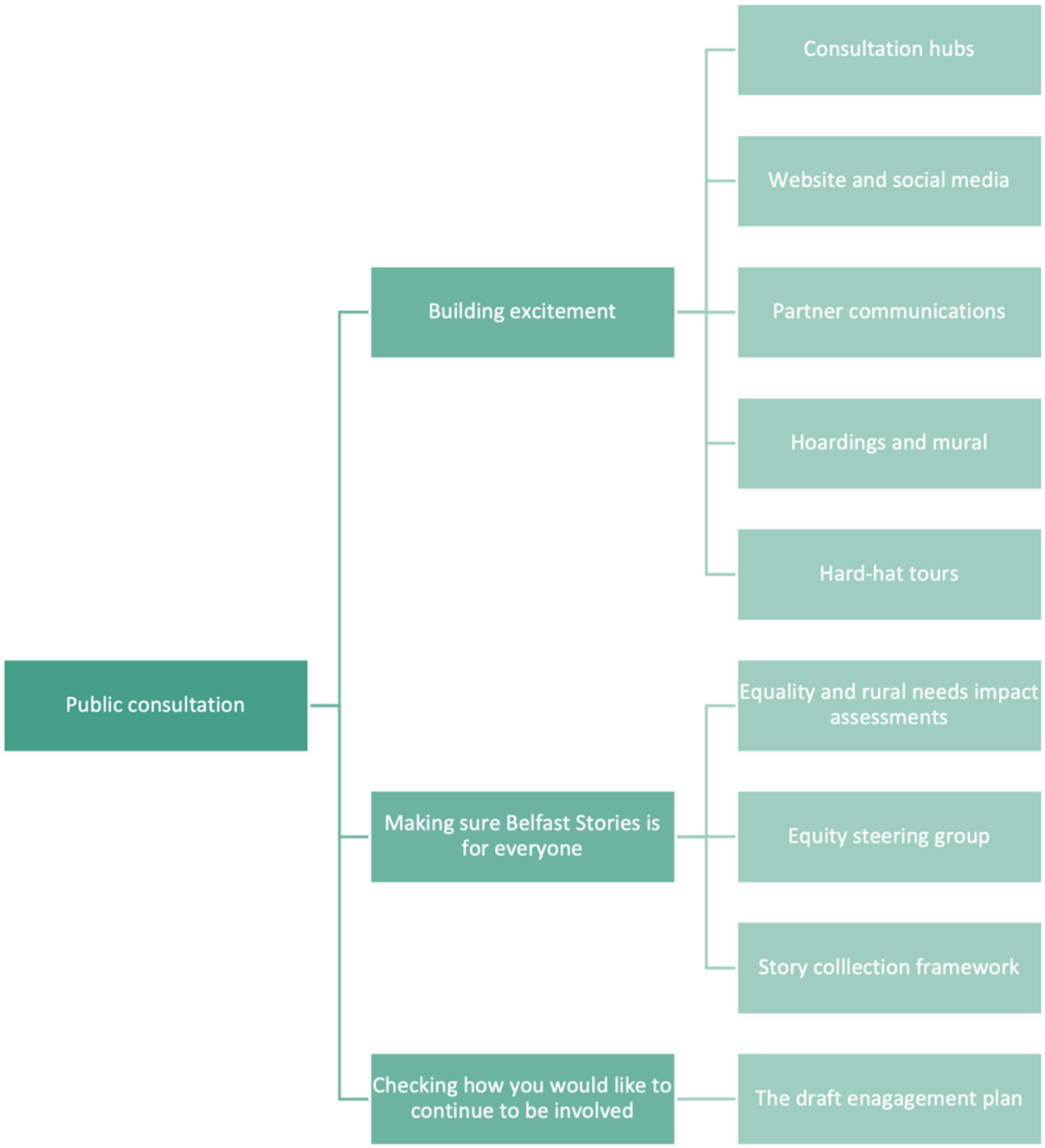
2. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement will be structured around four work strands:

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

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

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION



BUILDING EXCITEMENT

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

To do this, we will:

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

MAKING SURE BELFAST STORIES IS FOR EVERYONE

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

1. EQUALITY IMPACT AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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

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

2. THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

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

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

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

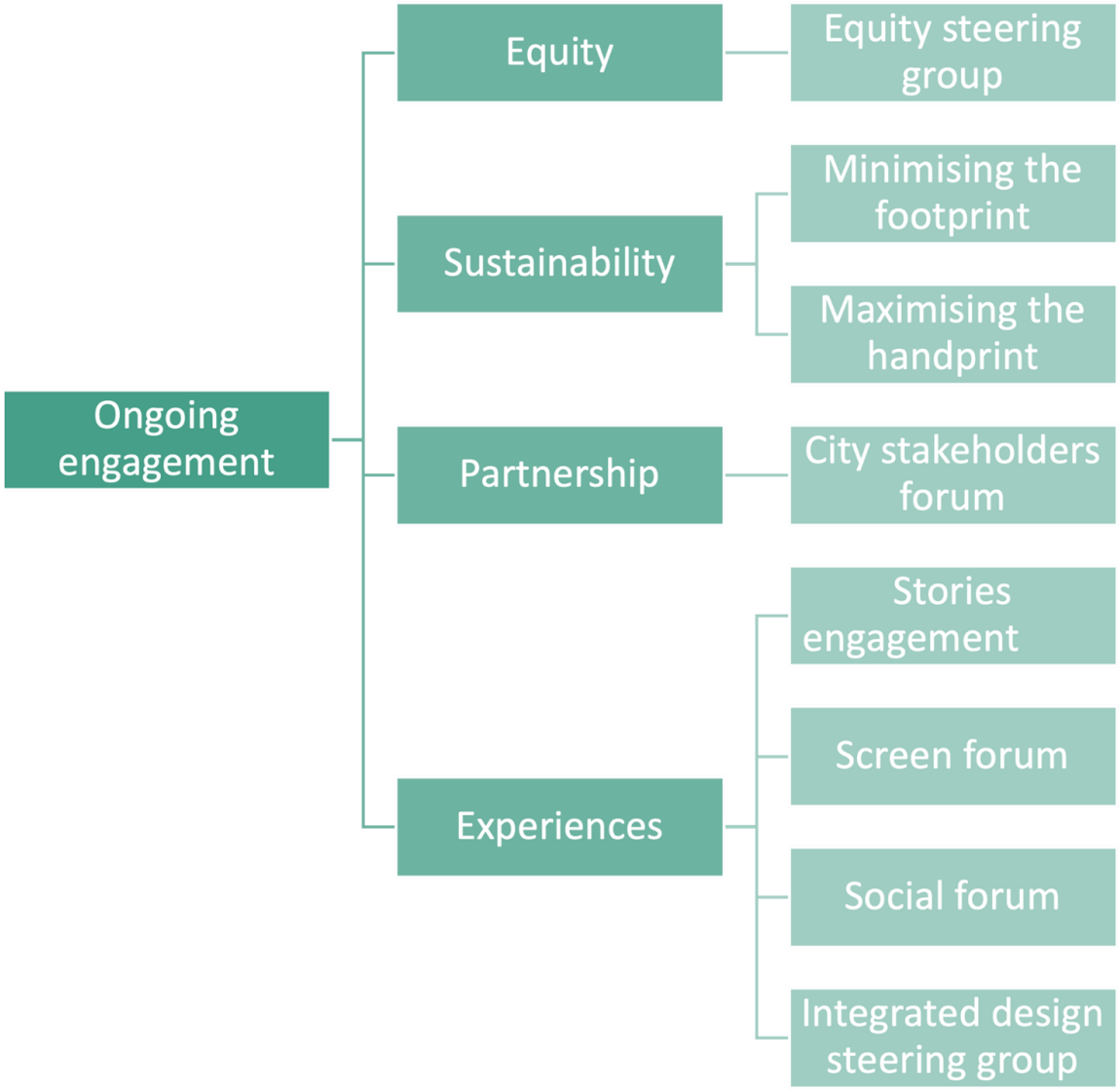
- People from different faith, political and cultural backgrounds
- People from minoritised ethnic communities
- Deaf/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people
- Older people
- Children and young people
- Women
- Carers and people with dependents
- LGBTQ+ people

3. TESTING THE DRAFT STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

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

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

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT



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

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

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

- **identify and connect** to "missing voices" and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an **engagement programme** that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce **engagement opportunities** throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research

- check the **accessibility** of consultation materials
- act as a **critical friend**, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

THE SUSTAINABILITY STORYLINE

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

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT

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

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

MAXIMISING THE HANDPRINT

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

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

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

THE PARTNERSHIP STORYLINE

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

The **city stakeholders network** will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It will **meet quarterly** to share key information, discuss emerging issues and opportunities and encourage collaboration. Partners will also be asked to share information and engagement opportunities with **their members, communities and networks**.

THE EXPERIENCES STORYLINE

1. STORIES

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

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

2. SCREEN

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

3. SOCIAL

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

4. INTEGRATED DESIGN STEERING GROUP

The integrated design steering group will comprise:

- representatives from **the equity, sustainability and experience storylines**
- **key partners such as NI Screen** and
- **contractors appointed to design the exhibition space and the overall building**

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

WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE RESULTS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX 2: DAISY CHAIN INC. AND THRIVE REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The data collection phase began on 25th September 2022 and lasted for almost 2 months until 20th November.

Together, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. interviewed 683 people, collecting 1,096 responses. Responses were higher than the number of people interviewed because one same person was asked more than one question at once and responses were analysed by question.

If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why? and *What is the most Belfast thing you've ever heard or seen?* were asked in the four different areas of Belfast, in north, south, east and west and in shopping centres. *What is your first memory?* and *Why are you here?* were asked in existing events happening in the city. Finally, *What is your favourite place?* was asked during a series of events designed and hosted by Daisy Chain Inc.

In total, 50% females and 42% males. For 8% of the responses, gender was not recorded. Age groups ranged from 18 to 75+. 15% of responses were not allocated to an age group. Belfast story collection framework

Throughout their research, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. were keen to compare their findings with the Story Collection Framework completed by Lord Cultural Resources for Belfast City Council. Indeed, they believed there was an opportunity to test the framework's accuracy and relevancy if it was to be used in the future to support any collection or use of stories at a city-wide level.

The Story Collection Framework features 7 overarching themes:

- Home: A sense of belonging and connection
- Resilient: Strong and spirited
- Place: Relating to spaces
- Authentic: Embracing all identities
- Innovative: Entrepreneurial zeal
- Change: A city transforming
- Creative: Inspiring expressions in many forms

Each of these themes also comprises a variety of subthemes, 93 in total, which offer different examples of how the main themes could be interpreted.

When analysing their own data, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. organised each response by theme from the existing framework.

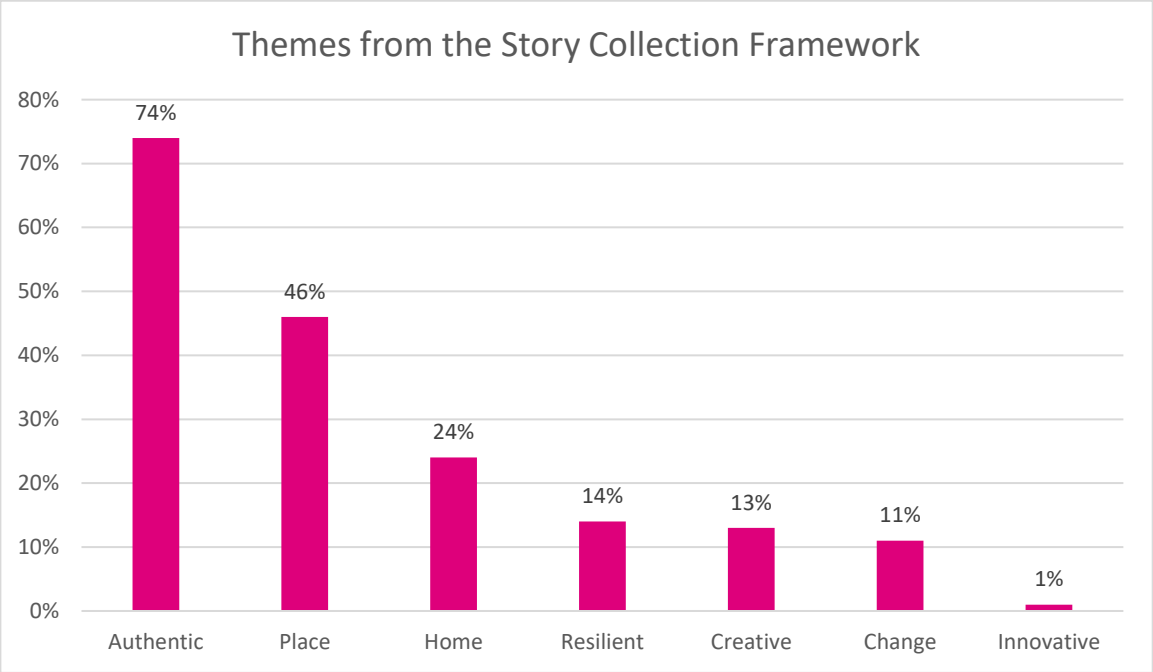
Some responses overlapped with more than one theme. Overall, *Authentic* was the most common theme across the total of answers at 74%. It most typically included references to language, food, humour, situations, or behaviours characteristic to Belfast. It was followed by *Place* (46%) and *Home* (24%). Responses categorised under *Place* referred to spaces around the city such as pubs, shops, buildings, streets, parks, arts and culture venues, etc. *Home* was mostly attributed to responses mentioning family, friends or the idea of making Belfast a new home.

Other themes were assigned as follows:

- Stories or mentions of the Troubles were labelled as *Resilient*
- Any mention of the arts and culture scene as *Creative*
- *Change* referred mostly to places that did not exist anymore but were still remembered
- *Innovative* related to trade or the Belfast shipyard

Although most responses fitted within at least one of the themes, there were still 13% of responses that could not be assigned and were therefore categorised as *Other*.

Some of the themes were at times relevant but often too general. Mentions of the Troubles, for instance, were categorised as *Resilient*, but were rarely about resilience and more about trauma. When respondents spoke of the Troubles, it was about how vivid those memories



were and the impact the Troubles had on their mental health and on their relationship with Belfast:

"I remember the barricades, in the 70s, you'd come up shopping when you felt safe enough."

"I hate to be grim but standing on the roadside on Ligoniel Hill on a dark evening in 1969 and watching the glow of fires burning across the city. Aged 5."

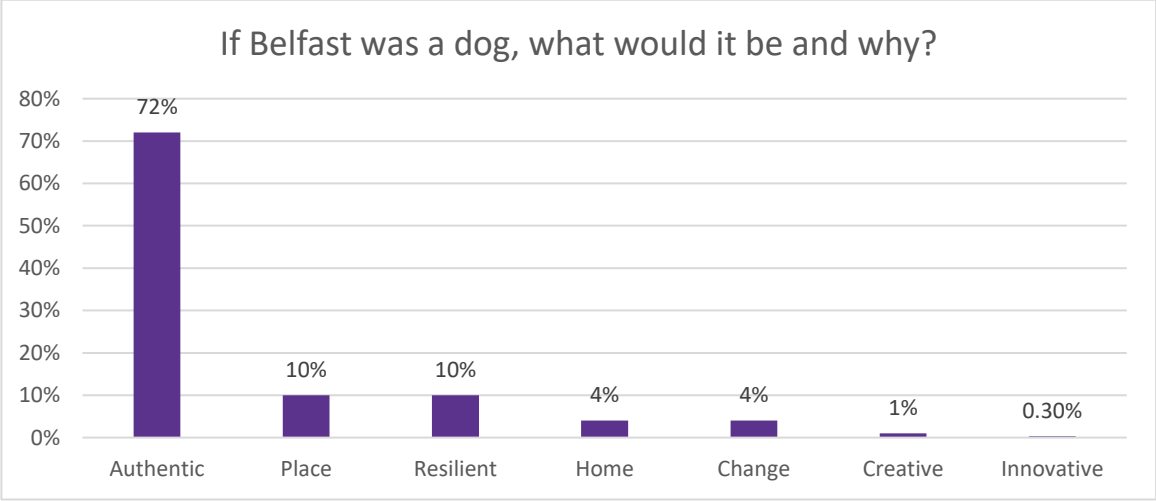
The theme *Innovative* was rarely referenced with only 7 responses being classified here. Of those 7 responses, most referred to Belfast as a port city, where people remembered what it felt like to arrive in Belfast for the first time via a ferry:

"Coming off the ferry, in the 70s. The sun was just coming out as we got off from England. I remember feeling like the docks were gigantic. I couldn't believe how big the ships and things were."

"Coming off the ferry for the first time, seeing the huge boats and shipping containers! It made me feel small in the grand scheme of all the operations which link us in the world."

Other themes, although relevant to a degree, could not accurately represent every aspect of each answer and overlooked details that could be of importance to determine how Belfast Stories should be curated.

On a similar note, the themes and subthemes within the Framework all have a positive connotation. During the engagement, it was noted that people's opinions of Belfast and their stories are often more nuanced, sharing the 'good' as much as the 'bad'. For this nuance to be reflected in the stories that will be celebrated and shared in the Belfast Stories building, consideration could be given as to how the Framework could be adapted to



capture this.

RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?

This question was designed to explore how people in Belfast collectively perceive the city, to learn about its identity. As the research progressed, this question was identified as a helpful

icebreaker, bringing an element of fun to relax participants and incite them to respond. This question performed well on social media too with 42 responses. *If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?* was asked the most often amongst all 5 questions and gathered a total of 286 responses.

When compared with the Story Collection Framework, a majority of responses (72%) fitted the theme *Authentic*, especially the subthemes *Distinctly Belfast* and *Identity and belonging*.

Regardless of the dog breeds respondents chose, the answers to the second half of the question gave valuable insight into which characteristics they associated with a Belfast identity.

This set of data told a really clear story about Belfast. Overall, respondents think that Belfast is a city with **a strong personality with distinct qualities that the majority value**.

97 responses for this question focused on the different characteristics of the city. Many described it as **energetic and fast** (25 responses):

"A Spaniel because they're fun and have a lot of energy."

"A Pitbull because it's busy and fast."

"A Collie because it's energetic and doesn't stop."

Other qualities included diverse (12), strong (10), independent (8), loyal (6), smart (6) and protective (5).

There were also differences of opinion – while 14 respondents perceived Belfast as small, 11 thought of it as big.

Respondents (88) often talked about how **welcoming, friendly and warm** people in Belfast are. It will be seen later in this report that this theme was prevalent across all questions. Indeed, the word **friendly** was used by participants more than any other qualifying term, 37 times for this specific question.

Loveable, loving and cute were together mentioned 31 times. Other accounts comprised beautiful (8), warm (6) and the best (6).

"A Border Collie because they're the best dogs and Belfast is the best city. It's the best because of the music scene and there are always small bands from both sides of the border that play in Belfast."

"It would be a loveable mutt because there are so many different backgrounds and communities within Belfast, to describe it as one breed would be highly inaccurate. When people aren't thinking about their differences, they come together, it's a lovely place to be."

"A Golden Retriever because it's so nice and friendly. You want to cuddle it all the time and it's also very smart."

Although a majority described the city as friendly, there was almost an equal number of respondents (87) who talked about its **hostility**. Many (23) described it as fierce or feisty, while others used words such as aggressive or edgy (17), scary or rough (17), unpredictable (17) and barky or loud (13).

"A Rottweiler because people here can be a bit aggressive."

"A Bulldog because it's rough when you don't know it, but loyal and strong when you do."

"An Alsatian because it's aggressive, strong, with a pack mentality."

Only a minority of respondents (14) were downright negative about the city and used words such as ugly, unloved and dead to depict Belfast:

"A scabby dead dog left on the side of the road because there's nothing here and it's a dead city."

"Walking about the city centre and seeing all the crumbling empty buildings, I think it might be a chihuahua or Jack Russell in need of medical treatment from an owner that hasn't given it enough attention over the last few years."

Ultimately, people's opinions of Belfast often express both these positive and negative sentiments, acknowledging all the facets that the city can have.

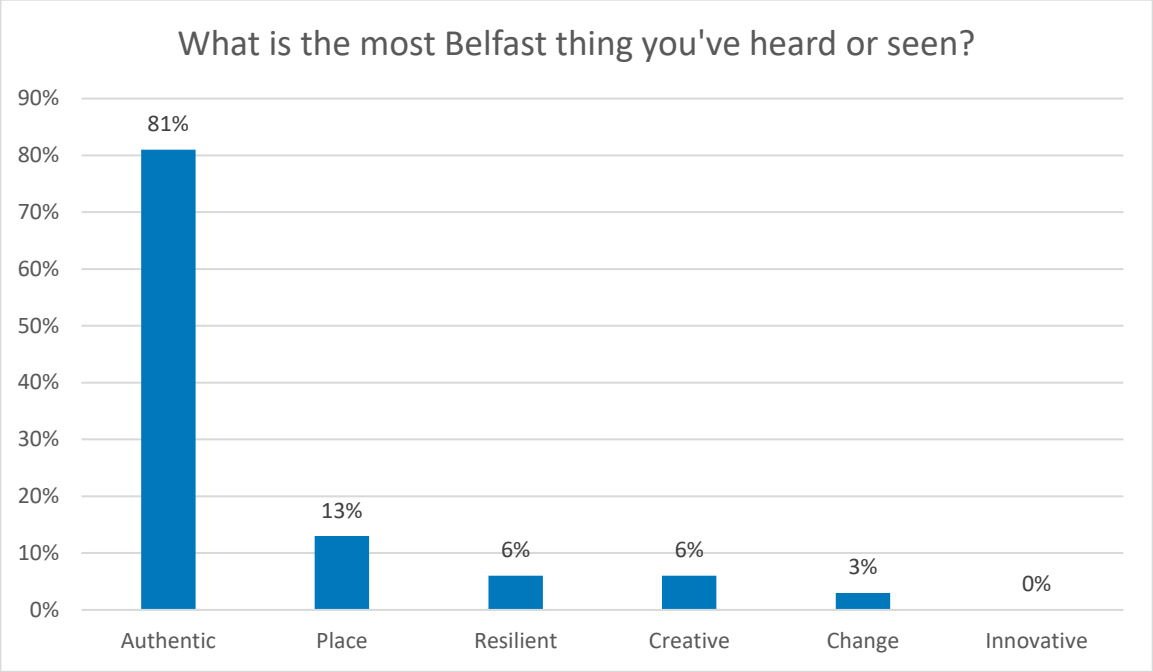
"A hot dog because they are little bit greasy but they absolutely serve a purpose and everyone secretly does love it. If you really wanna be gourmet about a hot dog I guess you can be but I think it's kind of more a food of the people."

"The first one that springs to mind is a Jack Russell. Classic design in parts, real character, cheeky when it wants to be but snuggles up when it's feeling cozy."

"A Rottweiler because they're mistaken as hostile and aggressive with sinister undertones but actually good-natured, placid and very devoted deep down. Show some love and we're ready to give you a cuddle."

WHAT IS THE MOST BELFAST THING YOU'VE EVER HEARD OR SEEN?

This question was worded to investigate the city's identity. It was also anticipated that this question would spark longer conversations, where potential stories for Belfast Stories could develop. Throughout their research, they noticed that it was difficult for participants to answer this question instantly. Respondents often needed time to think about a story that was "worth telling" or opted for an easier response that did not need as much thought – something about food (e.g. Belfast bap) or language (e.g. What's the craic?). This was also observed online, and as a result, did not generate many engagements (4). In total, this question generated 280 responses.



When set side by side with the Story Collection Framework themes, responses to this question were in majority labelled as *Authentic* at 81%. This was not surprising as this question is, in itself, about authenticity. As mentioned above, references to food and language were found amongst responses, but also humour, people and funny situations that typically happen in Belfast and nowhere else. 4% of responses could not be categorised in any of the themes.

Humour was an overarching theme that could be observed in all responses for this question, regardless of the type of story told. Answers always included banter, wit, and jokes, which could be identified as a core aspect of the Belfast identity.

"I was sitting with my partner and her son and friends. They were sharing stories about the Troubles when they all grew up on the Falls Road. I was quiet for the whole hour and then said the worst thing that happened to me in Glengormley was waiting for the bus for 30 minutes. That sums up Belfast for me. Two completely different experiences for people who live in the same place."

"Belfast people are always a bit cheeky but in a nice way. You always hear people slagging each other off. There is a great sense of humour."

"The jokes, the craic, the every day. Belfast people get on with life. You laugh at yourself and your situation."

88 responses to this question referenced **language and swearing** and shows how important language is in the character of Belfast. There is a Belfast way of saying things and swearing is often part of it. As mentioned previously when analysing responses to *If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?* Belfast can be intimidating at first. For people in Belfast, swearing is a type of banter, used in ways that are not meant to offend or intimidate, but could initially be misunderstood by outsiders.

“The language. The colloquialisms Belfast Bap, Face like a melted welly, Meet yourself coming backwards.”

“I think we are really good with insults. Somebody outside the shops last night called someone a shitey shite bag."

“Everything is 'wee'. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad or big or small. I recently heard 'she had a wee pregnancy scare'. People are casual about things, they don't take it too seriously.”

Funny or unusual situations typical to Belfast came second with 70 responses. As one respondent put it, *“there is a lot of randomness here”* and this clearly appeared in the answers researchers were given. Stories often included alcohol or fights.

“Sitting in Mike’s Deli and a slightly sozzled guy beside me trying to fit a whole sandwich in his mouth at once spots Roy Walker standing outside. Most of sandwich still in his mouth, he howls “SAY WAT YA SEE!” through window. Tomato, lettuce, cheese sprays everywhere.”

“Seen a couple kissing one night- she stopped and threw up the very last contents of her stomach and then proceeded to keep kissing him!”

“Going for a kebab one night from Spuds which used to be on Shaftesbury Square. A completely pissed guy was walking out as we were coming in and he trips, and drops a burger which completely opens up and spills on the floor. He scoops it back up, smiles at us and says "fuck it, he'll never know!"

Next, there were 37 mentions of **what makes people of Belfast unique** and other specific characters who can be found around the city. This echoed what had already been said in previous responses about people’s qualities: their friendliness and openness. There are also people who regularly walk around the city and do not go unnoticed. Some of them were mentioned on many occasions by a variety of respondents.

“There's a woman with a pet ferret on a lead who walks around the city, a guy with a pet rat on his shoulder, another one who cycles in pink underwear.”

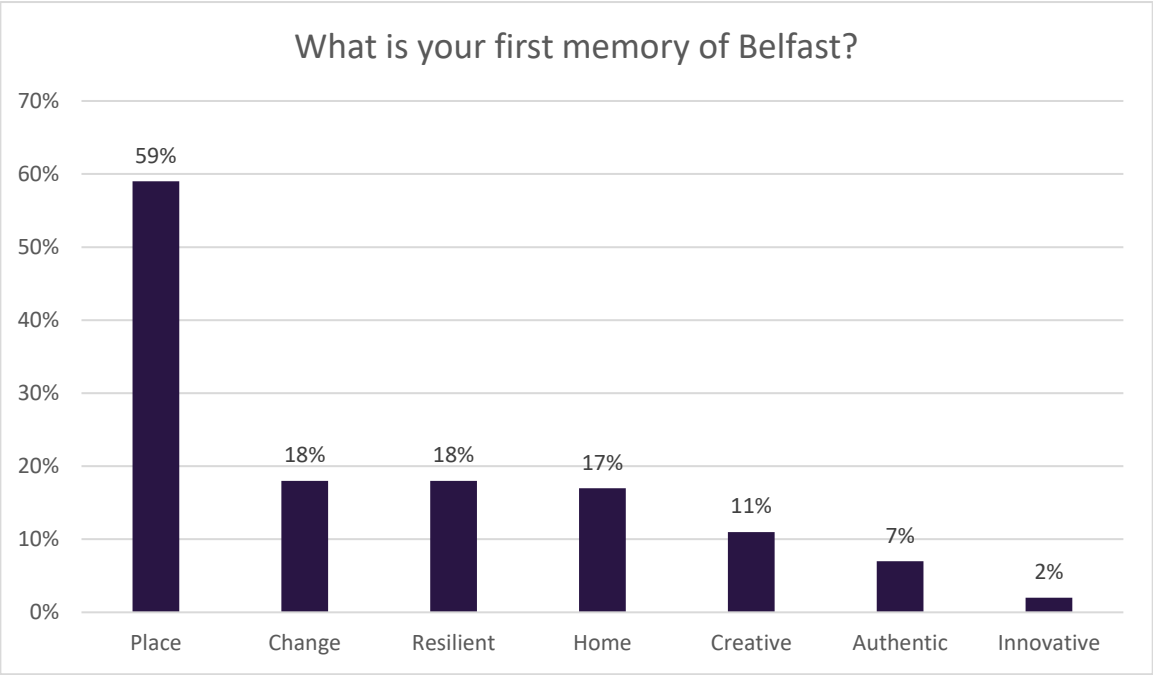
“Jelvis Pelvis in Victoria Square performing in front of the preachers.”

“Jelvis, the Elvis impersonator, being threatened by someone with a bottle of Buckfast.”

“Just the friendliness of the people, very welcoming and always ready to chat.”

People 40 years old and older remembered **the Troubles**. Although we now think of this period as being from the past, the conflict still impacts on people today. The normalisation of violence and trauma has been baked into the Belfast spirit – the “just get on with it” attitude and the use of black humour was present in many stories.

“I remember the Ring of Steel. You used to have to get searched going into Royal Avenue. We had travelled down from Coleraine and it was all very strange and scary.”



"I remember growing up as a kid and having guns pointed at you. Not normal! The soldiers would train their sights on you. I must have been 10 or 11. Then after the ceasefire there were a lot less soldiers about, and to start with, I felt less safe."

"Bus stations blowing up because the Troubles epitomises our past and present still."

A few respondents (24) thought of **specific landmarks and buildings in Belfast**, unique to the city. City Hall, the Titanic Museum, Cathedral Quarters or the Harland and Wolff cranes were some of the places people acknowledged. Finally, some people (17) talked about the **food** that is typical to Belfast. This often included the Ulster fry, Belfast bap, sausage roll baps or crisps sandwiches.

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF BELFAST?

This question had been trialled in previous thrive research and was an effective trigger for encouraging people to share personal stories and anecdotes.

Again, it proved effective in this engagement and the most likely question to trigger a response, both in person and online.

The quality of the responses was also high as respondents usually started by sharing one memory, which then led to another memory and another, until their response became a full, cohesive story. When asked to a group of people rather than one individual, this question engendered longer conversations between participants. In total, 261 responses were collected for this question, including 64 online.

Whereas responses to the first two questions were in majority *Authentic*, themes from the Story Collection Framework were slightly different for this question. Indeed, responses referring to *Place* were the most common at 59%. People spoke fondly of shops, restaurants, buildings or particular areas in the city centre they used to visit in the past.

Many of the places they mentioned were places that do not exist anymore – hence *Change* being 18% - like Leisureworld, Skandia or Anderson McAuley. A lot of the responses showed nostalgia. 7% of responses did not correspond to any of the themes.

Regardless of the themes that emerged on the back of this question, responses as a whole told a story about people's relationship with the city centre:

- People are drawn to Belfast for work or study.
- People who live outside of Belfast come to the city for special occasions like arts and culture, Christmas or to a restaurant. These people are usually more fearful of Belfast and talk about apprehension or past negative experiences.
- Belfast residents speak of the city centre being used for everyday activity such as shopping or going out for food.
- For those living in Belfast, family memories are strong, and they often talk about places they visited with parents, grandparents, or uncles.

Besides spaces in the city centre people went to, **the Troubles** had a significant place amongst responses. Bomb scares, the Ring of Steel, security checks and the likes of barricades were mentioned 47 times. For people from outside Belfast, they often talked about the fear they would feel when coming into the city. On the other hand, when people from Belfast talked about the Troubles, there was a sense of normalised violence.

"I'm from Portrush and I would've come into the city a lot for work, and I remember that fear during the Troubles, you would've been worried about coming in. It's changed a lot since then."

"The bombs. I'm from Sandy Row and the windows in our house were always open to prevent them from shattering from the bombs. I also remember being on the rooftop of a building on Dublin Road, near the old Cinema site, and I saw 6 explosions in a row. I remember the smoke and the ambulance sirens the most."

People also remembered **arts and culture venues** (29) they attended in Belfast when they were younger, whether it was their first gig, a school trip to the Ulster Museum or going to a pantomime for Christmas.

"Going to see my first ever live gig in the Ulster Hall in 1999. It was Stereophonics. There were friendly goths in the queue using pages of the Bible as smoking utensils. The band attracted a different crowd at the time and my first impression of Belfast was very cool indeed."

"Going to see The Sound of Music with my mum at the Odeon on Great Victoria Street in 1965. Magical movie memories in the city."

There was another theme that was particularly important for those who moved to Belfast from abroad and it was **transport and traveling**. They remembered their journey or the first thing they saw when they arrived in the city. They often talked about how they felt as they were about to start a new life in a new place.

"Coming off the ferry for the first time, seeing the huge boats and shipping containers! It made me feel small in the grand scheme of all the operations which link us in the world."

"Last year when I moved over, getting off the plane at International and hopping on the bus to the Europa Bus Station and seeing it was grey and rainy but I'm used to that because I'm from Scotland, then the sun came out that day and it was lovely."

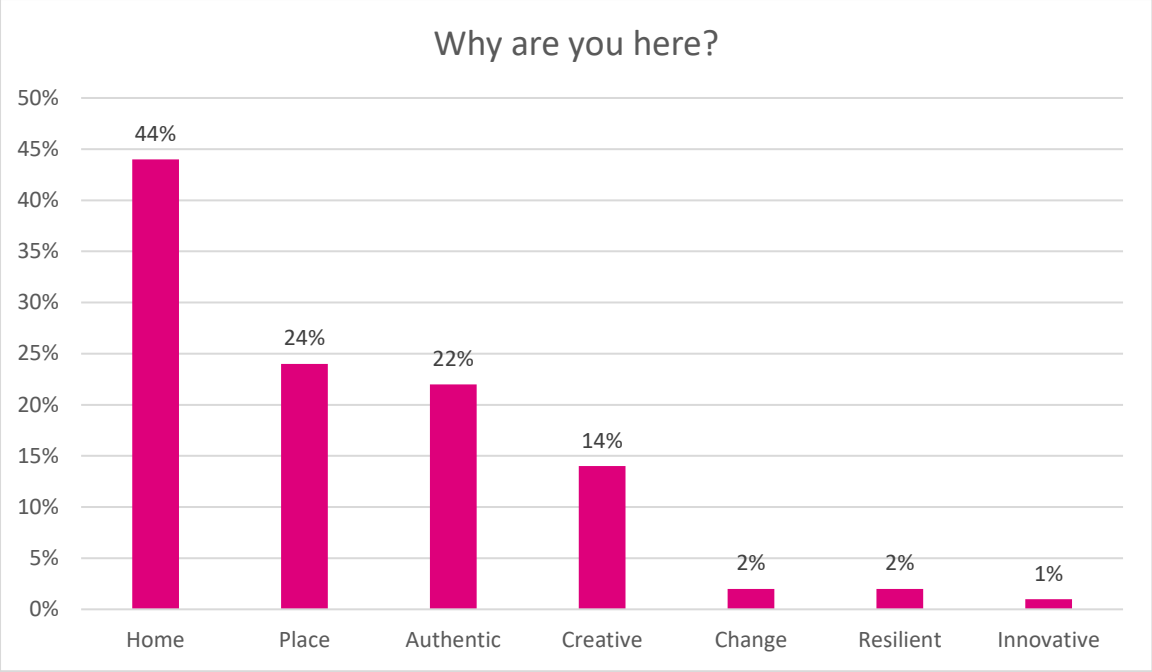
"I came in here without thinking too much about it. I'd never been to Ireland or the UK and I had no English so when I first arrived of the bus, the first thing I saw was The Crown the pub, that was the moment it hit me "Oh shit I'm here". The first thing I saw was a pub—of course!"

Finally, and reflecting themes for *If Belfast was a dog, what would it be and why?* and *What is the most Belfast thing you've ever heard or seen?*, the **friendliness of people from Belfast** was also something that left its mark on respondents' minds.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

This question was asked to find out what it is about Belfast that people love and by extension, why they decide to live and stay here. It was also motivated by the fact that people who are not from here are always being asked this question by locals. This time, researchers wanted to ask locals themselves. Responses to this question often stayed superficial and at times, it was difficult to get respondents to offer deeper assessments. Overall, thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. felt *Why are you here?* was not suited for short conversations if the aim was to generate thoughtful insights about what Belfast meant to people who live here. However, if there was an opportunity to prompt respondents to share more details during longer conversations, *Why are you here?* has the potential to act as a trigger for people to share stories. This question collected 225 responses. It was not asked online.

Home was the most prominent theme from the Story Collection Framework for this set of responses at 44%, especially the subthemes *New beginnings* and *Family ties*. Respondents talked about moving to Belfast for something specific, like a new job or to study, and ended up staying. Many participants also mentioned friends and family. 10% of responses could not be identified with a theme. Other themes were as follows:



On the whole, the answers to this question told a straightforward story. There were three main reasons for people to move to Belfast and live here: work, study, or love. Those who stayed to make Belfast their home cited people's friendliness, a busy city life, arts and culture, and affordability, as the principal incentives that encouraged them to settle down here. People born and bred in Belfast usually stayed for similar reasons, but it is their family and friends who were the most important. Many respondents originally from Belfast, left and came back at a later stage of their life, always for the same reasons stated above.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE IN BELFAST?

Last, the final question *What is your favourite place in Belfast?* was asked during a series of five events, especially designed by the team for the purpose of this research. Each event was held in a different setting to test how environments impact on people sharing stories. Events were:

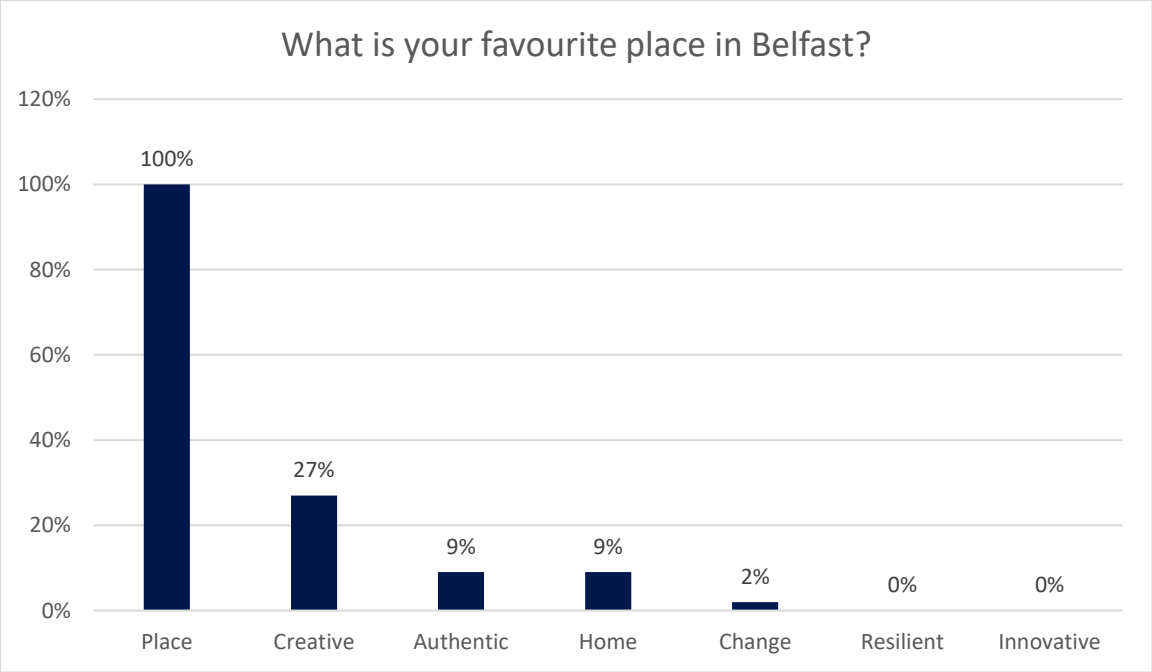
- A cruise tour of the river Lagan with Taste and Tour NI
- A foraging walk on Cave Hill with forager Clare McQuillan
- A breakfast in the Observatory of the Grand Central Hotel
- A lunch in the Black Box with food provided by Anaka Women's Collective
- A game show in Castlecourt Shopping Centre, the Dirty Onion and the American Bar

All events were free to attend, although participants had to register in advance to attend so demographics and capacity could be monitored.

Drop out was high, which might be because the events were free. The motivation for attendance was the type of event rather than the opportunity to engage in research or consultation. The nature of the events also impacted the type of people who attended. For

example, the event in the Grand Central Hotel attracted architects who were intrigued on viewing the built landscape for a different perspective. Surroundings and activities influenced the way participants answered the question. An unusual view that could be explored, as well as food, offered a more relaxed atmosphere, which encouraged people to share longer stories and add some depth to their response. Because of the format in which this question was asked, the total of responses was significantly lower than for previous questions at 44 responses.

When compared to the themes in the Story Collection Framework, responses for *What is your favourite place in Belfast?* were unsurprisingly all labelled as *Place*, with a few responses that could be categorised under other themes. *Creative* came second at 27% and mostly referred to arts and culture venues around the city. None of the responses were tagged as *Resilient* nor *Innovative*.



Place is a word that could have several meanings and researchers thought it was important to break it down into smaller themes that came up in conversations with participants.

Outdoor spaces and nature came overwhelmingly first for this question, with 29 responses mentioning parks, views of the hills or the sea, Maritime Mile and outdoor areas not too far from the city. Across all 5 events, everyone liked how small and familiar Belfast is compared with other cities. Many respondents mentioned how easy it is to access open green spaces and the sea from the city.

"When you're driving on the M3 and when you're peeling off a bit towards the Odyssey, that view across the docks, that very small point, and wherever you're driving you just have to look at it. I drove that road quite a lot in the past. At night-time when all the lights were there and you could see the water it was very, very beautiful."

"That park has just been an absolute God-send for everything, it's where we can socialise, it's where we can get exercise, it's right there. It's such a valuable resource. And Belfast doesn't have that much public green spaces in the city centre. […] If Ormeau Park was four times as big this would be the greatest thing ever, but beggars can't be choosers, and I love it. Every year they do a litter picking day, so I feel like it's my duty, because I love it so much, to go out with a couple of friends and help. I love the fact that they do that kind of stuff, every community-minded, it's fun."

Arts and culture venues were next with 9 responses. Respondents did not only say what their favourite venue was but also shared what such a space meant for them in their life. Most of the time, it was a place where they could engage with arts and culture, but also socialise or relax.

"The Limelight is where I became a woman! It's where I grew up, and I still love it now. It's so different now, but the Katy's bit is still the same. The big room isn't right. But that's when I started being a grown up and being aware."

"The Linenhall Library is a haven for me, it is so gorgeous and peaceful, right in the middle of a bustling city centre. I use it as a retreat when I am feeling stressed, it gives me a bit of perspective. Sometimes I just sit and watch the city from the window. Sometimes I read or meet a friend for coffee. It is important to have places like that in the city centre."

Other places that participants mentioned included areas, streets or neighbourhoods in the city that they enjoyed, pubs and shops.

APPENDIX 3: ORGANISATIONS THAT RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

Twenty-one organisations responded to the survey. The following organisation gave permission to be named as participating in the public consultation. Names of individuals responding to the survey were not requested.

City of Belfast Youth Orchestra

Fighting Words NI

Coiste na nIarchimí

Armstrong Storytelling Trust

Tread the Boards

Omniplex Cinemas

Sustrans

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

Belfast Celtic Society

Translink

Victoria Square

Ulster Architectural Heritage

Northern Visions Media Centre

APPENDIX 4: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Blackstaff Community Development Association

Belfast Civic Trust

INTBAU Ireland (the all-island chapter of the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism).

Community Arts Partnership

Conradh na Gaeilge

Forbairt Feirste

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Belfast Stories Equality Impact Assessment

Final Decision Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 10 August and 20 November 2022, Belfast City Council carried out a 14-week public consultation on Belfast Stories, a new visitor attraction due to open in the city centre in 2028, and its accompanying equality impact assessment (EQIA).

This EQIA final decision report sets out:

- the initial findings from the draft EQIA report
- the results of the consultation process
- conclusions
- recommendations for monitoring any adverse impacts

ABOUT BELFAST STORIES

Funded by the Belfast City Region Deal and Belfast City Council, Belfast Stories will open at the former Bank of Ireland buildings, 92 Royal Avenue (where North Street and Royal Avenue meet) by 2028. It aims to attract both tourists and locals while helping to regenerate the city and surrounding areas.

There are three main parts to the visitor centre: stories, screen and social.

1. STORIES

These will be first-person accounts of the city. The stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will include:

- uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others
- collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard

The stories will be exhibited using a range of media in 2,000m^2 of exhibition space including a library of stories, a main exhibition space and temporary exhibition spaces. Visitors will be guided through the space by a trail which will end at a viewing platform on top of the building where they can reflect on the story of the whole city.

2. SCREEN

Belfast Stories film centre will house a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema offering and NI's digital screen archive. The film centre will also support the local film industry with developmental space, flexible learning spaces and a story lab. There will be a particular focus on children and young people.

3. SOCIAL

The exhibition space and film centre will be connected by public spaces where people can meet, eat, shop and relax. These will include:

- a central open-air courtyard
- pocket squares and laneways
- roof gardens
- cafes, restaurants and bars sharing local produce and cuisine – Belfast's "food story"
- shops selling local products

THE STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

The purpose of the Story Collection Framework is to help gather, sort and celebrate a wealth of Belfast stories without being constraining. There are seven themes, each with between 11 to 16 subthemes. Stories can be about the past, present or future. Stories may fit under more than one theme. If stories do not fit under a particular subtheme, a new one can be created.

ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The 14-week public consultation focused on:

1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

An online consultation hub was created on Belfast City Council's Your Say platform. It included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA and copies of the consultation document in a range of formats including HTML, Easy Read, British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL).

The council's Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the public consultation and draft EQIA and invited to comment. The Belfast Stories equity steering group, comprising 10 experts by experience (including people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities) met four times. Sixteen workshops were facilitated with people and groups who are generally less heard or more at risk of missing out, and 10 one-to-one meetings were held with organisations representing or advocating for such people or groups.

There were 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives.

In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc, a creative consultancy, to help raise awareness and build excitement including through on-street interviews, events and workshops. They engaged a total of 683 participants.

There were also four public meetings in the north, south, east and west of the city, which were attended by 15 participants.

Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at a range of venues.

Written submissions were also received from seven organisations.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The Belfast Stories engagement plan sets out plans for ongoing engagement structured around four work strands:

1. Equity. Equity recognises that not everyone starts from the same place. It gives people the different resources and opportunities they need to take part.
2. Sustainability. The purpose of this strand is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. It will bring together environmental, tourism, culture and economic development stakeholders.
3. Partnership. The city stakeholders network will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories.
4. Experiences. This strand will bring together stakeholders around the stories, screen and social elements of the concept.

There are also two more planned public consultations: in autumn 2023 on the concept design and in late 2024/early 2025 as part of planning permission.

CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

This section provides an overview of the data and research that was considered in the draft EQIA report.

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKE-UP OF BELFAST'S RESIDENT POPULATION

The draft EQIA provided a breakdown of Belfast's resident population drawn from the most up-to-date data available when the draft EQIA report was being prepared.

COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The draft EQIA provided an overview of relevant Belfast City Council policies and strategies. This included its:

- Equality Scheme (2021)
- Language Strategy (2018)
- Good Relations Strategy (2019)
- Belfast Agenda (2017)
- Corporate Plan (2019)
- City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (2015)
- A City Imagining cultural strategy (2020)
- Make Yourself at Home tourism strategy (2022)
- Consultation and Engagement Framework (2020)

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION TO DATE

Engagement around the concept of a Belfast Stories has been ongoing since 2014 when the need for a second major visitor attraction in the city was identified. Belfast Stories has subsequently been formally consulted on during a range of public consultations. The concept was broadly welcomed. Findings relevant to the draft EQIA included:

- Cost may be a barrier, particularly to families and younger people
- Transportation can be a barrier, particularly for older people
- Need to follow inclusive design principles
- Equality considerations should "go beyond" the statutory requirements

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Belfast Stories' Equality Framework was developed in 2021. It recognises that the project's vision cannot be achieved unless equality, diversity and inclusion are placed at its core and supported by co-design and an inclusive process throughout all stages of development.

It recommends that engagement be:

> *"an ongoing cumulative process, enabling relationships, building trust and strengthening links over time […] Residents, voluntary and community groups, specialists and concerned or interested individuals, may want to participate at a range of levels – from providing advice to co-designing the process, undertaking some aspects of the engagement to delivering projects to meet some of the outcomes."*

It also recommends that equality screening and impact assessments should be carried out at different stages and on different elements of the project.

EQUALITY SCREENING

Belfast City Council's equality screening of the Belfast Stories outline business case found that:

> *"There is nothing inherent in the principles underpinning the concept of the Belfast Stories to indicate an adverse impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups. Instead, the concept will follow inclusivity principles for all residents and visitors […] will bring about advantages to Belfast citizens irrespective of their identity."*

However, it continues "The Belfast Stories aspects of this project needs to ensure equal representation of residents and visitors of different [identities]". It recommended that an EQIA should be carried out, potentially at key milestones such as concept, design and content stages.

DRAFT STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

The draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in 2021 in consultation with over 50 stakeholders including representatives from museums, libraries, archives and other collections. Consultees identified voices that are more likely to be missing from or underrepresented in current stories and collections.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

Belfast Stories will use expressions of culture to attract visitors. The draft EQIA considered how different people and groups across the different Section 75 equality categories may engage differently with culture.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

In accordance with the EQIA process, having gathered information on the policy and those affected, Belfast City Council then assessed:

1. whether there is likely to be a differential impact on one or more of the equality groups;
2. the extent of differential impact; and
3. whether that impact is adverse.

In the draft EQIA report, Belfast City Council considered the following potential impacts.

Barriers that particular groups face to activity that is similar in nature to Belfast Stories include emotional barriers (such as anxiety or discomfort); interest barriers (not relevant, don't know what's available); practical barriers (cost, transport); and societal barriers (racism, ableism).

The Belfast Stories' Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that barriers are removed and equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project's development.

Belfast Stories' engagement plan and draft Story Collection Framework builds on this foundation. These identify groups who are less likely to access or feel represented in Belfast Stories and sets down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impact.

Central to this is the equity steering group, which brings together representatives from the nine equality groups to co-design further engagement and opportunities to promote equal opportunities and good relations. This group will also support the wider engagement plan and influence the design of the building and plans for the collection, curation and exhibition of its stories, making it accessible, welcoming and representative for all.

Other planned mitigations include:

- a concentrated period of public consultation aimed at making the building welcoming and accessible and ensuring everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories
- consultation with the council's Equality Consultative Forum and other key organisations representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method
- information available in written, visual and Easy Read formats and other formats on request
- a range of tailored engagement tools from online surveys and quizzes to focus groups, creative workshops and hard-hat tours
- substantial ongoing engagement including around the theme of equity
- further public consultation and equality screening
- monitoring engagement across different Section 75 groups

The assessment of impacts in draft EQIA concluded that with equality, diversity and inclusion embedded in its development and extensive planned engagement including around the theme of equity, Belfast Stories has the potential to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations across all Section 75 categories.

The public consultation welcomed further evidence of any impacts on Section 75 groups, which would be collated and analysed to produce this final EQIA decision report.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

SURVEY RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT EQIA

One hundred and twenty-seven people responded to the survey on the Your Say Belfast consultation website.[1] Of those, 50 answered questions specifically on the draft EQIA.

50 per cent of respondents agreed with the **assessment of impacts**; 8 per cent disagreed; and 30.0 per cent responded "Don't know".[2] Reasons given by those who disagreed with the assessment of impacts were:

- "not all sides get listened to."
- "Let's break down the various communities and see what might appeal to the public at large. Taxpayers that vote in the council and pay for it. The project must cater to those that have shaped Belfast"
- "I have not read into the policy and data to make my own mind up on this question. Further open access research needs to be available and open to public."

There were 17 responses to the question **"Are you aware of any other impacts that we haven't identified?"** including 11 responses (64.7 per cent) stating that they could not identify additional impacts. One response reinforced the opportunity to improve good relations.

There were 14 responses to the question **"Are you aware of any other evidence or research that may be relevant to Belfast Stories impact assessment?"**. Of these, 11 (78.6 per cent) were unaware of additional evidence.

There were 25 responses to the question **"What else could we do to promote equality of opportunity and good relations?"**. Accordingly:

- 7 responses emphasised the importance of consultation and engagement, and 4 listed additional groups they felt should be engaged. There were homeless people, care homes, "advocacy agencies" and primary schools.
- 2 respondents emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- 2 responses felt that Belfast Stories should be wider than Belfast
- Suggestions to promote good relations included ensuring there is political balance; using arts and festivals to promote good relations; and challenging received narratives.

RELEVANT FINDINGS FROM WIDER ENGAGEMENT

The following section summarises relevant findings from the overall public consultation including the survey, meetings, workshops, focus groups and interviews.

BUILDING THE EXCITEMENT

[1] See appendix 6 for a list of organisations that responded via the survey

[2] 12.0 per cent gave no response

Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories, with 43.2 per cent saying they felt "very" excited.[3]

Reasons people felt excited included:

- recognition of an opportunity to change the usual negative, narrow or "us and them" narrative of Belfast. ("Think it's a great opportunity to tell stories of the city and its people that transcend tired and unrepresentative binary views.")
- a potential boost to pride at both civic and individual level particularly among Section 75 groups

Among those who were not excited or disagreed strongly with the concept, the main concern was that the investment would be better spent elsewhere or is diverting funding from other priorities, such as preserving other heritage buildings.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE VISITING THE BUILDING

Across all engagement strands, barriers identified that would stop people accessing the building included:

- Cost
- That the building might not be welcoming "for the likes of us" including young people and people from minoritized ethnic communities
- Lack of activity for children and families
- Safety and fear of anti-social behaviour. This was a greater issue for older people, disabled people and people from minoritized ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Transport. This was a major concern, particularly among older people, disabled people, minoritized ethnic communities, carers and people living in working class areas.
- Building design. This was of particular concern to older people, neurodiverse people and disabled people.
- Unilingual signage. This was felt to be a particular barrier for the Irish language community.

For carers and disabled people, a good practice buddy ticketing system was considered essential. It was also felt that older people may need more encouragement to go out after the pandemic.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE VISITING THE EXHIBITION

[3] n=125

Barriers identified across all engagement strands that might stop people enjoying the exhibition included:

- Cost
- Lack of interest or relevance
- Different language and literacy abilities
- Triggering content, including “Dark stories” that could traumatise or retraumatise, flashing images and loud noises
- Lack of outreach
- Marketing that is not inclusive of diverse communities.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE TELLING THEIR STORIES

The survey asked “What might stop you telling your story?”. The most frequent barrier identified related to perceived lack of inclusivity, identified by 18 people, followed by “Nothing”, identified by 14 people.[4]

In practice, during workshops and other in-person engagement, the vast majority of people were very willing to tell their stories.

Generally, young women appeared more reticent than young men, and women more reticent than men in general.

Some people indicated that they would be more comfortable telling their story to another person. This would help overcome barriers including different literacy and language abilities. Others would like to write or record their own story privately, particularly those with sensitive or traumatic stories to tell. Group dynamics helped some overcome initial reticence.

While the majority of participants in the consultation had little reticence sharing their stories with the facilitators during the public consultation (who were generally unknown to the participants), many of the workshops were organised or supported by trusted intermediaries, whether a local community group or respected individual “of” that community, which helped reassure participants.

Some would be happy to have their words used, but not their voice (because they dislike the sound of their voice on recordings); others would be happy to have their voice used, but not their face. Several consultees, particularly among minoritized ethnic groups and young people, wondered whether they could use an avatar instead.

[4] n=87

There was concern that the collection process could be difficult or cumbersome, particularly for those with different literacy or memory loss.

Another barrier that emerged through in-person engagement was storytelling fatigue. Many people's stories have already been collected through community groups, reminiscence projects and so on. In general, participants indicated they would prefer that this activity is shared or showcased, rather than stories recorded anew.

PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR RISK OF MISSING OUT

The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people, was emphasised throughout the consultation.

Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that we had identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group. Other suggestions for the equity steering group included:

- Migrant communities
- People with refugee status or seeking asylum
- Men
- Middle-aged men
- The very elderly
- Students
- People of no faith
- Integrated education alumni
- Irish speakers
- Those who no longer live in Belfast or NI
- Parents
- Foster carers and guardians
- Younger children
- People with care experience
- Underprivileged children
- Long-term unemployed
- Different socio-economic classes, in particular people living in poverty
- "Normal working every day people"
- "Less educated people who struggle to read large blocks of text"
- Blind people
- People with dementia
- People from geographic communities
- People living at interfaces
- Homeless people
- Drug addicts
- Tourists
- People who are not affiliated to groups

Some respondents considered more “professional” expertise would be advantageous. Others were concerned that the equality focus was misguided or that the steering group was “box ticking” or “woke”.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector.

Consultees “warmly welcome[d]” Belfast Stories and were “hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city”. However, there were concerns that “the Irish language community have been, so far, completely omitted from the Belfast Stories concept”.

Consultees considered that including Irish language in Belfast Stories would welcome the Irish language community while fostering good relations by “normalising the language”.

While there was recognition that Irish as a native minority language should not be categorised with other minority groups, it was also suggested that there should be “members of the Irish language community on the project’s equity steering group, given that all other minority groups across the city are represented.”

Other suggestions from the Irish language sector included:

1. That Irish language is woven throughout the Belfast Stories themes, including celebration, diversity, education and the story of the language itself.
2. There should be bilingual resources throughout Belfast Stories including external and internal signage, exhibitions, marketing and other materials.
3. The council should develop and implement a language screening assessment for all new council policies, practices and projects.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO ULSTER SCOTS

A meeting was held with the Ulster Scots Agency, and the Ulster Scots Community Network also participated in a consultation workshop.

The opportunity to foster further understanding the cultural identity of Ulster Scots was broadly welcomed. It was felt that this should include stories of the language, of “celebrated” and “lesser known” individuals, of industrial heritage and diaspora and international connections.

In general throughout the public consultation, there was concern that there could be an imbalance or bias in content and presentation. One consultee also welcomed further

reflection of other Ulster identities and ancestries (for example, Anglo-Ulster, Franco and Italianate).

CONCLUSIONS

This information has been brought together in this report in order to ensure that Belfast City Council is in a position to take account of all issues when making a decision in relation to Belfast Stories. The following analysis of the key points arising from the EQIA and the consultation responses is provided to assist the council, but it is not exhaustive and is not meant to be a substitute for the detailed information presented in this report.

SUPPORT FOR THE BELFAST STORIES CONCEPT

During the public consultation, Belfast Stories' engagement plan ensured that Belfast City Council gathered feedback across a broad range of equality groups, and there were exceptionally high levels of support, including across all Section 75 equality categories. Many consultees also reflected on the potential positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Nevertheless, there were concerns that Belfast Stories could present a partisan, binary or narrow perspective of Belfast that would exclude the stories or identities of particular groups. The council should continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in the development of Belfast Stories, ensuring that early potential for positive impact can be realised throughout the project design, delivery and implementation.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

During the public consultation, consultees offered further insight in relation to groups of people at risk of missing out and tactics to mitigate potential differential impact.

Tactics to engage people at risk of missing out are considered and included in the engagement plan. Ongoing engagement should continue to focus on those most at risk of missing out, and the engagement plan and stakeholder mapping should be reviewed and revised in light of lessons learned and additional evidence uncovered during the public consultation.

STORY COLLECTION

Belfast City Council plans to start story collection in spring 2023. The engagement plan includes recommendations for engaging around story collection. This should focus on action learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstance), in particular older people and the very elderly whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.

IRISH AND ULSTER SCOTS

The Belfast Stories concept was broadly welcomed by the Irish language community as an opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the language and the city's Irish language community. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to a native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.

Belfast City Council should continue to consult closely with Irish language and Ulster Scots stakeholders, including in relation to the development of the building, story collection, exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should be subject to an equality screening and (if required) a full equality impact assessment.

MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that a system be established to monitor the impact of the final policy in order to find out its effect on the relevant groups within the equality categories.

Belfast City Council plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when the draft EQIA report will be revised, taking into account comments received during the consultation, and a final EQIA report will be prepared for Belfast City Council. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 10 August and 20 November 2022, Belfast City Council carried out a 14-week public consultation on Belfast Stories, a planned new visitor attraction due to open in the city centre in 2028, and its accompanying equality impact assessment (EQIA). The public consultation focused on:

1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

During the consultation period, the draft EQIA report was available on Belfast City Council's Your Say consultation website. This included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA. The council's Equality Scheme consultees (appendix 1) were notified of the draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, the Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre. There were also 65 consultation workshops and meetings with a range of stakeholders (see appendix 2).

This EQIA final decision report sets out:

- the initial findings from the draft EQIA report
- the results of the consultation process
- conclusions
- recommendations for monitoring any adverse impacts

2. THE POLICY

ABOUT BELFAST STORIES

In December 2021, Belfast City Council announced its plans for a new visitor attraction in Belfast city centre.

Funded by the Belfast City Region Deal and Belfast City Council, Belfast Stories will open at the former Bank of Ireland buildings, 92 Royal Avenue (where North Street and Royal Avenue meet) by 2028. It aims to attract both tourists and locals while helping to regenerate the city and surrounding areas.

There are three main parts to the visitor centre: stories, screen and social.

STORIES

These will be first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home.

These stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will include:

- uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others
- collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard

The stories will be exhibited using a range of media – words, pictures, photographs, animation, film, virtual technology and so on – in 2,000m^2 of exhibition space including a library of stories, a main exhibition space and temporary exhibition spaces. Visitors will be guided through the space by a trail which will end at a viewing platform on top of the building where they can reflect on the story of the whole city.

SCREEN

Belfast Stories film centre will house a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema (including an outdoor screen), offering, for example, premieres and new releases from around the world, film festivals and special events.

It will also contain NI's digital screen archive, which visitors can explore, supported by a year-round programme of talks and interactive events.

The film centre will also support the local film industry with developmental space, flexible learning spaces and a story lab. There will be a particular focus on children and young people.

SOCIAL

The exhibition space and film centre will be connected by public spaces where people can meet, eat, shop and relax. These will include:

- a central open-air courtyard
- pocket squares and laneways
- roof gardens
- cafes, restaurants and bars sharing local produce and cuisine – Belfast's "food story"
- shops selling local products

These spaces will be brought to life through a programme of events, pop-up shops and street food.

THE STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

A draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders in 2021.

The purpose of the framework is to help gather, sort and celebrate a wealth of Belfast stories without being constraining. It is essential that the Story Collection Framework is inclusive of different people and groups so that they will share their stories.

Stories will be told in the first person to keep their distinctive, human and relatable voice, told from a personal point of view rather than by an official or authority.

Stories can be about the past, present or future, and there are seven themes:

i. Home
ii. Resilient
iii. Place
iv. Change
v. Innovative
vi. Authentic
vii. Creative

Each theme has between 11 to 16 subthemes, but the framework is designed to be flexible. Stories may fit under more than one theme. If stories do not fit under a particular subtheme, a new one can be created.

Stories will be mostly Belfast-focused, but they will have common threads that will show how Belfast connects with global history and current affairs (such as Black Lives Matters, climate change or #MeToo).

The themes are underpinned by five principles.

i. Equality and inclusiveness
ii. Increased accessibility and co-creation
iii. Pressure free
iv. Respect
v. People centred

ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Belfast Stories' Equality Framework was developed in 2021. It recognises that the project's vision cannot be achieved unless equality, diversity and inclusion are placed at its core and supported by co-design and an inclusive process throughout all stages of development.

It recommends that engagement be:

> *"an ongoing cumulative process, enabling relationships, building trust and strengthening links over time […] Residents, voluntary and community groups, specialists and concerned or interested individuals, may want to participate at a range of levels – from providing advice to co-designing the process, undertaking some aspects of the engagement to delivering projects to meet some of the outcomes."*

It also recommends that equality screening and impact assessments should be carried out at different stages and on different elements of the project.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The 14-week public consultation focused on:

3. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
4. gathering ideas and evidence to help shape the design brief to make sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories

An online consultation hub was created on Belfast City Council's Your Say platform. It included a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA; copies of the consultation document in a range of formats including HTML, Easy Read, British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL); and registration for workshops and public meetings. The council's Equality Scheme consultees (appendix 1) were notified of the public consultation and draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city including pop-ups and display boards exhibited at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster

University, the Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre. A series of meetings, workshops and events were also held (see appendix 2 for participating organisations).

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

An equity steering group was set up in August 2022. Its purpose is to:

- identify and connect to "missing voices" and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an engagement programme that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce engagement opportunities throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the accessibility of consultation materials
- act as a critical friend, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

It is made up of Belfast City Council staff working alongside people who are experts by experience of being less heard or listened to due to their identity or circumstance including:

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

The engagement plan recommends that the equity steering group should continue to run after August 2023, when it will co-design its new priorities, which might include, for example:

- building the confidence and trust of missing voices to share their stories and
- marketing and communications.

The engagement plan also recommends that the membership of the steering group may change as one of its roles will be to continually ask itself "Who else needs to be part of the discussion around this table?"

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Belfast Stories engagement plan sets out plans for ongoing engagement structured around four work strands:

5. Equity. Equity recognises that not everyone starts from the same place. It gives people the different resources and opportunities they need to take part.
6. Sustainability. The purpose of this strand is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. It will bring together environmental, tourism, culture and economic development stakeholders.
7. Partnership. The city stakeholders network will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories.
8. Experiences. This strand will bring together stakeholders around the stories, screen and social elements of the concept.

The strands will come together in an integrated design steering group, which will be responsible for ensuring that the design of the building and exhibition reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.

ABOUT THE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Belfast City Council recognises Belfast Stories as a major development which will impact on staff, residents and other ratepayers. As a result, it could also impact on people and groups associated with the nine Section 75 equality categories.

An initial equality screening was carried out in December 2021. It recommended that an equality impact assessment (EQIA) be carried out on Belfast Stories, potentially at different stages in the project, such as concept and design stages.

The initial 14-week public consultation on the concept and draft EQIA took place between 10 August to 20 November 2022.

Belfast City Council plans to continue engagement with different people and organisations throughout its development. This includes two more planned public consultations: in autumn 2023 on the concept design and in late 2024/early 2025 as part of planning permission.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

This section provides an overview of the data and research that was considered in the draft EQIA report.

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKE-UP OF BELFAST'S RESIDENT POPULATION

A breakdown of Belfast's resident population is included in appendix 3. It is drawn from the most up-to-date data available at the time when the draft EQIA report was being prepared, namely the 2011 Census, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's mid-year population estimates and 2019 local council elections.

COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

EQUALITY SCHEME

The council's revised Equality Scheme (approved in 2021) sets out Belfast City Council's arrangements for complying with the equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It includes a commitment to provide information in alternative formats on request were reasonably practicable. The scheme states that alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Belfast City Council's 2018 Language Strategy aspires to create a place where linguistic diversity is celebrated and respected. It has two key purposes.

1. To protect and promote awareness of our indigenous languages of Irish and Ulster-Scots

2. To promote access to, inclusion of and awareness of other languages including sign languages, the languages of new communities who live in Belfast and languages and communication for disabled people

GOOD RELATIONS STRATEGY

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, all public bodies, including Belfast City Council must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

The council's Good Relations Strategy was adopted in 2019. It states that it "aims to promote sharing over separation and the economic, social and environmental benefits of

such. We need to continue to create spaces for communities to interact and make connections with each other, moving from parallel living to meaningful relationships and casual interactions".

It also sets down the five outcomes it seeks to achieve.

- Outcome one: Strong, positive and transformative civic leadership – inclusive governance with community changemakers
- Outcome two: Shared and connected spaces – a smart, connected city driven by inclusive and transformative place making
- Outcome three: Shared services – focusing on co-design and social innovation
- Outcome four: Structured collaboration and partnerships
- Outcome five: An intercultural city and respectful cultural expression within the rule of law

THE BELFAST AGENDA

The Belfast Agenda, Belfast's first community plan, was published in 2017. It is currently being reviewed and revised.

At its core, the Belfast Agenda has the aim of improving the wellbeing of all Belfast citizens, and it has the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, tackle and address issues of exclusion and marginalisation and have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups.

The intended outcomes of the Belfast Agenda are:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is safe, fair and inclusive for all
- Belfast is a place that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable
- Everyone experiences good health and wellbeing
- Everyone fulfils their potential

It is underpinned by values including "A focus on outcomes for people", "Equality and good relations" and "Inclusiveness, care and compassion". It recognises the need to "deliver services differently, in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people and helps them participate fully in the life of the city."

CORPORATE PLAN

The draft Corporate Plan (2019 to 2023) supports the Belfast Agenda through its themes of:

- Growing the economy
- Living here
- Working and learning
- City development
- Resilience and sustainability
- Cross-cutting priorities, including implementing the Good Relations Strategy and developing and implementing the city's cultural strategy, A City Imagining

It also introduces a number of organisational capabilities required to deliver excellent service and city leadership. Priorities under organisational capabilities include data development, people development, customer focus, continuous improvement and equality, diversity and inclusion.

CITY CENTRE REGENATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Published in 2015, the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy recognises that Belfast:

> *"city centre is one of the most important places in Northern Ireland. [It is] where investment impact can be maximised, where rates are generated and where momentum can be built to support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods."*

Inner North Belfast (including the North Street and Royal Avenue intersection) is recognised as a special action area which "should be home to Belfast's growing learning and innovation culture" and considers opportunities for a "creative hub".

A CITY IMAGINING

A City Imagining, Belfast City Council's cultural strategy for 2020 to 2030, places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development.

There are four themes within the strategy.

1. A City Belonging (active participation): Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.
2. A City Challenging (diversity): Priorities under this theme will aspire to cultivate creative environments for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our placemaking.
3. A City Creating (new approaches): Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways.
4. A City Exploring (our place in the world): Priorities under this theme will sustain, strengthen and develop the city's cultural ecosystem.

It identifies a major cultural attraction that will be shaped by the stories of local people, attract visitors and connect to the city's wider cultural offering as a strategic project.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Belfast City Council's tourism strategy (2022) places authentic, local stories as key to attracting visitors to the city. It identifies Belfast Stories as a physical home for some of these stories and the flagship investment in product development in the city:

> *"Belfast Stories is a transformational project designed to capture the unique spirit of Belfast. This major regeneration and tourism anchor will help revitalise our city centre, allowing people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screens and social spaces."*

It details how the physical building and its contents will be supported by wider programmes of storytelling and development.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION TO DATE

Engagement around the concept of a Belfast Stories has been ongoing since 2014 when the need for a second major visitor attraction in the city was identified while Belfast City Council was developing its then tourism strategy. It has subsequently been formally consulted on during public consultations on the council's Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment, A City Imagining and Make Yourself at Home strategies.[5]

The concept Belfast Stories has been broadly welcomed in all consultation and engagement carried out to date.[6] Findings relevant to the draft EQIA included:

- Cost may be a barrier, particularly to families and younger people
- Transportation can be a barrier, particularly for older people
- Need to follow inclusive design principles

[5] Variously referred to as a destination or creative hub

[6] See appendix 4 for participating organisations

- Equality considerations should “go beyond” the statutory requirements

DRAFT STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

The draft Story Collection Framework was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders including representatives from museums, libraries, archives and other collections. Consultees identified that the following voices are more likely to be missing from or underrepresented voices in current stories and collections:

- Women
- Youth (includes teenagers and student population)
- Children
- Elderly
- Religious and ethnic minorities
- Transient/migrant populations
- LGBTQ+
- Marginalized people (prisoners/ex-prisoners, children in foster care, homeless, refugees, illegal workers)
- People with special needs

OTHER RELEVANT RESEARCH

EQUALITY SCREENING

Belfast City Council’s equality screening of the Belfast Stories outline business case found that:

> *“There is nothing inherent in the principles underpinning the concept of the Belfast Stories to indicate an adverse impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups. Instead, the concept will follow inclusivity principles for all residents and visitors […] will bring about advantages to Belfast citizens irrespective of their identity.”*

However, it continues “The Belfast Stories aspects of this project needs to ensure equal representation of residents and visitors of different [identities]”.

As a result, it recommends that an EQIA should be carried out, potentially at key milestones such as concept, design and content stages.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

Belfast Stories will use expressions of culture to attract visitors. Stories can relate to heritage as well as about the present and the future. They can be drawn from existing archives, libraries, museums and other collections. They may be expressed through film, literature, visual arts, sound, digital technology and other creative mediums.

Appendix 5 considers how different people and groups across the different equality categories may engage with culture.

4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

In accordance with the EQIA process, having gathered information on the policy and those affected by it in the draft EQIA, Belfast City Council then assessed:

4. whether there is likely to be a differential impact on one or more of the equality groups;
5. the extent of differential impact; and
6. whether that impact is adverse.

Differential impact suggests that a particular group has been affected differently by the policy (either favourably or unfavourably), while adverse impact is an indication that the effect is less favourable and is potentially unlawful.[7]

The following section summarises the assessment of impacts as set out in the draft EQIA report based on the evidence available at that time.

DRAFT ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

Belfast City Council recognised that Belfast Stories had the potential to impact differently on people and groups associated with the nine Section 75 equality categories. Barriers that particular groups face to activity that is similar in nature to Belfast Stories include emotional barriers (such as anxiety or discomfort); interest barriers (not relevant, don't know what's available); practical barriers (cost, transport); and societal barriers (racism, ableism).

The Belfast Stories' Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that barriers are removed and equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project's development. This included recommending regular screening, consultation and engagement and co-design and inclusive design processes.

Belfast Stories' engagement plan and draft Story Collection Framework builds on this foundation. These identify groups who are less likely to access, experience or feel represented in Belfast Stories and sets down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impact.

Central to this is the equity steering group, which brings together representatives from the nine equality groups to co-design further engagement and opportunities to promote equal opportunities and good relations. This group will also support the wider engagement plan and influence the design of the building and plans for the collection, curation and exhibition of its stories, making it accessible, welcoming and representative for all.

[7] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 (pp.22-23)

Other planned mitigations include:

- a concentrated period of public consultation aimed at making the building welcoming and accessible and ensuring everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories
- consultation with the council's Equality Consultative Forum and other key organisations representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method
- information available in written, visual and Easy Read formats and other formats on request
- a range of tailored engagement tools from online surveys and quizzes to focus groups, creative workshops and hard-hat tours
- substantial ongoing engagement including around the theme of equity
- further public consultation and equality screening
- monitoring engagement across different Section 75 groups

CONCLUSIONS

The draft EQIA report concluded that with equality, diversity and inclusion embedded in its development and extensive planned engagement including around the theme of equity, Belfast Stories has the potential to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations across all Section 75 categories.

The public consultation welcomed further evidence of any impacts on Section 75 groups, which would be collated and analysed to produce this final EQIA decision report.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE POLICIES AND MITIGATING ACTIONS

Step 4 of the Equality Commission NI's Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment requires that an EQIA considers mitigating actions where a negative impact has been identified.

The evidence currently available indicates that the project has the potential to impact positively across all Section 75 equality categories.

However, the council is mindful of the need to continue to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations. It therefore plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when a EQIA final decision report will be prepared, taking into account comments received during the consultation. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

6. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Equality Commission states that consultation should be inclusive, afford a fair opportunity to communicate pertinent information and enable consultees to give advice and opinion on the policy so that the public authority may reach a more informed decision. The Equality Commission has also made it clear that an EQIA should not be considered as a referendum whereby the views of consultees from a majority are counted as votes to decide the outcome. [8]

The consultation process on this EQIA covered a 14-week period from 10 August to 20 November 2022. During the consultation period, the draft EQIA report was available on Belfast City Council's Your Say consultation website. It was accompanied by a survey inviting feedback on the Belfast Stories proposal and draft EQIA. The council's Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the draft EQIA and invited to comment. Leaflets and information were distributed across the city and a series of meetings, workshops and events were held.[9]

Responses were received as follows.

SURVEY RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT EQIA

One hundred and twenty-seven people responded to the survey on Belfast City Council's Your Say Belfast consultation website.[10] Of those, 50 people (39.4 per cent) answered questions specifically on the draft EQIA.

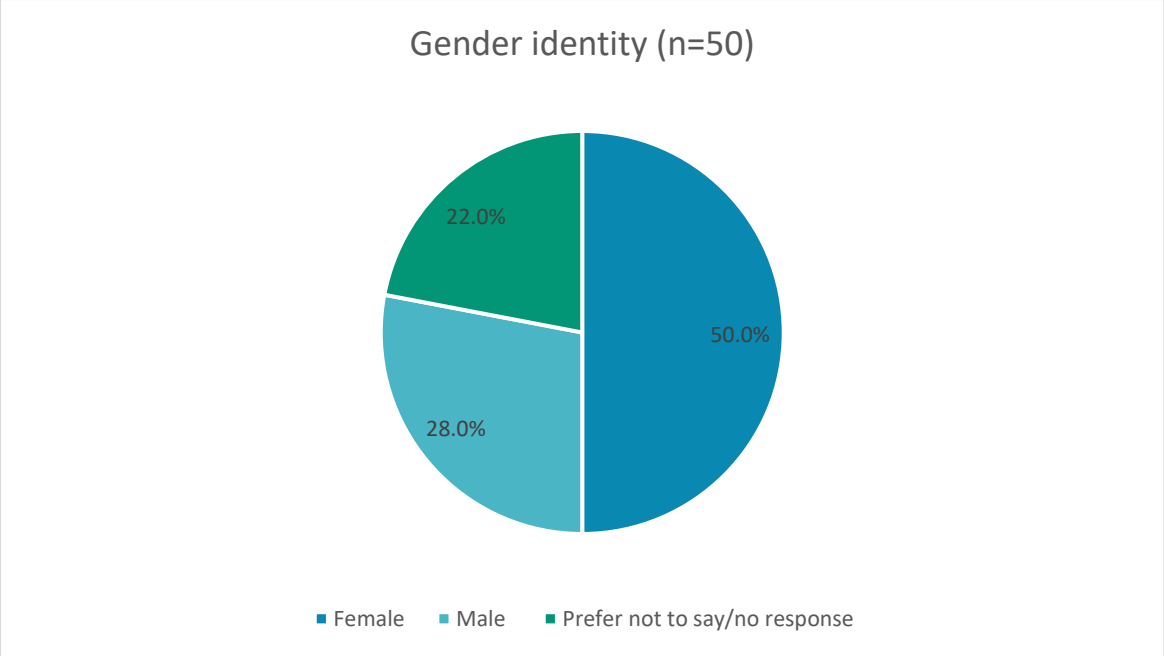
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS

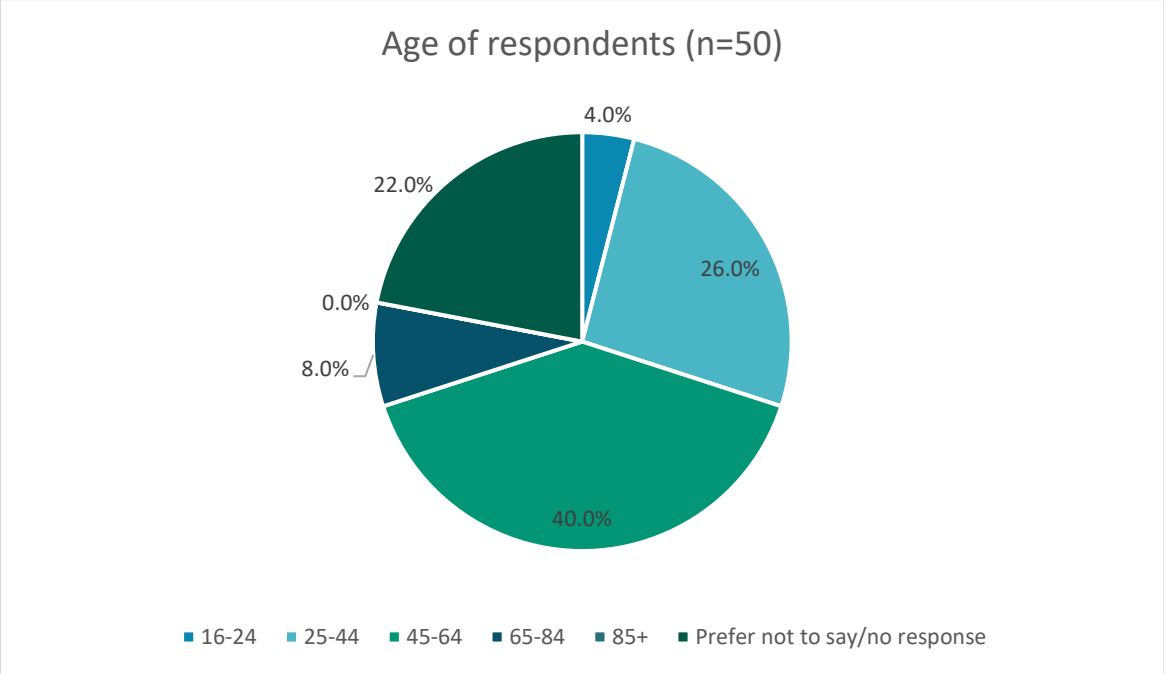
The majority of respondents were female (50.0 per cent) and aged between 16 and 64 (66.0 per cent).

[8] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 (p.36)

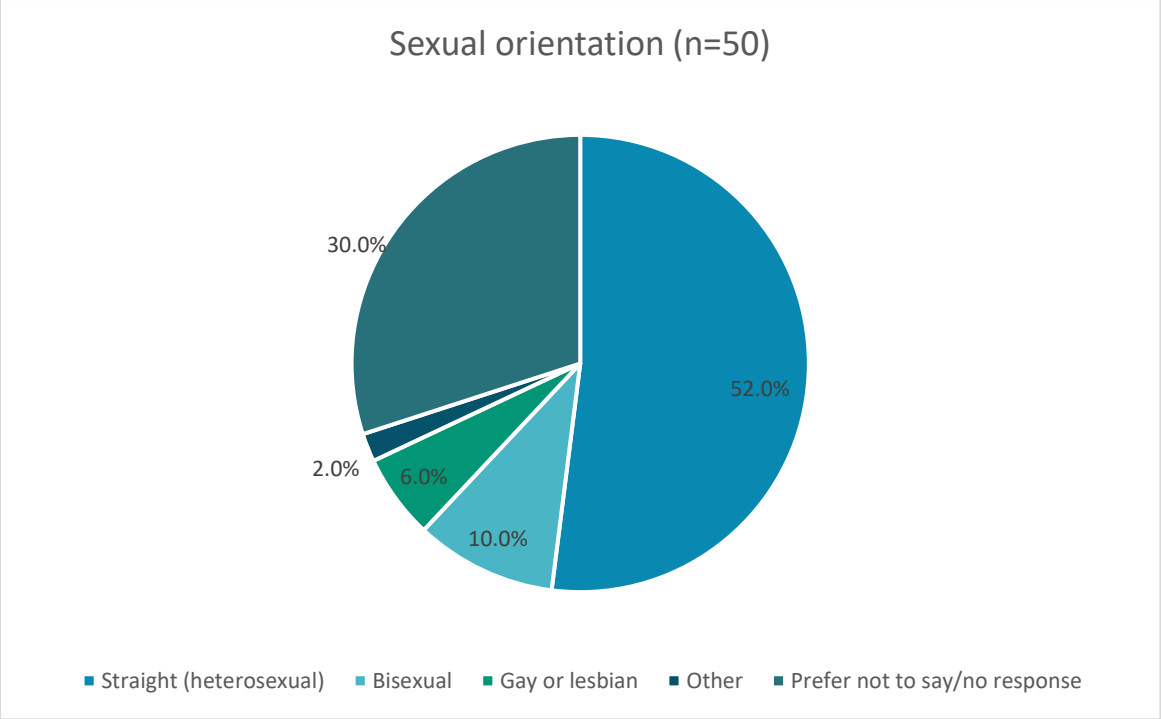
[9] See appendix 2

[10] See appendix 6 for a list of organisations that responded via the survey

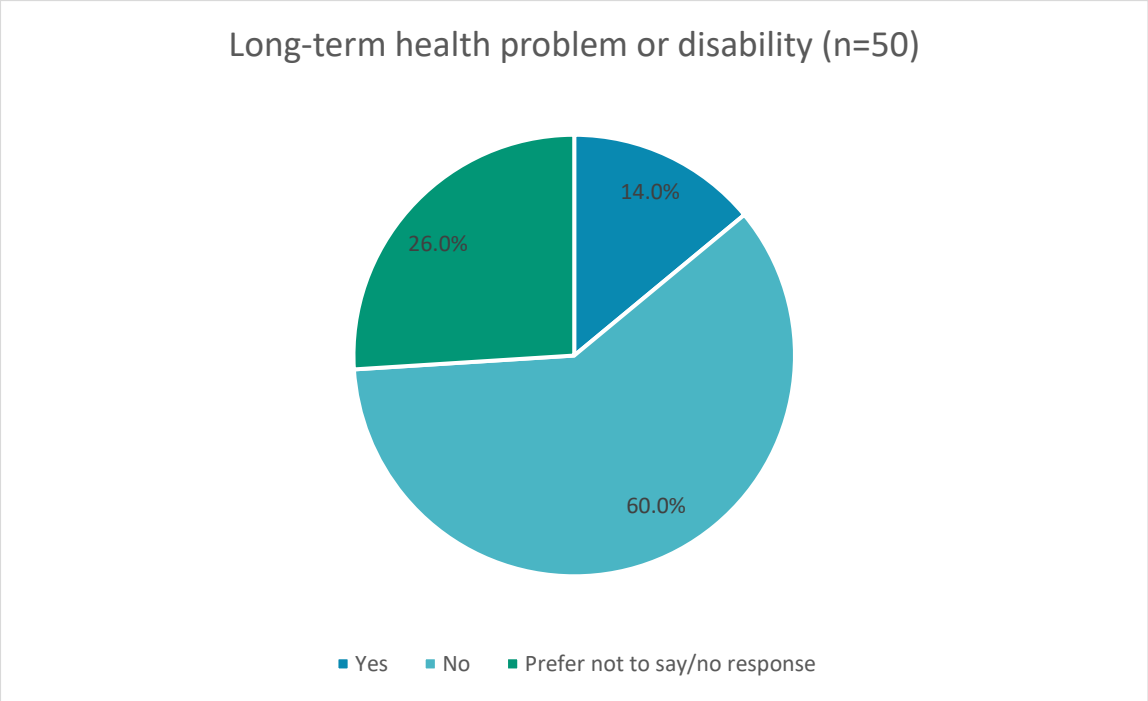




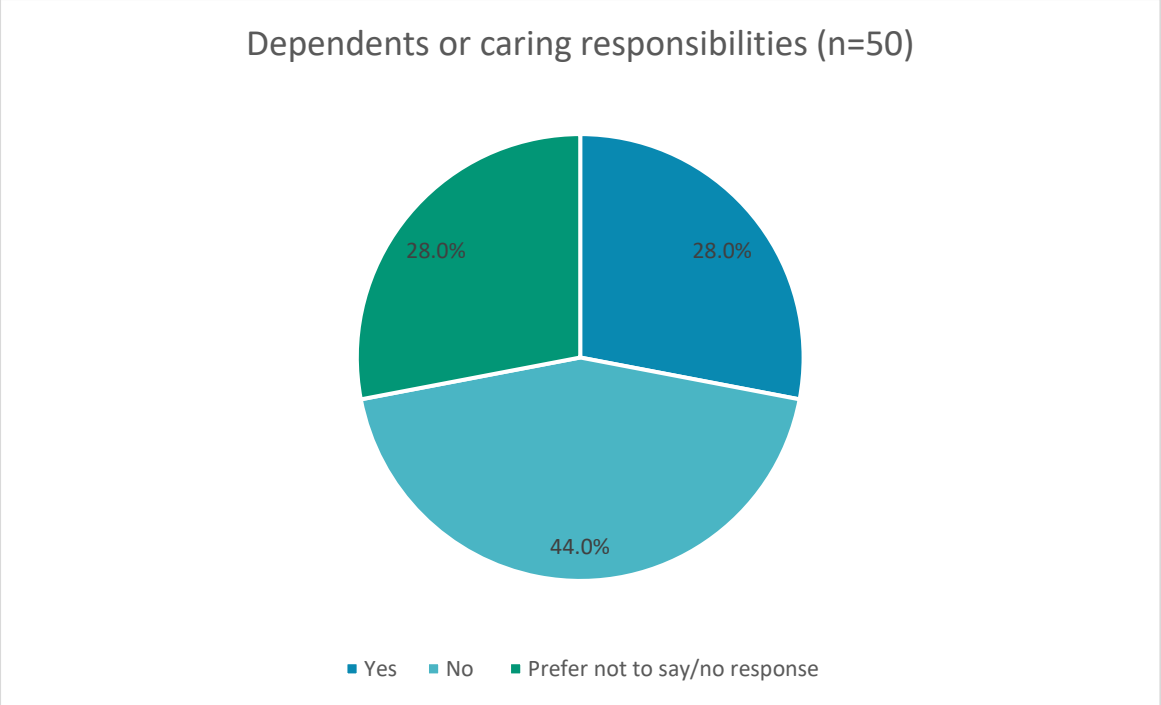
52.0 per cent of respondents identified as straight, and 18.0 per cent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other.



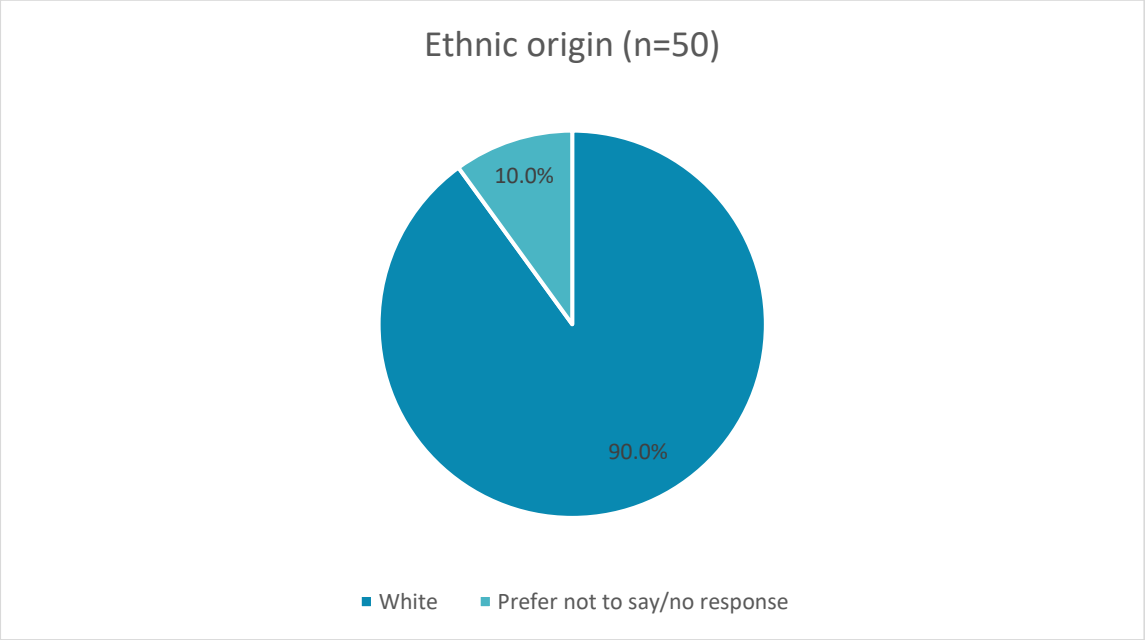
14 per cent identified as being disabled or having a long-term health problem that limits their day-to-day activity.



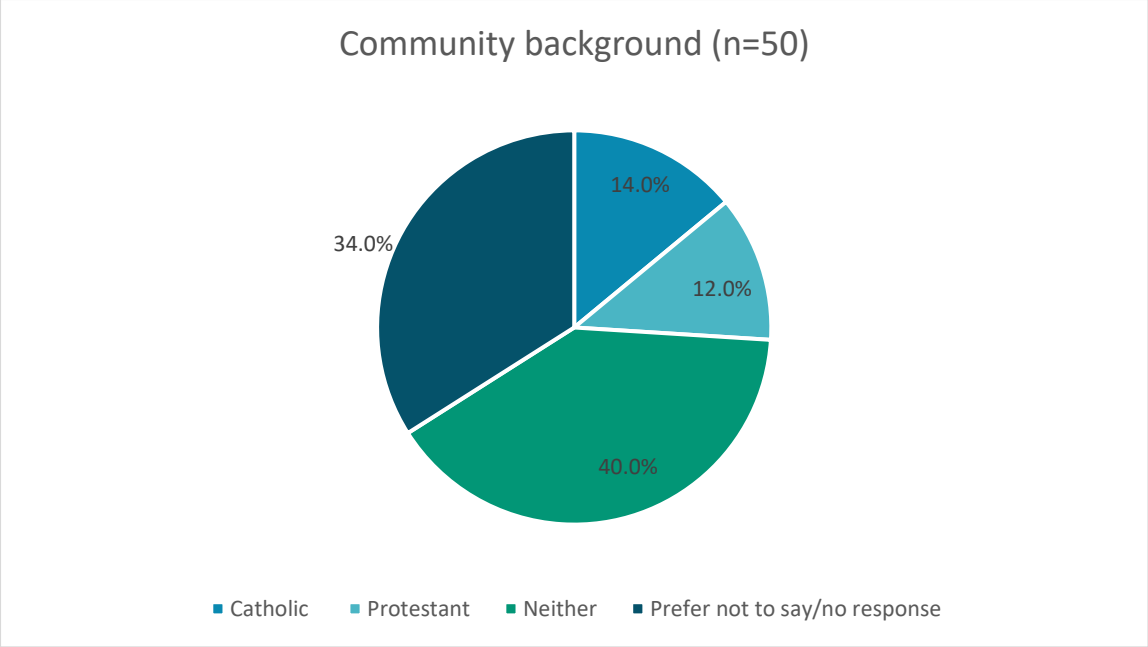
28.0 per cent had dependents or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons.



90 per cent identified as being from a white community background.

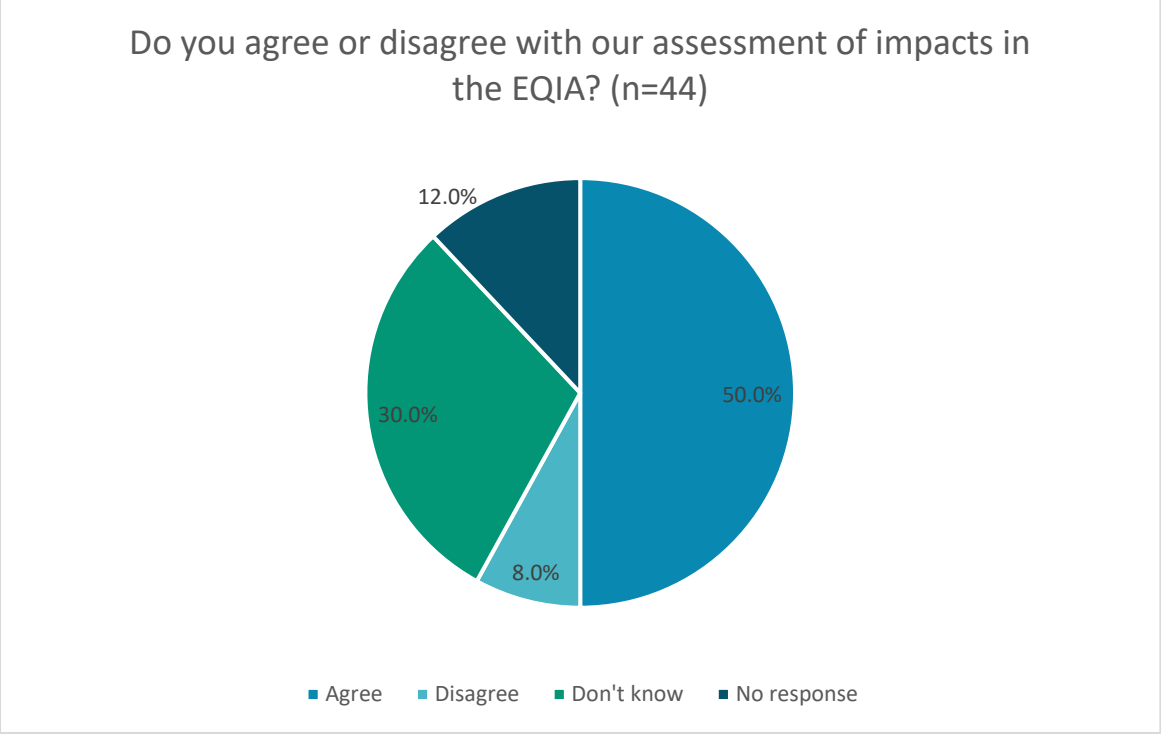


14.0 per cent identified as being from a Catholic community background; 12.0 per cent from a Protestant community background; and 40.0 per cent from neither a Catholic nor Protestant community background.



AGREEMENT WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

The majority of respondents agreed with the assessment of impacts. 8 per cent disagreed.



Reasons given by those who disagreed with the assessment of impacts were:

- “not all sides get listened to.”
- “Let’s break down the various communities and see what might appeal to the public at large. Taxpayers that vote in the council and pay for it. The project must cater to those that have shaped Belfast”

- "I have not read into the policy and data to make my own mind up on this question. Further open access research needs to be available and open to public."

ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

There were 17 responses to the question "Are you aware of any other impacts that we haven't identified?" including 11 responses (64.7 per cent) stating that they could not identify additional impacts.

One response reinforced the opportunity to improve good relations. Other responses were less relevant to good relations or equality of opportunity across Section 75 protected characteristics.[11]

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

There were 14 responses to the question "Are you aware of any other evidence or research that may be relevant to Belfast Stories impact assessment?". Of these, 11 (78.6 per cent) were unaware of additional evidence. Other responses were:

- "Do not have the time to study in depth."
- "Research can be biased based on who carried it out, what was the remit and the reason for it."
- "Boston College revelations of interviewees' data."

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND GOOD RELATIONS

There were 25 responses to the question "What else could we do to promote equality of opportunity and good relations?". Accordingly:

- 7 responses emphasised the importance of consultation and engagement, and 4 listed additional groups they felt should be engaged. There were homeless people, care homes, "advocacy agencies" and primary schools.
- 2 respondents emphasised the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, although another respondent felt that there should be "Less tick boxing. It needs to develop on an individual basis – rather than representatively."
- 2 responses felt that Belfast Stories should be wider than Belfast
- Suggestions to promote good relations included ensuring there is political balance; using arts and festivals to promote good relations; and challenging the received narratives ("Ensure there is a focus n unifying stories – Belfast hasn't always been a divided city – lets hear about that! What was it like post troubles? When we all lived as one and no one cared about your religious background. I appreciate we need to speak of the troubles but this should by no means be the overall story of this place.

[11] These responses were: "Parking, business as in coffee shops (If your opening a cafe)"; "Confused why rural needs impact assessment if it is Belfast Stories?"; "Emotional trauma. Anger. Personal regret"; "Impact of climate crisis".

We are much more than that."; "make sure not to work in a way that allows gatekeepers").

WIDER ENGAGEMENT

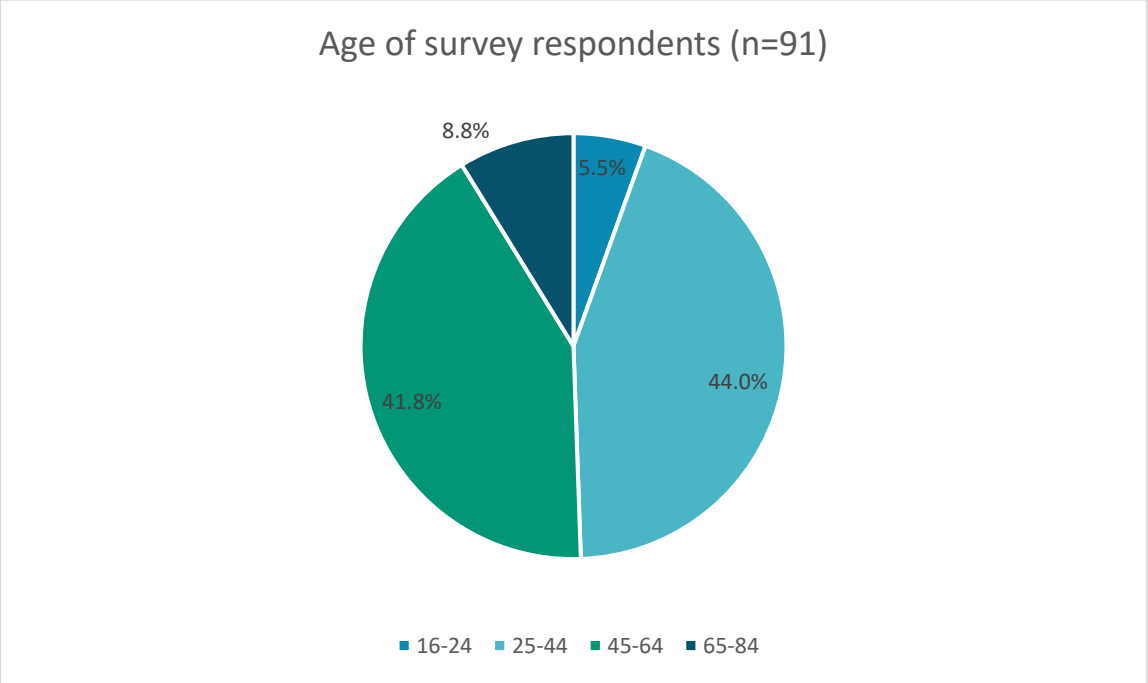
RESPONSES TO THE OVERALL SURVEY

One hundred and 27 responses were received across the whole survey which, in addition to the questions specific to the draft EQIA, asked:

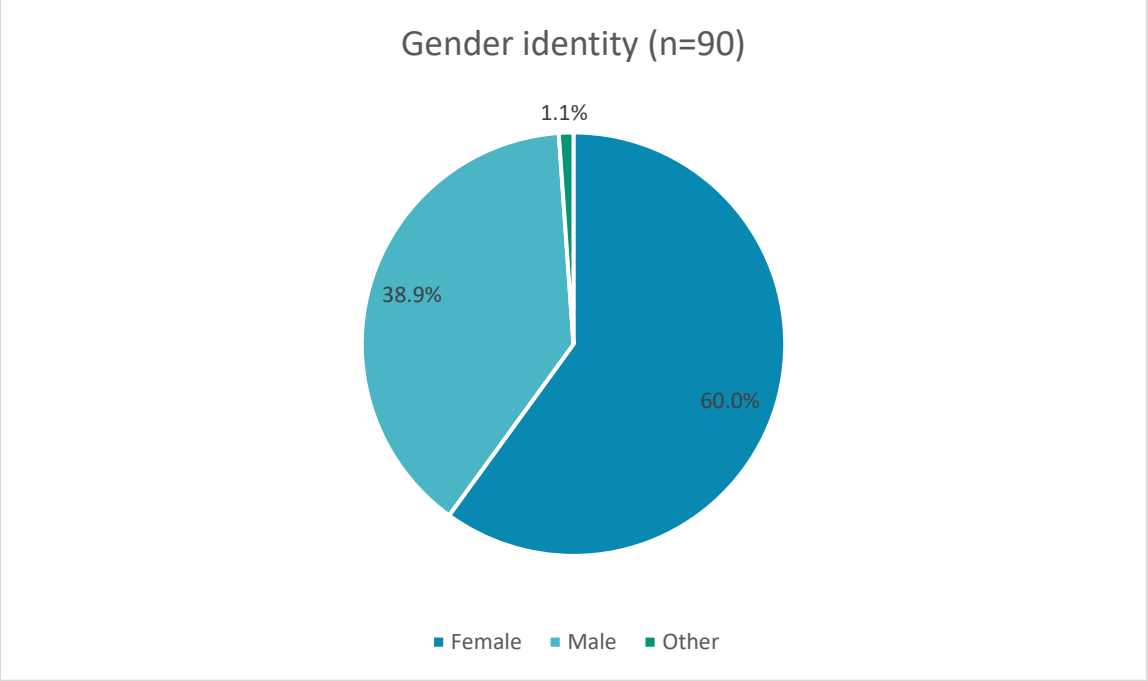
- What might stop you from enjoying Belfast Stories?
- Have we identified the right people for the equity steering group?
- Are there any other groups of people at risk of missing out?
- How else can we engage with people at risk of missing out?
- Is the story collection framework a good foundation for gathering stories?
- What might stop you telling your story?
- What support might people in your community or organisation need to share their stories?

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES ACROSS THE OVERALL SURVEY

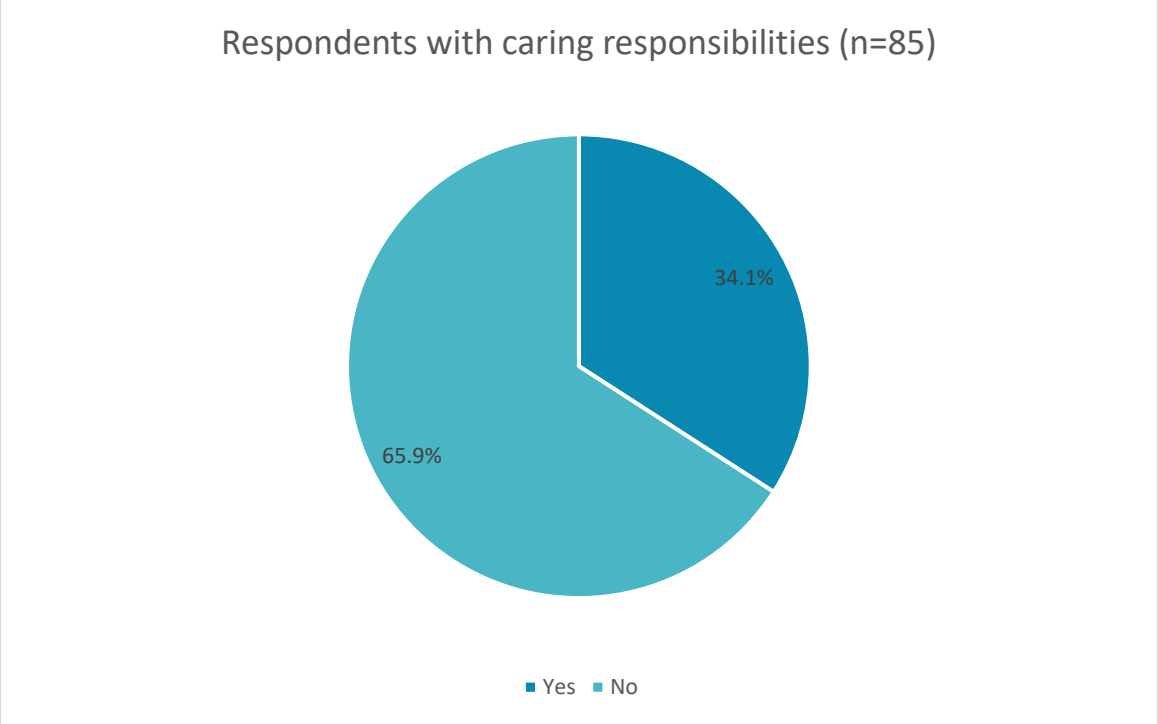
85.8 per cent of respondents were aged 25 to 64.



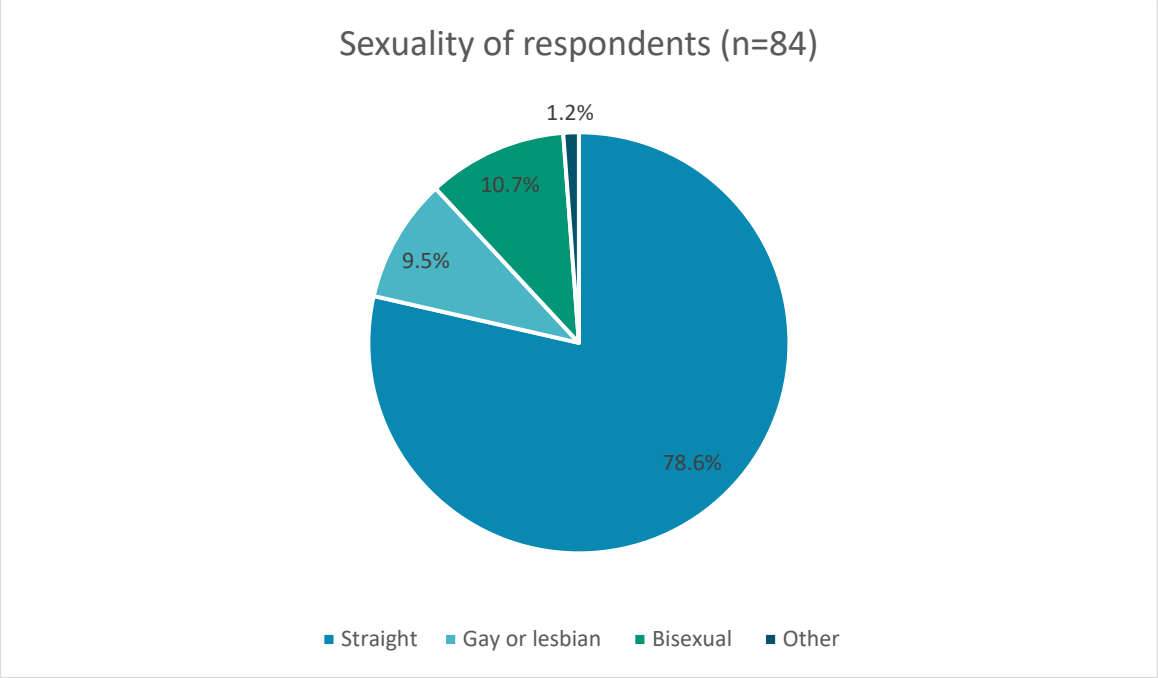
60.0 per cent of respondents were female and 38.9 per cent male.



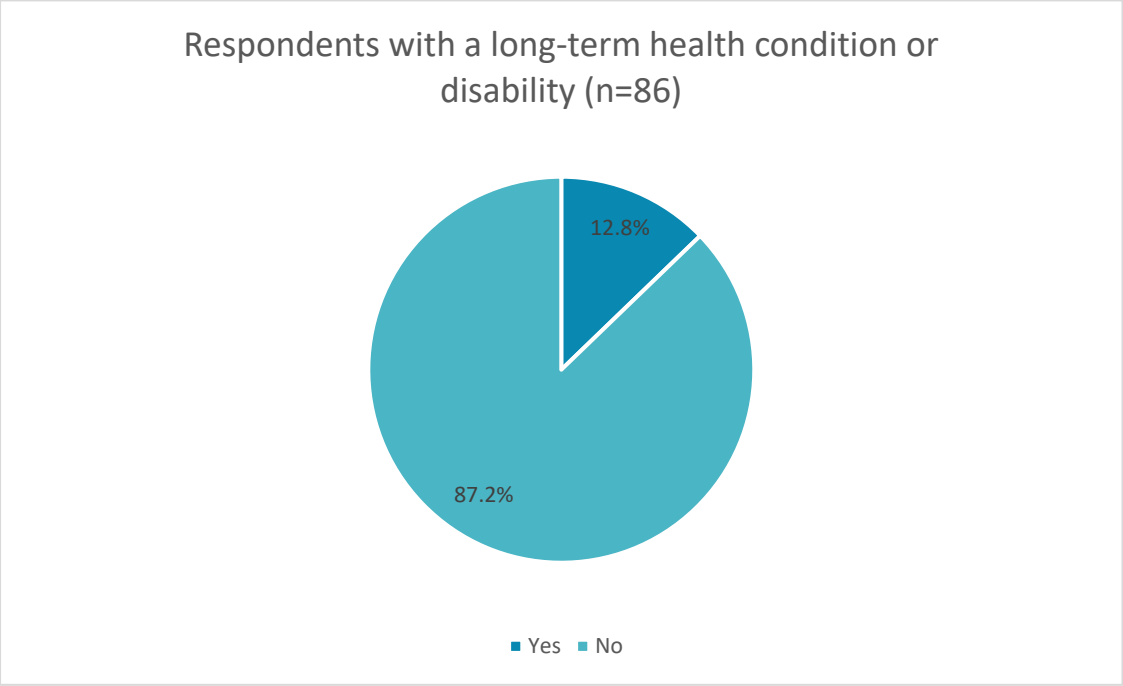
34.1 per cent of respondents have caring responsibilities including 20 per cent with responsibility for caring for an older person or disabled person.



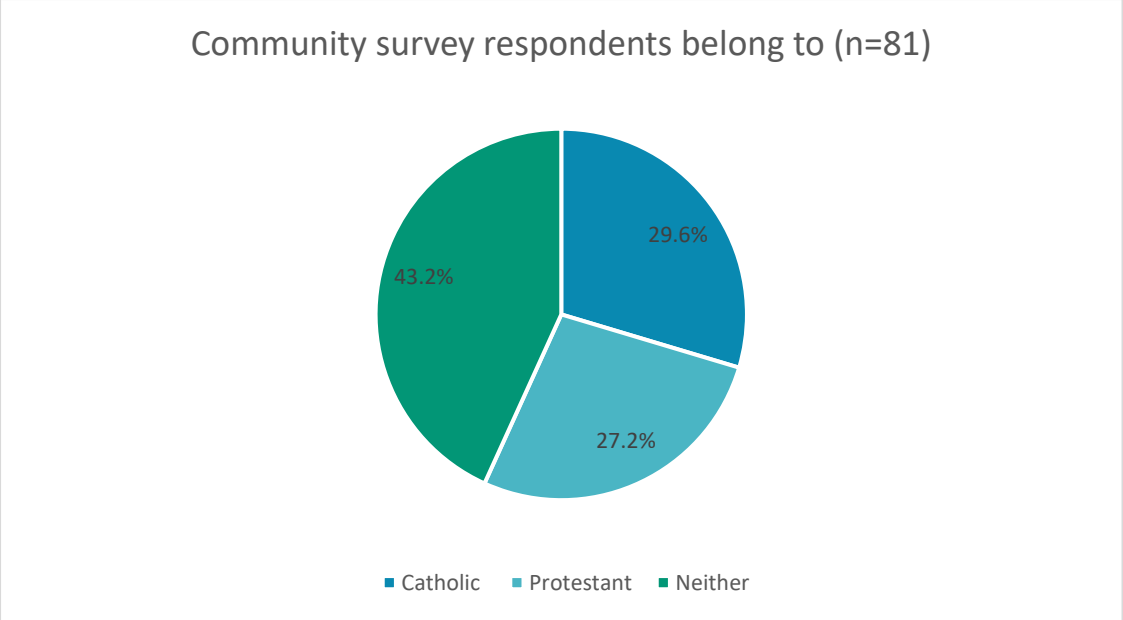
78.6 per cent of respondents identified as straight (heterosexual) and 21.4 per cent identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (“queer”).



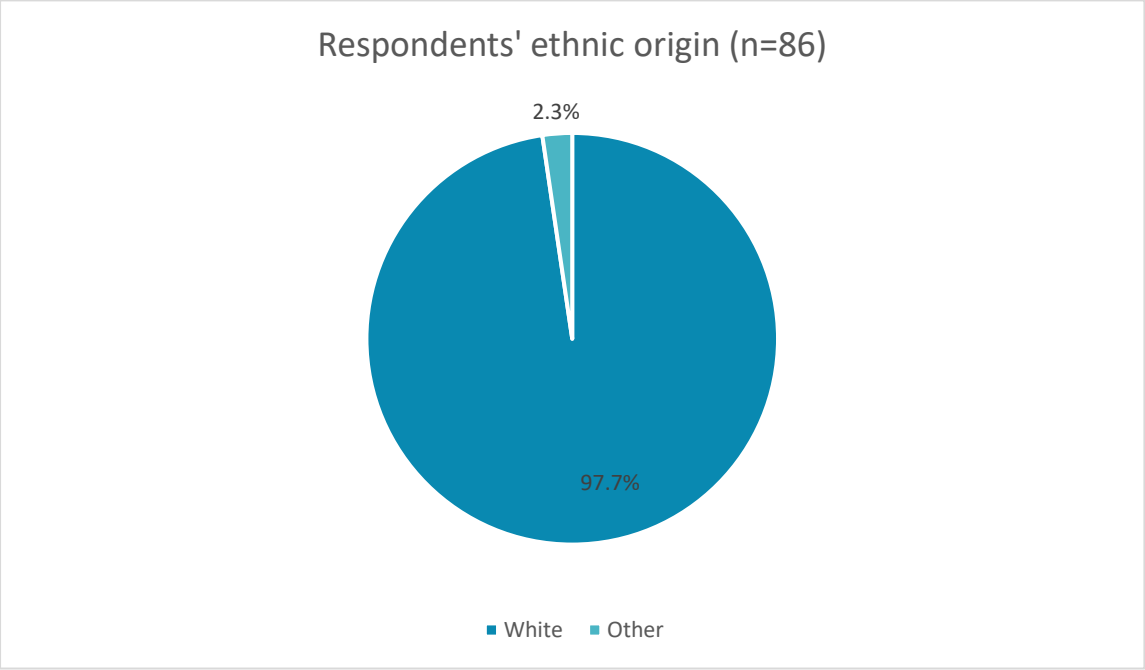
12.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a long-term health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activity.



29.6 per cent of survey respondents identified as belonging to the Catholic community; 27.2 per cent identified as from the Protestant community; and 43.2 per cent identified as belonging to neither community.



97.7 per cent of respondents identified as white, and 2.3 per cent identified as other including from a mixed ethnic background.



EQUITY STEERING GROUP

In August 2022, an equity steering group was set up comprising 10 experts by experience including people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, inner city, working class and LGBTQ+ backgrounds; older and younger people; disabled and neurodiverse people; and people with caring responsibilities.

There were 4 equity steering group meetings during the public consultation, which were attended by an average of 8 people (31 in total).

OTHER ENGAGEMENT AROUND EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A further 16 workshops were facilitated with people and groups who are generally less heard or more at risk of missing out. These were attended by 136 people (9 on average).

Ten one-to-one meetings were also held with organisations representing or advocating for people and groups at risk of missing out.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

There were 31 workshops with the film, tourism, arts, heritage, the voluntary and community, Irish language and public sectors, engaging 238 representatives.

Written submissions were also received from seven organisations (see appendix 7).

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Belfast City Council facilitated four public meetings. These took place in the north, south, east and west of the city and were attended by 15 participants.

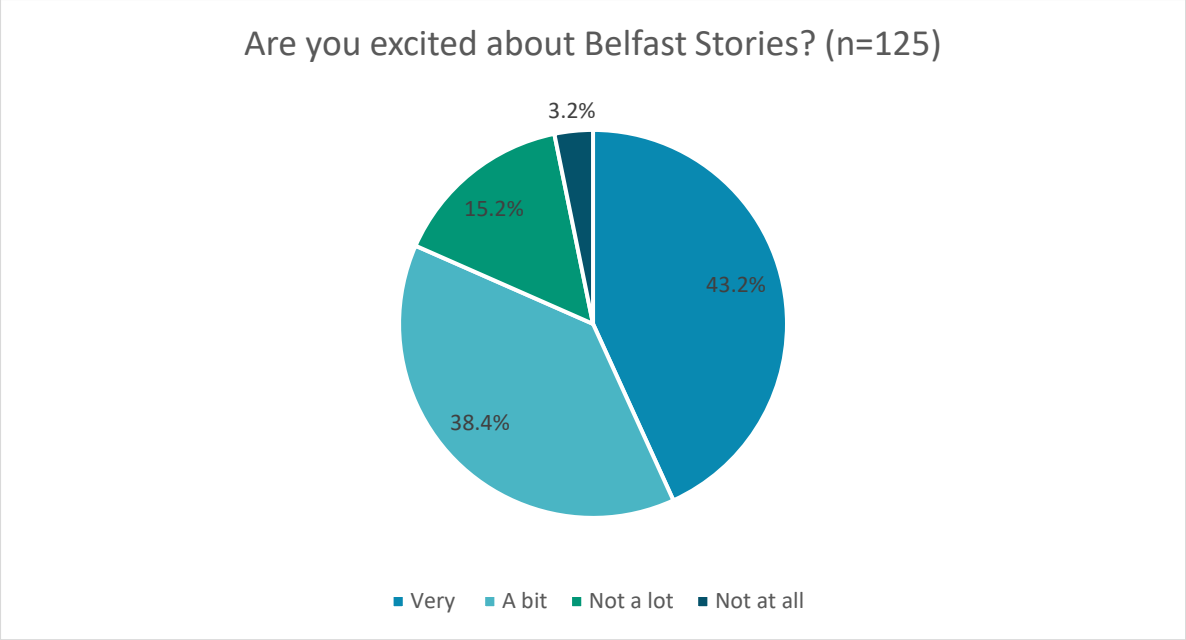
Information boards were displayed at Clifton House, Girdwood Community Hub, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Crescent Arts Centre, Ulster University, Spectrum Centre, EastSide Visitor Centre and the James Connolly Visitor Centre.

In August 2022, Belfast City Council appointed thrive, the audience development agency for NI, and Daisy Chain Inc, a creative consultancy, to help raise awareness and build excitement including through on-street interviews, events and workshops and pop-up consultation hubs in central and surrounding locations. They engaged a total of 683 participants.

RELEVANT FINDINGS FROM WIDER ENGAGEMENT

BUILDING THE EXCITEMENT

Across all engagement strands, there was remarkable excitement about the concept of Belfast Stories. For example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories, with 43.2 per cent saying they felt “very” excited.



Reasons people felt excited included:

- looking forward to the regeneration of the area, which many felt was run down, unwelcoming or even unsafe ("the area is a mess a disgrace so it will be a shot in the arm for the area")
- recognition of an opportunity to change the usual negative, narrow or "us and them" narrative of Belfast. ("Think it's a great opportunity to tell stories of the city and its people that transcend tired and unrepresentative binary views.")
- a potential boost to pride at both civic and individual level.

"So important to capture the stories of our city by the people who make it, particularly those of senior citizens whose views are often seen as irrelevant."

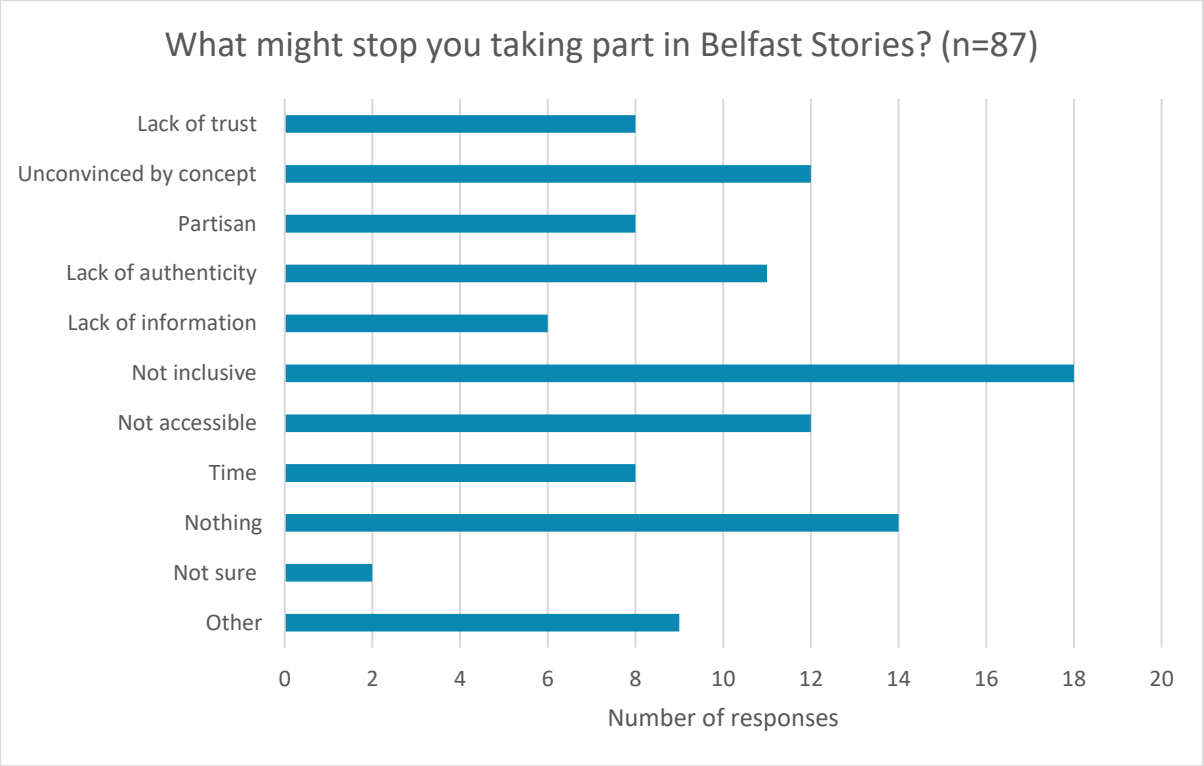
"The idea excites us, the Roma have never been included in anything like this"

Among participants who were unsure about the concept, concerns included

- Not knowing enough about it. Some struggled with being consulted on a concept, rather than on set plans or physical designs.
- Timescales. As the building is not due to open until 2028, some felt that it was too far in the future to be of interest.
- There was suspicion about the political narrative, specifically that the centre would "just" tell the usual "us and them" narrative or, for some people, concerns that it would just tell the story of "them".
- There were also concerns about authenticity, which qualified a lot of opinions, including those who were otherwise excited for Belfast Stories. For example, "I am excited if it is not watered down" or "Disnefied" or is if it is "true to me".

Among those who were not excited or disagreed strongly with the concept, the main concern was that the investment would be better spent elsewhere or is diverting funding from other priorities, such as preserving other heritage buildings or investment in existing arts and cultural infrastructure.

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE ENJOYING BELFAST STORIES



The survey asked “What might stop you taking part in Belfast Stories?”. Eighty-seven responses were received. Most related to the participating in the story collection process, rather than visiting the physical building.

Eighteen responses related to a perceived or potential lack of inclusivity. This included people who felt that their culture would not be welcome (“one sided narratives”, “if it is classist or erases minorities”, “because I know my faith and culture is not wanted”) and people living outside Belfast (26 per cent of respondents (24 people) were from outside Belfast), who were unsure whether they were included in Belfast Stories.

However, among the 12 responses that were unconvinced by the concept of Belfast Stories, there were concerns that there is too much emphasis on equality or particular equality groups:

- “Woke-ism gone mad.”
- “If I felt like the focus was so far onto marginalised groups that ordinary, educated, white middle-class people aren't encouraged to also apply and feel like we have a chance too.”

Eight responses also indicated concern that the content would be politically partisan.

Twelve responses related to access including the location of the building (getting there and perceptions of safety), cost and lack of adjustments.

THE BUILDING

Across all engagement strands, barriers identified that would stop people accessing the building included:

- Cost. It was felt that at least some of Belfast Stories (such as social spaces, retail, restaurants and bars) should be free to enter and that different pricing models for locals and tourists should be explored.
- "Not for the likes of us". Some consultees felt that the building might not be welcoming, at least to "the likes of" them. Consultees reinforced the importance of staff training and skills to create a warm welcome.
- Lack of activity for children. Consultees wanted family friendly activity and a play area.
- Young people not welcome. It was felt that there is a lack of space in Belfast where young people can just "hang out" safely, particularly away from alcohol.
- Whole family appeal. Consultees indicated a lack of activities in Belfast that would appeal to different generations, from toddlers to grandparents.
- Safety and fear of anti-social behaviour. This was a greater issue for older people and disabled people, particularly when combined with lack of transport which increases the risk of people being left alone and at night. People from minoritized ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community also described being subject to racist and homophobic abuse (for example, "The current approach along Royal Avenue involves being shouted at by preachers declaiming the LGBTQIA+.").
- Transport. This was a major concern, particularly among older people, disabled people, minoritized ethnic communities, carers and people living in working class areas. Concerns included lack of parking spaces and accessible parking and cost of parking. There was also felt to be poor public transport links and a scarcity of taxis, both of which are worse at night, further hindering the evening economy. Consultees would welcome a free shuttle bus down Royal Avenue and better transport links, particularly at night and to rural areas.
- Building design. This was of particular concern to older people, neurodiverse people and disabled people. It was also recognised that inclusive design would benefit the rest of the population, in particular children and parents. The new wing of the Ulster Hospital was cited as an example of good, inclusive design. Other ideas included:
    - Architects, designers, restaurant tenants, Belfast Stories staff and so on all to benefit from dementia-friendly training

    - Carers, people with dementia and older people to work with the building design team
    - Colour-coded floors
    - Laminate floor should run length of grain (otherwise creates perception barriers)
    - Clear signage
    - Way out signs *inside* toilets
    - Quiet areas throughout the building (not just one for whole attraction or exhibition, but in the lobby, restaurants and social spaces as well)
    - Red and blue plates for people with dementia so they can see pale food
    - Assisted or lightweight doors
    - No or dropped kerbs and level access from parking areas and in to the building
    - Access for mobility scooters
    - Plenty of toilets including changing places
    - Accessible toilets (not "disabled" toilets)
    - Gender neutral facilities and spaces
    - Plenty of seating
    - Wide lifts
    - Firefighting or evacuation lifts
    - Good lighting
    - Good acoustics
    - Soft surfaces to absorb sound
    - Vertigo warnings on the roof garden and viewing platform
- Unilingual signage. This was felt to be a particular barrier for the Irish language community.

For carers and disabled people, a good practice buddy ticketing system was essential. It was also felt that older people may need more encouragement to go out after the pandemic and that the centre should facilitate group visits.

THE EXHIBITION

Barriers identified across all engagement strands that might stop people enjoying the exhibition included:

- Cost. This was the main issue raised in relation to the exhibition for local people.
- Lack of interest or relevance. This barrier was identified most frequently in the survey. As ensuring relevance was the part of the main purpose for many workshops, this barrier came up less frequently in person. Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included engagement with minoritized groups and combining visual and audio archive footage with first-person stories for older people and people with dementia.
- Different language and literacy abilities (such as children and newcomer, Roma and d/Deaf communities). Generally, people preferred the exhibition to be "not too wordy", favouring "more powerful" visuals. A mix of media was also felt to better

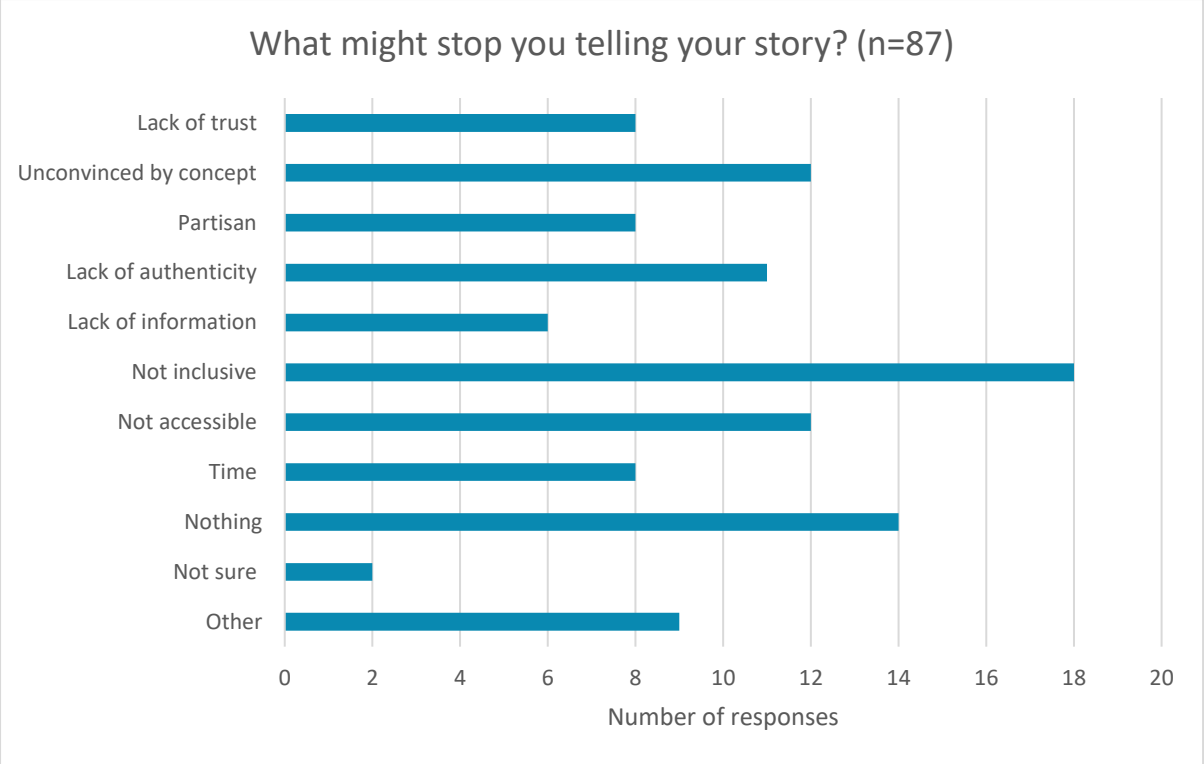
"help get someone's identity". Suggestions included changing colours, lighting or music to reflect the stories or how people are supposed to feel in response.

- Triggering content, including "Dark stories" that could traumatise or retraumatise, flashing images and loud noises
- Lack of outreach. This would extend the engagement approach after the building has opened to ensure people and groups more at risk of missing out have the opportunity to take part.
- Marketing that is not inclusive of diverse communities ("Not just white princesses from Frozen")

Suggestions to help mitigate these barriers included:

- Simultaneous translation
- Phone or digital apps to engage with the exhibition in own language
- Interactive activities, games and augmented reality
- Programmable community performance space
- Programmable community exhibition space
- Community spaces (for example, for a monthly d/Deaf community meet-up)
- A changing programme marking civic or cultural events (such as Christmas and Chinese New Year)
- Parental guidance-type warnings
- Quiet spaces
- Use of images showing diverse communities (including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people and people from minoritized ethnic communities)
- English and Irish signage, exhibition text, marketing and other materials

BARRIERS THAT WOULD STOP PEOPLE TELLING THEIR STORIES



The survey asked “What might stop you telling your story?”. Responses broadly mirrored the responses to the “What would stop you taking part in Belfast Stories?” question. In practice, during workshops and other in-person engagement, the vast majority of people were very willing to tell their stories.

Some people indicated that they would be more comfortable telling their story to another person. This would be more conversational, prompting them to open up or dive deeper. It would also help overcome barriers around literacy and language abilities, from dyslexia, other first languages or simply embarrassment at poor spelling.

Others would prefer to write or record their story direct, whether finding this approach more creative or less exposing.

During in-person consultation, only a very few felt that they had no story to tell (“Who would be interested in my story?”; “Other people have told stories better”). Generally, young women appeared more reticent than young men, and women more reticent than men in general. Young people were also very concerned with their public profile and would only tell their story (in 2028) “if they were successful”.

Group dynamics helped people overcome initial reticence. For example, at the carers workshop, those who felt their stories were not interesting enough were chivvied along by peers who championed carers as “unsung heroes” who are “not recognised enough”. They were quickly boosted, and stories were shared.

In other group settings where it might be perceived that they could be a lack of trust, for example, with minoritized ethnic groups, they were again happy to open up within their peer group. It may be less likely that they would have told their stories individually.

Still, others may prefer the privacy of individual story collection, particularly those who have sensitive or traumatic stories to tell. There was concern about the potential for storytelling to retraumatise. Organisations such as the Victims and Survivors Service have excellent, tried-and-tested policies and practices co-designed with the intended beneficiaries.

Another barrier that emerged through in-person engagement is storytelling fatigue. This may particularly affect people whose stories are of academic interest; victims, survivors, older LGBTQ+ people (particularly men), ex-combatants and -prisoners, for example, may already have told their stories, sometimes more than once, to researchers.

Many people's stories have also already been collected through community groups, reminiscence projects, local history associations and so on. In general, participants indicated they would prefer that this activity is shared or showcased, rather than stories recorded anew.

This also points again to the need for a foundation of trust. While the majority of participants in the consultation had little reticence sharing their stories with the facilitators, who were generally unknown to the participants, many of the workshops were organised or supported by trusted intermediaries, whether a local community group or respected individual "of" that community, which helped reassure participants.

One person felt that people collecting the stories should be local people. Another felt that collectors should be "of" the community stories are being collected from (so, for example, someone with Irish language should collect stories from the Irish language community). Another felt that the stories should be interpreted by Belfast people. Overall, "It shouldn't be two white men".

The use of trusted intermediaries is likely to be particularly important for vulnerable or marginalized groups. Consultees suggested that where stories had not already been collected, tools that could be used included training and resourcing (for example, with interview scripts, facilitators, digital recording devices and so on) community groups to collect stories, training peer facilitators and using arts to help people open up and approach stories more obliquely.

Some would be happy to have their words used, but not their voice (because they dislike the sound of their voice on recordings); others would be happy to have their voice used, but not their face. Several consultees, particularly among minoritized ethnic groups and young people, wondered whether they could use an avatar instead.

There was concern that the collection process could be difficult or cumbersome, particularly for those with different literacy or memory loss.

Other suggested tools and techniques that might help different people and groups share their story include:

- "story stations" or booths distributed throughout the city
- storytelling hubs in libraries
- storytelling booths in Belfast Stories (including onsite during the build)
- provision of example stories
- reminiscence workshops ("Best asset is the film archive – use this to generate stories; let people remember, then tell stories.")
- walking/talking tours and consultations
- poetry and creative writing workshops
- other arts and crafts including drama, photography, music and quilt making
- "living libraries"[12]
- community ambassadors
- use of technology to mitigate barriers such as physical access for disabled people and people living in poverty (for example, an online forum to record or submit a story)
- provision of transport to Belfast Stories or for story collectors to go to storytellers
- provision of resources to communities, such as recording devices, guidance and facilitators
- community outreach, for example, through story collection days or hubs in community or public spaces
- an ethics advisor
- assurance as to how stories will be used, safely and with respect
- trauma-informed practice and processes
- trained, skilled and properly resourced story collectors and facilitators. Consultees stressed the need for excellent people skills to put people at ease and listening skills to tease out and collect stories accurately
- clear messaging assuring people their stories are valuable and welcome
- clear messaging welcoming the stories of minority communities
- provision of collateral in a range of languages and formats including Braille, large print, audio-visual, BSL, ISL and Irish

PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR RISK OF MISSING OUT

The role of the community and voluntary sector as trusted intermediaries to engage people, was emphasised throughout the consultation. This included the sector in its widest sense including community centres, residents associations, sports clubs, historical societies, interest groups and arts organisations. Consultees also emphasised a need to go to where

[12] See, for example, www.community-relations.org.uk/news-centre/living-library-where-people-are-books

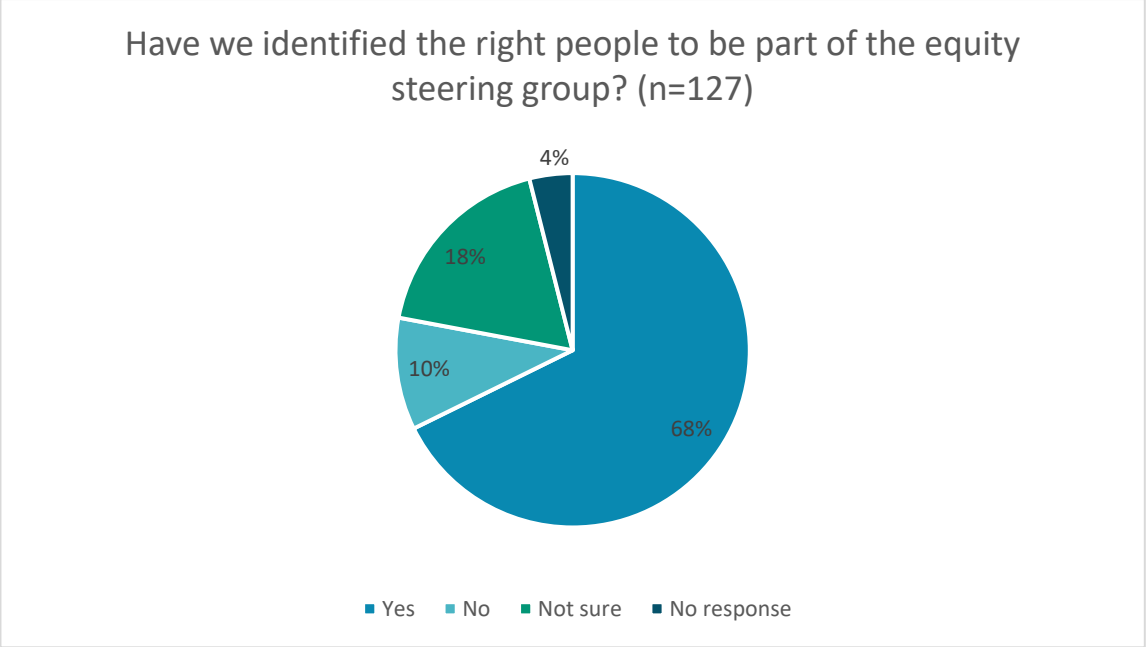
people and communities are, rather than expect them to come to a consultation or event, and several organisations volunteered their service.

Other suggestions included:

- press
- social media
- print, radio and TV advertisement
- leaflets
- information available in a range of formats including visuals and video
- events targeted at particular minority groups
- engagement with the Education Authority and schools
- engagement with large employers and their employees
- engagement via libraries
- arts and storytelling events
- pop-up “audience by surprise” events
- sensory and relaxed events
- events in other community settings (such as job centres, hairdressers, bowling greens, play parks, supermarkets, pubs and bookies)
- drop-in hubs
- Zoom consultation sessions
- community ambassadors
- celebrity ambassadors
- word of mouth

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

Over two thirds of survey respondents (68 per cent) agreed that we had identified the right people to be part of the equity steering group.



Other suggestions for the equity steering group included:

- Migrant communities
- People with refugee status or seeking asylum
- Men
- Middle-aged men
- The very elderly
- Students
- People of no faith
- Integrated education alumni
- Irish speakers
- Those who no longer live in Belfast or NI
- Parents
- Foster carers and guardians
- Younger children
- People with care experience
- Underprivileged children
- Long-term unemployed
- Different socio-economic classes, in particular people living in poverty
- “Normal working every day people”
- “Less educated people who struggle to read large blocks of text”
- Blind people
- People with dementia
- People from geographic communities
- People living at interfaces
- Homeless people
- Drug addicts
- Tourists
- People who are not affiliated to groups

One person suggested that the equity steering group "Be flexible in its make up [and] rotates and members can join and leave without it becoming a burden or precious to just a chosen few."

Some respondents considered more "professional" expertise would be advantageous ("Experts! How are individual people within this massive group of 'diverse identities' going to interact with each other? You can't just pooled such diverse people together and expect to get good quality data"). Others were concerned that the equality focus was misguided or that the steering group was just "box ticking" or "woke" (for example, "If everyone has an equal voice then the result is not proportionate.").

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Belfast City Council hosted an Irish language consultation session, which was attended by 19 representatives. There were also three written submissions on behalf of the Irish language sector.[13]

Consultees "warmly welcome[d]" Belfast Stories and were "hugely encouraged by the commitment to include diverse stories representing the different identities and people that make up our wonderful city". However, there were concerns that "the Irish language community have been, so far, completely omitted from the Belfast Stories concept". Rather,

> *"it is incumbent upon Belfast City Council to ensure that these rights are catered for in council projects through language visibility. To overlook the language rights of this growing and vibrant community, who have long campaigned for equality and respect, to access such an innovative and important resource through their native tongue would be doing a huge disservice to them, in breach of international and domestic treaty rights and would be contradicting the council's own Language Strategy"*

As well as welcoming the Irish language community, such an approach could also help good relations by "normalising the language [as] research has consistently shown increased visibility leads to increased tolerance and understanding".

While there was recognition of Irish as a native minority language that should not be categorised with other minority groups, it was also suggested that there should be "members of the Irish language community on the project's equity steering group, given that all other minority groups across the city are represented."

> *"The impact of being unable to access such a magnificent resource in one's own language is something which should certainly be taken into consideration when*

[13] Conradh na Gaeilge, Forbairt Feirste and Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich

evaluating those who may be at risk of missing out. This would ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are truly at the heart of the Belfast Stories project."

Other suggestions from the Irish language sector included:

4. the Irish language is woven throughout the Belfast Stories themes, including celebration, diversity, education and the story of the language itself.
5. there should be bilingual resources throughout Belfast Stories including external and internal signage, exhibitions, marketing and other materials.
6. the council develop and implement a language screening assessment for all new council policies, practices and projects.

RESPONSES IN RELATION TO ULSTER SCOTS

A meeting was held with the Ulster Scots Agency, and the Ulster Scots Community Network also participated in a consultation workshop.

The opportunity to foster further understanding the cultural identity of Ulster Scots was broadly welcomed. It was felt that this should include stories of the language, of "celebrated" and "lesser known" individuals, of industrial heritage and diaspora and international connections.

In general throughout the public consultation, there was concern that there could be an imbalance or bias in content and presentation. One consultee also welcomed further reflection of other Ulster identities and ancestries (for example, Anglo-Ulster, Franco and Italianate).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that, in making any decision with respect to a policy, a public authority shall take into account any EQIA and consultation carried out in relation to the policy (para. 9.2). There is no strict definition of what "taking into account" entails. However, the Equality Commission guidance on how decisions should be recorded makes it clear that a public authority must be able to record the decision-making process (as well as the decision) and that the decision must be justified.[14]

The guidance also advises that all available information should be combined in making the decision. This includes the information gathered during the research phase and the results of the consultation.[15]

This information has been brought together in this report in order to ensure that Belfast City Council is in a position to take account of all issues when making a decision in relation to Belfast Stories.

The following analysis of the key points arising from the EQIA and the consultation responses is provided to assist the council, but it is not exhaustive and is not meant to be a substitute for the detailed information presented in this report.

SUPPORT FOR THE BELFAST STORIES CONCEPT

The Belfast Stories' Equality Framework established the broad parameters to help ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the project's development.

Belfast Stories' engagement plan identified groups who are less likely to access, experience or feel represented in Belfast Stories and set down a range of actions to mitigate potential differential impacts during the public consultation and ongoing engagement.

During the public consultation, the engagement plan ensured that Belfast City Council gathered feedback across a broad range of equality groups, and there were exceptionally high levels of support (for example, in survey responses, 81.6 per cent of survey respondents said they were excited about Belfast Stories), including across all Section 75 equality categories. Many consultees also reflected on the potential positive impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Nevertheless, there were concerns that Belfast Stories could present a partisan, binary or narrow perspective of Belfast that would exclude the stories or identities of particular groups. The council should continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in the

[14] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, ECNI 2004, p.45

[15] ibid.

development of Belfast Stories, ensuring that early potential for positive impact can be realised throughout the project design, delivery and implementation.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The next stage of engagement is an opportunity to continue to build on excitement and good will to start to shape a building and an experience that all people and groups can access and feel included in.

During the public consultation, consultees offered further insight in relation to groups of people at risk of missing out and tactics to mitigate potential differential impact.

Tactics to engage people at risk of missing out are considered and included in the engagement plan. These include:

- continuation of the equity steering group
- review and refresh membership of the equity steering group
- identify and connect to “missing voices” and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an engagement programme that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- co-produce engagement opportunities, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the accessibility of consultation materials
- equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences
- storytelling ambassadors
- support for community networks to test the story collection process, identifying barriers that might stop people from telling their story and coming up with ideas to overcome them
- pop-up engagement workshops during festivals and events
- an onsite drop-in consultation hub

Ongoing engagement should continue to focus on those most at risk of missing out, and the engagement plan and stakeholder mapping should be reviewed and revised in light of lessons learned and additional evidence uncovered during the public consultation.

STORY COLLECTION

Belfast City Council plans to start story collection in spring 2023. The engagement plan includes recommendations for engaging around story collection. This should focus on action learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstance), in particular older people and the very elderly (no one aged over 85 responded to the survey), whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.

IRISH AND ULSTER SCOTS

The Belfast Stories concept was broadly welcomed by the Irish language community as an opportunity to explore and celebrate the history of the language and the city's Irish language community. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to a native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.

Belfast City Council should continue to consult closely with Irish language and Ulster Scots stakeholders, including in relation to the development of the building, story collection, exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should be subject to an equality screening and (if required) a full equality impact assessment.

8. MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that a system be established to monitor the impact of the final policy in order to find out its effect on the relevant groups and subgroups within the equality categories.

The results of ongoing monitoring must be reviewed and published on an annual basis. If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two-year period show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the public authority must ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

Belfast City Council plans to continue to monitor impact throughout the development of Belfast Stories and review it at least annually including:

- at the end of this public consultation period, when the draft EQIA report will be revised, taking into account comments received during the consultation, and a final EQIA report will be prepared for Belfast City Council. The results of the EQIA will be published on the council's website and intranet and in its annual report to the Equality Commission.
- in August 2023 when a report on this stage of the engagement process (design brief to concept design) will be prepared and published on the council's website
- in autumn 2023 when a further equality screening will be carried out in advance of a public consultation on the concept design
- between August 2024 and February 2025 when a further equality screening will be carried out as part of the planning permission and public consultation process

The results of monitoring will be included in Belfast City Council's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission and in line with the council's Equality Scheme. If the monitoring and analysis over a two-year period show a greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Belfast City Council will take measures to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY SCHEME CONSULTEES

Action Ability Belfast

Action Deaf Youth

Action On Hearing Loss

Age NI

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

Alzheimer's Society NI Belfast

Ardoyne Association Advice Centre

Ardoyne Community Centre

Arthritis Care NI

Arts Council NI

Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland

Autism NI

Aware NI

Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Belfast Bahá'í Community

Belfast Chinese Christian Church

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust

Belfast Islamic Centre

Belfast Jewish Community

Belfast Lions Club

Brain Injury Matters

Braniel Community Centre

British Deaf Association NI

Bryson An Munia Tober

Business Services Organisation

CARA Friend

Carers Northern Ireland

Carew 11 Family & Training Centre

CAUSE

Centre for Independent Living

Children's Law Centre

Chinese Welfare Association Northern Ireland

Communication Workers Union

Community Development & Health Network NI

Community Foundation

Concorde Community Centre

Co-Operation Ireland

Council for the Homeless NI

Cregagh Youth & Community Centre

Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich

DAERA

Dee Street Community Centre

Democratic Unionist Party

Diocese of Connor

Disability Action

Disability Action NI

Disability Network Real

Disability Sports NI

Divis Community Centre

Donegall Pass Community Centre

East Side Partnership

Education Authority

Employers' Forum on Disability

Epilepsy Action NI

Equality Coalition

Equality Commission NI

Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland

Falls Community Council

Féile an Phobail

Finaghy Community Centre

Forbairt Feirste

Gay & Lesbian Youth in NI

Glen Road Community Centre

GMB

Greater Shankill Partnership Board

Green Party

Guide Dogs Northern Ireland

Hammer Community Centre

Here NI

Highfield Community Centre

Horn Drive Community Centre

Housing Rights

Indian Community Centre

Inverary Community Centre

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Knocknagoney Community Centre

Lenadoon Community Forum

Ligoniel Community Centre

Markets Community Centre

Mencap Northern Ireland

Methodist Church in Ireland

Mind Wise NI

Morton Community Centre

MS Society NI

Multicultural Group-Windsor Women's Centre

NAS Northern Ireland

NASUWT Northern Ireland

National Children's Bureau Northern Ireland (NCB NI)

NDCS Northern Ireland

Neurological Alliance of Ireland

Newtownards Road Women's Group Ltd

NI Chest Heart and Stroke

NI Community Relations Council

NIACRO

NICVA

NIPSA

North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum

North Queen Street Community Centre

Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce

Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Northern Ireland European Women's Platform

Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association

Northern Ireland Policing Board

NOW Group

OI Kwan Chinese Women's Group

Parkinson's UK in Northern Ireland

People before Profit Alliance

Play Resource

Playboard

Pobal

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Progressive Unionist Party

Queen's University Belfast

QueerSpace

Rainbow Project

RNIB

Royal British Legion

Rural Development Council NI

Sandy Row Community Centre

Save the Children Fund

Sense Northern Ireland

Shankill Women's Centre

Shopmobility Belfast

Simon Community Northern Ireland

Sinn Féin

Social Democratic and Labour Party

South Belfast Partnership Board

Sport Northern Ireland

Stroke Association NI

Suffolk Community Centre

The Cedar Foundation

The Communication Advice Centre

The Focus Trust

Tourism Northern Ireland

Traditional Unionist Voice

Tullycarnet Community Centre

UCU Northern Ireland

Ulster Unionist Party

Ulster-Scots Community Network

UNISON NI

Unite The Union

University of Atypical

USEL

Victim Support NI

Visual Access (NI) Ltd

Volunteer Now

WAVE Trauma Centre

West Belfast Partnership Board

Whiterock Community Centre

Windsor Women's Centre

Women's Aid Federation N.I.

Women's Forum Northern Ireland

Women's Resource & Development Agency

Women's Support Network

Woodvale Community Centre

Workers Party

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Youth for Christ Northern Ireland

Youth Initiatives

Youth Justice Agency

Youth Link Northern Ireland

YouthAction Northern Ireland

APPENDIX 2: MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS BETWEEN AUGUST AND NOVEMBER 2022

The following organisations gave generously of their time expertise during the public consultation.

Thanks also to other individuals, groups and organisations who took part but cannot be named below.

Aisling Productions Ltd

AMMA Creative Learning Centre

An Droichead

Arts and Business NI

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Aura Digital Studios Ltd

BBC NI

BBC Rewind

Belfast Buildings Trust

Belfast City Council ABLE Forum

Belfast City Council Disability Advisory Panel

Belfast City Council Equality Consultative Forum

Belfast City Council PROUD Network

Belfast City Council Women's Network

Belfast Exposed

Belfast Festivals Forum

Belfast Film Institute

Belfast Harbour

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Carers Network

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Physical and Sensory Disability Services

Belfast International Airport

Belfast Media Festival

Belfast Migrants Forum

Belfast One BID Ltd

Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group

Belfast Toastmasters

Bigg Life Arts

Blackstaff Residents Associates

British Council NI

Cara Friend

Cathedral Quarter arts Festival

Causeway Pictures

Cinemagic

Circusful/Festival of Fools

Clifton House

Coiste na nIarchimi

Colin Glen Trust

Conway Mill Preservation Trust

CQ Trust

Creative Schools EANI

Creative Tours Belfast

Crescent Arts Centre

DAERA

Destination CQ Bid

Digital Arts Studios

DOCS Ireland

Doubleband films

DU Dance (NI)

East Belfast Community Development Association

Eastside Partnership

EastSide Visitor Centre

Equity Steering Group

Excalibur Press Ltd

Failte Feirste Thiar

Feile an Phobail

Fighting Words NI

Film HUB NI

Food NI

G6 Older Peoples Forum

Gallaghers Films Ltd

General Public attendees

Grand Opera House

Greater Shankill Partnership

Greater Village Regeneration Trust

Green Shoot Productions

Harriott Communications

Hastings Hotel

Heart Project

ICC Belfast

Indian Women's Association

Innate Films Ltd

INTO Film

Italic Pig

James Connolly Visitor Centre

KarmaDinosaur Media

Kippie CIC

Libraries NI

Linenhall Library

Maiden Voyage Dance

Makematic Ltd

Maritime Belfast Trust

National Autistic Society NI

National Lottery Heritage Fund

National Trust

NI Environment Link

NI Opera

NI Science Festival

NI Screen

NI Screen – Digital Film Archive

Oh Yeah Music Centre

On the Square Emporium

PaperxClips

Portview Trade Centre

PRONI

Queen's Film Theatre

Queen's University Belfast

Ramada by Wyndham Belfast

RNIB

RSUA

Sailortown Regeneration

Screen Skills

Shared City Partnership

Sign Language Users Forum

Sonic Arts Research Centre

Source Photographic Review

Spectrum Centre

Strand Arts Centre

Sustrans

The Beannchor Group

The Clover Group

The Horatio Group

The MAC

The Nerve Centre

Titanic Belfast

Tourism NI

Townsend Enterprise Park

U3A

Ulster Architectural Heritage

Ulster Orchestra

Ulster Scots Agency

Ulster Tatler

Ulster Touring Opera

Ulster University

University of Atypical

Victims and Survivors Service

Visit Belfast

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Advisory Panel

Volunteer Now

Walking Tours Belfast

West Belfast Heritage Community Initiative

White Pot Studios

YEHA

Young at Art

APPENDIX 3: BELFAST'S POPULATION BY SECTION 75 DIMENSION

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

On Census Day 2011, 49 per cent of Belfast City Council's usual residents were from a Catholic community background compared with 42 per cent from a Protestant or other Christian related background.

POLITICAL OPINION

In the last local government election held on 2 May 2019, 28.2 per cent of first preference votes were cast for Sinn Féin; 21.6 per cent for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP); 15.7 per cent for the Alliance Party; 9.1 per cent for the Social, Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP); 6.2 per cent for the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); 6.0 per cent for the Green Party; 5.2 per cent for the People before Profit Alliance; and 3.1 per cent for the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). A total of 60 councillors were elected to Belfast City Council. The table below provides an overview of the number of councillors by each political party.

Political Party	Number of councillors elected
Sinn Féin	18
Democratic Unionist Party	15
Alliance Party	10
Social Democratic and Labour Party	6
Green Party	4
People before Profit Alliance	3
Ulster Unionist Party	2
Progressive Unionist Party	2

ETHNIC GROUP

Country of birth statistics taken from the last census in 2011 show that 6.55 per cent of all usual residents were born outside the UK and Ireland. Almost a third of this group (2.1 per cent of all residents) were born in the Middle East and Asia.

The 2011 census also found that 95 per cent of Belfast's population (aged 3 years and over) have English as their main language; 1.4 per cent state "other" as their main language; and 1.2 per cent have Polish as their main language.

AGE

Based on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's mid-year population estimates for 2020, the age profile of Belfast is similar to that of the wider region. Almost one in five residents (19.9 per cent) are aged under 16, slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average (20.9 per cent). The working age population (aged 16 to 64 years) make up two-thirds (65.1 per cent) of all Belfast residents. Older people (aged 65 and over) currently account for 15.0 per cent of the Belfast population.

The population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 74.4 per cent to 498,500 people from mid-2014 to mid-2039, with the result that one in four people (24.7 per cent) will be in this age category.

MARITAL STATUS

According to the 2011 census, just over one third (35.6 per cent) of all usual residents in Belfast (aged 16+) are married – a relatively low proportion when compared with the Northern Ireland average (47.6 per cent). Belfast has a higher percentage (45.3 per cent) of residents who are single when compared with the Northern Ireland average (36.1 per cent). There is also a higher-than-average proportion of people in Belfast who are separated (5.4 per cent compared to 4 per cent NI average) and divorced (6.2 per cent to 5.5 per cent NI average). Belfast also has 353 residents (0.1 per cent) who are in a registered same-sex civil partnership, almost a third of all such partnerships in Northern Ireland.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Several UK- and NI-based studies have attempted to quantify the number of people who identify as LGBTQ+. Estimates for the LGBTQ+ population range from 0.3 to 10 per cent using different sources. A commonly used estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is approximately 5 to 7 per cent of the population.

MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY

According to the 2011 census, Belfast has a higher female population (52 per cent of all residents), slightly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 51 per cent. The difference is largest in the over 65 population where 59.3 per cent of all residents are female.

DISABILITY

Census figures show that almost one quarter (23 per cent) of Belfast residents have a long-term health problem or disability which affects their day-to-day activities. This is a higher proportion than the Northern Ireland average (20.1 per cent). Over one-third of Belfast residents reported that they had a long-term condition (defined as a condition which has

lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months). The most common conditions were mobility or dexterity difficulty (39 per cent of all those affected), pain or discomfort (34 per cent), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (31 per cent) and emotional, psychological or mental health condition (23 per cent).

2.02 per cent or 6,729 Belfast residents are blind or have partial sight loss.

DEPENDENTS

According to the 2011 Census, 30.4 per cent of households in Belfast include dependent children compared with the NI average of 36.5 per cent. 11.0 per cent of households consist of a lone parent and a dependent child or children, compared with the NI average of 8.1 per cent. Lone parents are considered at greater risk of economic disadvantage than other household types with an estimated 39 per cent of people living in a lone parent household living in relative poverty. Over 94 per cent of lone parents in Belfast are female.

11.8 per cent of Belfast residents provide unpaid care for a dependant adult, slightly higher than the NI average of 11.0 per cent.

APPENDIX 4: CONSULTEES ENGAGED PRIOR TO AUGUST 2022

ATTENDED WORKSHOPS OR MEETING DURING DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK

1. National Museums NI
2. Golden Thread Gallery
3. Prison memory Archive
4. Belfast Exposed
5. NI Digital Archive
6. Tourism NO
7. Tinderbox Theatre
8. TourGuides NI
9. Nerve Centre
10. Linen Hall Library
11. Libraries NI
12. QUB
13. Visit West Belfast
14. Tourism Ireland
15. Ulster University
16. Visit Belfast
17. Thrive
18. Tenx9
19. Kabosh Theatre
20. Maritime Trust
21. EastSide Partnership
22. CQ Trust
23. NI Screen
24. PRONI
25. Fighting Words
26. Arts Council NI
27. Heritage Lottery Fund
28. NI Good Food
29. Cinemagic

OTHER PRESENTATIONS AND MEETINGS

1. Queens Film Theatre
2. National Museums NI
3. NI Screen
4. Department for Communities
5. Tourism NI
6. Department for the Economy
7. Ulster University
8. BID ONE
9. NI Libraries
10. Destination CQ
11. CastleCourt Complex
12. NI Connections
13. Belfast Metropolitan College
14. Translink
15. HSCNI
16. Linen Quarter BID

17. St Annes Cathedral
18. Visit Belfast
19. CQ Trust Board
20. Belfast Charitable Society
21. Heritage Lottery Fund
22. Belfast Civic Trust
23. Ashton Centre
24. NI Tourism Alliance
25. Social Enterprise NI
26. NI Community Relations Council
27. Hospitality Ulster
28. Strand Arts Centre
29. Belfast City Centre Management
30. North Belfast Heritage Cluster
31. Markets Development Association
32. EastSide Partnership
33. Carrick Hill Residents Associations
34. South Belfast Partnership / Forward South
35. Arts Council NI
36. The Oh Yeah Music centre
37. Titanic Distillery
38. Maritime Belfast
39. The British Council
40. Ulster Architectural heritage Group
41. Greater Shankill Area Partnership
42. Belfast Hills Partnership
43. Arts and Business
44. Visit West Belfast
45. Smithfield and Union representatives
46. St Patrick's Church
47. Belfast Harbour
48. Urban Villages
49. Brown's Square
50. Sailortown Regeneration
51. Proud / Able / Women's internal BCC Fora
52. East Belfast community Development Agency
53. Greater Belfast's Seniors Forum
54. Historic Environment Division
55. BCC Youth Forum
56. University of the Atypical
57. Sign Language Users Forum
58. Healthy North Belfast
59. Belfast Charitable Society

APPENDIX 5: ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AMONG EQUALITY GROUPS

The main source of statistical information is the Continuous Household Survey. It is used by the NI Statistics and Research Agency to produce official statistics for the Department for Communities (DfC).[16] Its figures relate to the whole of NI.

Thrive, the audience development agency, carried out Belfast-specific research in 2016/17. It also looked in more detail at different types of culture (such as popular and cultural film, music, heritage and outdoor events).

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

According to DfC in 2020/21, people from the two main religions, Catholic and Protestant, were equally as likely (86 per cent) to engage with culture (including arts, libraries, museums, PRONI and places of historic interest). 89 per cent of people of other or no religion engaged in culture, although the margin of error in the statistics means the difference may not be significant.

ETHNIC GROUP

There is currently no regularly published local government or NI data relating to the ethnic background of those engaging in culture and arts.

In GB, research has found that people from White or Mixed ethnic backgrounds are more likely to engage with the arts than people from Black or Asian minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.[17]

People from minority ethnic groups can face multiple social, economic and cultural barriers to sports, arts and other cultural engagement. These barriers to participation may include communications and language; perceived irrelevance of arts to own culture; money; lack of transport; and lack of time and timings of events.

Diversity means that people see others "like them" involved in culture and have their culture and experience reflected back in activity that is relevant and authentic. In 2020/21 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) reported that 5 per cent of the workforce of their core-funded clients were from a minority ethnic background, while 24 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targeted minority ethnic groups.[18]

[16] www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/dfc-statistics-and-research

[17] See, for example, www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts/arts-taking-part-survey-201920

[18] http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/research-publications

AGE

People tend to engage less with culture and arts as they get older, and those aged 65 and over are least likely to engage. The decline continues as people reach 75 and older. A lot of research identifies older people as the demographic group where there is greatest inequality and that is most difficult to engage. However, there are also differential impacts depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on).

Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline found that older people are more likely to watch a cultural film (arthouse, documentary or foreign language), participate in museums and heritage activity, attend literature events and use public archives than other ages.

It also identified that there is a likely correlation with marital status: that is, older, single people are less likely to engage with culture.

Having someone to go with may also be a barrier: the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018–21 found that one in five older people in Belfast do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22 per cent compared to 16 per cent for women) and for those in the oldest age group.

Among other age groups, Thrive's research showed that cost is the main barrier for both 16- to 24-year-olds and 45- to 54-year-olds. Twenty-five- to 34-years-olds are time-poor because of their social lives, but 35- to 44-year-olds are time-poor because of family and work.

Research in England has found that outdoor arts audiences tend to be representative of the demographics of the public in their area.[19] However, Thrive found that this is not the case in NI where outdoor audiences tend to skew younger. There may be practical and societal barriers such as ableism – 1 in every 2 people aged over 65 in Belfast has a disability or long-term health condition – and lack of transport or seating. This means that there is an opportunity to learn from the diversity of outdoor events in GB.

MARITAL STATUS

According to DfC, in 2020/21 married or cohabiting and single people (88 per cent) were more likely than separated or divorced and widowed people (82 per cent and 71 per cent respectively) to engage with culture. Barriers to engagement may include cost and lack of people to go with.

[19] The Audiences Agency, "Outdoor Arts Audience Report: What Audience Finder says about audiences for the Outdoor Arts", 2018

As outlined above, Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline indicates there is a likely correlation between age, marital status and cultural engagement.

SEXUALITY

ACNI's Annual Funding Survey 2020/21 reports that 22 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targets LGBTQ+ communities.[20] However, there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. Barriers to participation may include services designed on the assumption that the users are heterosexual and events and activities that are not reflective of their culture.

MEN AND WOMEN GENERALLY

Women are historically more likely to engage in culture than men, although the gap appears to be closing: according to DfC in 2020/21, 88 per cent of women in NI engaged with culture compared to 85 per cent of men (the difference is not statistically significant).

There are also differences depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on). However, there were few areas that Thrive found to be a little more popular with men. These included certain types of music (techno/electronic, jazz/Blues and folk/trad/world music), comedy and public archives.

There are also differences according to multiple identities: for example, young men are harder to engage than young women or men generally; they are much less likely to participate in activities such as reading; but they are much more likely to engage in some digital culture such as playing computer games.

DISABLED PEOPLE

According to DfC, in 2019/20 disabled people were less likely to engage in arts than people without disabilities (77 per cent compared to 90 per cent) or to visit a place of historic interest (47 per cent compared to 62 per cent).

Thrive found the difference greatest in these activities.

1. Watching a mainstream film on general released in a cinema or venue
2. Attending big outdoor event
3. Visiting a museum or historical exhibition
4. Attending rock, pop or country music
5. Visiting a National Trust property

[20] http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/research-publications

6. Reading books or eBooks
7. Watching a mainstream film on general release: at home or in private
8. Visiting any other historic site (castle, ruin, historic church or cathedral)
9. Watching a documentary, foreign language or arthouse film: at home or in private
10. Attending a play or drama

According to the ACNI, disabled audiences are more likely to feel uncomfortable or out of place (10 per cent compared to 2 per cent compared to the general population), lack transport (11 per cent compared to 3 per cent) and have access to the facilities they need at an activity (4 per cent compared to 0.3 per cent).[21]

PEOPLE WITH DEPENDANTS

Historically, people with dependants have been more likely to engage with culture, which may reflect the volume and variety of programming aimed at children and families. However, this gap appears to be closing: in 2020/21, DfC reported that 89 per cent of people with dependants engaged in culture compared to 85 per cent of people without dependants (the difference is not statistically significant).

There may be differential impacts for different groups with dependants, such as lone parents. It is also likely that people with caring responsibilities for older people and disabled people face additional barriers including transport, cost, time and need for respite care.

PARTICIPATION IN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Evidence from recent Belfast City Council surveys suggests that younger people tend to be less involved in council consultation and engagement. For example, 2 per cent of respondents to a 2019 council survey were under 24 compared to 61 per cent who were aged 25 to 59.

Younger people are also less likely to feel that they are able to influence public policy. According to the 2020 Belfast residents' survey, 47.5 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 agreed that "I am able to have a say on how services are run, what the priorities are or where investment is needed" compared to 59.5 per cent for the whole population across all ages.

According to the council's Equality Consultative Forum, people with caring responsibilities may find it difficult to take part in engagement opportunities, and the council's Putting You

[21] www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Annual-Progress-Report-Disability-Action-Plan-2017-18.pdf

First customer service strategy notes that people with dependants may prefer to carry out business digitally due to demands on their time.

However, digital solutions do not work for everyone: according to Age-friendly Belfast, 51 per cent of people aged 65 and over in Belfast have never accessed the internet.

Putting You First: Transforming Customer Experiences also notes increasing challenges serving all customers due to language barriers and cultural differences.

APPENDIX 6: ORGANISATIONS THAT RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

Twenty-one organisations responded to the survey. The following organisations gave permission to be named as participating in the public consultation. Names of individuals responding to the survey were not requested.

City of Belfast Youth Orchestra

Armstrong Storytelling trust

Fighting Words NI

Coiste na nIarchimí

Tread the Boards

Omniplex Cinemas

Sustrans

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

Belfast Celtic Society

Translink

Victoria Square

Ulster Architectural Heritage

Northern Visions Media Centre

APPENDIX 7: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Blackstaff Community Development Association

Belfast Civic Trust

INTBAU Ireland (the all-island chapter of the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism).

Community Arts Partnership

Conradh na Gaeilge

Forbairt Feirste

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BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN – UPDATED MAY 2023

CONCEPT DESIGN STAGE (JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2024)

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INTRODUCTION

WHY WE ARE ENGAGING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VISION AND MISSION

The purpose of the engagement plan is

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

Our mission is

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

WHAT IS COVERED IN THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

This engagement plan covers the period July 2023 until September 2024 which will include the development and submission of outline business case to the Department for Economy and the completion of designs to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stage 2. This will include plans for the:

- Layout of the building
- Design of the exhibition space
- Story collection framework.

There will be two broad parts to our engagement between July 2023 and September 2024.

1. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement will be structured around feedback received as part of the public consultation taking on board specific recommendations as set out in the Public Consultation Report and summarised below in section 2. An action plan has been developed and is detailed in section 3.

In 2022, our initial engagement approach focussed on 4 strands:

i. Equity
ii. Sustainability

iii. Partnership
iv. Experiences.

These strands continue to form the foundations for our engagement, helping to build relationships and shape further ongoing engagement up until (and possibly after) Belfast Stories opens in 2029.

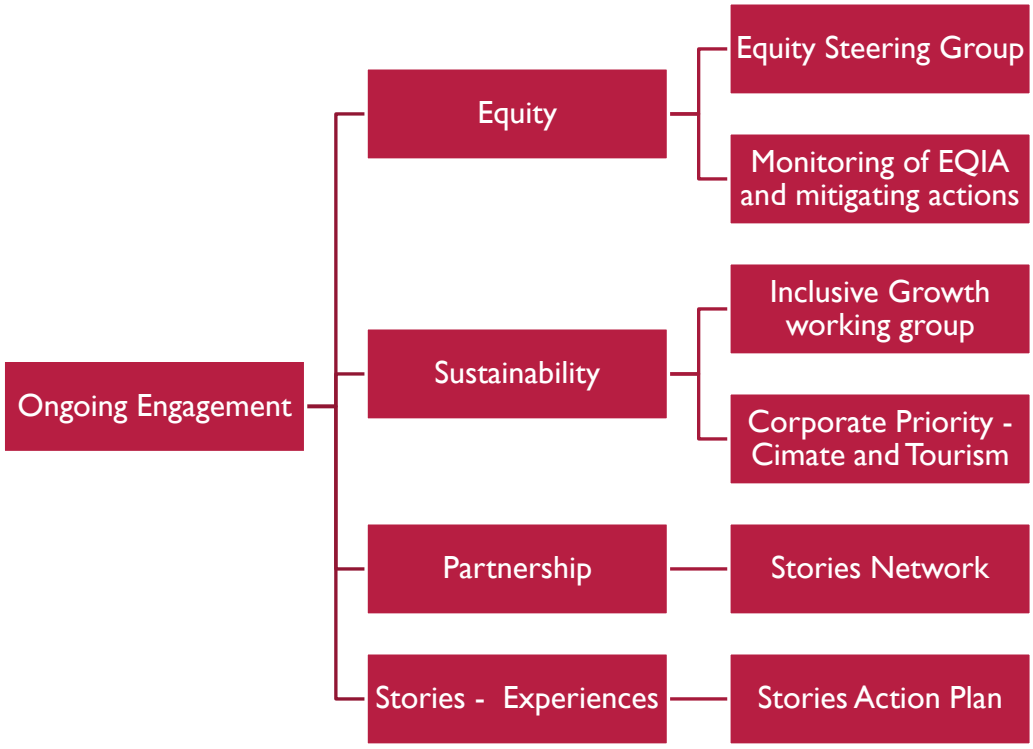
2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Building on the feedback from the first public consultation (August – November 2022), a second consultation is planned for early 2024. This public consultation will focus on:

i. Presenting concept designs produced as part of RIBA stage 2
ii. Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including further consultation on the EQIA and RNIA
iii. Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement specifically around story gathering and content development.

ONGONG ENGAGEMENT

The initial engagement plan identified a number of strands or 'storylines' of engagement. These have been updated following feedback from the public consultation and allocation of internal resources.



THE EQUITY STORYLINE

During the ongoing engagement phase, the **equity steering storyline will be delivered through the work of equity steering group and ongoing monitoring of mitigating actions from the EQIA. The equity steering group** will:

- **Identify and connect** to "missing voices" and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- Co-design an **engagement programme** that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building
- Co-produce **engagement opportunities** throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- Check the **accessibility** of consultation materials
- Act as a **critical friend**, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences.

THE SUSTAINABILITY STORYLINE

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

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT

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

Action Plans will be agreed to reflect corporate interdependencies and priorities including shared objectives with BCC's Climate and Tourism teams. Sustainability will be identified as a cross-cutting priority with additional actions focussed on regenerative tourism.

MAXIMISING THE HANDPRINT

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

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

Belfast City Council's tourism, culture and economic development teams will develop **networks and programmes** to help local businesses, cultural and community organisations and local and regional tourist providers build on the Belfast Stories opportunity. This will be supported by the inclusive growth working group set up to support Belfast Stories.

THE PARTNERSHIP STORYLINE

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

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

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

THE EXPERIENCES STORYLINE

1. STORIES

Our plans will continue to develop as we begin to gather stories. These are the types of tactics we might use to **gather, record, store, select and share stories.**

- **Social media campaigns** encouraging people to share micro-stories in words, photographs or videos
- **Storytelling ambassadors**, including well-known and "ordinary" people from different backgrounds
- Support (such as training, toolkits, equipment, expertise or funding) for **community networks**, such as community organisations, schools, libraries and other public-facing services across the city, to test the story collection process, identifying barriers that might stop people from telling their story and coming up with ideas to overcome them
- Pop-up workshops during **festivals and events**
- **Onsite drop-in consultation hub** and activities.

2. SCREEN

Ongoing engagement with representatives of the screen sector alongside Belfast City Council's arts and creative industries teams will focus on starting to scope the broad parameters of the screen, skills and creative learning programmes.

3. SOCIAL

Ongoing engagement with representatives of the arts, culture, events, festivals, food and retails sectors working with **Belfast City Council's culture and tourism teams** will scope the social offering and creative use of public space in the Belfast Stories building.

4. INTEGRATED DESIGN STEERING GROUP

The integrated design steering group will comprise of:

- **Representatives** from **the equity, sustainability and experience storylines**
- Key **partners** such as NI Screen
- **Contractors appointed to design** the exhibition space and the building**.**

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

WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE RESULTS

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

We will develop engagement related Key Performance Indicators and publish an annual evaluation report. This will also summarise what we have heard and learned and what we plan to do with the information at key points during the engagement. These findings will then be published on the consultation hub and shared through our groups and networks.

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

ACTION PLAN

The following section outlines the how the ongoing engagement will respond to feedback received during the first consultation.

A number of **key recommendations** were presented in the final Public Consultation report. Below sets out specific actions to be taken forward against each of these recommendations.

Recommendation	**Action**	**Timeframe**
Engagement – reporting and accountability		
Publish findings and set out details of next stage of engagement informed by consultation.	The Public Consultation will be published online and promoted on social media and via Belfast Stories ezine.	Publish July 2023.
	A summary document will be issued setting out journey so far and key performance indicators (KPIs) for engagement over next 16 months.	Key performance indicators to be monitored via Delivery Board.

Ensure that the project team continues to evaluate the effectiveness of its ongoing engagement by adhering to the evaluation framework and using appropriate tools.	Appointment of external evaluator. Scope to include engagement processes and outputs.	Appointed September 2023.
	Annual evaluation report published and presented to Committee.	August 2024.
Stakeholder engagement priorities		
Continue breadth of engagement with stakeholders however ensure specific activities are delivered that address priority areas as set out below.	Review and update stakeholder mapping with inputs from all programme strands including Stories Audit.	Updated July 2023 with ongoing review via Delivery Board dashboard.
Communities – build trust and relationships to reach geographic communities on the outskirts and in the immediate vicinity.	Audit of businesses and organisations in immediate vicinity of the building.	Phase 1 completed. Phase 2: November 2023.
	Site visits and briefings.	Ongoing and to be included in key performance indicators.
	Recruitment of volunteers to support story gathering in these areas.	November 2023.
Move beyond sectoral silos to engage on different terms that focus on specific expertise for example interest in or contribution to Belfast Stories –	Integration of this approach into a Stories Action Plan including: - Setting up of Stories Network.	Stories Action Plan agreed June 2023.

story gathers, tellers, curators etc	- Setting up of Stories Panel. - Delivery of stories focussed events.	
Maintain engagement with tourism sector to ensure Belfast Stories can support overall visitor experience and enhance existing products and providers.	Building on engagement with tourism sector during Public Consultation facilitate roundtable discussion in partnership with Northern Ireland Tourism Association (NITA).	October 2023.
	Regular engagement sessions with key agencies including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast.	Ongoing.
	Work with BCC Culture and Tourism team to agree joined up engagement approach as part of development of neighbourhood tourism.	September 2023.
	Include industry considerations in market testing e.g. focus groups with tour operators.	January 2024.
Increase commitment to Irish Language and Ulster Scots engagement to explore Good Relations opportunities, story collection and themes, representation within the building with the option to consider a language policy for the project and specific EQIA if required.	Ensure representation from Irish Language and Ulster Scots on Stories Panel to be set up under Stories Action Plan.	Stories Action Plan agreed June 2023.
	Update Stories Audit with any additional collections/ archives that have been identified in relation to Irish Language and Ulster Scots.	September 2023.

	Include minority language dimension as part of study visits/ benchmarking programme of best practice.	December 2023.
	Belfast Stories project team to attend meetings of Irish Language Forum and Ulster Scots Forum and provide regular updates.	Ongoing.
	Include language as part of briefings for the induction of design teams.	October 2023.
	Include Irish language and Ulster Scots activities and materials as part of the next public consultation.	March 2024.
Raising awareness		
Development of a strategic communications and engagement plan.	Appointment of necessary expertise via tender process to provide engagement and communications support up to end of RIBA 2.	Appointment by October 2023.
Develop key messages and a consistent identity with signposting to an updated Belfast Stories website and engaging social media.	Review of key messaging framework.	July 2023.
	Review of digital channels and website.	November 2023.
	Digital Audit Phase 2 completed and rolled out.	November 2023.

Potential to embed Belfast Stories activity in the calendar of events and festivals across the city.	Work with Belfast 2024 to identify opportunities for elements of creative programme to be delivered in partnership with Belfast Stories with focus on: - Story based approaches - Audience development - New creative content - Activating the site	August 2023 – agree strategic partnerships.
Platforms		
A city stakeholders' network should be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It should meet quarterly to share key information, discuss emerging issues and opportunities and encourage collaboration. Partners will also be asked to share information and engagement opportunities with their members, communities and networks.	This has been renamed as a Stories Network to reflect feedback during the public consultation and access point for many stakeholders and focus for the project team being stories including stories development. Initially meetings will coincide with project milestones however this may increase to quarterly as project progresses to end of RIBA 2.	October 2023.
The equity steering group has provided vital insight into equality, diversity and inclusion including facilitating conversations with individuals and groups that would otherwise not be known to the Belfast Stories team. The membership of the equity steering group should be	Review membership of equity steering group and role during next stage of project up to end of RIBA 2.	August 2023.

reviewed and refreshed to ensure that we are hearing from voices that may otherwise go unheard.		
Stories expert panel with a remit to include ethical framework. This would ensure that the Council accesses the necessary expertise to integrate an ethics function into the story gathering processes and tools.	Set up stories panel with Terms of Reference to reflect recommendations set out in Public Consultation Report, Story Collection Framework and Stories Audit.	September 2023.
The public consultation report proposed some form of steering group should have a crucial role in ensuring that Belfast Stories reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.	It is proposed that this sits within the Stories Network to be reviewed with design teams as part of induction programme and agree specific design engagement actions and mechanisms.	November 2023.
The public consultation report recommended specific opportunities for more detailed engagement with ambassadors (organisations) and champions (individuals).	Formal programmes will not be taken forward at this stage however will be reviewed at the end of RIBA 2. The following actions will be completed:	-
	Continuation of quarterly ezine.	Ongoing.
	Development of partnership toolkit.	August 2023.
	Delivery of stakeholder events.	Ongoing

Story gathering		
Story gathering should focus on active learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstances), in particular older people and the very elderly, whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost. It should also: • Build on best practice that currently exists, in particular in relation to safeguarding and ethics • Uncover the stories and archives that already exist, including at community level • Bring different sectors and stakeholders together to share knowledge and experience and build a community of practice through a conference or event.	See Stories Action Plan for the integration of these recommendations.	

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A detailed consultation plan will be drawn up by end of 2023, to support the delivery of the public consultation exercise in early 2024. Details will be presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee and published.

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Stories Audit

May 2023

454-1

29th April 76

Dear Friend, replied 12 May info+tele no.

I am replying to your advertisement in the Belfast Telegraph. I feel a little bit guilty about writing to you as I have no specific problem, other than that I am homosexual and that life in general is consequently a lot more difficult. I have read the article about your work in Fortnight magazine so I don't think you'll mind my letter. I am a stranger in this city a situation which is a bit of a mixed blessing as I find it difficult to make any real personal contacts. I would be grateful for any assistance or support which you would be able to give me. Please accept a small donation towards your work and thank you for caring.

Yours sincerely

D4457/2/1/5/2/7 (pg 1 of 2)

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Executive Summary

This report is based on an audit of first-person story collections relating to Belfast, completed by the creative practice and consultancy Starling Start from December 2022 - May 2023 on behalf of Belfast City Council.

The audit produced a **catalogue of 100 story collections / projects**, the majority of which are held by independent organisations working in the community / voluntary sector or in culture, arts and heritage. The catalogue accompanies this report as a searchable spreadsheet which can be used in ongoing research and updated as plans for Belfast Stories develop further.

The research began with **sector mapping** (Chapter 4) to identify the range of organisations and bodies involved in collecting. Next, we held a series of **discovery conversations** with stakeholders and experts in the field (Chapter 5), revealing a wide variety of specific collections to be audited and highlighting the depth of knowledge and insight to be gained from collection holders, community representatives and subject matter experts. Drawing on these discovery conversations is a series of four **story collection case studies** (Chapter 6). Each one highlights important considerations for ongoing partnerships, including ethical considerations, accessibility, representation, rights and preservation of collections.

The report goes on to describe some key findings of our initial **analysis** of the catalogue of story collections (Chapters 7 & 8), highlighting collections by sector, overarching themes and content tags to provide a sense of the variety of story collections, their context and contents.

Finally, the report considers **barriers** to ongoing partnership working and accessing collections (Chapter 9) and offers several key recommendations to overcome these, and we propose a **roadmap** for ongoing story collection partnership programmes (Chapter 10).

A free person tells her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place.

Rebecca Solnit (2017).

1. Introduction

Belfast Stories will be a new visitor attraction on the corner of North Street and Royal Avenue, including the iconic art deco former Bank of Ireland building, constructed in 1930. An exciting and authentic experience with Belfast's people and personality at its heart, Belfast Stories aims to attract both tourists and locals. As part of the Belfast Region City Deal, it also aims to help regenerate the city and surrounding areas. There are three main experiences within or parts to the visitor attraction: stories, screen and social.

Stories featured will be first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home or have a connection with the place. These stories will be discovered through an ambitious citywide story collection programme that will involve uncovering the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others, in addition to collecting new stories, particularly accounts of life in the city from individuals and groups whose stories have been under-represented.

In December 2022, Starling Start was appointed to undertake an audit of existing collections and story-related programmes. This report outlines the approach taken to undertaking the audit, in line with the brief set by Belfast City Council, which was:

- completion of audit in line with mapping tool
- analysis of findings including identification of trends and gaps
- identification of any access issues or barriers to partnership working
- recommendations and roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes.

The audit was carried out between December 2022 and May 2023. It reflects a moment in time and builds a foundation for further research on the city's rich heritage of storytelling and oral history.

In the scullery, my Nanny had a jawbox sink and there was no hot water in those days, only a cold water tap... The water used to run, it went out into an open gully in the yard - so my Granda used to help us make paper boats, and we used to sail them down that.

A woman reflects on her 1960s childhood in East Belfast.

2. The Research Team

Starling Start Limited is a creative practice and consultancy with a focus on arts, place and collaboration. Starling Start undertakes a diverse range of strategic arts and creative placemaking projects that are rooted in understanding place and creating positive change.

Stories of place are central to the way we collaborate, allowing us to listen and to learn about people's connections to places. We firmly believe that these stories can help cross boundaries of languages and cultures; enhance a collective sense of community; and define our own identity.

The audit was undertaken by Amberlea Neely and Dr Conor McCafferty with additional research by Morag Stuart.

Find out more about the work of Starling Start by visiting https://www.starlingstart.com/

3. Methodology

Our methodology for the audit of existing collections and story related programmes both *uncovered the stories that are already held by museums, archives, local history groups, communities and others,* and *made recommendations for collecting new stories, particularly those people and groups whose stories may not yet have been heard.* The approach is based on established practice and theoretical tools that we have refined through numerous creative and research projects.

Sector Mapping

We co-developed, with the Belfast Stories Team, a visual tool in the form of a stakeholder map. The mapping initially focused on sectors and this was enhanced with the addition of umbrella groups, organisations and projects that held collections. The map was used to select stakeholders across several sectors that would help us build the first phase of the audit and to develop the engagement plan.

Discovery Conversations

Discovery conversations in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held with 19 people to gather primary data for the audit. These discussions were partly structured to follow the Stories Collection Framework developed by Lord Cultural Resources. However, we were keen to keep the conversations open-ended to allow us to gather other pertinent information about collections and identify additional leads. We also participated in group discussions with the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group and a Belfast Stories Roundtable with individuals who work in diverse practices of story collecting.

These Discovery Conversations were not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they offer complementary information from a range of sources coming from different parts of the city and with different sectoral expertise. In most cases, the researchers invited interviewees to take part based on their subject area expertise or community background. In some cases, the interviewee

approached us with an offer to contribute and where we felt this would add a new perspective that would strengthen the audit we have included it. It is important to emphasise that these discovery conversations are not a comprehensive overview of story collecting in the city, but they offer starting points that highlight stakeholders' lived experiences and deep expertise. As the development of Belfast Stories proceeds, Belfast City Council plans to engage widely with stakeholders across the city.

Desk Research

We followed up the Discovery Conversations with desk research, producing over 150 potential project leads. Data was collected in line with a modified version of the Stories Collection Framework, with additional fields added to aid categorisation and analysis. Desk research involved immersion in a wide variety of story collections, exploring their context and contents through online exhibitions, print publications, podcasts and moving image media.

Case Studies

Based on the discovery conversations and desk research, we identified four projects to explore further in detailed case studies. While no single project can represent a specific sector, each case study offers rich contextual information that is pertinent to the development of Belfast Stories and which will help engagement with similar projects: 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', an academic oral history research project on poverty and urban life (Chapter 6.1); Cara-Friend Letters Archive, a collection of anonymised letters from LGBTQI+ people seeking support in the city in the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 6.2); NVTV, a community broadcast media archive (Chapter 6.3); Carrick Hill, an inner urban community and near-neighbour to the Belfast Stories site (Chapter 6.4).

Analysis

Using the data collected through the Stories Collection Framework, we catalogued collections of Belfast Stories to audit existing resources, conduct thematic analysis through coding, identify gaps in

collection areas and identify barriers to engagement and partnership working.

Recommendations

Following analysis, we developed recommendations. We based the roadmap on a Theory of Change and a Logic Model, which offers a framework and the rationale to show potential next steps for story collection, and the impact that it will have.

4. Sector Mapping

Sector Mapping was the starting point for the audit. From this initial map (**Figure 1** below), we were able to target potential partners for Belfast Stories including educational institutions, community / voluntary sector organisations, broadcast media institutions, and libraries and archives. The result is not meant to be final or definitive, but does indicate the broad range of organisations, institutions and projects involved in story collecting relating to the city and which should be considered stakeholders in the Belfast Stories project. Engagement with these organisations will also lead to discovery of additional stakeholders. ***See also:*** 'Collections by Sector' in Chapter 8.

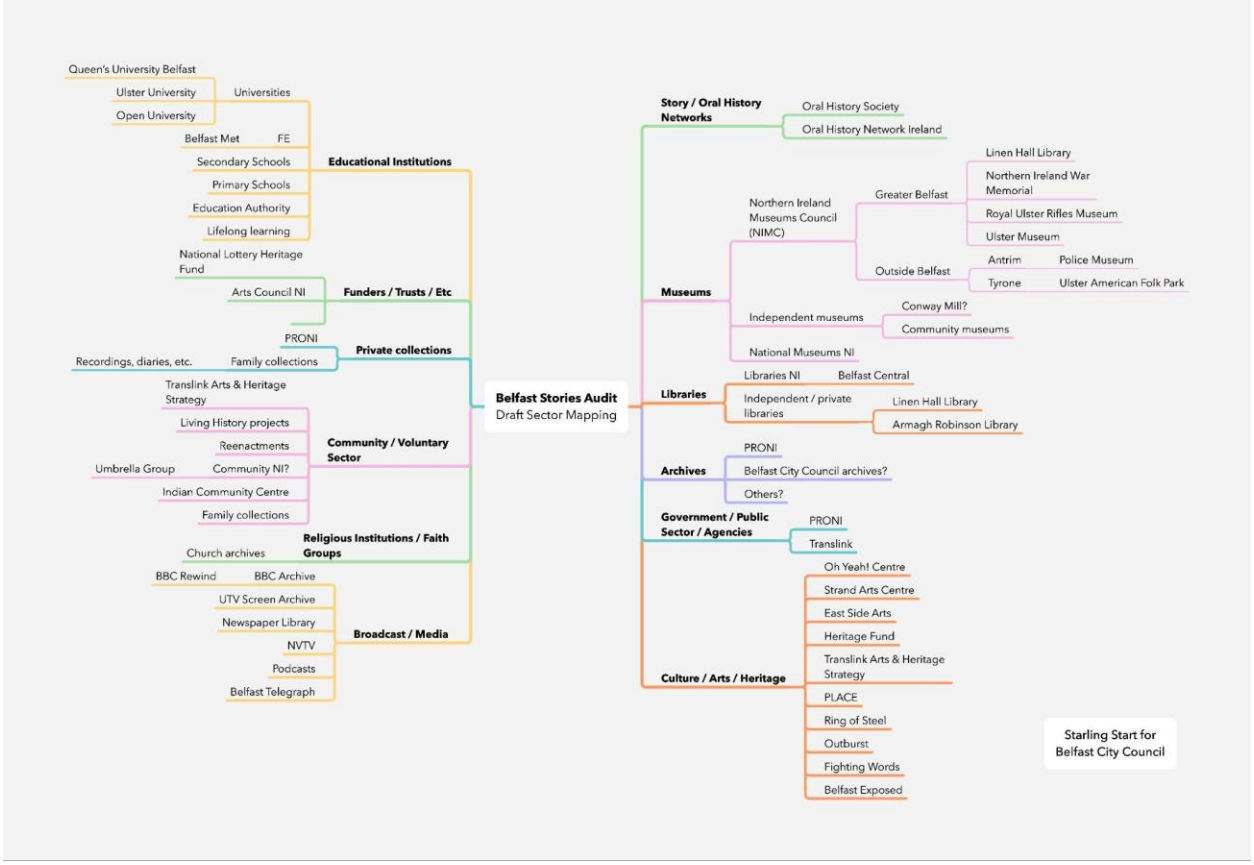


Figure 1. Sector Mapping, December 2022.

5. Discovery Conversations

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
24 Jan 2023	**Lisa Rea Currie**	Heritage Officer, EastSide Partnership	Collection Methods: Civic group work practice - using a dialogic approach, everyone who comes into the room is the expert. Encouraging people to find and tell their stories, even if they may not know where to begin. Hoping to target younger age groups as they are harder to reach - typically oral history and storytelling appeals to older people. Lisa shared a list of potential East Belfast based story collections for inclusion in audit - wide variety of activity across different organisations in this part of the city.
24 Jan 2023	**Olwen Purdue**	Professor of History, QUB	Olwen has experience of oral history work as a researcher, lecturer and project leader and is Director of the Centre for Public History at Queen's. Currently working on a new oral history project of everyday life in Belfast – working class life. Aims to reach a public audience via website and PRONI - interactive map where you can hear audio and layered with archive materials. What are some challenges that Belfast Stories might face? 'Disneyfying' - telling a solely positive story without enough real everyday life. (For example, there wasn't enough of everyday life & the hard reality of industrial Belfast in the original Titanic exhibit.) For Belfast Stories, the more diverse and nuanced the better. Certain narratives may dominate; it will be hard to ensure that people feel seen there. Olwen shared a list of potential academic sources (e.g. PhD research projects) to include in the audit.
3 Feb 2023	**Janice Smith**	Director, Smith & Kent Consulting	Janice has been consulting for Belfast Stories and with her colleague Brenda Kent convenes the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group, which offers insights from groups that may be at risk of disadvantage or marginalisation. Janice shared a list of more than fifty potential story collections which have been gathered through her consulting and her work with the Equity Steering Group.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			Janice noted the following potential barriers to engagement and partnership working: - Physical barriers - availability of public transport, inclusive design, parking - Trust - people unsure if they are welcome to visit and contribute. People unsure if they will be able to tell their story and for it to be represented properly - Language - English may not be the language in which people feel comfortable telling their story - Roma community is not normally asked or represented
7 Feb 2023	**Sean O'Connell**	Professor of History, QUB	We discussed rights and permissions and the importance of informed consent for participants. Need for story contributors to feel part of the process. Barriers to access - especially for working class people who have contributed their stories if there is a cost to visit Belfast Stories. For oral history projects, sound quality can sometimes be an issue, for example many interviews have been recorded on tape with no intention to publish later - and have not been digitised / preserved / catalogued. The undergraduate 'Recording History' module at QUB – worked with BBC in the past to pitch radio documentaries, but in recent years has moved to podcasting instead of one-off shows. This module could potentially work with Belfast Stories on projects arising from student work. We discussed the possibility that students on the MA Public History course at QUB could intern with the Belfast Stories team to conduct oral histories with individuals who have been identified on themes that have been marked as particularly significant or where there are gaps in coverage in the collections. ***See also:*** case study on 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', Chapter 6.
20 Feb 2023	**Adam Murray**	Community Development Officer, Cara-Friend	The Cara-Friend Letters Archive includes more than 3,000 items (1.5K personal hand written correspondence) from members of LGBTQI+ community. Archive held at PRONI, but not publicly accessible. Cara-Friend has developed a partnership with QUB to organise, then index the archive – all in spreadsheets based on personal data /thematic data. Becky is now looking for stories - finding writing in the collection that is reflective of society. Hoping to get funding to digitise the letters.
	Becky Cruze	Public History Masters Intern, QUB/ Cara-Friend	

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			Archive contains content that may trigger or cause distress. ***See also:*** Case study on Cara-Friend, Chapter 6
6 Mar 2023	**Janice Smith & Brenda Kent**	Directors, Smith & Kent Consulting	This was a discussion with the Belfast Stories Equity Steering Group. The group was set up to enable representation among traditionally underrepresented and marginalised communities in Belfast Stories and to address barriers to participation. Discussion around community archives - these often host rich content and many digital recordings, but record-keeping can be challenging and organisations have nowhere to host the results of their work. Discussion of various possibly interesting & relevant projects from different parts of the city with distinctive social histories, and groups doing interesting work including Ballynafeigh, East Belfast Historical Society, Donegall Road, shipyards, Belfast cemeteries, mills, sports clubs. Collective / community-based / place-based oral histories are important, but individual artistic approaches can also yield interesting stories such as Larry MacAree's exhibition and book. Belfast diaspora may be seen as a gap. Do people identify as being from or of Belfast? And does this matter? - *'People think Belfast Stories isn't for them. Belfast Stories might not be about me - I'm from Donegal. I'm a blow in.'* - *'I want to hear about people who are blow-ins - what brought you here?'* Discussion of people who feel they are in a liminal space and may not feel part of the conversation, for example due to refugee status. People may not want to be identified as an asylum seeker (either now or in the future); young people might not want to be identified as such. There may be issues around protecting identity. Young people with autism can feel very isolated and marginalised. Important to develop a space (and story collecting initiatives) that can offer a good welcome for people with disabilities.
	Six members of the Equity Steering Group	People with lived experience as a disabled person, Autistic person, older person, and person from a minority ethnic background	
9 Mar 2023	**Janet Hancock**	Deputy Head of Public Services, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)	PRONI holds both public records (e.g. official government documents and files) and private collections (which will likely be of more interest to Belfast Stories): - There are approximately 5,000 private collections deposited to date - which range widely in size, from a few pages to hundreds of boxes worth of material.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			- Key to engaging with PRONI is to work around the stories you want to tell. - Many collections are Belfast-specific or Belfast-centric but there are also many with a different or broader geographic focus. Partnership potential with PRONI in various ways - Depositing & preservation of collected stories: PRONI offers best practice professional archiving facilities and has a remit for both public and private collections; early discussion would be required to move this forward. - External / partnership projects have covered specific PRONI costs in some cases (e.g. funding for the Making the Future project covered costs of PRONI archivists to do research and engagement officers to develop public-facing programmes). - A more basic partnership would be to request archival content suggestions from PRONI - but staff resources are limited.
28 Mar 2023	**Máirtín Ó Muilleoir**	Belfast Media Group	Discussion of the *Andersonstown News* archive (50 years of local journalism). Belfast Media Group is co-operating with the social enterprise Tuairiscigh Béal Feirste/Report for Belfast to explore options for future sustainability including a possible move to becoming a social enterprise. There is the potential to 'gift [the archive] to the city'. The social enterprise will also seek to be a sustainable model for local journalism. Report for Belfast is considering opportunities for funding to create a digital archive of the 50 years of the newspaper. Discussion of different areas of the city and their own distinctive histories. Potential for Belfast Stories to tell some of the story of West Belfast and then visitors can call to West Belfast to find out more - a satellite.
4 Apr 2023	**Frank Dempsey**	Carrick Hill Community Association	- A close residential neighbourhood of the Belfast Stories site - Strong story collection methodology (although not formalised) involving intergenerational events and community activism. - Book: 'Green Peas and Barley O' – stories of the people - Newsletters: Carrick Hill newsletters – 1980s. All in hard copy. Stopped when Unity Flats were demolished. - Events – are they recorded? May require further resource to record and digitise. - ***See also:*** Case Study, Chapter 6.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
6 Apr 2023	**Francis Jones**	Head of Archive, NI Screen	Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive currently consists of approx. 11,000 moving image media provided by various different rights holders incl. amateur holders (e.g. 1930s films by aristocratic families; amateur collections became more widespread later as film recording was democratised); newsreel footage; NI Tourist Board collection; selections from the UTV Archive (the most extensive and significant part of the DFA collection). • The UTV Archive spans from 1959 to the 2010s and contains 100,000+ physical items. It preserves and provides access to the analogue output of UTV, across news, entertainment, culture, sport etc. • Recently digitised selections from the UTV Archive include 800 cans of film from the 1960s (maybe 5-6 items per can) - political figures, visitors to NI, everyday life, cultural activities, industry and domestic life. • A recent videotape digitisation process of 6,500 items involved a mini-audit to select items. • Collection based on partnership between NI Screen (digitisation, archiving, selection), PRONI (long-term physical and digital preservation) and ITV (rights holder). The Digital Film Archive has a cataloguing subcommittee which deals with issues relating to cataloguing – including selection, editorial, use of language, representation etc. NI Screen have developed much experience with rights management. They have found that in most circumstances of non-commercial/non-exclusive use, people are happy for content to be reused. To date, NI Screen have tended to implement collection management systems based on the requirement of specific projects - so there is knowledge of various systems; no single system in operation above all others.
13 Apr 2023	**David Hyndman**	Director, NVTV	Discussion of history of Northern Visions and development of NVTV as a local broadcast station Discussion of challenges involved in maintaining the NVTV archive - constant need for new material leaves little time / resources to focus on archiving. Discussion of NVTV's role in promoting community arts in Belfast. Concerns over Belfast Stories taking away public resources that could be used to support underfunded arts initiatives.

Date	Name	Title / Organisation	Key points of discussion
			See also: Case study, 'Stories from a Community Media Archive', Chapter 6.

6. Story Collection Case Studies

6.1 Stories of Survival: 'Making Ends Meet in the Past'

'Making Ends Meet in the Past' is an oral history research project exploring working class life in Belfast with a particular focus on the experience of poverty among a range of city residents. The research was carried out by Sean O'Connell, Professor of History at Queen's University Belfast, with grant support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The project was based on 30 oral history interviews recorded on tape. At the time the recordings were made in 2002, participants ranged in age from 40-99 and so the stories cover a wide time period, from the 1910s to the early 2000s. The interviews offer an exploration of how people shopped and budgeted, building a compelling picture of working-class life in Belfast from the early 20th Century onwards.

This collection raises several pertinent issues for Belfast Stories in terms of: (1) the presentation of audio recordings; (2) ethical issues relating to existing collections; (3) curatorial and representational aspects of collections.

6.1.1 Presentation of audio recordings

Oral history research projects such as this one often use audio recorded interviews. These usually take the form of unstructured or semi-structured interviews about pre-planned topics, conducted by an individual researcher with a participant or small group of participants, perhaps in the participant's own home or place of work.

There are several options for how Belfast Stories might present audio recorded stories:

A. *Use original audio recordings:* Audio recordings could be played back in their original form over loudspeakers or headphones or accessed through an AR interface or app, for example.
B. *Transcribe:* Audio recordings could be transcribed and presented as text on an exhibition panel, as installation text, or in some other text-based format.
C. *Re-enact:* Audio recordings could be re-enacted and re-recorded by an actor reading the lines in audio or video.

Regarding 'Making Ends Meet in the Past', Sean O'Connell noted his preference for the original recordings to be used (subject to permissions being granted) and this is also our recommendation whenever possible when an archive of audio recordings is available.

There are several reasons to prefer the use of original audio recordings:

- The original recordings will have an authentic feel, capturing nuance and tone in the story-teller's voice that might be missed in a written transcription or a re-enactment.
- Unique qualities can be conveyed in a participant's voice (such as their background, age, and various aspects of their personality and life experience) that go beyond the story itself. For example, one of the 'Making Ends Meet…' participants, Mrs Rafferty, was aged 99 at the time of the interview; she spoke in an accent which is no longer heard in present-day Belfast and used colloquial phrases which are no longer commonplace.
- Audio recordings often invoke a specific ambience or atmosphere. For example, we might hear the ticking of a clock, a boiling pot on the hob or the crackle of a fireplace in someone's home. Likewise, an outdoor recording conducted on a busy urban street will have a different feel than one in a park or suburban area.
- These elements can all add nuance and richness to the listener's experience of the story.

However, there are also significant challenges in the use of original audio recordings. It is important to remember that audio recordings of oral history interviews are not usually created with public exhibition in mind. In academic contexts, such recordings can be seen as raw materials for the researcher's use - the main purpose is to create a verbatim written transcript which the researcher can then analyse and discuss in a piece of scholarly writing. In community oral history projects, the imperative is often to record an individual's story before the chance is lost, or because it relates to a particular theme - again, public exhibition may not be considered as a potential output.

Oral history / story-telling recordings might therefore be made without thought to audio quality, long-term preservation or later re-use. The following issues should be considered in all cases but especially when recordings have not been produced to a professional standard:

- Poor audio quality: In many cases a recording may be unusable or may require significant audio treatment. This can occur for many reasons, especially if poor quality equipment has been used, or if the location is inappropriate (e.g. a very echoey room), or if care is not taken to record the speaker's voice clearly, or if the gain is set too high (resulting in an unpleasant distorting / clipping sound) or if there is overwhelming background noise or wind noise, or if there are technical problems with the recording device or microphones.
- Risk of loss: Recordings that are not carefully preserved are at a significant risk of loss, due to being misplaced, physically damaged or destroyed, or undergoing natural media deterioration. Original audio recordings should be stored securely and backed up to at least one additional location (e.g. copied to another device or saved in another format, and stored at a different site from the original).
- Expectation of subtitling / translation / transcription: In contemporary digital media and social media, the use of subtitles is now often an expected standard. For example, users of YouTube, Instagram and TikTok can expect to see computer-generated subtitles and

captions on practically all video content. If an audio recording used in Belfast Stories is of poor quality, or if the speaker's accent is hard to understand, many visitors will expect to have a written transcription and/or synchronous subtitles along with the audio.

- Mixed media preservation: Securely storing a wide variety of media content requires significant resources and an appropriate Collection Management System. ***See also*** *'Collection Management Systems' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.*

6.1.2 Ethical considerations

Recordings from the 'Making Ends Meet…' collection were not originally intended to be made public. This leads to several significant ethical issues which are instructive for Belfast Stories.

- *Participant consent to use stories in a different context*. In the case of 'Making Ends Meet…' participants signed up more than 20 years ago to be part of an academic research project on their experience of money and poverty in the city. The potential use of this material in a public setting was not part of the original agreement, so Belfast Stories should consult further with the collection holder about reuse, bearing in mind that a new agreement with participants may be required. ***See also:*** 'Rights and Permissions' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.
- *Recordings featuring deceased participants.* The rights situation for recordings featuring participants who have since died can be complicated - rights do not always automatically transfer to the researcher / commissioning organisation and may pass instead to the estate of the individual. Surviving family members are often very happy to allow reuse but it is important to proceed with caution and check on a case-by-case basis. ***See also:*** 'Rights and Permissions' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.

- *Entry fees to Belfast Stories for those who have contributed.* The issue of payment for access to Belfast Stories should be carefully considered - especially for those who have contributed stories - or surviving family members in cases where the participant is deceased. Sean O'Connell noted that this issue is all the more pointed in projects like 'Making Ends Meet…', where participants have experienced poverty and discuss this experience as part of their story. ***See also:*** 'Ethical Considerations' in the table titled 'Barriers to accessing collections and partnership working' in Chapter 8.

6.1.3 Curatorial considerations

Given its wide-ranging time frame, and involvement of participants of various ages drawn from different parts of the city, 'Making Ends Meet…' is not a one-dimensional collection. Rather it is multi-faceted and features a range of perspectives and experiences. This gives rise to interesting representational challenges:

- *Terminology:* Cultural and political life in Belfast is known for highly specific terms, euphemisms and acronyms. For example, some older participants use the term 'the Troubles' to refer to the 1910s/1920s conflict in Belfast, rather than (or in addition to) the period from the late 1960s onwards. This highlights a potentially useful opportunity for contextual interpretation, by framing an individual's story in relation to their use of particular terminology or themes.
- *Everyday speech:* More broadly, a collection of stories gathered across a wide time range can introduce important terms and events through participants' everyday speech, which tends to be nuanced and complex, with highly specific slang and colloquialisms. It is likely that some participants will use language that may be considered sensitive, dated or problematic by contemporary standards. Again, framing and interpretation may be helpful in such cases, especially if the content of a story might be upsetting or distressing.

- *Reference to larger collections:* Depending on the curatorial / interpretive strategy used for Belfast Stories, it is likely that only some stories (or portions thereof) from any one collection will be selected for public display. However, by providing references to the collections from which stories are drawn, there is an opportunity to share and celebrate the work of researchers and collecting organisations and to encourage visitors to explore themes of interest more deeply, as well as fostering a sense of community and dialogue among collecting partners.

6.2 Stories of Friendship and Care: Cara-Friend Letter Archive

"How do we use these ethically in a way that's engaging?" Cara-Friend

Cara-Friend is a charitable organisation which supports and empowers the LGBTQI+ community in Northern Ireland. The organisation was established as a volunteer-led project almost 50 years ago, in 1974, pre-decriminalisation (1982). Cara-Friend first existed with a PO Box address and an open call out in newspapers for people to get in touch by letter. The results were astounding, opening much needed dialogue through handwritten correspondence. Although Cara-Friend is Belfast based, the collection includes correspondence from across Northern Ireland and beyond, as far as Argentina, Mauritius, New Zealand, and the United States. Handwritten correspondence continued until the mid 1990s when email became more popular. Now Cara-Friend conducts all correspondence online.

Given that the collection period began in a period when it was illegal to be gay in NI, Cara-Friend anonymised correspondence by removing names and applying codes. This was put to test when an RUC raid on the Cara-Friend office in Belfast produced no evidence that pointed to any individual. Logbooks and minutes of meetings have been maintained meticulously with the same level of protection by the original volunteers.

The collection comprises 3000+ personal letters and supporting materials 1974-1995. Personal letters are to and from Cara-Friend including letters from family members and health practitioners seeking support. It also includes telephone logbooks, company correspondence, annual reports, and books of newspaper clippings. Cara-Friend staff have mentioned how surprisingly narrative even the annual reports are: "they really put so much time into describing the queer community in NI".

6.2.1 Accessibility to the letters

The collection is housed at PRONI, but it is closed to public access. Cara-Friend describe it as 'one of the most popular, but least accessible' collections. It can only be accessed for academic purposes. Another issue for accessibility is that the collection has not been digitised.

A current partnership with Queen's University Belfast has connected Cara-Friend with a Public History MA Student intern. This role is undertaking an analysis of the collection, by sorting correspondence. This analysis will also begin to identify stories that run through the collection. It was never intended that the letters would be made public, so this analysis will never show the letters in their full form, rather it will pull out parts of the narrative. Common themes and quotes will then be drawn out of the letters. Cara-Friend are able to map and identify letters from the Belfast area if this is helpful to Belfast Stories.

Cara-Friend are keen to share these stories and they are brimming with ideas about how to share the story of the collections. Their ideas include immersive walk-through exhibitions, online exhibitions and programs, live interpretation/guided tours, events and programs, festivals and theatrical representations. The stories from the collection have already been used to inform a theatre production called *Callings* with Kabosh Theatre. Cara-Friend say that by sharing the collection further or in new ways, it will encourage more people to seek support or share their own story.

6.2.2 Untold Stories

The collection tells the incredible story of gay rights activism in Northern Ireland, featuring themes such as social unrest, loneliness, safety, belonging, religion and community. Given that the collection began pre-decriminalisation of homosexuality, the letters contain previously untold stories, but these stories are likely to include topics that may be triggering or distressing for some readers. There are questions about how the letters can be used ethically.

It is worth noting that there are other established and fledgling collections that may complement the Cara-Friend letters:

- UU and QUB are partnering on a new research project that seeks to uncover 'LGBTQI+ life from the early 20th century until the 1982 decriminalisation of homosexuality in NI.'
- PRONI holds the Jeffrey Dudgeon court case papers which record the case of Belfast politician and gay rights activist's successful 'Dudgeon vs the United Kingdom' case which he brought to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge criminalisation in Northern Ireland.
- Cara-Friend has partnered on a course called Pathways that engages young people from cities across Northern Ireland who are interested in animation and creative writing. Pathways is an immersive two-year training and mentoring programme designed specially for LGBTQI+ 16–26-year-olds interested in creating and publishing queer-inclusive children's books.

6.2.3 Ownership

Ownership of the letters remains with the author of each. Even though names have been removed from the letters, they still cannot be published in full due to other information shared in letters which may identify someone. For example, some letters may speak about where the person was from, or where they had travelled to, relationships, etc. If Belfast Stories wish to partner with Cara-Friend, it is envisaged that quotes may be pulled from some of the letters that speak to a wider thematic.

6.3 Stories from a Community Media Archive: NVTV

NVTV (Northern Visions TV) is a Belfast-based community television station broadcasting on a digital terrestrial licence. It broadcasts on Freeview and Virgin Media from 5pm each evening, with an extensive selection of material also presented online. Northern Visions, the not-for-profit organisation which runs the station, was formed in 1986. Its premises at 23 Donegall Street features TV studios, production spaces, offices, and the organisation's physical collection of moving image media. In addition to programme production and scheduling, Northern Visions offers training and workshops in film-making and community journalism.

Some of the themes the station has explored in its broadcast and archival materials in recent years include oral histories of Belfast Cathedral Quarter, economic regeneration through arts and culture, economic regeneration in different parts of the city, equality and diversity, the peace process, interfaces and reconciliation, housing, politics, health, experiences of young people, transport, cultural diversity and ethnic minorities. The NVTV archival project *Our Generation* focused on 1965 – 2013 and collected the reminiscences, experiences, insight and appraisal of those who, in a myriad of small ways, sought to build positive structures, resources and services in the community amid - and despite - challenging circumstances including ongoing conflict.

6.3.1 Archiving and cataloguing challenges

While some of the NVTV collection has been preserved and catalogued - allowing search and selection by station staff for broadcast and/or online special collections - the vast majority of the archive has *not* been preserved or catalogued. Original recordings and B-roll footage are stored in various physical media formats at the NVTV offices, including DV tape, DVDs and some older film formats such as the tapes used by the Sony Portapak system. These physical media are held on storage shelves, in boxes and filing cabinets. The small proportion of the collection that has been preserved (usually for the purpose of current programming or arising from a

particular funding opportunity) - has been digitised and transferred to a local server, and the original physical media are marked as archived.

There is a strong level of institutional knowledge within Northern Visions, such that different staff members may be aware of the variety of content held on original physical media, even if it has not yet been archived. However, this knowledge relies on staff members' personal experience of working with the collection and over any given period, many different people will work for or on behalf of the organisation. This frequent change of personnel makes finding the time and implementing a system for archiving older material more challenging, since regular programming and workshop activity must take priority. When a staff member moves on, their knowledge of particular archival items may be lost. During the busy regular programming cycle at NVTV, there is a risk that an item may be drawn from the physical archive for a particular purpose without being returned to its original location, leading to material loss. Such institutional knowledge, though invaluable, is not a substitute for a properly archived collection that has been well catalogued and preserved for the long term. While it may require time, resources and training to implement, a proper system of archiving and cataloguing would increase the value of NVTV's output and its potential to engage in a wider network.

For the funding bodies that support the work of NVTV and other arts-based / community organisations, archiving and preservation is not usually a priority. While funders such as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund may offer resources to preserve significant items (see for example, 'Our Generation', which identified key items from the NVTV archive along several themes from the late 1960s to the late 2000s), such funding tends to be narrowly focused on preserving collections relating to a specific theme or community, and enveloped within broader outcomes based on community engagement and participation. This can restrict the amount of preservation work that smaller organisations can do - no matter how extensive and significant their collections and no matter how urgent the need for archiving to be completed.

NVTV is one of several small, independent organisations that hold collections. The challenge of archiving in this context presents a possible model of partnership and/or funding support that would be mutually beneficial for both Belfast Stories and such organisations. In the case of NVTV, this would allow for some or all of the following outcomes:

- enable the significant collection NVTV collection to be audited in full, with important items (such as those with historic significance or particular unique characteristics) identified, preserved and catalogued;
- enable a flexible and robust content search - based on keywords, dates, locations and names - as a result of proper cataloguing;
- create fully digitised, accessible and easily backed-up versions of physical media content, for easier and more flexible sharing within the organisation and for external partners.

As a rule, moving image media content is always more easily shared and reused when it has been properly preserved and catalogued and we strongly recommend a process of enabling preservation and cataloguing to be carried out where required and feasible. However, this should not preclude worthwhile stories that have not yet been preserved from being used in Belfast Stories; flexibility in the choice of Collection Management System for the project should allow stories that have not yet been fully catalogued to be selected for use.

6.3.2 Rights and permissions

For Northern Visions, being clear about the ownership of content and gaining participant consent has been an important part of their work from the beginning. The organisation has sought to ensure they have robust agreements with contributors allowing a wide range of uses, to enable them to produce programmes and reuse content without restriction. Effectively,

Northern Visions own the rights to everything they produce, including content filmed by participants in community film-making workshops.

When they receive requests for reuse of material, Northern Visions are often happy to share content without charge (in part due to the complication of charging for this service). However, this is subject to agreement that the intended reuse aligns with NVTV's own aims and ethos. By the same token, Northern Visions generally reserve the right *not* to share material if they feel the planned reuse would conflict with their approach, or if there seemed to be an unwarranted commercialisation of their community-based material.

This context presents a slightly different challenge compared to the participant consent issue noted previously in the case study 'Making Ends Meet in the Past'. Since Northern Visions already own the rights to all material and can allow reuse of the content, it means that Belfast Stories can negotiate directly with the organisation without having to consider new participant agreements for reuse. In this case, fostering a partnership with Northern Visions would allow access to a wide variety of moving image footage and interviews for a wide range of participants. However, this also means that Belfast Stories should carefully consider what it intends to use and how to benefit Northern Visions in return - for example, through some kind of partnership and/or funding support.

6.3.3 Engagement with the arts and heritage sector

Through its independent and community-focused programming, NVTV has developed an important position as a promoter of the arts and heritage in Belfast, especially community arts. In our conversations with NVTV as part of this audit, the station's interest in developing community arts came through time and again.

At a fundamental level, arts and heritage organisations should be seen as key stakeholders in Belfast Stories since - alongside community and voluntary sector organisations, and often in collaboration with them - their storytelling and oral history projects will likely make up a large part of the source material for the new venue. Beyond seeing these organisations as content providers, however, NVTV leadership expressed the hope that Belfast Stories could be a site of engagement with local independent arts and heritage organisations. The expertise in arts practice and management which has been developed in these organisations over many years could be put to powerful use in programming and activating Belfast Stories as a public space.

This suggests a curatorial strategy for Belfast Stories that can present compelling narratives of life in Belfast from multiple sources, while maintaining a platform for new interpretations, spatial activations and creative engagement from the city's vibrant arts and heritage organisations.

6.4 Stories of Change in an Inner City Community: Carrick Hill

"When they took away the old Carrick Hill, they took the heart away. Broke the community with the flats. It was a disaster." Carrick Hill Community Association

Overview

Carrick Hill is an inner-city neighbourhood bounded by the Westlink, Clifton Street and Peters Hill. Residents of Carrick Hill are near neighbours of Belfast Stories. Carrick Hill residents include notable sportspeople from bare knuckle fighters to jockeys to a current world champion in Irish Dancing.

Carrick Hill Community Association is a community led charity that supports the local community. Carrick Hill Community Association (CHCA) has led many initiatives to celebrate and share stories of the history of the area. An established community organisation, CHCA has been instrumental to the physical regeneration and integral to the keeping the beating heart of this historic neighbourhood. Their commitment to placemaking, memory and bringing history to life demonstrates a unique form of storytelling.

6.4.1 Community Storytelling

Collections include formal and informal methods to collect and disseminate stories:

Newsletters

These include a newsletter published throughout the 1980s, with a particular focus on improving living conditions in the Unity Flats (and eventually a campaign for their demolition). Newsletters include first hand stories from locals and they cover themes like housing, education, social justice, human rights, religion, segregation. The newsletters exist in hard copy within CHCA and have not been digitised.

Interviews

A local publication '*Green Peas and Barley O'* was the result of interviews with local residents. The book title is based on a children's street song. Interviews collected memories and stories and there is a collection of 45 audio tapes of the recordings. These recordings have not been digitised. They could be revisited for a partnership project with Belfast Stories.

Events

CHCA host intergenerational storytelling events to celebrate or commemorate. A recent event [when] explored stories about a local football team, Alton United, who played and won in the FAI Cup Final in Dalymount Park in Dublin with a single goal in 1923. Sadly the cup never made it across the border to Belfast. The event saw around 80 people gathering to listen to families' accounts of the story. Valuable events like this could be recorded, if they were given the proper resourcing.

6.4.2 Location

Carrick Hill is less than 0.5 of a mile away from the Belfast Stories site, although the design of the new houses, built to replace the Unity Flats, face in such a way that the neighbourhood looks inward. This is typical of planning that leads to segregation. In addition, The Westlink clearly segregates Carrick Hill further from the City Centre. Carrick Hill is not alone in this regard, and it would be a good exercise to map all residential areas in proximity. If a programme was piloted with Carrick Hill residents, this model of learning could be tailored to other parts of the city.

6.4.3 Archiving

Although the Carrick Hill collections have been developed with a grass roots approach, The story of Carrick Hill also exists within other formalised collections such as Digital Film Archive

and BBC Rewind (see for example a 1964 UTV news item on slum clearances in Carrick Hill, hosted by the Digital Film Archive: https://digitalfilmarchive.net/media/slum-clearance-in-carrick-hill-3811).

There are questions around how these formal and informal archives might complement each other, as both have great value. It is clear that CHCA plays an integral part in the trusted collection process at a community level. This process, based on local social connections and community and neighbourhood bonds could not be replicated by Belfast City Council or other agencies or institutions.

How can Belfast City Council support this process? There is the potential to support community-led approaches by developing grant schemes or facilitating community skill-sharing workshops or training to help digitise and archive smaller scale collections. Small organisations often do not have the resources to implement high quality archiving practice - providing access to such skills, either through project funding or training initiatives, could foster the development of storytelling practice and enable digital skills development.

7. Collection Audit Tool

This story collection audit is the first of its kind for Belfast. Central to the audit was the use of a Collection Audit Tool, which allowed us to gather a wide range of information on specific story collections and their holders. Already in this first iteration, the audit has collected information on a large number of projects (detailed in Chapter 8), offering a clear impression of the kinds of story collections that have been produced to date and providing a strong basis for continuing research as Belfast Stories develops.

Desk research was our primary tool in completing this audit. With the exception of information collected through discovery conversations, the audit uses information in the public domain (for example in oral history publications, project and organisation websites and archival catalogue descriptions). It should be noted that the reliability and quality of information available in the public domain varies quite widely. This is to be expected given the diversity of collection holders - from small not-for-profit community organisations to major broadcasting institutions. We have noted the date of our research on each entry in the audit, allowing future iterations to retrace the data we have collected.

Auditing Fields

The Collection Audit Tool was built upon the previous Story Collection Framework commissioned from Lord Cultural Resources by Belfast City Council. As shown in **Table 1**, the Collection Audit Tool provided a template to gather relevant information about existing collections, and new fields created for this audit allowed us to capture additional project-specific data such as location, sector, and content tags.

Table 1: Fields used to gather information on collections using the Collection Audit Tool.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
PROJECT / COLLECTION TITLE	If a specific/discrete project exists, name it here. Ideally complete a separate form for each project within a single organisation.
ORGANISATION / INSTITUTION	Host organisation of a specific story collection - some organisations will have multiple collections. Ideally complete a separate form for each project.
ORGANISATION / INSTITUTION VISION AND MISSION	If relevant.
SECTOR OF THE ORGANISATION	- Educational Institutions - Funders / Trusts - Private Collections - Community / Voluntary Sector - Religious Institutions - Broadcast / Media - Oral History Networks - Museums - Libraries / Archives - Government / Public Sector - Culture/ Arts / Heritage - Sport
POSTCODE OF THE ORGANISATION	Note: Record postcode of specific project separately, if there is one.
CONTACT NAME	If there is a contact within the organisation / project.
ROLE OF THE CONTACT PERSON	If relevant.
WEBSITE OF THE PROJECT / COLLECTION	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: INSTAGRAM	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: TWITTER	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: YOUTUBE	If relevant.
SOCIAL MEDIA: TIKTOK	If relevant.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
SOCIAL MEDIA: OTHER	If relevant.
SUBJECT MATTER	Identifies the subject matter(s) of the collection.
EXTENT OF THE COLLECTION	Where known - e.g. 50 audio recordings / 100 videos / 20 written interviews...
POSTCODE OF THE PROJECT	If relevant.
FIRST PERSON NARRATIVES?	How much of the collection is based on first person narratives? All / Some / None / n/a
COLLECTING INITIATIVE DATES	Start and end date as applicable.
COLLECTION OVERVIEW	Brief overview of the collection.
COLLECTION TYPE	Oral Histories / Intangible Heritage / Moving Images / Still Images / Born Digital / Object Based / Installations / Books / Other / n/a
COLLECTION FORMATS / MEDIUMS	Audio / Video / Film and footage / Written content / Published material (newspapers, books) / Digitally created content / Map and plan / Photograph / Paper based material / Prints and drawings / 2D, other / 3D / Digitized copies / Other
CONTENT TAGS	Add 3 or more tags separated by commas. (Tag examples: women, industry, shipbuilding, sport, green spaces, theatre, politics, church, architecture...)
THEME: I am HOME (Theme 1 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am RESILIENT (Theme 2 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am PLACE (Theme 3 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am INNOVATIVE (Theme 4 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
THEME: I am CHANGE (Theme 5 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
THEME: I am CREATIVE (Theme 6 of 6)	- This theme is relevant to the collection. - This theme is not relevant to the collection. - It is unclear if this theme is relevant or n/a.
COLLECTION SOURCES	This identifies the various potential sources that may be considered/approached for the purpose of collecting. Sources depend very much on the type(s) and format(s) of assets that one seeks to collect. Sources may include cultural organizations, individuals, artists and creatives etc.
COLLECTING METHODS	Determines the preferred collecting methods.
CHRONOLOGICAL SCOPE	- Exploring the past % - Living now % - Creating the future %
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	- Belfast City - Greater Belfast - Belfast natives living abroad - Immigrant and transient to Belfast - Tourists/Visitors to Belfast - Northern Ireland - UK - Ireland - Rest of Europe and the world
AUDIENCES	Notes key target audiences that the organization seeks to reach.
COLLECTION USE & RE-USE BY INSTITUTION	- Exhibitions - Online exhibitions and programs - Live interpretation/guided tours - Guided and walking tours – off site - Virtual tours, online programs and/or events - Events and programs - Talks and lectures - Screening - Festivals - Documentaries - Book publications - Theatrical representations - Commissions - Residencies - Digital creations

AUDITING FIELD	DESCRIPTION / USE
	- Creative workshops - Educational material & Outreach - Educational Training, Professional Development and/or mentoring - Websites - Social medias - Podcasts - Apps - Newsletters - Blogs - Other
PUBLIC ACCESS	Identifies the level of access to the collection, that is, the ability for other organizations and the public to locate, consult, copy, user and reuse collections, whether physically or digitally.
PARTNERSHIPS	Identifies partners involved in collecting initiatives.
RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE	Identifies main expertise available within the organization, along with resources.
PRESERVATION	Outlines preservation mandate and activities.
CURATION AND MEDIATION	Identifies aspects of curation and mediation.
OWNERSHIP & RIGHTS MANAGEMENT	Identifies who owns collections and how rights are managed.
ETHICS	Identifies specific ethical issues.
BARRIERS TO USE / ACCESS	Identifies specific barriers that relate to use of or access to the collection.
ANY OTHER INFORMATION	If relevant
THIS INFORMATION WAS GATHERED BY	Add name of person / organisation carrying out the research
WHEN INFORMATION WAS GATHERED	Add date to aid with future research
INFORMATION SOURCES	- Interview with project custodian - Research (e.g. online / books / primary sources relating to the collection) - Word of mouth (e.g. project mentioned by someone at a meeting) - Other:

Catalogue of Story Collections

Using the Collection Audit Tool, we have produced a *Catalogue of Belfast Story Collections*, provided as a searchable spreadsheet to accompany this report. This is a live working document which can be developed further over the coming years: the catalogue can be filtered and searched to identify items of interest during the curation phase, and new story collections or projects can be added to it using the auditing fields as described in **Table 1** on the previous pages. The Catalogue can be used by BCC or external providers to search and filter story collections according to various needs (e.g. location, sector, thematic tags).

The audit has captured 100 story collections / projects, which are listed on the following pages.

1932 Shared Heritage

9ft in Common

A Century Later

A Historical Exhibition of Progressive Loyalism

A Sense of Place: North Belfast Care Zone

Andersonstown News Archive

Ballymac Mobile Museum

Ballynafeigh Oral History Project

BBC Rewind

Bealach na hAislinge / Dreamways

Belfast accent (British Library)

Belfast Celtic Museum

Belfast City Cemetery app and guide

Belfast in the 1930's: An Oral History Project

Belfast Sound Map

Belfast Transport Hub Arts and Heritage Strategy

Betjeman's Belfast

Big Hand for the Band

Blackstaff Mill - Baroness May Blood MBE

Blackstaff Residents Association

British civilian nurse, RVH, 1958-1988

Buried in Belfast

BYstanding - The Choices We Made

Cara-Friend Letter Archive

Carrick Hill Community Association

Century of Change Exhibition

Chinese Welfare Association

Community Consultation for Quality Of Life

Creative Writing and Quilt Making Project

Dear Diary

Disabled People Speak Out

Divided Society - Northern Ireland 1990 - 1998

Donegall Pass Community Forum

East Side Lives

Ensemble Colours: A Spectrum of Stories

extraORDINARYwomen

Family Signed Stories

Folklife Collection

Fr Des Wilson Archives

Gastronomy Summit 2022

Glór Podcast

Great War Gaeilgeoirí of East Belfast

Healing Through Remembering Network

Herstory - Peace Heroines

History of Cinema in Northern Ireland

Homeless Connect / Homeless Awareness Week

The Houben Centre

Indian Heritage in Northern Ireland

The Infinite City Podcast

Irish Trade Unions - Industrial Relations in NI

James Connolly Archive

Kabosh Theatre Projects

Lá/ Lá Nua Irish Language Newspaper

The Lamplighters

The Library Men of WW1

The Listening Project

Living Legacies 1914-18

Living Library

Living through the conflict: Belfast oral histories

Loyalism, Memory & Change

Making Ends Meet in the Past

Making the Future - Oral Archive

Matilda Street

Museum of Orange Heritage

My Belfast – Stories in Sound

North Belfast Women: Living In An Interface Area

Northern Ireland Deaf Sports

NVTV Special Collections

Oral History: Former H&W Employees

Reflected Lives

Our Generation (NVTV)

Poverty, Ethnicity And International Migrants

Prisons Memory Archive

Queer History NI

R-CITY Summer Camp Showcase

Reflected Lives: Peace Wall Communities

Reminiscence Network NI - Life in a Box

Stories from Silence / WAVE Stories

Sharing Memories Building Communities

Sharing Stories

Sign of Our Times

Signed Stories

St Comgall's Visitor Centre

St Matthews Church History

Still Livin' - Larry MacAree

Story of Belfast exhibition

Storytelling Audio - Tullycarnet Yarnspinners

Strand Stories

Telling Our Stories

Templemore Baths Research Project

tenx9 Podcast & Videos

This is Me - Cornstore Youth Club, Draperstown

This is Me - Belonging

This is Me - Junction Club

Unlocking Our Sound Heritage

UPstanding - Stories of Courage

UTV Archive

The Vacuum Newspaper

VMR: Voices of Migration and Return

WheelWorks

Write Up Your Street Zine

You don't know where these people are now, and where their stories end.

Adam Murray, on the people who wrote letters seeking support from Cara-Friend.

8. Analysis of Findings

8.1 Collections by Sector

The initial sector mapping focused on the following sectors (bearing in mind that some organisations may straddle more than one): Educational Institutions, Funders / Trusts, Private Collections, Community / Voluntary Sector, Religious Institutions, Broadcast Media, Oral History Networks, Museums, Libraries / Archives, Government / Public Sector, Culture/ Arts / Heritage, Sport.

As shown in **Figure 2** below, the majority of collections are held by organisations in the community / voluntary sector, with 38 collections - this is to be expected, since oral history projects are common within this sector. The next largest group was made up of organisations in culture / arts / heritage, consisting of 18 collections - again, this is not surprising due to the extensive story collection work done by arts and heritage organisations, often in collaboration with community / voluntary sector partners.

Clear gaps have also emerged, with low representation of private collections, religious institutions and sporting organisations. There may be several reasons for this:

- *Rights / permissions for reuse:* There may be many significant collections which have yet to be made public because the collection holder does not have the right to publish them - or it is unclear who owns the original material;
- *Sensitive content:* Some of our interviewees for this audit noted that certain collections contain sensitive or challenging material which participants and/or collection holders are unwilling (as yet) to share publicly;
- *Fewer story collection initiatives:* We can surmise that certain sectors may have less experience in story collection, perhaps because oral history is not commonly used in

their area of work. In such cases, under-represented sectors could be encouraged to become involved in new sector-wide story collection initiatives.

It is important to note that there are several major organisations in Broadcast / Media, Libraries / Archives, and Museums which are only partially represented in this audit. Each of these undoubtedly holds a large amount of oral history / storytelling content of interest to Belfast Stories. However, it is possible that some of their archives have not yet been organised as publicly accessible collections, or there may be issues around rights and reproduction / reuse of copyrighted material. Further engagement with organisations in those fields should yield an extensive range of additional content.

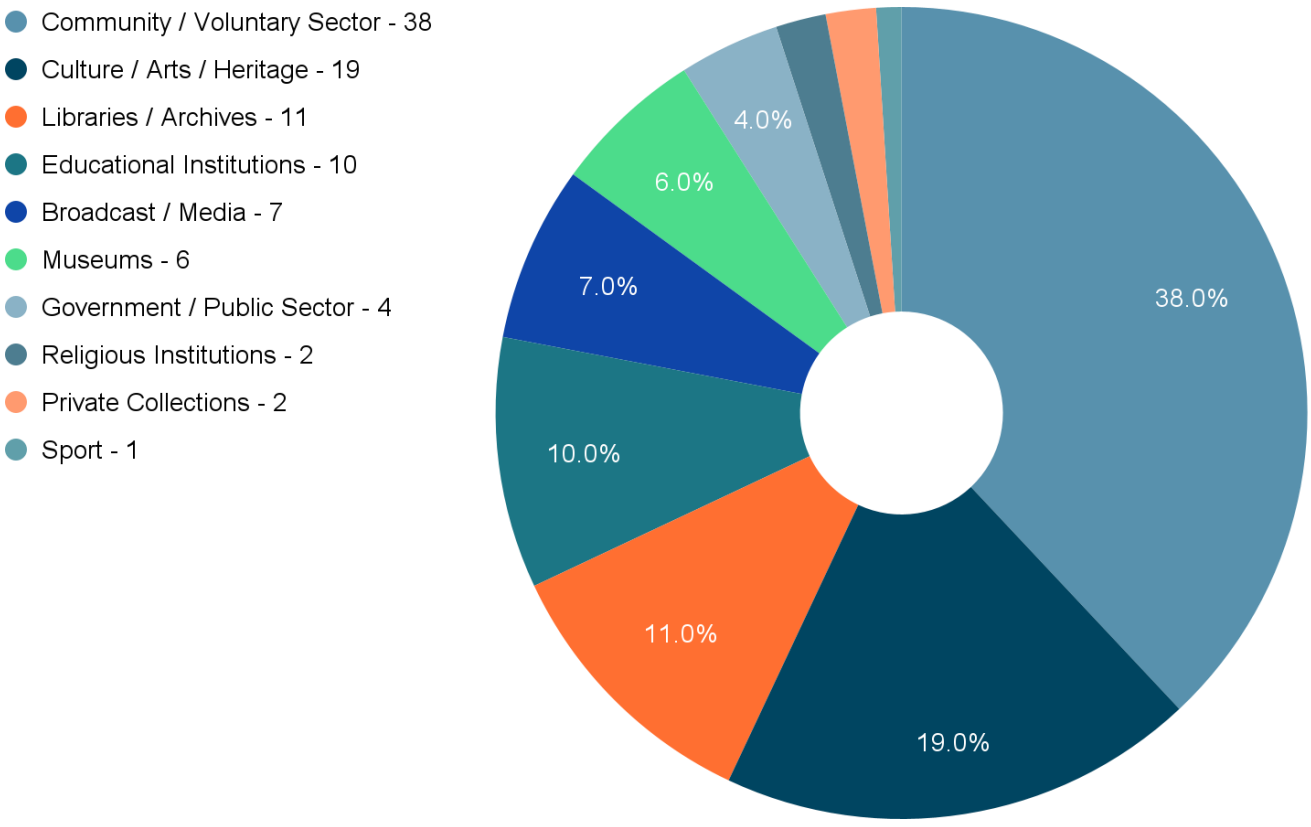


Figure 2: Chart showing sectoral breakdown of 100 collections audited.

8.2 Themes

The audit reflected six of the seven top-level guiding themes identified in earlier research: 'I am Home' / 'I am Resilient' / 'I am Place' / 'I am Innovative' / 'I am Change' / 'I am Creative'. A seventh theme, 'I am Authentic' has not been included, since this theme is already relevant to all collections. Numbers shown in **Figure 3** below are measured against all 100 audited collections.

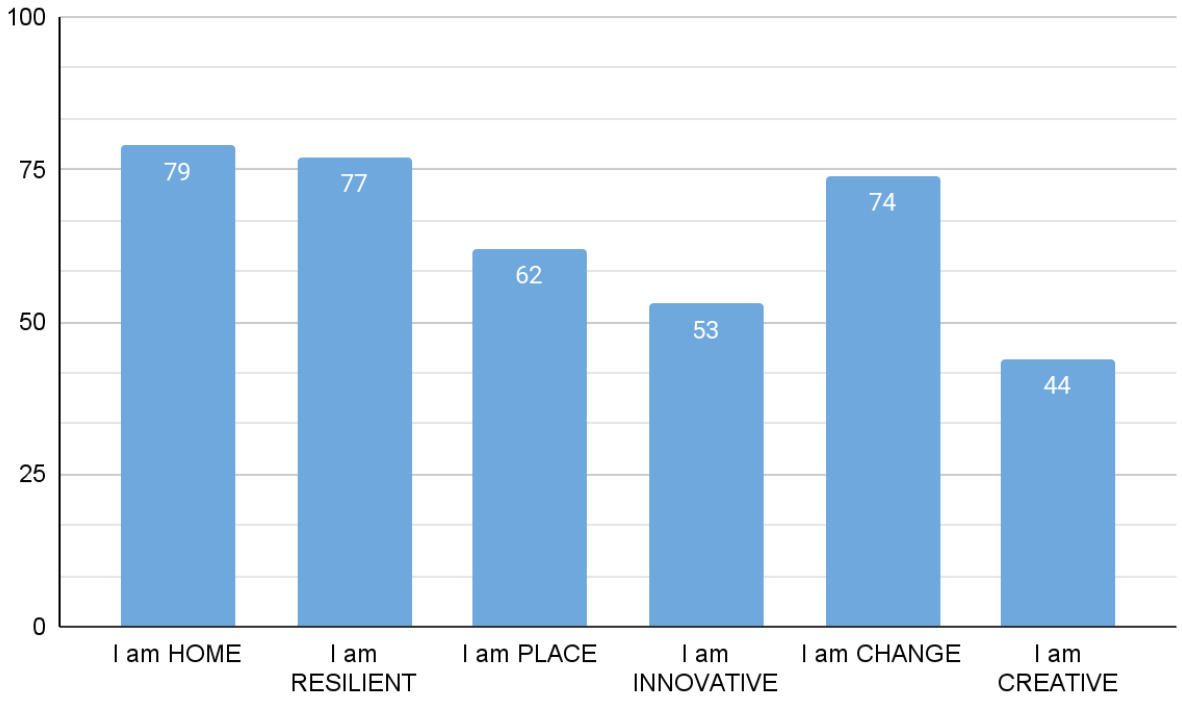


Figure 3: Chart showing breakdown of themes in the 100 collections audited.

These results are preliminary - a thorough review of all content in every audited collection to confirm the prevalence of each theme was outside the scope of this audit. However, our desk research shows a relative balance across all six themes, with 'I am Home', 'I am Resilient', 'I am Place' and 'I am Change' all prevalent. This suggests that these themes resonate with a wide variety of the stories collected in previous initiatives and perhaps highlight 'I am Creative' and 'I am Innovative' as areas of focus in future story collecting.

8.3 Content Tags

As part of the audit, we allocated several content tags to each collection: an intuitive description based on our desk research which can be found in the Catalogue of Story Collections. The resulting list of content tags (see **Figure 4**) indicates the prevalence of particular subjects within the 100 audited collections. The larger words in the list appeared more frequently in the content tagging exercise, while the smallest tags appeared only once.

The list of content tags clearly identifies the more common and general tags that are relevant to several collections - such as 'community', 'disability', 'the troubles', 'family', 'politics' and 'women'. But the list also reveals more specific tags that appear less frequently. Take, for example 'equality' and 'ethnicity', each represented twice. There are several similar tags with subtle distinctions that could help guide a story discovery process, as for example the cluster of tags on 'homes', 'homelessness', 'hostel' and 'housing'. These terms are all related to one another but each one suggests different types of stories.

The content tags should be seen as partial: they can act only as an initial, short-hand guide to richly detailed story collections that feature multiple voices, perspectives and memories. What is more, they should not be seen as a final guide to story collections in the city since more stories will always be uncovered in existing collections or will be collected in future initiatives. Nonetheless, they already demonstrate the variety of content held in collections, giving a sense of the kinds of stories that have been collected to date. The less prominent content tags (and indeed the tags that are entirely absent from this analysis) suggest areas for future research when considering under-represented stories and collections.



Figure 4: These content tags highlight the range of content found in story collections.

Lockdown hit... our neighbourhood connected... Random faces became actual names, actual connections, things in common.... chances to meet, and we held an alleyway pot luck between two streets... bins and crap collected, replaced with tables, chairs, lights... craic flooded the space for an evening. 3am arrived pretty fast!

Belfast resident sharing how the alleyway became a much needed shared space during Covid lockdown.

9. Barriers and recommendations to accessing collections and partnership working

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
1. Resource availability	Many community and academic projects identified in the audit were created with a limited life span and funding allocation. As a result, preparing collected materials for public use was not considered and will likely require additional resource.	Consider options for a city wide digitisation process with appropriate resources for projects and organisations that have relevant collections. Ensure that the curatorial / interpretation brief considers collections that are not yet digitised.
	PRONI should be seen as a key resource for Belfast Stories since it holds both general archival resources on the city's history and numerous first-person stories across thousands of private collections. PRONI staff have indicated support for Belfast Stories but they have also noted that their capacity to support the project is limited without additional resources.	Consider allocating resources to enable a programme of archival research at PRONI - to include both general interpretive background research on the city's history and specific story research within the private collections.
2. Rights and permissions	Some story collections will have been recorded for a specific purpose which limits the collection being made public. (In many cases consent may have been granted for a specific, limited purpose; for some collections, consent may not have been explicitly considered at all.) In many cases stories were collected simply because the opportunity existed to do so, or because limited opportunities for such collections emerge. As a result there can be a lack of clarity around eventual use of stories or collections. Individual participants in collections can often be hard to track down. Some participants may be reluctant to sign a new agreement.	For existing collections: - Engage with collection holders to clarify the rights status of their collections if this is not already clear. - Consult with copyright and data protection specialists to develop a Rights Clearance Strategy. - Negotiate new rights / permissions to use material in Belfast Stories when required (with the caveat that this can be a challenging task, especially with older collections). - Consider negotiating new terms of reference for collections that allow for re-use. - If rights cannot be negotiated, consider using parts of the collection that maintain anonymity and can be re-used under fair use / 'exceptions to copyright' legislation (however, it is important to consult with copyright specialists to ensure that this is done

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
		appropriately, and to outline a clear approach to fair use / exceptions to copyright in the Rights Clearance Strategy). For new collecting initiatives: - Create new commissions for story collecting with partners. - Consider community and sectoral training opportunities around rights management for story collections. - Consult with copyright specialists to develop robust and future-proofed rights management for new content. This should complement the approach to existing content in the Rights Clearance Strategy. - Ensure robust administration of participant paperwork, bearing in mind data protection legislation and duty of care to participants.
3. Duplication of content	When a story is already in the public realm (for example in an archival collection, museum exhibition, a book or a website) there is a risk of duplicating the existing offering. There is a risk that collection holders will perceive the use of their collections as unwanted competition for their services / attractions in other parts of the city.	Create unique values for Belfast Stories that prevent duplication. Where possible, engage with collection holders on the use of stories and encourage a sense of co-ownership among contributors. Ensure that previously published stories are curated / interpreted with care and sensitivity to their origin. Where possible, the curatorial approach should complement the original context and enable a new understanding of the story, rather than simply duplicating it. All content presented in Belfast Stories should be appropriately credited and referenced. Belfast Stories should offer public acknowledgement of the wide variety of ongoing work in story-telling and oral history collection in the city and foster a sense of inclusivity and engagement.

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
4. Ethical considerations	Potential partners have indicated that there may be stories that should be free for people to access as a matter of principle; placing such stories into a visitor attraction that charges for access would exclude some audiences. (In particular this was raised when discussing working class stories, or when audiences might have difficulty accessing/ or be prohibited from accessing their family's audiences.)	Consider opportunities to participate in Belfast Stories that are free of charge. Some potential solutions that could be explored further: - Creating free 'zones' of the building that reflect the generosity of storytelling; - Occasional free access days for Belfast residents / specific target audiences; - Events / space animations that can attract visitors without obligation to pay for access to the main attractions.
	Some collections identified by our study participants have been excluded from the audit as they contain very personal or distressing content. Collectors of such stories have indicated that story owners would not want them to be made public, for example, research that contains interviews with joyriders, or survivors of abuse	Belfast Stories will need to develop a strong case for including these stories and then find a way to engage with the story owners
5. Addressing gaps	The audit analysis has identified sectors that are not well represented within the audit (eg. Private Collections, Religious Institutions and Sport). Our engagement has indicated that stories of younger people are underrepresented within existing collections.	Belfast Stories could initiate new partnerships with the sectors identified in order to: 1. Ensure that existing collections from underrepresented sectors are included within future audit phases 2. Explore potential for new collections
6. Archiving	Many community collections have not been archived. Many exist on individual laptops or in hard copy and many have not been digitised. This creates a risk of material loss if older physical media are not digitised or preserved.	Allocate resource for a city wide archival and digitisation process. This could include small scale grants and/or training workshops for community organisations to enable them to identify and preserve important collections that they hold. For Belfast Stories itself, a long-term preservation strategy for all content is essential. This will likely require partnership with an archival institution that has facilities for proper preservation, such as PRONI.

Topic	Potential Barriers	Recommendations
7. Collection Management Systems	Collection Management Systems are used in archival and media organisations to ensure consistency of records and ease of access for future reference. Story collection holders that use such systems tend to be larger-scale organisations - for example libraries, archives, and media organisations. Often they will be custom-built to meet specific project needs and developed over time.	Consult with archival and records management specialists to develop a Collection Management Strategy and identify an appropriate Collection Management System for Belfast Stories.
	Collection Management Systems are based on a core set of metadata that give standardised information about each specific item in the collection. (Some examples of metadata fields include Title, Description, Date, etc.) If platforms follow the same protocols (such as the 'Dublin Core' standard for archival records) then metadata associated with collections can be shared relatively easily. However, it is important to recognise that most existing story collections have not been catalogued to any pre-existing protocol or standard, nor would it be feasible to complete such work for every collection, except perhaps for a selection of items.	Ensure flexibility as part of the specification for the Belfast Stories Collection Management System, to allow for the inclusion of stories and collections that have not been catalogued to a specific protocol or standard.
	Content featured in Belfast Stories will likely be based on a wide variety of mixed media content. This will require a robust and secure solution for data storage and access which can interact with the Collection Management System and/or a Collection Management System that can handle mixed media.	Consult with IT and collection management specialists to ensure an appropriate, secure and accessible data storage solution is selected for Belfast Stories. As a minimum, the data storage solution will need to securely store content and allow for on-demand access. This should be suitable for a wide variety of media in various formats, including text, images, audio, video and potentially newer forms of AR and VR content.

I think of when my mummy used to sit and say to me, "See when I was a wee girl..." Now I'm being the same [laughs]. See when I was a wee girl...

A woman remembers her mother telling her stories of growing up in Belfast.

10. Roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes

The roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes is based on a Theory of Change and a Logic Model. This methodology is a visual tool that demonstrates how actions (Activities) lead to the desired change (Outcomes).

Planning		**Delivery**		
Resources	**Activities**	**Outputs: Deliverables**	**Outcomes: The Result**	**Impact Overview**
Public investment Stakeholders / Partners Research / Knowledge Board/ Staff / Volunteers	Engagement with collection owners and interviewees Small grants / training on identifying / preserving collections Co-creation with partners, e.g. QUB oral history students Consider resourcing key archival partners e.g. PRONI Celebrate the wealth of story collections and the tradition of storytelling Pilot study sharing stories uncovered via social media outreach, creating transparency Further audit, taking into account the sectors currently underrepresented Further research on ethics/ barriers with partners Research best practice for collecting	Establish a programme of outreach with potential collection holders Training and knowledge sharing on archiving and preservation of existing collections Commision new story collections with partners to address gaps identified Disseminate thought leadership that explores the challenges of sharing story collections through a conference Develop an ethical framework for story collecting	Collection holders will feel informed and engaged Collection holders will have new skills to manage their own collections Trust established between Belfast Stories, collection holders and broader communities Potential audiences can see the value in sharing stories New collecting initiatives will be based on strong foundations	Belfast Stories creates a new partnership model for reuse of existing stories and the commissioning of new stories Belfast Stories is a model of best practice for reuse of existing collections and new collecting initiatives Storytellers and the people of Belfast feel that Belfast Stories does justice to our stories

Credits and References

This report was prepared by Starling Start Limited in May 2023, on behalf of Belfast City Council. This version is final submission.

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- Figure 4 (word cloud) generated using TagCrowd.com

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BELFAST STORIES ACTION PLAN – UPDATED MAY 2023

CONCEPT DESIGN STAGE (JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2024)

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INTRODUCTION

On completing the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining,* and beginning to consider opportunities to bring the multiple voices of the people of Belfast into the cultural life of the city, through Belfast Stories, Belfast 2024 and other city-wide programming and events, it became clear that an overarching Story Collection Framework that better understands existing collections and supports any further collection and use of stories at a city-wide level was needed.

Belfast City Council commissioned Lord Cultural Resources in 2021 to carry out this work. Although the Belfast Stories had certainly prompted the need for such a tool, the resulting Framework was much broader than the Belfast Stories in its scope, as it considered the Custodianship of a Collection of Belfast Stories and set a strategy at the city level, offering guidance for year-round cultural programming around Belfast: activations, programs and events aligned to Belfast Stories.

The Framework recommended that Belfast City Council undertake an audit of stories already collected relating to the City of Belfast. Phase 1 of this work has now been completed.

This Action Plan responds to the recommendations set out in both the Story Collection Framework and Stories Audit as well as drawing on insights and feedback from the Public Consultation on Belfast Stories completed in November 2022.

STORY COLLECTION FRAMEWORK

Working in collaboration with key stakeholders and subject matter experts across the city we have developed a Stories Collection Framework (SCF). The Stories Collection Framework outlined the proposed direction on a number of areas including:

- Guiding principles – programmes such as the Decade of Centenaries have established good practice in setting clear guiding principles that inform Council's position and partnership approach.
- Ethical parameters – there are important ethical considerations that must be assessed and necessary processes put in place to ensure best practice is reached across engagement, collecting and telling of Belfast stories.
- Themes – the purpose of the thematic framework is to assist in what will be a considerable undertaking to collect and arrange stories. This is an organisational tool and is not how the stories will be presented or told as this will be addressed at the next stage when the curatorial approach will be developed as part of public engagement and design processes.
- Partnership approach – this sets out a phased approach to a wider programme and partnership model to support cultural and tourism development in relation to collecting and telling Belfast stories. Whilst this will in turn support the building project, the potential benefits are much wider.
- Governance – Council is not a collecting organisation. This requires significant infrastructure and expertise. The governance is linked to the partnership model that locates Council within a wider stories ecosystem for the city and acknowledges the considerable expertise that exists in partner organisations.

The Stories Collection Framework is a flexible tool that will evolve over time. It is critical to ensuring the authenticity and diversity of the stories represented in Belfast Stories and across multiple initiatives. In its present form, the Framework seeks to:

- Explore new ways and perspectives of telling the stories of the people of Belfast
- Bring the people of Belfast into the heart of the initiatives
- Increase accessibility of existing collections across the city and beyond
- Identify and address gaps in stories that have not been collected or that lack visibility
- Encourage long term active engagement with partners creating a network across the city and beyond that will increase opportunities to participate in the cultural life and support neighbourhood tourism
- Identify efficient and sustainable ways of sharing and putting collections to their best use
- Bring in new perspectives and creativity in adding to the city-wide cultural offerings.

The following mission and vision statements support Belfast's Story Collection Framework.

Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

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

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

STORIES AUDIT

One of the key recommendations from the Story Collection Framework as agreed by City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2022 was to undertake an initial Stories Audit to better understand what stories have been collected and current levels of access to these collections. The scope of the audit was to:

- Complete an audit of stories, archives and collections relating to the city of Belfast in line with the mapping tool developed as part of the Story Collection Framework.
- Analyse findings including identification of trends and gaps.
- Identify any access issues or barriers to partnership working.
- Recommendations and roadmap for ongoing story collection and partnership programmes.

Belfast City Council commissioned Starling Start to complete this work. The research began with sector mapping to identify the range of organisations and bodies involved in collecting. A series of discovery conversations with stakeholders and experts in the field were held, revealing a wide variety of specific collections to be audited and highlighting the depth of knowledge and insight to be gained from collection holders, community representatives and subject matter experts. These complemented the extensive engagement already undertaken as part of the development of the Story Collection Framework and on an ongoing basis by the Belfast Stories project team. Drawing on these discovery conversations four story collection case studies were developed with each one highlighting important considerations for ongoing partnerships, including ethical considerations, accessibility, representation, rights and preservation of collections that can be applied across the audit.

The report presents key findings, an initial analysis of the catalogue of story collections, highlighting collections by sector, overarching themes and content tags to provide a sense of the variety of story collections, their context and contents. Finally, the report considers barriers to ongoing partnership working and accessing collections and offers several key recommendations to overcome these and proposes a roadmap for ongoing story collection partnership programmes.

STORIES ACTION PLAN

The following actions have been developed in response to:

- Recommendations included in the Story Collection Framework
- Recommendations included in the Stories Audit
- Feedback from the public consultation on Belfast Stories
- Required inputs to complete Belfast Stories to RIBA 2

Recommendation	Action	Timeframe
Establish a programme of outreach with potential collection holders.	Integration of this action into Belfast Stories engagement activity and delivered via development of a Heritage Plan for Belfast. This will be included in ongoing work to agree corporate interdependences and priorities.	August 2023 – corporate priorities to be agreed with roll out of activities to be finalised.
Training and knowledge sharing on archiving and preservation of existing collections.	As above with potential to scope partnership with other heritage providers and funders.	August 2023 – corporate priorities to be agreed with roll out of activities to be finalised.
Commission new story collections with partners to address gaps identified.	Further audit, taking into account the sectors currently underrepresented.	December 2023.
	Story Gathering - Pilot study sharing stories uncovered via social media and other channels to create transparency.	October 2023.
	Development of interpretative plan as part of Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team's	January 2024.

	(IPEDT) scope to be included public consultation.	
Disseminate thought leadership that explores the challenges of sharing story collections.	Establish Stories Panel to ensure appropriate focus and skills in relation to story gathering and sharing.	September 2023.
	Delivery of conference/event.	March 2024.
Develop an ethical framework for story collecting.	As above - setting up of Stories Panel to ensure appropriate focus and skills in relation to story gathering and sharing.	September 2023.
	Develop and publish ethical framework to be included in public consultation.	January 2024.
Explore new ways and perspectives of telling the stories of the people of Belfast and bring in new perspectives and creativity in adding to the city-wide cultural offerings.	Strategic Delivery Partner as part of Belfast 2024.	Agree specific partnership projects by August 2023.
	Develop creative learning programme in partnership with NI Screen.	October 2023.
	As above - Integration of this action into Belfast Stories engagement activity and delivered via development of a Heritage Plan for Belfast. This will be included in ongoing work to agree corporate interdependences and priorities. Identify potential partnerships with other heritage providers and	August 2023 – corporate priorities to be agreed with roll out of activities to be finalised.

	funders e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund.	
Encourage long term active engagement with partners creating a network across the city and beyond that will increase opportunities to participate in the cultural life and support neighbourhood tourism.	Establish Stories Network.	October 2023.
	As above - Integration of this action into Belfast Stories engagement activity and delivered via development of a Heritage Plan for Belfast and new neighbourhood tourism investment programme. This will be included in ongoing work to agree corporate interdependences and priorities.	August 2023 – corporate priorities to be agreed with roll out of activities to be finalised.

How we will evaluate progress

We will develop stories related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be included in our annual evaluation report. This will also summarise how we are responding to what we learn through the process especially in relation to overcoming barriers to people participating in the activity including sharing their story. These findings will be monitored via the governance structures of Belfast Stories and reflected in ongoing work to deliver corporate priorities in relation to culture and heritage.

The findings will then be used to inform next steps including in relation to the Belfast Stories design and stories development programmes.

Belfast Stories Members' Working Group *DRAFT*

1. Purpose

The Belfast Stories Members' Working Group will be responsible for providing cross-party strategic advice to ensure that the programme vision, outcomes and objectives are realised.

The issues to be considered at the Working Group include:

- Inclusive growth including social value opportunities during design, construction and operations
- Equality, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility
- Ethics and approach to stories - gathering, holding and interpretation
- Sustainable development including net zero build aspirations
- Stakeholder engagement, consultation, communications and PR
- Linkages to the development and implementation of the Council's and city's key plans, strategies and programmes
- Consideration of good practice and benchmarks from other relevant projects and/or cities
- Emerging actions the Council may take to mitigate against any adverse impacts arising from the project and capitalising on any opportunities that may arise
- Monitoring of Belfast Stories programme and progress against key milestones.

2. Membership

The Chair and the Deputy Chair shall be appointed by the Members at the first meeting.

3. Frequency of meetings

The Group will normally meet on a quarterly basis and the minutes will be reported to City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

DRAFT

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry McMullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme (the "Programme") and to seek Members' approval of the proposed funding model and next steps.
1.2	In April 2022 Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the draft tourism plan, *Make Yourself at Home* together with the Year 1 2022/2023 Action Plan of priorities. This included a commitment to developing a Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Fund for local tourism, recognising this as one of 3 catalyst projects alongside Belfast Stories and Year of Culture 2024. ***Catalyst 1 - Our Place - Developing Local Tourism****:* the Tourism

	Plan recognises that Regenerative Tourism is driven by the relationship between people and place, with an emphasis on uplifting the importance of community in the context of tourism and in particular, the relationship between the visitor and the host.
1.3	The Programme provides an opportunity to support the development and roll out of *Belfast Stories* and align with delivery of the *Tourism Plan, Cultural Strategy* and Tourism NI's *Embrace A Giant Spirit* brand and values, to deliver enhanced experiences for visitors and act as a catalyst to support the social, economic and physical regeneration across the city.
1.4	It is envisaged that this will be an iterative, phased programme. Significant work has already been undertaken by the Tourism Development Unit on the initial phase of the Programme (Phase 1: Development), in collaboration with the Belfast Stories and Culture Unit teams.
1.5	In order to maximise synergies and outcomes across key programmes, it is anticipated that the second phase of the Programme (Phase 2: Implementation) will launch once *Belfast Stories*, *the Heritage Audit and Development Plan and the Visitor Experience Action Plan* have progressed to a more advanced stage.
1.6	Since 2017, Council has supported 2 neighbourhood tourism organisations (EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar) to deliver a *City Connections* programme which promotes cohesion between cultural tourism offers in the east and west of the city. It is anticipated that *City Connections* will be replaced by the proposed investment Programme, which will be open to organisations across the city. To facilitate the transition, it is proposed that Council continue to support both organisations in this interim period and provide financial assistance to the end of this financial year (31st March 2024).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	To progress development of Phase 1 of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme, we request Members' consideration of the following:
2.2	Members are asked to approve investment in independent sectoral facilitation to conduct developmental engagement which will identify needs, gaps and opportunities, alignment of the City Connections programme and further inform and the parameters of the Programme (Phase 2).

2.3	Members are asked to approve investment in a 2-year programme to develop and enhance tourism products and experiences across the city, sharing and distributing the benefits of a vibrant tourism sector throughout local neighbourhoods.
2.4	Members are asked to approve interim funding to continue support for the Ctiy Connections programme until the end of current financial year.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Strategic Context** To ensure that an investment programme is developed in a robust and cohesive manner to meet sectoral needs, the Programme will be informed by key interdependent strategic priorities and projects, including *Visitor Experience Action Plan*, the *Cultural Strategy*, *Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development,* and *Belfast Stories*, as detailed below.
3.2	Through investment in the development of high-quality tourism products aligned to our core strategic objectives*,* visitors may be drawn to neighbourhoods beyond the city centre delivering authentic experiences, promoting increased dwell time and spend, uplifting economic growth and capacity in local communities.
3.3	Further opportunity has been identified to enhance and extend the visitor experience and promote a cohesive, expanded visitor journey of exploration beyond the city centre. Creating a regenerative tourism offering that takes into consideration the appeal of neighbourhoods in delivering authentic experiences and the benefits of regenerative tourism.
3.4	As Members will be aware, **Belfast Stories** aims to create a unique visitor experience that captures the city through its powerful stories. Offering visitors, a new way to see and understand Belfast, it will generate authentic experiences that engender a greater sense of connection and belonging, both for local people and visitors to our city.
3.5	The offer will become the “go to” first stop for visitors to Belfast and the wider NI region, orientating visitors and linking them to other city-based / regional visitor attraction.

3.6	At the current time, the hierarchy of stories / stories framework is still at a developmental stage, however in time and when fully developed this will become intrinsically linked to the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme parameters. The development phase will enable industry to fully understand the opportunity presented by Belfast Stories and consider experiences that will enhance and support interconnected Visitor experiences and the role that communities can play in the overarching visitor experience.
3.7	**Cultural Strategy** The ten - year Cultural Strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining* states that in order to truly engage with our visitors and ultimately grow market share, Belfast needs to ensure that visitors connect strongly with the city's people, culture, places and heritage. To help give focus to the challenge of creating unique destination experiences which meet visitor need, the strategy identifies four themes: • **Tell me more (A city of stories**) e.g. character and charm of Belfast, make the visitor feel at home • **Not what it seems (A city of contrasts**) e.g. intriguing and complex history of Belfast, character of the place • **Hidden depths (A maritime city)** e.g. waterways, rivers, loughs and shores • **Homespun (Made in Belfast)** e.g. industrial heritage, cultural venues, innovation, creativity. The proposed Programme will be developed in cognisance of these themes to shape immersive and engaging tourism experiences across the city.
3.8	**Heritage Audit** It is also envisaged that the Programme will be shaped in alignment with the *Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development,* aligning investment that recognises, promotes and protects the city's cultural heritage in all its dimensions, both tangible and intangible including the plurality of the city's cultural narratives. Work on this development plan is currently underway and will provide additional understanding of enabling infrastructure and assets that will support the success of Belfast Stories and visitor engagement.
3.9	**Tourism Strategy**

	In April 2022, Council approved the 'Make Yourself at Home' 10-year Tourism Plan for Belfast, recognising the importance of tourism to the city's economic growth. The *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan places community at its heart. Respect for the local context, to ensure tourism-derived benefits are shared and inclusive, is evident in all four of the strategic themes - Grow, Position, Experience and Sustain.
3.10	Need has been identified for a specific programme to support the development of neighbourhood-based tourism experiences. Work to date has demonstrated that some areas of the city are more advanced than others in terms of neighbourhood tourism and leveraging the opportunity it presents. Whilst some areas have organisations undertaking work on visitor servicing and tourism development, it is clear than many neighbourhoods currently lack the capacity to bring forward strong proposals that would appeal to visitors. The development of a suitable investment programme would be further strengthened by independent engagement with a range of organisations across the city to identify sectoral needs and opportunities and to support and inform future Programme phases.
3.11	Benchmarking research work has demonstrated that neighbourhoods are uniquely positioned to offer the visitor the immersive, authentic experiences they are seeking: • Celebrating local culture, heritage and enterprise. • Accessing open and green spaces. • Co-creating authentic Belfast experiences, linked to the city's key stories. • Enjoying day to night food and hospitality. • Amplifying and extending the impact of the city's main existing visitor attractions.
3.12	Cities across Europe (of comparable size to Belfast) have successfully implemented ambitious programmes which place communities at the heart of regenerative tourism. Research highlights the importance of uplifting capacity, quality of product and visitor experience in local neighbourhoods beyond the city centre and considers how San Sebastian, Ljubljana, and Berlin have employed local tourism initiatives to develop sustainable growth in visitor numbers and product development *(Local Tourism in Belfast: Developing the Offer, Deloitte 2018)*. **Visitor Experience Action Plan**

3.13	At the current time, the *Visitor Experience Action Plan* is at a developmental stage, with a view to driving the effective implementation of the actions set out in the *Visitor Experience Plan*, which identifies neighbourhood tourism as one of six specific gaps in the city's current visitor experience offering. Once fully developed, the Action Plan will prioritise development activity linked to the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme parameters to address identified need and drive economic growth, sharing the benefits of the tourism sector with communities across the city.
3.14	**Purpose of The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme** The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme aims to: • Engage in facilitated dialogue with sectoral and community partners across the city to identify needs, gaps and opportunities for tourism offers to drive increased visitor footfall, dwell time and spend in local neighbourhoods. • Provide short term support (over a maximum period of 2 years) to develop authentic and financially sustainable new cultural tourism products, or enhancements to existing offers, which will bring vitality to local neighbourhoods, local residents and visitors. • Encourage the development of plans which build capacity for city neighbourhoods to connect to the broader tourism offer, enabling local communities to become part of the Belfast visitor experience. • Promote enhanced visitor dwell time in the city and extend the economic benefits beyond the city centre. • Extend the journey of visitors to *Belfast Stories*, encouraging further exploration of its narratives across wider city neighbourhoods.
3.15	**Programme Focus and Scope** The Programme will facilitate funding of priority outcomes linked to the Tourism Plan and support actions set out under the four strategic themes contained within the *Make Yourself At Home* Tourism Strategy - Grow, Position, Experience and Sustain. It will also provide a flexible approach to Neighbourhood Tourism within the City, while recognising the differing stages of development and capacity across the city. While it is envisaged that the investment programme may be extended beyond the initial two year period, the first two programme phases will have specific areas of focus:

	Phase One - Programme Development
3.16	In this first phase, significant focus will be placed upon scoping and benchmarking work to inform and define programme parameters, aims and projected outcomes, in alignment with interdependent projects. This work has already been progressed by the Tourism Development Unit, in collaboration with the Belfast Stories and Culture teams. To further shape Programme parameters, we will prioritise the procurement of independent facilitation services to conduct developmental and engagement activity with the sector and across neighbourhoods in the North, East, South and West of the city. This work will include, but will not be limited to, the following: • Conducting a needs audit and gaps analysis within neighbourhoods. • Identify visitor needs and opportunities to increase dwell time and spend in neighbourhoods. • Engage with sectoral stakeholders to build confidence in neighbourhood tourism offers and explore the development of new products and experiences, or enhancements to existing offers. • Facilitate sectoral dialogue around issues relating to connectivity, sustainability, accessibility and capacity. • Advise on potential programme linkages to Council's strategic priorities and Tourism NI's Embrace a Giant Spirit brand values and themes. • Outline opportunities for the alignment and integration of the previous support delivered via City Connections.
3.17	Awareness of the initial phase of the programme will be raised via messaging across the council website and digital channels. Active participation will be sought through an open call to potential partners, stakeholders and collaborators from the city's tourism and community sectors. An audit process will also identify appropriate groups and organisations to shape, inform and benefit from the proposed programme.
3.18	It is envisaged that the engagement activity will achieve the following benefits for participants: • Promote a greater understanding of the economic and social value of neighbourhood tourism to both communities and tourism businesses.

- Enhance understanding of the opportunities presented by *Belfast 2024* and *City Deal* programmes to promote economic growth, build capacity and connect communities into the emerging broader tourism offer.
- Enable local communities to become part of the Belfast visitor experience
- Foster collaborative partnerships and networking synergies to promote the development of clustered tourism offers.

3.19 The work outlined above will further inform the Programme to ensure it is robust and fit for purpose when it is opened during Phase 2 of the proposal. Committee will be updated on the outcomes and learnings resulting from the facilitation work in advance of the programme progressing to Phase 2.

Within this first programme phase, we also propose to continue support for the City Connections programme until the end of this financial year in its current format.

3.20 **Phase Two – Programme Implementation**

Phase 2 will be scoped in response to the work undertaken in Phase 1, with focus placed upon an open call for projects aligned to council's *Visitor Experience Framework*, *and Action Plan*, which will provide a co-ordinated approach to product and experience development in the city. Phase 2 will also prioritise the development of high-quality tourism products linked to Belfast's key narratives, which encourage visitors to continue their journey beyond the *Belfast Stories* attraction and extend their experience across the wider city.

3.21 **Investment Priorities**

The investment priorities for this programme are:

- **Product Development:** development of new, high quality local tourism products and experiences or enhancements to existing high-quality offers across the city.
- **Capacity Building:** in collaboration with teams across the Economic Development Unit, the Programme will invest in projects to strengthen community capacity to shape, deliver and contribute to visitor experiences. The ambition is to ensure all parts of the city have the opportunity to benefit from tourism investment.

	• It is envisaged that applications will be considered for investment in products at one of three distinct phases; concept, planning, operational.
3.22	**Anticipated Programme Outcomes:** The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme will, in the long-term, support the delivery of the Visitor Experience Framework through the development of financially sustainable tourism products which draw visitors into local neighbourhoods, immersing them actively in the locale, promoting increased dwell time and spend in the area and uplifting skill, capacity and confidence in local communities. It is anticipated that the parameters and outcomes of the programme may evolve throughout the lifetime of the *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan in response to challenges, opportunities and needs identified across the city.
3.23	A post-programme evaluation report will be brought to Committee, incorporating lessons learned and recommendations to shape future funding initiatives in response to programme outcomes, opportunities and sectoral needs. **Timeframe** Phase 1 (research and development) of the project is currently underway, with facilitation and engagement activity to commence once investment is approved. It is anticipated that work will continue until March 2024, with a view to Phase 2 (implementation) commencing from April 2024. Further progress reports will be provided to Committee in due course.
3.24	**<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>** Approval of the Committee is sought for a total investment of £500,000 to support the ambitions of this Programme across a two year period. It is anticipated that budget will be sought from City Deal reserves for the 2023 – 24 and 2025 periods of activity. **2023 - 24 (Research and development phase)** City Connections current funding £50,000

	Committee meeting on 5 April 2023 approved £25k each to Fáilte Feirste Thiar and EastSide Tourism to support City Connections programme of work, 1 April to 30 September 2023. City Connections extension of funding, 1 Oct to 31 March 2024 £50,000 Independent facilitation services £50,000 **2024 – 25 (Implementation phase)** Investment programme £350,000
3.25	**<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>** The Tourism Plan: *Make Yourself at Home* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EAIQ) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNS). Any issues raised during the public consultation have been addressed in the final plan, which was approved at committee meeting on 6 April 2022. No further public consultation will be required will be required for this investment fund. Neighbourhood tourism is one of the outputs of the Tourism Strategy, promotion of opportunity for all Section 75 groups to be celebrated within the programme is important to it's success.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	None

Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	*A City Imagining* Investment Programme: Cultural multi-annual grants
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
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**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: – Update Members on the investment programme that supports the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining 2020-2030*. – Update members on the independent review of Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG) – Seek approval for the opening of the cultural multi-annual two-year and four-year scheme in August 2023 for funding from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2028. – Seek approval for the continuation of Pathfinder in 2023/24

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: – Note the contents of this report and agree to open cultural multi-annual grants in August 2023 for Arts and Heritage organisations and Events and Festivals for funding from 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2028 subject to final recommendations being agreed by Committee in January 2024 – Approval the continuation of Pathfinder in 2023/24
3.0	**Main report**
	Background to Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG)
3.1	At a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28 August 2019, a new ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, was agreed. As part of this strategy a new investment approach was approved including phased implementation of new funding programmes. Similar to the Belfast Agenda, the recommended investment model for culture proposed a new partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast. This investment is central to creating positive cultural, social and economic impacts for the city, delivering on our overall targets for the period, positioning Belfast as a regional driver, and creating the conditions for long-term transformation.
3.2	As included in the strategy, the aims of the cultural investment model are to: - support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change - invest in the cultural and creative sectors skills development and capacity for production and innovation - position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking - establish Belfast as a cultural destination.
3.3	The first phased implementation of the cultural investment model commenced with the opening of a competitive funding programme for cultural multi-annual grants for the period April 2020 to March 2024. It was agreed that these multi-annual grants would cover two main areas: - Arts and heritage organisations, which have a year-round programme of cultural activity (*Anchor* four-year grants and *Enable* two-year grants)

	- Festivals and events organisations, which have a festival or event with an audience of 65,000 or more (*Imagine* four-year grants), or an audience of 10,000 or more (*Activate* two-year grants) by end of grant period.
3.4	These two strands of funding, Arts and Heritage and Festivals and Events, each with two tiers of investment available (two-year and four-year) replaced previous core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage and previous one-off funding agreements to events and festivals awarded on an annual basis via the Committee process.
3.5	The Arts and Heritage strand of funding is similar to and replaced the established core multi annual funding first implemented in 2013. It was designed to sustain our existing cultural offer covering both programmes and infrastructure. The Festivals and Events strand of funding was a new element and was designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become a year-round events destination. Furthermore it created a transparent and open process in line with the arts and heritage funding process.
3.6	**Plans and process for launch of Cultural multi-annual funding** In advance of the new financial year in April 2024, it is planned to launch CMAG in August 2023 with approval of awards and contracts by March 2023. A summary of this timeline is included below: • Open call for application submissions – early August 2023 • Information sessions for applicants – August 2023 • Submission deadline for application – September/October 2023 • Eligibility check, scoring, officer assessment and independent assessment – Oct to Dec 2023 • Committee Approval of awards - January 2024 • Council Ratification approval of awards - February 2024
3.7	Similar to other grants, Cultural Multi-Annual Grants will be advertised widely. This will include: • Information and application details emailed directly to a GDPR compliant mailing list representing over 370 organisations from across the cultural and creative sectors. • Information shared with sectoral networks, websites and socials including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Community Arts Partnership.

	• Promotion through Council communication channels • Three information sessions and one-to-one meetings held in advance of the deadline.
	<u>Criteria for Decision making</u>
3.8	Assessments will be made, and scoring applied under three key areas of criteria: - Quality of programme: this includes their vision, content, audience experience and marketing and audience development. - Impact of activity: this includes how the programme contributes to the four strategic themes (A City Belonging, A City Challenging, A City Creating and A City Exploring) and how they will monitor and evaluate that impact. - Readiness for investment: this includes planning, financial management, staff, governance, and environmental impact.
	Assessments will be made only based on information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This will include the application form and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies.
	<u>Principles of the Assessment Process</u>
3.9	Applications are received and eligibility checked by the Central Grants Unit before being passed to officers for scoring. Officers undertake a thorough assessment of all eligible applications. Applications and assessments are discussed and agreed at an internal moderation panel. An independent assessment panel co-ordinated by Central Grants Unit and chaired by a Senior Managers is then convened. The role of this assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process'.
	Review of current scheme
3.10	As part of the evaluation framework for CMAG, it was agreed there should be a summative evaluation of both the monitoring and evaluation process and programme impact carried out by an independent evaluator. In April 2023 Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent consulting to carry out a review of CMAG. The first cycle of CMAG coincided with a period of unprecedented change in the operating environment, including the Covid-19 pandemic, which seriously limited the

	ability of festivals, events and cultural sectors to deliver activities and outcomes that would contribute to the overall impact of CMAG and the Investment Programme.
3.11	Due to the challenges of the past four years, the evaluation focused primarily on a process review, exploring what worked well and what could be improved. Specifically, the report sought feedback from grantees, unsuccessful applicants, and key Belfast City Council staff. This included: • A survey which was completed by 34 grantees and 8 unsuccessful applicants • Four workshops attended by 23 participants from 20 grantee organisations • One-to-one, semi-structured interviews with a further 11 grantees and three unsuccessful applicants that were also Transition recipients. • Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key Belfast City Council staff including Central Grants Unit, the Culture and Arts Unit, staff involved in the design or assessment of CMAG and senior management
3.12	This Primary research was supplemented by desk research including CMAG guidance notes and application form, the Cultural Investment Model, CMAG monitoring data, the internal review of CMAG in 2021, the Draft CMAG evaluation framework and the "City Imagining" cultural strategy 2020-2030. Detailed feedback across each area is available in Appendix 1.
	Recommendations from the review
3.13	The report authors found that "there is evidence that Belfast City Council's CMAG programme follows a robust process and is designed to support the council's strategic ambitions as set down in A City Imagining.". Furthermore, it concluded that in keeping with National Audit Office good practice guidance, there is evidence that: • Risk is managed on a spectrum dependent on the type (restricted project and unrestricted grant-in-aid), value and duration of the grant. • It is not risk averse but balances the risk to the council and the grantee, in particular in relation to Imagine and Activate grants. • It is built on a previous comparator scheme and utilises expertise of those with understanding of the sector and experience of similar grant schemes, including Central Grants Unit. • Uptake of funding was accurately projected, and there is balance, on one hand, between encouraging uptake and minimising administrative burdens and, on the

	other, ensuring that the support is used as intended, and the council is confident that the funding targets and benefits the right organisations. • The sector has been engaged in the review of the scheme after both two and four years, which will influence the next cycle of funding. • There is no similar multi-annual strategic fund open to the sector.
3.14	However, it has not been possible to robustly evaluate whether CMAG has achieved its aims or the extent to which it contributed to A City Imagining outcomes. This is largely due to extenuating circumstances in the external and internal operating environment which meant neither the council nor the sector could operate as planned. The report highlights a range of recommendations intended to further enhance the grant process, impact and evaluation, namely:
	<u>Relationship management and support</u>
3.15	The report highlighted the importance of one-to-one relationship management, stating that "staff in BCC should also be supported to take on a more developmental role, including training, time to develop relationships and time in lieu to attend funding events and activities.". Whilst much of this developmental work was impacted by the pandemic and staff changes in the Culture Unit, the importance of relationship management has been reflected in the new structure of the culture team and its corresponding workplans.
3.16	Respondents also reflected the importance of wraparound support, particularly on areas such as accessibility and environmental sustainability. This support, including establishing a Green Arts Forum and a partnership with the University of Atypical to train disability champions, has been reflected in the Culture Workplan 23-24 which was agreed by members in the April 2023 Committee.
3.17	Several respondents also indicated their desire to build relationships with councillors. To address this need, officers will explore options for information and networking sessions between CMAG clients and members.
	<u>Eligibility criteria</u>
3.18	Arts and heritage eligibility criteria including audience and turnover are based on historic baselines. However, the impact of the pandemic has created peaks and troughs, and recent baselines are no longer robust. It is therefore recommended that arts and heritage organisations are allowed to base their application on projections (as per

	festivals and events applicants) with the caveat that historic performance will be used to assess whether projections are realistic.
3.19	Similarly, the pandemic has had an impact on audience numbers over the previous three years. It is recommended that the council analyse recent monitoring returns to consider whether audience eligibility criteria are still appropriate.
3.20	It is recommended that council should consider removing the requirement for a minimum number of volunteers. Instead, it should ensure that it is satisfied that volunteering is considered within the assessment criteria as an indicator of A City Belonging, Challenging or Creating.
	<u>Duration and level of funding</u>
3.21	To manage expectations, the council should agree in advance whether applicants can expect a significant change in funding or should request an incremental increase or standstill and communicate this to applicants. The council should also consider telling applicants the average value of grants made in the first round, and the number and value of grants it intends to make in the second cycle.
3.22	The report stated that council should consider awarding all grants on a four-year basis subject to developing a longer-term project fund of scale that could support new and emerging organisations. Officers are mindful of this feedback and the desire for longer term funding from across the sector. However, such a material change to the scheme would require extensive screening and consultation and will be considered for any subsequent reviews of CMAG.
3.23	The report recommended that the council should review existing project funding with a view to introducing a longer-term project fund of scale that would reduce pressure on CMAG and help support a diverse ecosystem. Officials will all engage with the sector to investigate opportunities for dynamic and longer term project funding.
	<u>Application process, evaluation and monitoring</u>
3.24	The report identified the need to provide support for applicants through information sessions and advice clinics, alongside clear consistent messaging to ensure that all applicants understand the purpose of the fund. These information sessions have been built into the planned rollout of the programme alongside a communications plan to

	announce the dates of opening and closing the grant as far in advance as possible. A more enhanced evaluation process, in consultation with grantees, will be implemented to enable evidence to be collected throughout the next four-year cycle.
3.25	Many respondents across all sectors recommended that the council should change the names of the funds. It is recommended to change the name of the funds to refer to them by their descriptors (E.g. four-year arts and heritage, two-year festivals)
	<u>Assessment process</u>
3.26	There were several recommendations relating to the assessment process, including providing applicants with more detail on the assessment process and criteria, using external subject matter expertise to assess at least Imagine applications, providing training to new assessors and reviewing the application form should be reviewed to identify any questions or attachments (such as board minutes) that could be removed or made only applicable to four-year applicants. It is also recommended that the administration of all grants should be migrated back to Central Grants Unit. All of these recommendations will be incorporated into the planned rollout of the programme.
	<u>Transition</u>
3.27	The council should consider how it will support any existing Imagine or Anchor client that applies unsuccessfully in the second cycle. However, it is not recommended that the council provides a formal scheme such as Transition. Rather, given the variance in Anchor awards in particular, this should be done on a case-by-case basis.
	Pathfinder for 2023/24
3.28	In February 2022, £79,768 was agreed in relation to four Pathfinder grants which had been designed to address a specific gap in funding. Members agreed that awards were extended for a further two years from 2022-24. The programme was designed to support those organisations that have a specific development need and are currently not in a position to drawdown core funding from the public sector. Based on monitoring of these awards to date, agreement is sought to continue this scheme for the second of the two years in line with the portfolio of two-year Cultural Multi-Annual Grants 2022-2024. Given that the establishment and future of Pathfinder is directly related to CMAG, officials will continue to assess whether the scheme is still applicable during and after

	the rollout of CMAG. Recommendations on whether to continue the scheme beyond 2024 will be brought to members in late 2023.
3.29	**Financial & Resource Implications** There are no new financial commitments relating to Cultural Multi Annual Grants and will be met with existing departmental budgets for 2023-24. An allocation of £79,768.00 will be made in 2023/24 year to extend the Pathfinder Awards and again this will be met from existing departmental budgets.
3.30	**Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment** The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Review of Belfast City Council's Cultural Multi-Annual Grants Programme

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A REVIEW OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL'S CULTURAL MULTI-ANNUAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Prepared by Smith and Kent Consulting

MAY 2023

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Introduction

Belfast City Council's Cultural Multi-annual Grants (CMAG) programme is now in the fourth and final year of its first cycle.

In April 2023 Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent consulting to carry out a review of CMAG.

Due to the challenges of the past four years, not least the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that grant recipients were unable to deliver planned activity and outcomes that would contribute to the council's A City Imagining cultural strategy, the review focuses primarily on the grants process including:

1. What worked well for who, how and why
2. What could be built on or done better for who, how and why

Evidence of impact is also considered where available and reasonable.

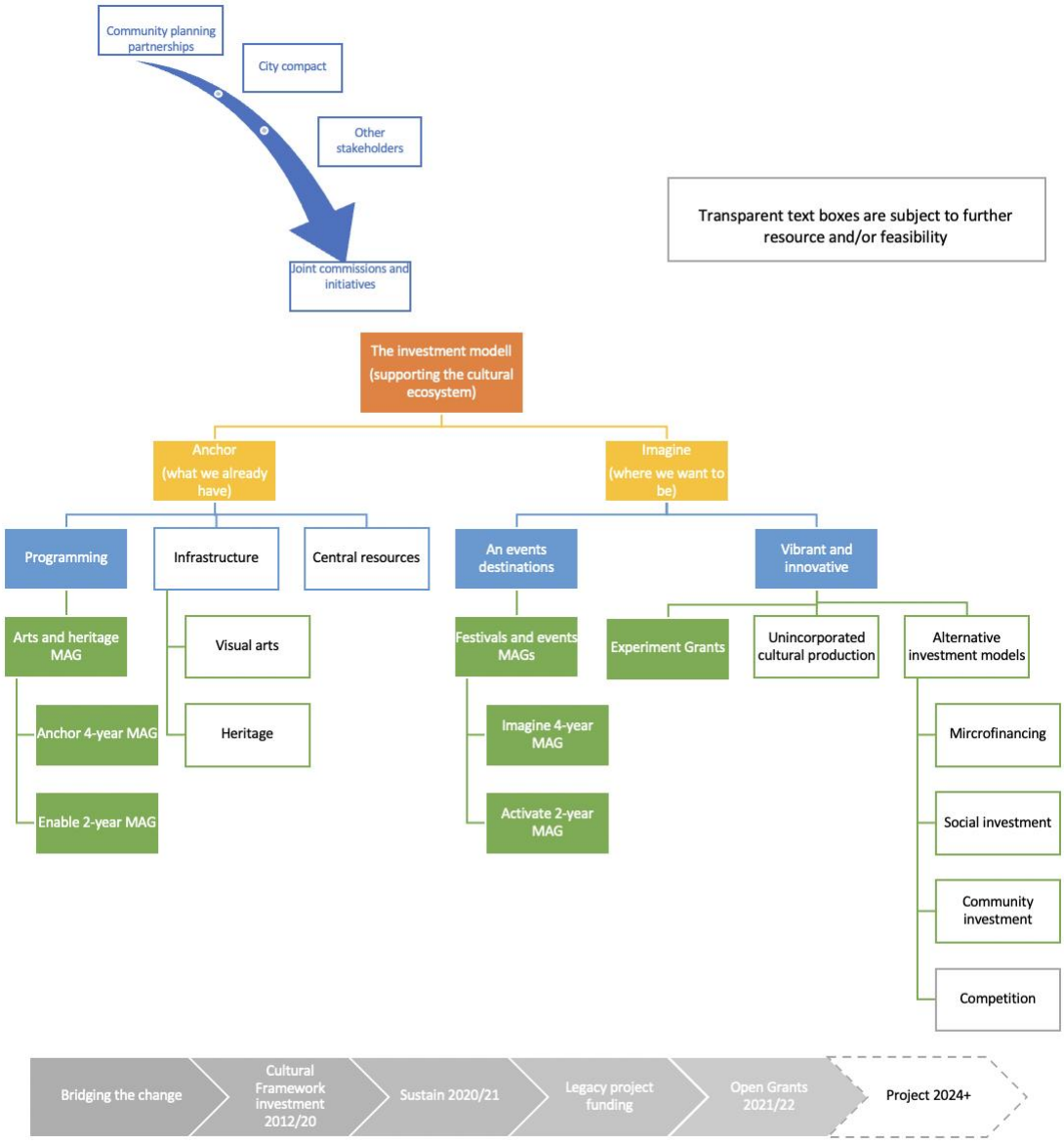
Quotations have been reproduced verbatim.

Background

The Cultural Investment Programme 2020–24

CMAG is one strand of Belfast City Council's Cultural Investment Programme 2020–24. The purpose of the Investment Model is "to deliver cultural transformation for the city."

It suggests a range of investment options – long- and short-term; strategic and project – for different beneficiaries – new; existing; growing; unincorporated – and different purposes, which can be broken down in to two broad strands: anchoring what we already have and imagining where we want to be.



Key interdependent strands included:

- phased transition from the previous Core Multi-annual Funding (CMAF) programme
- revisions to project funding to support the transition and lay a foundation for large, longer-term project grants

- new micro-funding and alternative investment in to support strategic gaps and areas of need (such as visual arts, heritage and unincorporated cultural production)
- monitoring and evaluation
- relationship management
- wraparound developmental support

The Investment Programme recommends that each investment strand is "reviewed annually with a minimum focus on financial reconciliation, taking into account delivery across the period, resulting in a decision to continue, discontinue or amend funding".

A City Imagining 2020–30

The Investment Programme contributes to A City Imagining, the council's cultural strategy. It states that "evaluation of our existing programme has revealed the need to adapt our one size fits all model" and "a new approach to partnership working [must be] applied to cultural development and investment". There are also four published investment priorities.

- Anchor: support the cultural infrastructure for a thriving cultural ecosystem
- Activate: empower civic and sectoral engagement, skills and capacity building in order to support inclusive growth
- Experiment: facilitate innovation, catalyst projects and new ideas
- Open: support outward-facing opportunities, including marketing and international cooperation

A City Imagining also aims to establish Belfast as "a unique events destination [with] a Belfast portfolio of festivals and events. This will consist of up to five signature and 12 growth events each year. It will also include continued investment in smaller festivals." This was based on recommendations from research carried out by Festivals and Events International (FEI). Based on its experience working in other cities and using standard industry classifications, FEI also defined the size and impact of signature and growth festival, including across indicators such as turnover, audience, employment and volunteers and outlined the amount and duration of investment required to support them.

Cultural Multi-annual Grants

Belfast City Council launched its Cultural Multi-annual Grants (CMAG) programme in 2019.

There are two strands of CMAG grants:

1. grants for festivals and events and
2. grants for arts and heritage organisations

There are also two tiers within each grant providing either two- or four-year grants.

The following table summarises the grants that have been made during this cycle. A full list of organisations that received funding is included at appendix 1.

Strand	Tier	Name	Number of grants		Value of grants	
			2019/20–20/21	2021/22–22/23	2019/20–20/21	2021/22–22/23
Festivals and events	4-year funding for festivals and events	Imagine	4		£635,000	
	2-year funding for festivals and events	Activate	12	15	£480,250	£473,425
Arts and heritage	4-year funding for cultural organisations	Anchor	9		£791,783	
	2-year funding for cultural organisations	Enable	29	27	£566,816	£564,562
Total			96		£3,511,836	

Arts and heritage grants

According to the Investment Programme, "Arts and heritage MAGs are designed to help sustain our existing cultural offer, and in recognition of the current operating environment, they are not required to demonstrate growth."

Arts and heritage grants are unrestricted, which means that the council does not ask grantees to specify how they will use the funding, as long as it is used responsibly.

Festivals and events grants

The Investment Programme states that "Festivals and events MAGs are designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become an events destination. Applicants will have to demonstrate how they will grow their audience by the end of the contract period", up to 10,000 or between 5 (for Activate) and 10 (for Imagine) per cent, whichever is greater.

In addition to arts and heritage activity, festivals and events grants are open to "cultural expression or celebration in the widest sense of culture" such as sports, language and food. This was the first time that the Culture Unit's multi-annual grants had been open to non-arts and -heritage organisations, and the budget for CMAG was increased by consolidating a number of budgets previously allocated to events and festivals.

Festivals and events grants are restricted as many of the funded organisations also run other festivals, events and programmes of work. This means that organisations must specify how they will spend their funding. However, it can be spent on core costs (attributable to the funded festival or event), and the council allows the grantees to reprofile as required.

Unsuccessful applicants

There were 49 unsuccessful applications for CMAG including 32 for the arts and heritage strand and 17 for festivals and events.

Transition

Transition was an interim funding programme put in place in 2021 to help support organisations that had previously received CMAF funding but who did not make it in to the new CMAG portfolio because they were ineligible to apply or their application was unsuccessful.

There were 11 Transition recipients who received funding alongside support for organisational development provided by an external consultant. Funding totalled £168,000, with grants ranging from £30,000 to £60,000 based on each organisation's CMAF funding deficit capped at council procurement and grant ceilings.

Administration

Belfast City Council grants have been managed and administered centrally by the Central Grants (CGU) since 2011.

The council's Culture and Arts Unit is the budget holder and is also responsible for strategic direction and programme management of CMAG.

Grantees apply for and manage their grants via an online grants portal. The current online grants portal will come to an end on August 2024. Feedback from this review can be used to inform the specification to tender for a new online grants portal. However, in the interim, minimal changes can be made to the system.

Operational context

CMAG grantees received their letters of offer five days before the first Covid-19 lockdown which, according to one grant recipient, "made the original plans obsolete almost immediately". This seriously restricted their ability to deliver planned activities and outcomes. It also damaged the capacity of organisations, for example, through earned income lost, disrupted relationships with audiences, volunteers and other supporters and furloughed staff.

Belfast City Council culture, arts, heritage, events and tourism development functions were also undergoing a significant structural review. In 2019, CMAG was designed and assessed by the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Unit in partnership with the City Events Unit. In 2021/22, two new units were formed, the Culture and Arts Unit and the Tourism and Events Unit, with management of CMAG retained by the former. Staff from the previous units were redeployed and new staff recruited. No staff members who were involved in the design, initiation or assessment of CMAG are in the Culture and Arts team.

What we did

Feedback from grantees

Organisations that had successfully applied for CMAG were invited to complete an online survey that asked them to reflect on their experience of the application process and administration and management of the grant as well as changes to their organisation over the past four years.

This survey was completed by 34 grantees.

The findings of the survey were then analysed and shared at four workshops. These were attended by 23 participants from 20 grantee organisations. A further 11 grantees took part in one-to-one, semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the workshops and interviews was to dive deeper in to the survey findings and consider what could be done differently in the next round of CMAG. A list of all grantees who participated in workshops or interviews is included at appendix 2.

Feedback from unsuccessful applicants

Organisations that had been unsuccessful applying for CMAG were also asked to complete an online survey. Eight organisations completed the survey, including two Transition recipients, and semi-structured interviews were also carried out with three unsuccessful applicants that were also Transition recipients.

Feedback from Belfast City Council

Smith and Kent carried out semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key Belfast City Council staff including:

- CGU
- the Culture and Arts Unit
- staff from the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Unit who had been involved in the design or assessment of CMAG
- senior management

Desk research

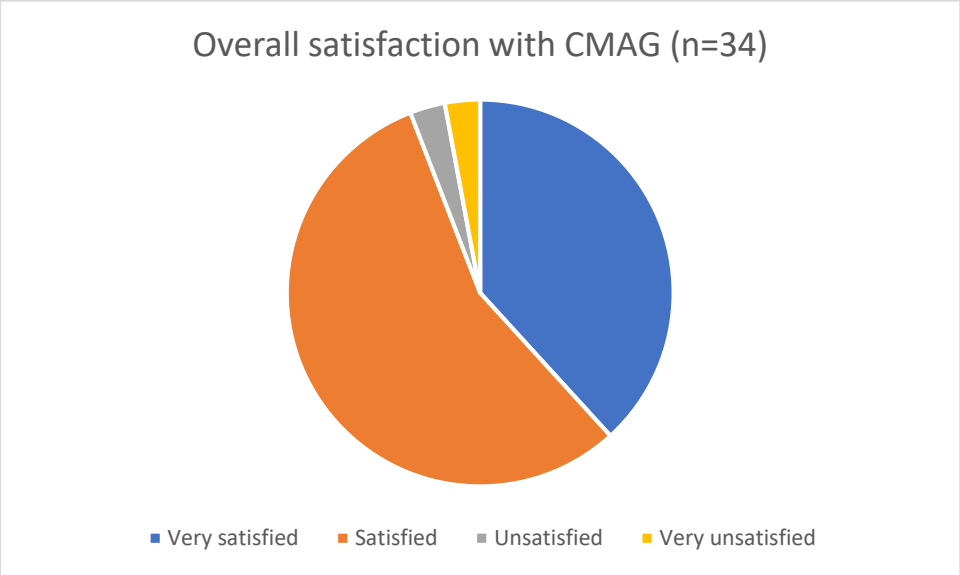
Primary research was supplemented by desk research including but not limited to:

- CMAG guidance notes and application form
- The Cultural Investment Model
- Outline proposal for Transition funding
- CMAG monitoring data
- An internal review of CMAG in 2021
- Draft CMAG evaluation framework
- Draft recommendations for CMAG wraparound support
- A City Imagining cultural strategy

What we learned

Overall satisfaction

According to the survey, 94 per cent of grant recipients were satisfied with CMAG overall, including 38 per cent who were very satisfied. 3 per cent (one organisation) was unsatisfied, and 3 per cent (one organisation) was very unsatisfied.



Levels of satisfaction were also evident in workshops and interviews, with many participants keen to share their appreciation of the council's support.

Overall, festivals and events grant recipients appeared to be more satisfied with CMAG. This may be because arts and heritage grantees were more likely to disagree with the eligibility criteria, particularly when it limited the amount of funding they could apply for, and it is likely there also be a correlation between the amount of funding awarded and satisfaction. (The average Imagine grant was £158,750; the average Anchor was £87,976; Activate, £35,321; and Enable, £20,203.) Unsurprisingly, unsuccessful applicants were also less satisfied.

Within Belfast City Council there was also general satisfaction with CMAG. However, there is also awareness that it is difficult, even unfair to judge its performance at this intersection given the unprecedented environment in which it has operated.

The following sections provide a more detailed overview of the findings across key stages of the grants process.

Main benefits of CMAG

Feedback from grant recipients

> *"Multi-year funding makes a huge difference to our organisation's ability to plan, develop and react to the unforeseen"*

> *"Moving from project funding to CMAG is not a big increase in grant value but was in terms of application time and reporting."*

"Multi annual core funding is always very valuable and we appreciate what we got and the Council's ongoing commitment to multi year funding. It shows trust in the sector and again other funders' could learn."

Grantees identified the main benefits of CMAG as:

- Unrestricted funds. Many organisations use CMAG as a contribution towards core operating costs, such as staff and rent, that are essential to programme delivery but are difficult to secure through other funding. Even festivals and events recipients tended to refer to the funding as unrestricted as the council permits allocation to core costs. Grantees generally felt that this conveyed Belfast City Council's trust in the sector. This was particularly valued during Covid when the council supported CMAG grantees to rapidly adapt their activities and budgets to better serve their organisation and beneficiaries during a time of crisis.
- Security. Consultees noted that there is no comparable multi-annual fund in NI and even across the UK, only a small number of trusts and foundations provide multi-year grants. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), who is the main funder of most arts organisations, for example, provide annual core funding. CMAG is therefore "the one constant among many different pots" Indeed, some organisations felt that a slight gain in actual funding through CMAG two-year funding was not a substitute for slightly less three- or four-year funding they had benefited from under CMAF (for example, one organisation described a couple of thousand pounds uplift over two years as "bittersweet").
- Planning. Multi-annual funding increases the relative value of the award by allowing organisations to plan ahead – providing security for staff or enabling them to book artists and events well in advance, for example.
- Reduced administration. Some organisations described how it freed up time and "head space" that would otherwise be spent "scrabbling around" for alternative funding. One organisation reported previously applying for three small grants twice a year; now, two-year CMAG has replaced 12 grants with one.
- Civic endorsement. CMAG was regarded as "a badge of some status", giving "credibility" and "kudos" – "Our city believes in us, our city backs what we do".
- Leverage. Other grantees found more time and security allowed them to be "flight of foot to pursue opportunities as the arise" (in that case, including a friends' scheme, corporate sponsorship and US partners). Several grantees found it helped them successfully apply for other funding or actively used CMAG to encourage other funders to "step up". Imagine grantees in particular appear to have leveraged their status as the city's "signature" events.

CMAG may have been particularly beneficial where their strategic direction aligned with A City Imagining and the ambitions of the fund.

"CMAG funds allowed us to put our strategic ambitions in to action as it allowed us to look over a 4-year period."

"CMAG has been the icing on a flat cake – we had direction and knew what we wanted – this helped us rise and take it there."

Imagine festivals and events in particular reported significant development (for example, at least three out of four Imagine festivals expanded their festival duration and reach) despite the extenuating operating environment.

> *"The strategic development of our festival – without the CMAG investment this would not have happened. It allowed us to grow audiences, develop/employ artists, co-create with citizens, produce innovative audience experiences, experiment during Covid 19, create new partnerships and leverage additional funding."*

Unless funding was used to employ a staff member, other grantees found it more difficult to directly attribute impact to CMAG (as CMAG was "a drop in the ocean" towards their overall programme or funding pot). They were able, however, to identify a myriad of outcomes arising from their overall activity that contribute to the A City Imagining outcomes, in particular A City Belonging.[1]

Feedback from Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council's investment increase from £1.5m per year peak CMAF to £2.5m per year under CMAG. However, CMAG was intended as a "different way" of funding, "greater than the sum of the grants".

Consultees from Belfast City Council agreed with the benefits identified by grant recipients. Furthermore, they identified:

- A number of organisations received a substantial increase in funding. This included venues and community arts as well as festivals and events.
- A number of organisations that were previously in receipt of short-term project funding, including relatively new organisations, successfully secured CMAG, benefitting from additional security, credibility, leverage and so on.
- "The sector is not static – outcomes and organisations are not static", and the diversity of organisations funded (in terms of size, nature, length of time established) supported the culture ecosystem in a change from entrenched CMAF and ACNI annual funding portfolios. This was most evident in the festivals and events awards which included, for example, sports and science, and which were more risk aware, assessing "potential as well as quality".
- Funded organisations became more confident, "It changed how they saw themselves and they flourished".
- The council trusted its CMAG clients to adapt their programmes to need during the pandemic.
- The council has a "much more coherent narrative" in terms of how and why it invests in cultural organisations.

Council consultees also agreed that Imagine festivals in particular had grown, innovated and increased their reach and reputation.

> *"It aimed to draw out festivals and events to build them up and grow. There were some surprises in the initial tranche and watching afterwards, the investment seems to have been a catalyst for festivals."*

[1] A City Belonging is about an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life; A City Challenging is about strengthening residents' connection to the place they call home; A City Creating is about sector capacity and collaboration; and A City Exploring is about Belfast's connection to the rest of the world.

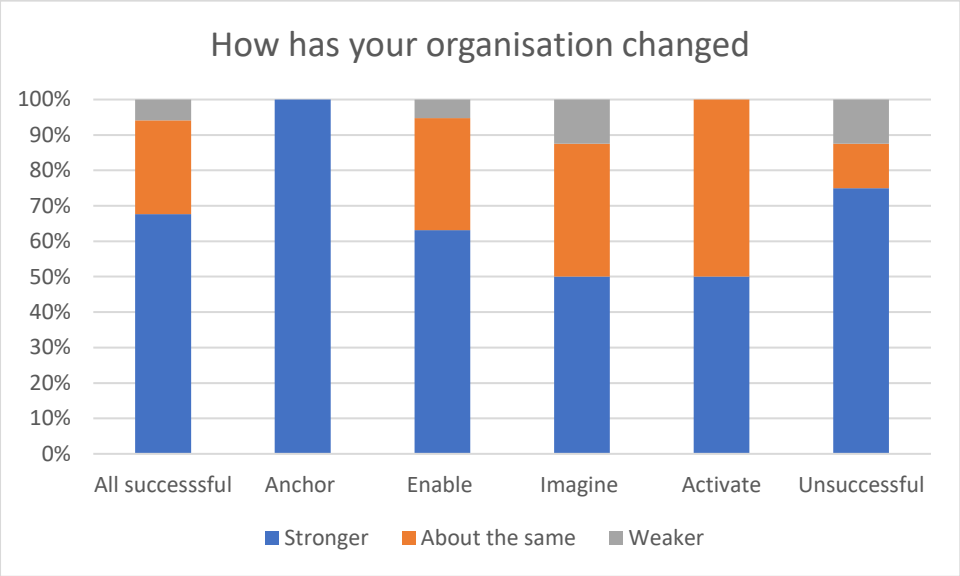
Changes in organisations

In the survey, successful and unsuccessful applicants were asked to consider how their organisation had changed over the past four years.

For most successful applicants, CMAG is a small percentage of their turnover, and while changes cannot be directly attributed to CMAG, it is a contribution to the whole, sometimes exceeding its actual value due to leverage, security and credibility.

> *"It's not all to do with CMAG, but it has got something to do with CMAG."*

68 per cent of grantees felt that their organisation had got stronger; 26 per cent felt it was about the same; and 6 per cent (two organisations) felt it was weaker.



Notably, 6 (75 per cent) unsuccessful applicants consider their organisation stronger now; 1 (13 per cent) considers their organisation weaker; and one (13 per cent), about the same. Responses from unsuccessful applicants include organisations that went on to secure 2 Transition grants and 8 other Belfast City Council small grants (Pathfinder, Arts and Heritage Project Fund, Community Festivals Fund) including 1 organisation that got 3 grants and 2 that got 2.

The Covid-19 pandemic was referred to by six organisations. CMAG was referred to only once by a successful applicant that felt a "funding-cut pulled the rug out from under our feet". Another respondent that felt their organisation is weaker attributed this to escalating operational costs.

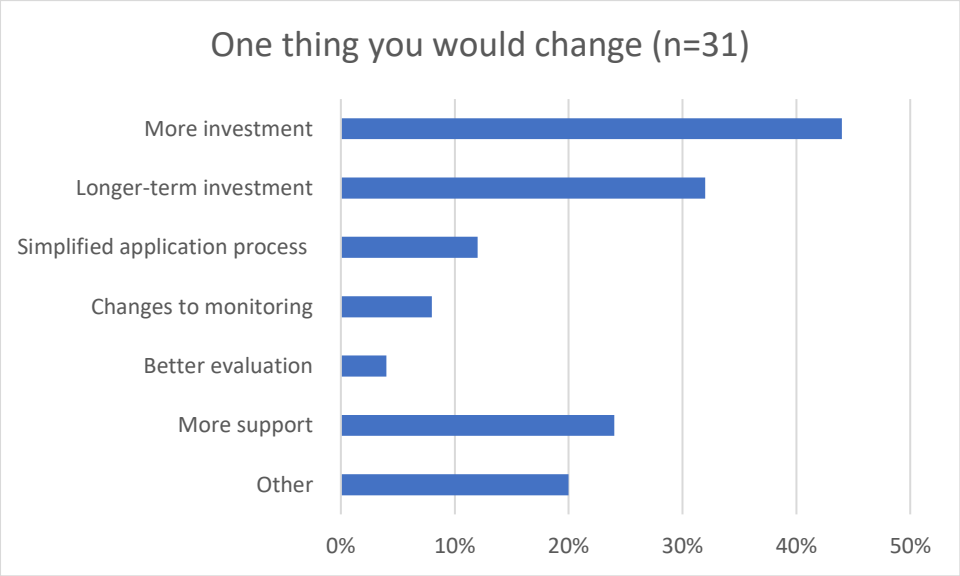
Others attributed their position to changes in funding or turnover (24 per cent) or staff and governance (18 per cent). Four organisations (12 per cent) referred to their programme and its impact. One specifically mentioned Belfast City Council's Blueprint programme.

> *"Because we survived the pandemic, didn't lose staff, furloughed no-one and are making beautiful award winning work and never stopped doing that."*

Key areas for development

Feedback from grant recipients

In the survey, successful applicants were also asked “What one thing would you change about CMAG?”



In general, grantees identified areas to build on, rather than issues to be resolved.

44 per cent wanted more investment, followed by 32 per cent would like longer-term funding.

24 per cent who would like more non-financial support including, for example, sector networking or guidance from their relationship manager.

> *“it would have been great to feel more connected to the other funded/Anchor organisations. There's a real opportunity there for a network/sharing of information that BCC well-placed to convene.”*

“Other” survey responses included:

- “representation of visual arts in the Anchor grant”
- “When outlining the potential 2-year programme, we are dreaming big, but as additional projects are mentioned in the application, we cannot apply for small BCC grants for these projects as they are not considered "new".
- “There should be a recognition going forward of the hard work of organisations in the face of these challenges and much was achieved and of the impact that too much change at such a precarious time would have on the sector.”

Feedback from Belfast City Council

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic five days after awards were announced “entirely removed the ambition” of CMAG. The council is conscious of judging a new scheme on atypical years and intends to prepare for a fuller evaluation over the next four years.

Consolidation of budgets through the Investment Programme aimed to contribute to a reduction in the number of grants administrated by Belfast City Council overall. The

Investment Programme projected that an average of 47.5 organisations would be funded the CMAG each year based on an annual budget of £2.3m. The actual average number of organisations funded was 54.5 per year (with a budget of £2.5m). By comparison, CMAF funded 56 organisations (with a budget of £1.5m) at its peak. There is some consideration within the council that

> *"Too many small grants have diluted the impact. Fewer, larger grants to key organisations will have more impact."*

Certainly, while CMAG grantees may have benefited from reduced administration, the Culture and Arts team are concerned that CMAG (alongside a range of other funding) is time consuming and detracts from developmental work.

Developmental work was, however, originally conceived to be integral to, not separate from CMAG.

> *"the money in itself is not what creates cultural transformation"*

> *"Strategic development needs a relationship outside of the funding transaction."*

Plans to support CMAG grantees with wraparound developmental support were not realised due to "having been in crisis mode for two years" and internal staff and structural changes.[2]

Another key strand of the Investment Programme was a "root and branch review" of project funding. This was with a view that by 2024, coinciding with a second cycle of CMAG, the council would launch a new, longer-term project grant of scale by

> *"apply[ing] its learning as a best-practice multi-annual strategic funder to a radical redesign of cultural project grants […] Having project grants of a similar value and longevity to strategic grants may also redress perceptions that the multi-annual strategic grants are the preferred grant for all cultural organisations, helping to balance supply with demand from within the ecosystem."*

Again, this was delayed due to internal and external pressures and has been identified as a gap.

Guidance notes

The guidance notes provided an overview of the grant scheme and its strategic fit with A City Imagining, the Cultural Investment Model and the Belfast Agenda as well as detailed guidance on how to apply. For example, it describes the section in the application form where applicants have to demonstrate the difference their programme makes as

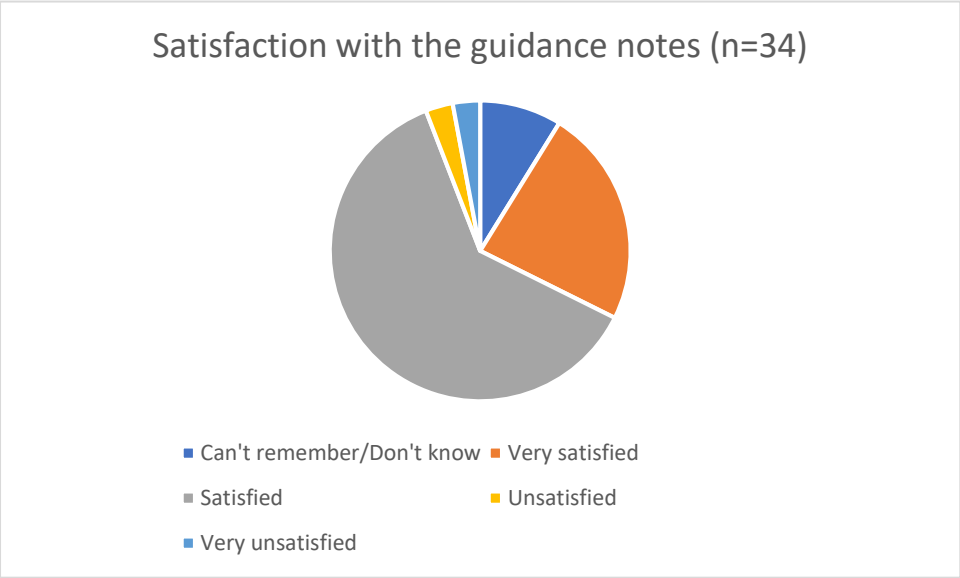
> *"about the impact your organisation will have on the city, its people, the cultural sector and our place on the world. It is based on the four themes in Belfast's cultural strategy, A City Imagining."*

A table then summarises how the council anticipates the grants will contribute to each theme.

[2] Some elements, such as relationship managers, the sector were generally aware of and would generally welcome. Other elements, such as the requirement for Anchor and Imagine grantees to "give back" and "help" Enable and Activate clients are not widely known and may require further socialisation.

Feedback from successful applicants

Among applicants who successfully applied to CMAG, 86 per cent were satisfied with the guidance notes including 1 in 4 (24 per cent) who were very satisfied.



Feedback included that the guidance notes were clear, helpful and comprehensive or concise:

> *"They helped with interpreting the questions"*
>
> *"there was clarity of purpose and structure"*
>
> *"As I remember they were well written and helpful."*

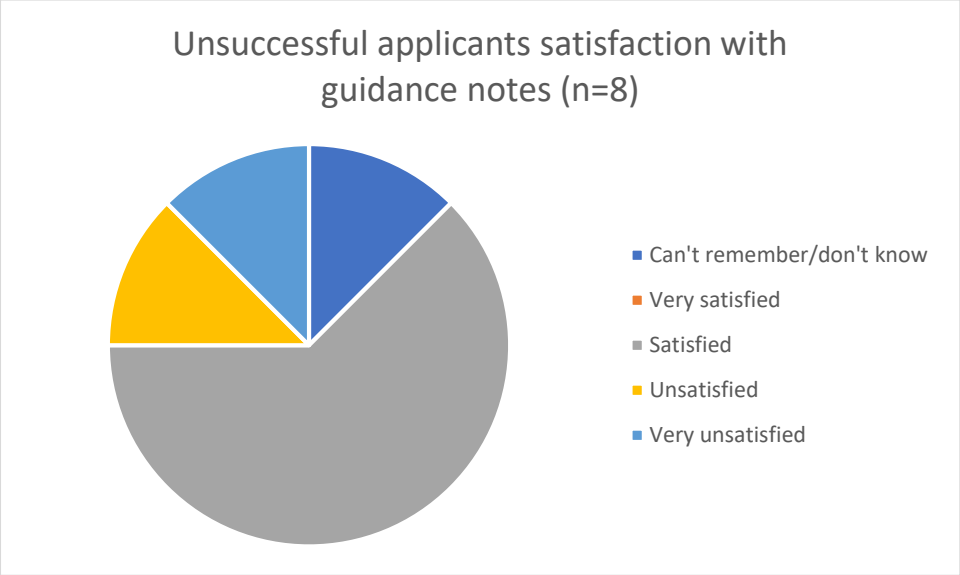
One person was unsatisfied, and one person was very unsatisfied.[3] They commented:

> *"The notes did not completely reflect he navigation of the form itself"*
>
> *"The structure of the funding programmes did not make sense in relation to actually delivering the strategy purpose and ambition. The guidelines had elements of unreality, confusion and contradiction including on the principle of additionality: overall the rhetoric was fanciful compared to the actual process in place / results of the process and much of the stated guidance not proportional to the small amount of grant available. There was no consultation on this momentous change and the detail of the process and so the guidelines. There was not adequate engagement by BCC with the sector on the process and its implementation and implications, therefore the guidelines were inevitably distanced from reality and inadequate. There was not adequate engagement by Culture Unit with applicants (our experience) in explaining the process with certainty / clarity. Again: the 'engagement' was confused and contradictory – and ultimately different interpretations were applied to different organisations, resulting in disproportionate benefit and disadvantage."*

[3] Throughout the surveys, there were a small number of responses that "can't remember" or "don't know". For some organisations, it has been three and a half years since they engaged with CMAG. There may also have been staff changes which mean the survey respondent was not involved in the application.

Feedback from unsuccessful applicants

Among applicants who applied but were unsuccessful, just under two thirds (63 per cent) were satisfied with the guidance notes. 26 per cent (two organisations) were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.



Feedback from those who were satisfied included:

> *"I think it covered everything that was needed to complete the application."*
>
> *"The ambition of the remake of the funding path was clear but the reality of the decisions made did not match what the guidance notes laid out."*

Feedback from those who were unsatisfied included:

> *"The bottom line is this, guidelines, no matter how helpful you may think they are in regard to the arts are inadequate, are a straight jacket and a poor way of moving forward. There is the preoccupation with numbers […] there has to be another way!"*
>
> *"Information from City Council relating to funding is deeply inaccessible, deeply technical, and not user friendly for anyone. It is reflective of the overall application process, which calls for a huge volume of information for very small amounts of money in a technical, uncreative way that in no way supports innovation or imaginative cultural activity."*

Strategic alignment

During workshops and interviews, feedback on the guidance notes was positive, similar to the survey findings, and suggestions for improvement were therefore limited. (Discussion about definitions of audience is included in the eligibility criteria section below). However, there was evidence that grantees were not clear on the purpose of CMAG. At one workshop, participants suggested "the council needs to share its ambition. What does it want to achieve through CMAG?"; at another, participants wanted clarity on the aims of the A City Imagining strategy; and several participants referred to the themes as "vague" or "airy fairy". While to an extent such confusion could be the result of the passage of time, during

an internal council feedback session, it was also suggested that strategic alignment could be strengthened in the guidance notes.

There is an ongoing role for relationship managers in promoting key messages around the purpose of CMAG and its two distinct strands. The festivals and events strand, for example, was criticised (particularly by arts and heritage applicants) for prioritising tourism over culture despite A City Imagining explicitly aiming to create "a unique events destination [with] up to five signature [Imagine] and 12 growth [Activate] events each year". Arts and heritage was also criticised for not helping organisations to grow, which was not the aim of that strand.

Fund names

The four funds, Imagine, Activate, Anchor and Enable, took their names from A City Imagining, and they were intended to reflect the purpose of each strand, streamlined with FEI's classification of Signature and Growth. However, the names have proved, at best, confusing and difficult to remember, and Enable grantees in particular found it "icky", "patronising" or even "disabling".

> *"Imagine and Activate are dynamic and progressive. Anchor and Enable 'stay there and we'll give you a hand' – there's no sense of forward momentum."*

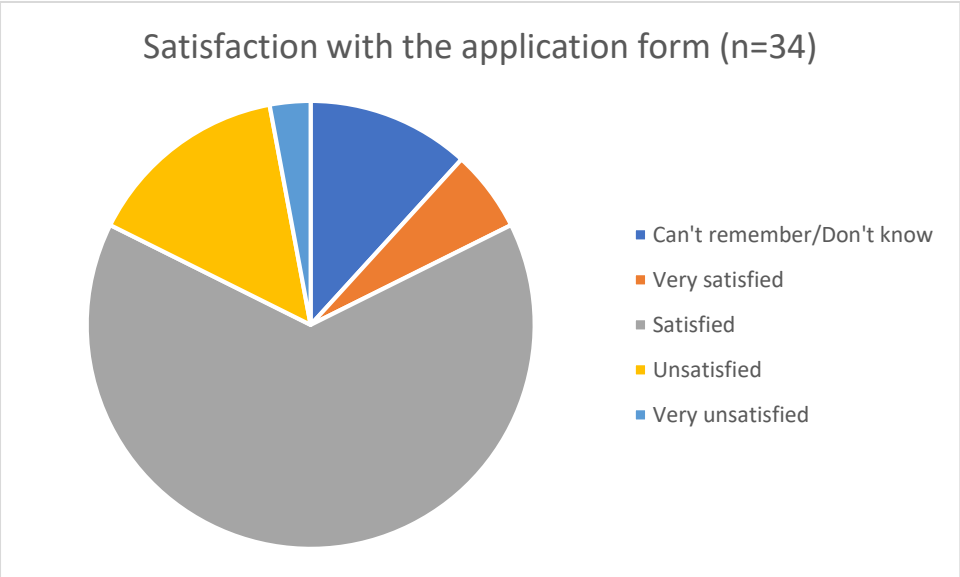
Imagine and Anchor grantees may be more likely to use the name, although some Imagine grantees use the FEI classification of Signature.

Application form

Applications to CMAG are made using an online grants portal. The same portal is used to apply for and manage all other council grants (and, indeed, is used by six other local authorities).

Feedback from successful applicants

Among successful applicants, 72 per cent of survey respondents were satisfied with the application form itself including 6 per cent who were very satisfied.



Respondents reflected that it was clear; straightforward; not repetitive; asked for sufficient detail; and that the online grants portal itself worked well and was user friendly.

> *"BCC's online system is user friendly and easy to navigate. This made the whole process very straight forward for filling out the form."*

> *"Wasn't over complicated and word count allowed a decent amount of detail to be included"*

> *"While it was a fairly detailed application, the questions and information that needed to be provided seemed clear and the online form allowed for the information to be submitted as needed."*

One respondent also commented on strategic fit as "it reflected back to what the city needed".

A number of respondents referred to it as being familiar to other or previous council application forms, which might benefit repeat applicants in particular.

> *"There was a lot of information required but you would expect it for this level of grants and it was familiar to what the Council usually asks for and the previous multi year funding."*

18 per cent (6 respondents) were unsatisfied, including one respondent who was very unsatisfied. The main criticism was that the level of detail required was not proportionate to the value or length of the grant requested. Indeed, in the survey, those in receipt of Enable funding were most likely to be unsatisfied with the application form (21 per cent compared to 14 per cent across the other strands), and this was echoed by Activate grantees in other engagements, indicating that those who were awarded more money and over a longer period of time were more likely to be satisfied.

> *"I understand that they had to work for a big range of funding and you would want the detail for the very large grants but maybe for the two year funding it could be scaled so there are fewer questions or attachments"*

> *"Many arts organisations now have experience of at least one non-NI funder and that highlight the lack of trust shown by the council the 'marking our homework'."*

In other consultation, the application was described (twice) as "a big monster". Some found the guidance on strategic, business and marketing plans too prescriptive, redoing them "to meet the criteria" when they "already have our own plans that work".

It was also noted that smaller organisations may be least resourced to deal with complicated applications and therefore also the ones who might benefit most from longer-term funding.

For some the "stressy" experience of the application was actually tied to the value of having unrestricted, multi-year funding and the "fear of getting it wrong".

It is also likely that those applying in 2019 had a different experience from those applying in 2021 due to the unprecedented operating environment.

> *"I remember that the level of detail required was very high. To project into the future at that time, especially when Covid and the cost of living crisis were impacting upon*

us, as well as uncertainty about the sustainability of other core funding, it was challenging."

This issue was reiterated at workshops and interviews, and it may be an ongoing issue as organisations continue to try to predict how audiences, box offices and bottom lines will perform against rising costs and reducing public sector budgets.

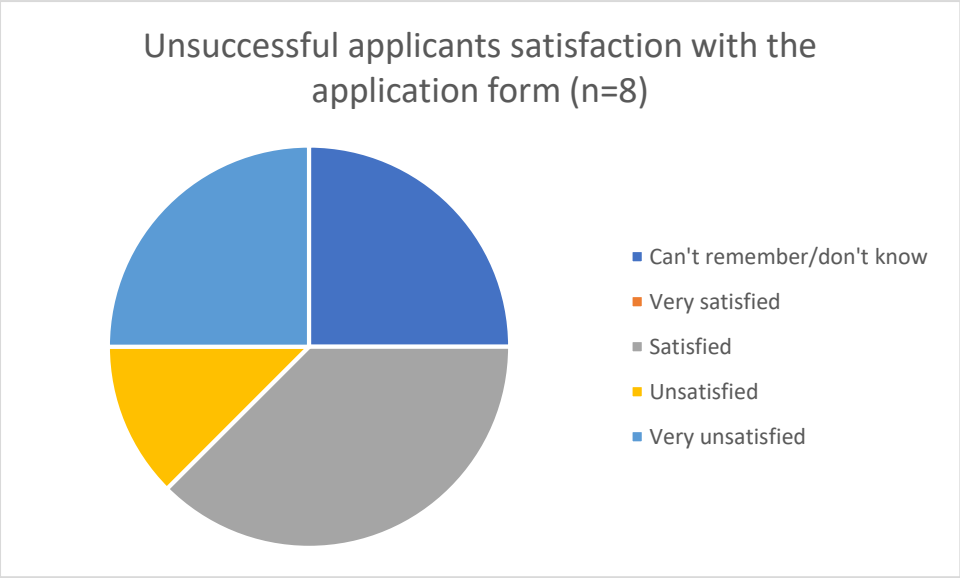
Other unsatisfied survey responses included:

"The questions were overloaded"

"It felt as though we were being shoe-horned into a very specific funding stream that limited our potential for much needed funding"

Feedback from unsuccessful applicants

38 per cent of unsuccessful applicants surveyed were satisfied with the application form and 38 per cent were unsatisfied, including 25 per cent who were very unsatisfied.



Feedback included:

"A LOT of bureaucracy and repetition of answers"

"To much effort is spent in form filling, extremely bureaucratic, frustrating and time consuming.....and for so little return from Council even if a group is successful. If a group engages in a range of complex work then such forms are torture to dill in. Deciding on the worth of an organisation based on a written application especially in terms of this nebulous thing called arts is inadequate."

Feedback from Belfast City Council

The application form was generally considered appropriate and robust with some consideration that it could be streamlined, particularly for applicants seeking smaller grants.

It was also suggested that the application process should be made more accessible, for example, "interviews for those with ADHD", similar to the council's Creative Bursaries and 2024 open call. It is not known whether Section 75 monitoring returns have identified any

differential impact for particular groups at this stage, and proposed changes would benefit from further research, consultation and equality screening.

Only very minor changes, however, can be made to the application form due to the contract with the online grants portal. Changes to the application form will also have ramifications for the online assessment form at the back end.

Eligibility criteria

According to the National Audit Office, funding schemes require balance between, on one hand, encouraging uptake and minimising administrative burdens and, on the other, ensuring that the support is used as intended.

CMAG eligibility criteria was based on:

- input (such as turnover) as an indicator of need for support
- output (such as audience numbers) as an indicator of likely scale of impact
- viability (such as evidence of business planning)

These criteria were agreed with Belfast City Council based on research including:

- analysis of the council's CMAF and other funding inputs and outputs
- benchmarking against other cities and funding
- FEI indicators of "signature" and "growth" festivals and events

The following table summarises the eligibility criteria when the second round of two-year funding opened in 2021. Revisions were made from when the scheme originally opened in 2019 based on the findings of the internal review. These included:

- Activate requirement for a fulltime-equivalent staff member to allow for a staff member "within a partner organisation where there is a clear legal relationship and where a commitment to delivering the festival or event can be demonstrated and measured".
- Enable minimum turnover reduced from £100,000 to £60,000
- Enable minimum volunteer requirements reduced from 12 to 6
- Enable maximum grants available increase from £30,000 to £50,000

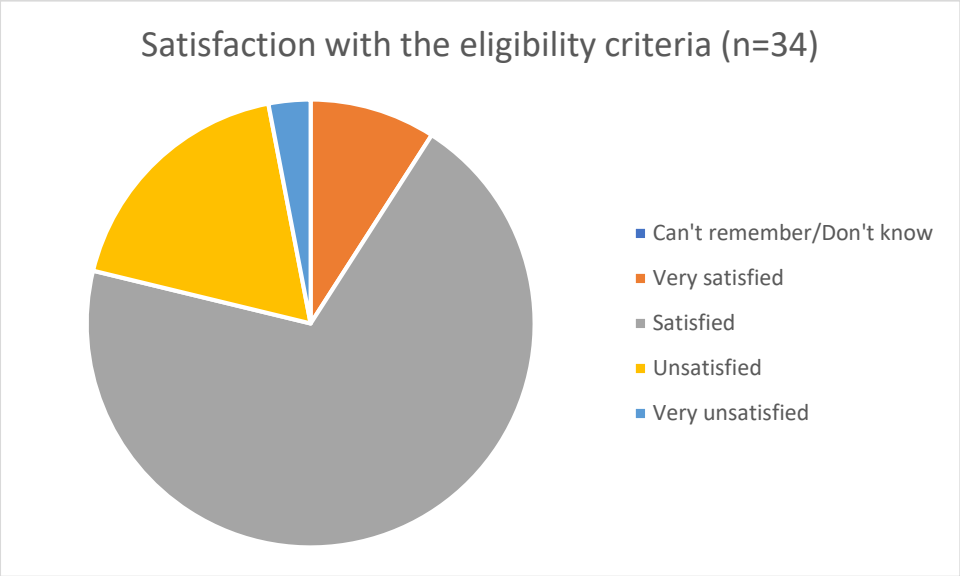
Scheme criteria	Imagine	Activate	Anchor	Enable
Organisation	**Cultural**		**Primary purpose arts or heritage**	
Activity type	Festival or event of scale described below	Festival or event of scale described below	Year-round programme not with festival or event of F&E MAG scale	Year-round programme not with festival or event of F&E MAG scale
Turnover	£300k average projected over four years (to 2023/24)	£50k average projected over contract period	£300k actual over last two financial years per annual accounts	£60k average over last two financial years per annual accounts
FTE staff (Section A)	Has or will employ in the first year, 3+	Has or will employ in the first year, 1+. This can be within a partner organisation where there is a clear legal relationship and where a commitment to delivering the festival or event can be demonstrated and measured.	3+	1+
Min. grant	£50,000	£10,000	£30,000	£10,000
Max. grant	£250,000 or 25% of average projected turnover	£50,000 or 25% of average projected turnover	£150,000 or 10% of historic turnover	£50,000 or 25% of historic turnover
Partners	Local, regional, international, media and cross-sectoral	Local and regional	Local, regional, international, media and cross-sectoral	Local and regional
Audience[4]	65,000 by 2023 or projects growth at 10% per year, whichever is greater	10,000 by 2024 or 5% increase per year, whichever is greater	50,000 per year	NA
Audience share	25% from outside Belfast + an out-of-state target	20% from outside Belfast + an out-of-state target	NA	NA
Volunteers[5]	40 per year from 2020/21	12+ per year from 2020/21	20+ per year	6+ per year
Long-term strategy	√	X	√	X
1-yr business plan	√	√	√	√
Marketing plan	Including 2023	1 year	1 year	1 year
DDA compliance	√	√	√	√

[4] Includes participants, known attendees, estimated attendees and digital attendees

[5] Includes board members

Feedback from successful applicants

According to the survey, 79 per cent of grantees were satisfied with the eligibility criteria including 9 per cent (3 respondents) who were very satisfied.



Respondents felt that these were "normal", fair, transparent, reasonable and realistic. One appreciated that it gave them a "push" to finalise plans. Another reflected:

> *"These limits allowed for organisations to demonstrate that they had the capacity to be able to deliver the scale of activity that would be required".*

There was also recognition that the eligibility criteria were appropriate in signifying that CMAG was not intended as a seed or start-up fund and to indicate that an organisation had the capacity to deliver.

21 per cent were unsatisfied, including one person who was very unsatisfied. This included respondents who felt that the council was prioritising inputs and outputs over outcomes.

> *"The primary determinant of where an organisation (delivering all year round) was placed in the funding categories was the amount of recent annual income, not the value of what had been delivered, the importance of delivery methodology, proven value for money. This is the worst aspect of unfitness for purpose of the CMAG."*

> *"There's a discussion to be had about large numbers versus impact and influence."*

> *"a narrower view that the number of engagements equals impact made breadth of activity (no matter the quality of the interaction) the goal. It glossed over that real impact and legacy can often be found in deeper engagements with slightly fewer people can often lead to greater change in the long term in how someone views the arts or their city."*

During workshops with arts and heritage grantees, eligibility criteria were the most discussed topic and probably the second most vexatious after level of funding. Again, the main concern was that it prioritises outputs over impact. Indeed, there was perception that the council does not assess impact in any other way (under the assessment criteria, up to 33

per cent of marks for festivals and events applicants and 38 per cent of marks for arts and heritage applicants are awarded for quality of impact).

Festivals and events grantees were generally more satisfied with the eligibility criteria. However, there were concerns that continued audience growth was not only not desirable but potentially detrimental to audience experience and, in practice, impossible within a limited market.

Some Activate grantees are currently considering whether the growth targets make the festivals and events strand the right fit for their ambitions and are considering applying instead to Enable. Some Enable organisations also reflected on the dangers of chasing "magic numbers" to secure funding, rather than staying true to their mission and vision.

There was also consideration that the eligibility favoured festivals and events over arts and heritage, even amounting to an "apartheid" that prioritised one-off over sustained provision and deeper impact despite greatest overall investment in arts and heritage (£1,923,161 compared to £1,588,675 in festivals and events).

Audience criterion

There is no audience minimum eligibility criterion for Enable applications, and the minimum for Anchor applications is 50,000. Much of arts and heritage applicants' discussion of audience targets related to festivals and events criteria, perhaps stemming from the perception that festivals and events had an unfair advantage of being able to request funding based on projection, rather than historical performance. It should, however, be noted, that festivals and events were also required to increase their audience and subject to (in non-Covid times) additional monitoring, restricted funding and financial penalties for underperformance.

Grantees also were unclear as to what counts as an "audience" and wanted this carefully prescribed. Such definitions (including ticketed, non-ticketed, participants and digital audiences) are, in fact, already included in the guidance notes. Those participants who were reminded of this appreciated that these align with ACNI definitions, which means the same figures can be reported to both funders and were cautious that further definitions could mean more counting.

Fairness and transparency was part of the motivation for defining audiences. There was suspicion that some organisations inflated their figures so that they are "a great work of fiction" and several "notorious" (anonymised) examples were provided, including of organisations counting social media impressions.[6] (A more charitable explanation may be that "The arts sector is a wee bit panicked because they think there is a right and a wrong answer – so they put in crazy numbers that they can't get and then they are too scared to call and sort it out.") If used to obtain funding inappropriately, this is, of course, fraud, and can be dealt with in line with the council's procedure. Festivals and events underperforming in usual times could be subject to financial penalty, while arts and heritage organisations would be dealt with on a "case by case basis".

Some participants were also concerned that some audiences should be weighted differently, but this tended to differ depending on the nature of grantees' audiences. For example, some argued that festivals and events audiences tended to only have short-term engagement.

[6] The guidance notes explicitly state impressions are not audience.

Others contended that ticketed audiences were deliberate: “at least you know they were in the building for that event”.

> *“you cannot compare theatre audiences with street art or any non ticketed event – its just not fair to do so”*

> *“Street events can't be compared with theatre seats in terms of quality but the impact of street events on accessibility have a huge impact on people who don't have access to theatres. Similar issues occur when establishing the value of workshop programmes in terms of numbers”*

There were suggestions that the audience eligibility criteria could be enhanced, for example, with checkboxes to evidence the quality or nature e of engagement, which would make it difficult to assess whether an applicant passes or fails the eligibility criteria. Consideration of nature and extent of impact is (as outlined above) also substantially considered in the assessment criteria.

Other criteria

Other grantees who were otherwise satisfied point to the changed operating environment, which might mean that thresholds have decreased, particularly in relation to audience, turnover and staff.

> *“It has to be recognised that the sector is in a much more difficult place than it was when the original applications went in – e.g., changes in audience behaviour/failure of the NI Executive/cost of living crisis.”*

It was noted that engagement, particularly with new beneficiaries, is more difficult post-Covid. However, other groups found they grew their audience online and internationally during the pandemic, and one consultee felt strongly “Covid is over” and “it shouldn’t be used as an excuse” to amend criteria.

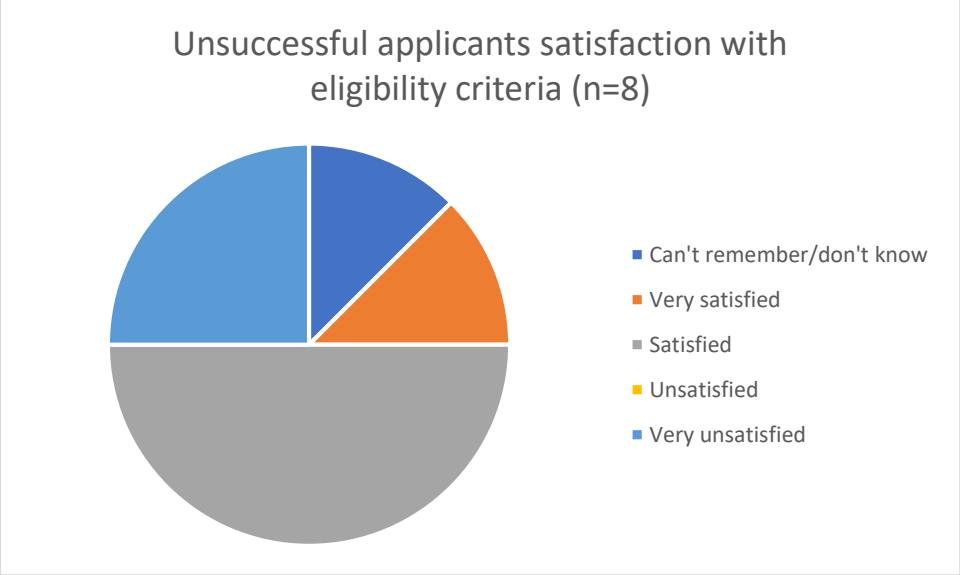
Grantees also questioned why volunteers were included in the eligibility criteria,[7] noting that the sector has campaigned against pressure to replace paid staff with volunteers.

While most understood the need to have the existence of plans and strategies as part of the eligibility criteria, there was some confusion among a small number of grantees about what time periods these should cover, concerns about the time it takes to develop these and the difficulty of planning in uncertain time.

Feedback from unsuccessful applicants

Nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of unsuccessful applicants were satisfied with the eligibility criteria. A quarter (25 per cent) were very unsatisfied (none were unsatisfied).

[7] It was based on benchmarks provided by FEI.



Feedback from satisfied organisations considered it to be fair. Other comments included:

> *"Considering the effort, time and demands they put on an arts group council give a pittance and expect the world. Too much reliance on numbers...mass is thinking with your ass!"*

> *"For such a tiny amount of money, the whole process show a deep distrust of the cultural sector and indicates Council's desire to have a high level of control over the creative process. Projects should and must be allowed to develop creatively rather than specify exact outputs and outcomes before anything has been delivered."*

> *"It was ok, but wouldn't actually help those the newly made funding system was supposed to support. Like new organisations that will grow Belfast's cultural offering."*

Feedback from Belfast City Council

There was recognition within Belfast City Council that there is a need for eligibility criteria "as a basic assurance they can manage the grant", and generally the criteria were considered appropriate. There was also recognition that the eligibility criteria are not popular among some of the sector. Discussion on alternative options considered reducing or removing some criteria, especially in response to Covid. A more radical option would be to assess outputs as part of the assessment criteria, which would likely increase administrative burden and may raise applicant expectations with similar results as "a cost–benefit analysis would have to be done at some stage".

There was some consideration within Belfast City Council that continued growth for festivals and events is untenable and perhaps, undesirable, "breeding a chase of numbers". However, this remains an ambition of the 2020–30 cultural strategy, and it is presumed that it will culminate when the city's capacity as an events destination, as defined by FEI, is realised or at the end of A City Imagining.

There was also concern that applicants are "manufacturing audience numbers", which should be managed through the council's monitoring, risk management and, if required, fraud procedures.

Consultees also reported that organisations were concerned that they may be penalised for having reserves. Belfast City Council does not currently have a policy on funding organisations with reserves.

Assessment criteria

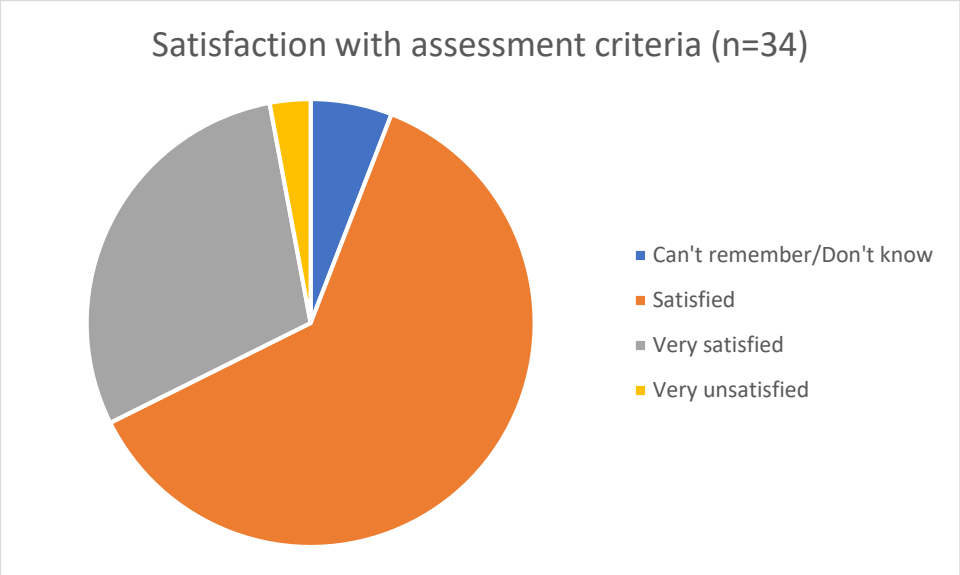
The following assessment criteria is published in CMAG guidance notes.

Quality of programme. This includes vision, content, audience experience and marketing and audience development. It was based on "tried-and-tested" indicators of quality drawn from Manchester Metrics, Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium and nef.	30
Impact of activity, including how the activity contributes to the four A City Imagining themes (A City Belonging, A City Challenging, A City Creating and A City Exploring) and how organisations plan to monitor and evaluate that impact.	40
Readiness for investment including planning, financial management, staff, governance and environmental impact.	30

Assessors also have access to guidance for assessing against up to 37 sub-criteria. Grantees do not have access to the full sub-criteria.

Feedback from successful applicants

In the survey, 9 out of 10 respondents (91 per cent) were satisfied with the assessment criteria including 29 per cent who were very satisfied.



Respondents particularly liked the focus on quality and impact; felt that it was fair and transparent; and even suggested that other funders could learn from this approach.

> *"Good to have significant weight outcome: move us out from a purely 'delivery' mindset, to the change we want to see happen as a result."*

> *"Transparent and impact focused. A lot clearer than other arts funders who are more subjective."*

> *"It was really useful to have clarity on the scoring in this way"*

> *"logical criteria for effective, impactful arts organisation"*

"These are questions which as an organisation we should have answers to."

"It is pleasing to see so much emphasis on quality. […] Other funders could follow this"

One person was very dissatisfied.

> *"assessment was primarily determined by inputs, not the qualities and impacts referred to here. Had these actually been the determining assessment criteria, the process would have been more equitable and more supportive of the Cultural Strategy and the organisations working to deliver on it. Quality of programme and Impact of activity were assessed, it seems, and these were correct criteria – but the result of assessing these was not reflected in the grants awarded because overall the assessment and awarding process did not have a purposeful, joined-up integrity, it was confused by the prioritisation of tourism over Belfast people/artists (for one thing)."*

In the workshops, there was some consideration that the quality score should be higher. Participants also would like adaptability and risk management to be included as indicators of readiness for investment (these are considered in the assessment sub-criteria) given the conditions in which they are required to operate (for example, short-term funding, funding decisions made well in to the financial year).

There were also suggestions that (qualitative) track record should be further taken in to account.

> *"It treats organisations with a longstanding relationship with the council, a longstanding place in the city, as if they have never heard of us."*

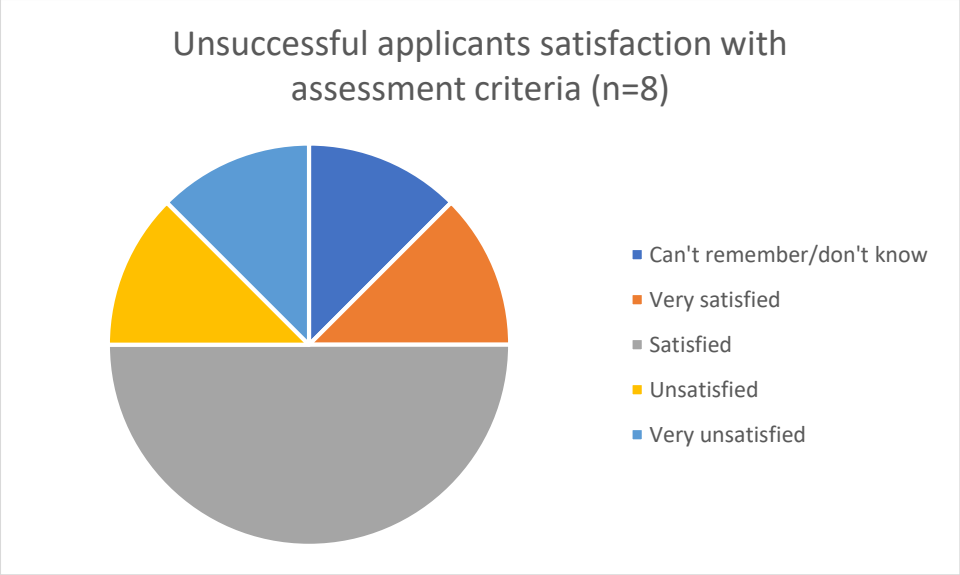
Track record can currently be provided and used alongside other evidence of quality. However, according to the Investment Programme, track record is not otherwise taken in to account in the assessment process as Belfast City Council councillors have stated that newer organisations should not be excluded from strategic grants.

One organisation noted in relation to the environmental sustainability criterion:

> *"We have [an environmental policy] but festivals can't not do international travel, and green is not cheap – clean and bio options of everything cost more – but there's no allowance for this – it costs extra to be good."*

Feedback from unsuccessful applicants

Just under two thirds (63 per cent) of unsuccessful applicants were satisfied and just over a quarter (26 per cent) were unsatisfied with the assessment criteria.



Again, among those satisfied, the assessment criteria was considered fair. One respondent considered

> *"It all seemed reasonable while it didn't work for us, the organisation has to take some responsibility for that".*

Among those who were unsatisfied, comments included "Assessments are subjective, arts and innovation and outcomes in the arts can't be easily assessed like this".

Feedback from Belfast City Council

The assessment criteria were generally considered robust, although the themes (A City Belonging, Challenging, Creating and Exploring) were described as "written in poetry, assessed in prose". One test might be whether the council believes it made the correct funding decisions. One consultee commented, "There is very little [in the CMAG portfolio] I would look at and think, 'That's not making a difference'."

The balance of impact, quality and readiness for investment was also considered appropriate.

> *"We want to turn the needle for the city and its citizens. We're not the Arts Council. It's a fair approach for the council to take."*

> *"The strategy also made it clear that we are not the Arts Council – it is civic funding. As servants of the city all civic investment must give back to the people of the city."*

There were concerns that "the mechanics of assessment is very difficult", intensive and time consuming, particularly for a small team, and that a new team could be particularly open to criticism that it lacks knowledge or understanding of the sector.

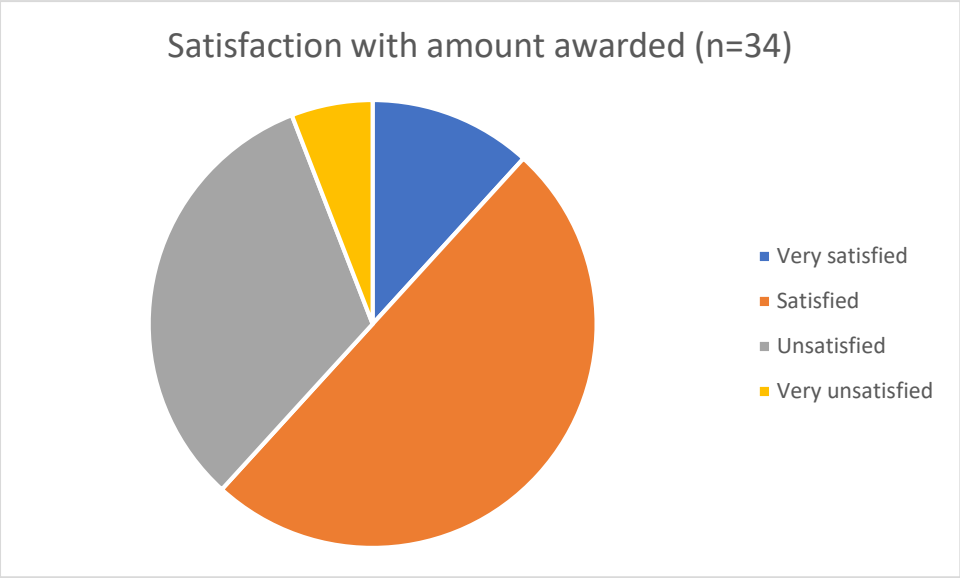
Suggestions for changes included prioritising particular themes, which would require a change in strategic direction. It was also suggested that applicants should be required to quote from supporting documents or refer to particular pages and paragraphs, rather than assessors read all supporting documents "to filter out those with really good documents". This would put additional burden on applicants, who have asked for a reduced application form, and having robust supporting documentation is a check against organisations that

know what to say in an application form. Nevertheless, reducing the need for some supporting documentation may be a way to streamline the application process without making substantial changes to the online grants portal.

During previous rounds of assessment, assessors benefited from training, which include live testing of the assessment criteria and guidance. There was also external support brought in to carry out assessments. For the Imagine applications, this included a respected, London-based creative producer, which "as someone not from here but who the sector accepts as understanding the context of their art form in Belfast" provided "reassurance and a layer of protection".

Level of award

62 per cent of those awarded funding were satisfied with the amount they were awarded including 12 per cent who were very satisfied.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who were very satisfied tended to refer to a substantial increase in funding, and those who were satisfied tended to refer to having around the amount they requested or at a level that was comparable to or a slight increase on previous awards.

Organisations also reflected that CMAG boosted morale and signalled a change in historic funding trends in keeping with the new strategic direction.

> *"We had ambitious plans for development of our festival, which was backed by a solid strategic planning process. It was very reassuring to see council bought into our vision. It was also reassuring that the portfolio overall was not based on historical funding allocations and that newer organisations such as ours were given the opportunity to develop"*

> *"Not only was the material difference vital for our ongoing activities/reflected reality, it also boosted staff morale, made us feel more 'credible' as an Anchor organisation, and meant that for monitoring purposes we returned to our application regularly as there was a sense of pride in what we had achieved that we wanted to sustain across the funding period/demonstrate development and long-term thinking."*

Others reflected that the award was appropriate to need.

> *"We got more than before and almost what we ask for so I think that we were guided to ask for an amount that was realistic."*

> *"The funding was a substantial step up for us but was necessary to enable the kind of step up in terms of scale of the festival that was being asked of us."*

Some satisfied organisations were also circumspect, reflecting on how the operating environment was also affecting council decisions and budgets.

> *"while it was not the amount asked for this was very gratefully received when others were cutting funding"*

> *"Understand that it is a competitive market but equally I believe BCC understand that we need to fund some key organisations sufficiently rather than spread funding too thinly to everyones detriment."*

Other grantees were concerned about the need to balance ambition (or simply the desire to for their application to score well) with realism, particularly as inclusion of activities in a CMAG application would mean that they would be ineligible for other Belfast City Council culture funding.

> *"We put all our soul in to it – all our aspirations – but then when some of those dreams became possibilities, we were not able to look to council for new project funding."*

38 per cent were unsatisfied including 6 per cent (2 respondents) who were very unsatisfied. One organisation described the level of award as "devastating", continuing:

> *"This did not deliver on the vaunted 'move away from Council grants carve-up' it actually made the situation worse [and] Although our new category is called 'Enable', the low level of CMAG awarded was disabling".*

Others felt that:

- their track record was not taken in to account
- the grant didn't reflect either the quality or scale of the work
- the small increase in funding didn't cover inflation
- the award is only a very small percentage of turnover
- there was no allowance made for or additional funding for access requirements
- they would have welcomed feedback on their application
- they did not get the opportunity to revise their programme and targets despite being awarded substantially less than needed to run their programme

> *"While the amount awarded is a huge contribution to our organisation, we are still struggling to generate enough income to cover the increasing costs of rent and overheads"*

Anchor (50 per cent) and Enable (42 per cent) applicants were more likely to be unsatisfied compared to 17 per cent of Imagine applicants and 13 per cent of Activate.

There was also a lot of benchmarking in the responses. Organisations were very aware of how much they were awarded compared to peer art-form organisations or the sector generally. Some considered that particular art forms, specifically visual arts and theatre, did less well, which was attributed to the eligibility criteria prohibiting such art forms being able to apply for the larger grants.

During workshops, consideration of the level and duration of the awards was interdependent. A few organisations would appear to favour the security of longer grants over shorter-term, higher value grants, though higher-value, longer-term grants was the preference overall. And while longer-term funding was generally preferred, there were concerns about "locking in" organisations to "effectively standstill" funding over several years, particularly if an organisation had received substantially less than requested. Proposed solutions included inflation-linking grants, have a mid-point review (for example, in year 2) when the level of funding could be increased or issue "cost of living" grants in exceptional circumstances.[8]

There was also concern that a disappointing result in the first round could create a cycle that would prohibit growth, including ambitions to become and Anchor or Imagine client:

> *"producing some devastating results and placing organisations on a downwards trajectory that is difficult to recover from for the next four-year grant period"*

> *"Now we can't afford to make the type of work that would double audiences."*

It was noted that while the council had increased the maximum amount Enable applicants could request in the second round, in reality applicants received a 10 per cent increase on their previous award. One grantee commented

> *"this new level was not real […] it was not a real opportunity [It] only reinforces a disingenuous aspect of CMAG that we have experienced in various other ways."*

Others suggested different ways in which applicants could be guided to ask for a realistic amount including:

- Discussion with relationship manager
- Using an average percentage of turnover benchmark[9]
- Using an average grant benchmark[10]
- Indication of the number and level of awards the council expects to make[11]
- Council offers set grants (for example, £10,000, £25,000, £50,000 and so on)
- Applicant does not make a request, rather the council awards based on perceived need and merit

Applicants would also like the opportunity to explain variances in turnover and other indictors or justify exceptional requests, particularly as Covid has affected turnover and audiences.

Overall, consultees felt that there should be more investment through CMAG and, in particular, funding available was insufficient to meet expectations.

[8] As provided, for example, by Future Screens and Santander.
[9] This was included in CMAF guidance notes.
[10] This was included in CMAF guidance notes. An average grant was not available for the first round of CMAG.
[11] This was included in CMAG guidance notes.

"[There was] A lot of 'think big', 'strategize', 'Belfast is amazing', but then there was the same amount of money. Can't be raising things up like that."

"don't encourage boundless enthusiasm for growth if funding is not the same"

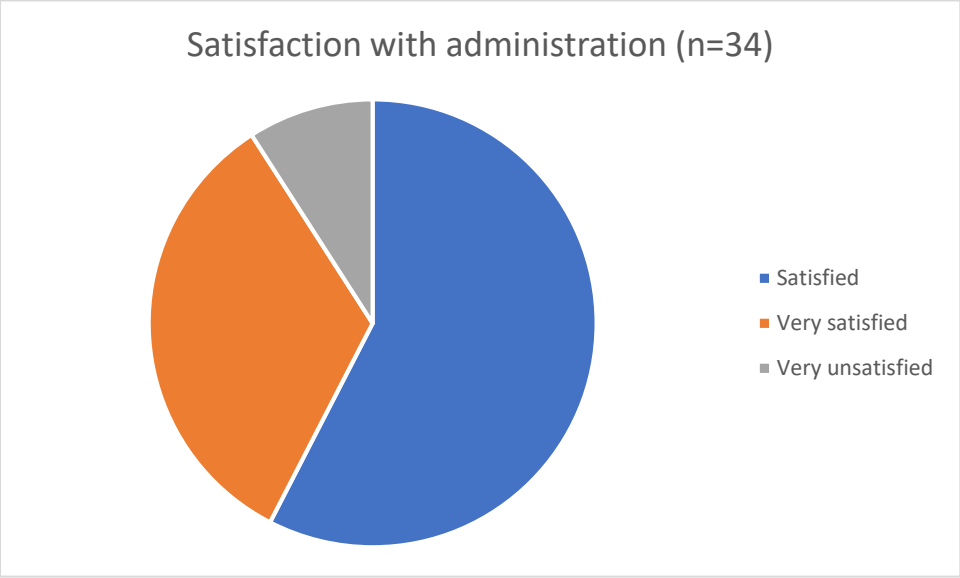
Organisations would also welcome feedback on their applications, particularly if awarded less than requested. Some organisations had requested and got feedback, which was described as useful, but others were unaware that this was an option.

Administration

Project level

In the survey, successful applicants were asked, "How satisfied are you with the administration of your grant, such as when it is paid, how it is monitored and so on?"

Nine out of 10 respondents (91 per cent) were satisfied with the administration including a third (33 per cent) who were very satisfied.



Monitoring was described as "rigorous but not ridiculous" and "allowing funders to keep tabs without being burdensome". Respondents also felt that payments were made promptly, when expected or when needed. This was particularly valued during the pandemic and among festival and events grantees. One festivals and events grantee reflected that "council were mindful of cash flow concerns when raised particularly as there were pinch points during the festival period", although some festivals and events appeared to understand that they were tied to a six-monthly drawdown cycle, which was more difficult for reporting and cashflow.[12]

A few organisations, while satisfied overall, would still prefer faster payments. CGU noted that payments could sometimes take up to three months due to a "bottleneck" in the process of getting sign off from the Culture and Arts team but that this should be prioritised in recognition that "this is core funding, and organisations rely on the funding to run".

[12] Festivals and events grantees can drawdown based on need. Arts and heritage grants follow a six-monthly drawdown cycle.

Arts and heritage grantees may have been more satisfied with administration overall having benefitted from CGU's streamlined process (indeed, one festival reported a seven month delay in payment), and those on a regular cycle of reporting and drawdown "knew in advance when the reports were expected and payments due to be made so could timetable into our Planning".

Grantees also felt that council staff were supportive, again in particular throughout the pandemic or other exceptional circumstances.

> *"BCC staff are patient and understanding if monitoring deadlines are not met for legitimate reasons."*
>
> *"We had a sense there was trust between us and the culture team, and they allowed us to get on with the important work."*
>
> *"The support from staff during 2020 when the challenges from the pandemic were the most severe was greatly appreciated. It was regularly and genuinely committed to supporting its organisations through a very tough time. […] There was an understanding there of the serious challenges that we faced in being able to delivery anything at all let alone the ambitious plans that we started with."*

In turn, CGU reflected that "The sector are professional, very capable – they know what they are doing and are easy to work with".

CGU is proud of the council's reputation as a flexible funder, allowing grantees to reprofile budgets, targets and programmes in response to emerging need and changing circumstance. As is best practice, monitoring forms are now issued at the start of the grant so that organisations know what they have to monitor. However, not all grantees appear to be aware that there is the option to reprofile. Furthermore, the current online grants portal means that targets and budgets that were submitted in application forms automatically populate monitoring forms. This can be particularly frustrating for grantees who were awarded less than requested and subsequently submitted reprofiled targets and budget to the council. They feel they have to repeatedly explain variances, which can make them feel like they are "failing", rather than adapting.

CGU is aware of this and will incorporate the ability to reprofile online in to the specification to tender for the new grants portal. In the meantime, they assure that reprofiles are held "offline" and monitoring is carried out by officers against reprofiles.

Grantees also suggested that monitoring reports could be "softened" by making the language in the monitoring forms "more human" (such as "We appreciate things change … please provide a wee sentence to explain significant changes").

Overall, most considered monitoring to be "straightforward and not laborious". However, a minority felt that monitoring forms are "time consuming and tricky", particularly reporting on the different categories of beneficiaries, such as volunteers, participants, known and estimated audiences. There was some appreciation that these categories matched with ACNI's reporting requirements and of the "good work" started by Belfast City Council to streamline processes with the arts sector's main funder. Grantees would welcome further

collaboration between funders, although it should also be noted that an increasing number of CMAG grantees are not funded by ACNI.[13]

Other alternatives to monitoring reports suggested were a formal, recorded conversation instead of a form.

At workshops and interviews in particular, participants indicated they would welcome the opportunity to share more qualitative information, such as case studies, anecdotes, quotes and reflections on successes and challenges, in monitoring reports.[14] One consultee described monitoring as

> *"Disappointingly pedestrian, lots and lots of figures and stats and no capture of impact. A missed opportunity to talk about outcomes internally and externally, locally and internationally."*

However, others stressed that this must be optional, reiterating that they liked the council's "relatively light-touch" monitoring and already manage extensive monitoring and evaluation demands internally and from other funders.

Three survey respondents (9 per cent) were very unsatisfied with the administration of grants. Two grant recipients reported poor communication and "huge delays" in payments, and the third found

> *"the monitoring process quite tedious and time consuming, I would much prefer visits to events to truly understand the value of our programming."*

Other festivals and events grantees reported delays in payments during interviews, which may reflect confusion over payment schedules or the anomalous administration during the pandemic.

Programme level

Within the Culture and Arts team, individual officers have a portfolio of CMAG clients. The team is new, with the last officer appointed in April 2023, which has limited their involvement with clients and the programme overall.

At the end of each financial year, there is a financial reconciliation of CMAG. At the end of the 2022/23 financial year, for the first time ever, there were no CMAG accruals as all grantees drew down their funding as planned.

The Investment Programme recommends that grants are "reviewed annually with a minimum focus on financial reconciliation, taking into account delivery across the period, resulting in a decision to continue, discontinue or amend funding". It further recommends that the council develop an "outcomes-focused [evaluation framework] to ensure that it measures what is meaningful and makes best use of resources, including opportunities to streamline and share data."

In 2020/21, the council developed a draft evaluation framework. However, this was during Covid and it was considered that "We could not judge CMAG or appear to be assessing the

[13] Five festivals and events in the first round and six in the second round are not ACNI funded.

[14] Some consultees thought that there was space in the monitoring form to report qualitative information. This may be a throwback to previous CMAF monitoring forms or confusion with other funders' monitoring reports.

sector on two years of a new scheme that were two atypical years" or "Evaluation at that point would be like kicking a puppy".

Nevertheless, an annual review is required to adhere to National Audit and Cabinet Office guidance. The sector is also keen that the council is held to account for the performance of their programme as they are held to account in relation to their grant.

> *"The whole City Imagining strategy was very ambitious. Whether council had capacity internally to deliver is something that they need to question internally."*

> *"Perhaps they spread things too quickly, rather than taking time and assessing what their impact has been."*

Timing

Applicants felt that the council kept the application open for a reasonable amount of time, although some requested that it was open for "as long as possible", and some would like earlier funding decisions, particularly those who operate festivals and events near the start of the financial year.

There should also cognisance of other key funding dates. Grantees valued that funding decisions were made in advance of ACNI annual funding. This could mean that applicants were working on the two applications simultaneously, which is a substantial workload, although others suggested that there are benefits, such as having "all the data together" at the same time. The same pros and cons also exist when ACNI and Belfast City Council monitoring cycles coincide.

Consultees also referred to a clash between CMAG and 2024 deadlines.

Developmental support

Wraparound developmental support was a key recommendation in the Investment Programme. It stated that

> *"Support can take many forms, from training, guidance and other informational support to the tangible provision of goods and services. It can be off-the-shelf or commissioned; sector specific or cross-sectoral with the benefit of cross-pollination; it can build on what already exists and works in the city or can be new and innovative, learning from other cities".*

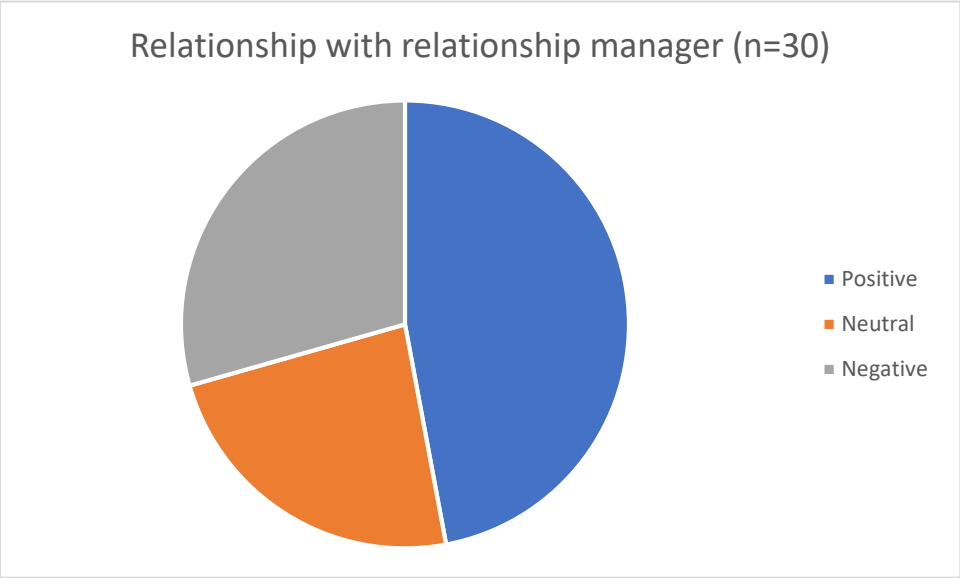
Other potential support needs identified in the Investment Programme included marketing; audience development; digital marketing and audience development; internationalisation; evaluation and impact measurement; reflective practice; innovation; capitalisation; cross-sectoral networking; environmental impact; digital skills; and research and development.

CMAG grantees in particular should benefit from "one-to-one support in the form of and facilitated by their relationship manager." the Investment Programme continues:

> *"The relationship should be supportive, built around a shared vision for success, but able to withstand challenge as the relationship manager will continue to be responsible for monitoring performance. The degree and nature of support required will vary depending on the investment strand, amount of investment, perceived risk and needs of the organisation and should be agreed between the relationship manager and organisation at the start of the contract."*

Relationship management

In the survey, successful applicants were also asked to describe their relationship with their relationship manager.



Just under half (47 per cent) gave a positive response, and comments included:

> *"All officers have been attentive, responsive and interested in the work we have being doing. We would say the relationship has been very good and beneficial for the festival"*

> *"Strong, professional and really valued working relationship"*

However, a quarter (24 per cent) gave a neutral response, and just under a third (29 per cent) gave a negative response.

> *"Since [they have] moved positions, I am not aware of a particular replacement responsible for our client relationship or any monitoring meetings that are important for improving communications between the funder and the client and for the funder to know the extent and impact of the work of the client."*

> *"Because this has changed, we haven't built much of a relationship and are often not sure who we should be dealing with. There's no real direct relationship beyond having someone to ask questions to if we need information."*

> *"There have been a lot of changes. Some staff didn't come near us or seemed more about the tourism and I don't feel they got arts. I am not sure who is even there any more."*

During workshops, participants reported their relationship manager changing up to four times or even "every time you sent an email". This was not a reflection on individual officers, who were singled out for praise, and there was recognition of the extent of change with the council's culture function.[15] Some felt that the council needed to do more to retain staff or

[15] As at May 2023, current Culture Unit team members have been in place for between just over 18 months and under one month.

at least retain corporate knowledge when staff move on and to communicate changes better.

> *"Relationships are now depersonalised and no different to any other funder that gives us money and gets reports."*

Organisations were also worried that lack of a relationship would put them at a disadvantage going in to the new round of CMAG.

> *"We want the council to have a depth of knowledge and understanding of what we do […] A relationship gives context for interpreting an application – that's hard if you have an officer who has never been in your premises. You'll be at a disadvantage. They should know you, not an impression of you."*

Relationships with CGU were, however, considered to be "strong and consistent", and the sector would like more opportunity to meet them in person and get to know "the human person behind the team, because we get on well and know their names but would walk past them in the street".

Overall, respondents are looking forward to building relationships in the future. There was particular recognition of the need for a dedicated point of contact within council who could help organisations liaise with other departments or link them in to other projects and initiatives happening across the council. This could include helping organisations unlock opportunities such as Section 76 and developer clauses or capitalise on strategic partnerships with sectoral bodies such as thrive, Arts and Business and the University of Atypical. Imagine clients in particular felt that their plans were disrupted when they were not consulted or informed about delays to the year of culture. It was also noted that council departments do not always work together and sometimes appear to "block each other". Being able to work across different agendas is, however, vital to supporting the sector's impact and value.

The importance of forums and networking was discussed across all consultation, and there was some consideration that this could substitute (at least partially) for one-to-one relationship management. There was strong recognition of the value of sub-sectoral collaboration, for example, through the Festivals and Visual Arts forums.

> *"I think that one thing that is starting to emerge is more collaboration between organisations through the festivals forum particularly in recognising how we can work together to improve the lot of festivals."*

> *"The Visual Arts Forum is the one strategic thing there is for visual arts"*

However, others felt that networking should take place on a cross-sectoral basis to allow "cross-fertilisation".

Others wanted more collaboration within the CMAG portfolio, which might support council's plans to require four-year grantees to support other organisations. There was also a perception that "Festivals were given a significant boost but didn't spread it around".

A few people queried the need for in-depth relationships, pointing to trusts and foundations that increasingly advise grantees not to make contact. They stressed that the relationship must be of mutual benefit and "not too onerous". Others suggested that if the council does

not have the resource to invest in relationships, it is best not to raise expectation. A minority also appear to prefer to have solely transactional contact with their funders.

Within Belfast City Council, it was suggested that a regular sectoral meeting or cultural forum or a client newsletter could also support relationships.

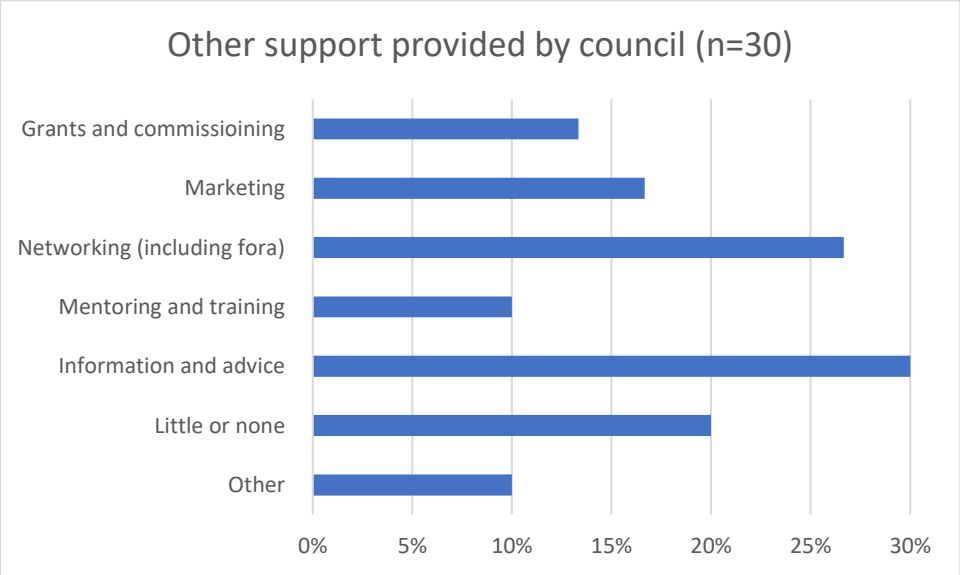
Strong, consistent relationships would help with some misunderstandings that exist about CMAG (from practicalities such as what funding can be spent on, how festivals and events can draw down funding and what other grants CMAG grantees can apply for to understanding of strategic direction and prioritisation), ensuring everyone has the same experience and benefit. Grantees also felt that this would make monitoring and evaluation "more natural" (although from an audit and administration perspective, it is important that a paper trail is maintained).

Both the council and organisations also felt that relationships of mutual trust and understanding would also mean that organisations could be better guided to ask for a realistic amount of funding and that council staff would be better equipped to assess applications and provide feedback.

> *"A good relationship is vital to guide people about what to cover in their application, to be realistic – ambitious but reasonable – to let people know they can change projects as long as they are not pie in the sky. It is all about trust."*

Other support

Survey respondents were also asked what other support they had received from Belfast City Council. Just under a third (30 per cent) had received information and advice, including from other areas of the council such as economic development, environmental health and capital development. Over a quarter (27 per cent) had been involved in networking, in particular through the Belfast Festivals Forum or Belfast Visual Arts Forum, which were also closely associated with marketing support (17 per cent). However, 1 in 5 (20 per cent) received little or no support.



Other responses included support with accessibility and advocacy.

"it is reassuring to have them as a backbone. I respect the support they give to the arts"

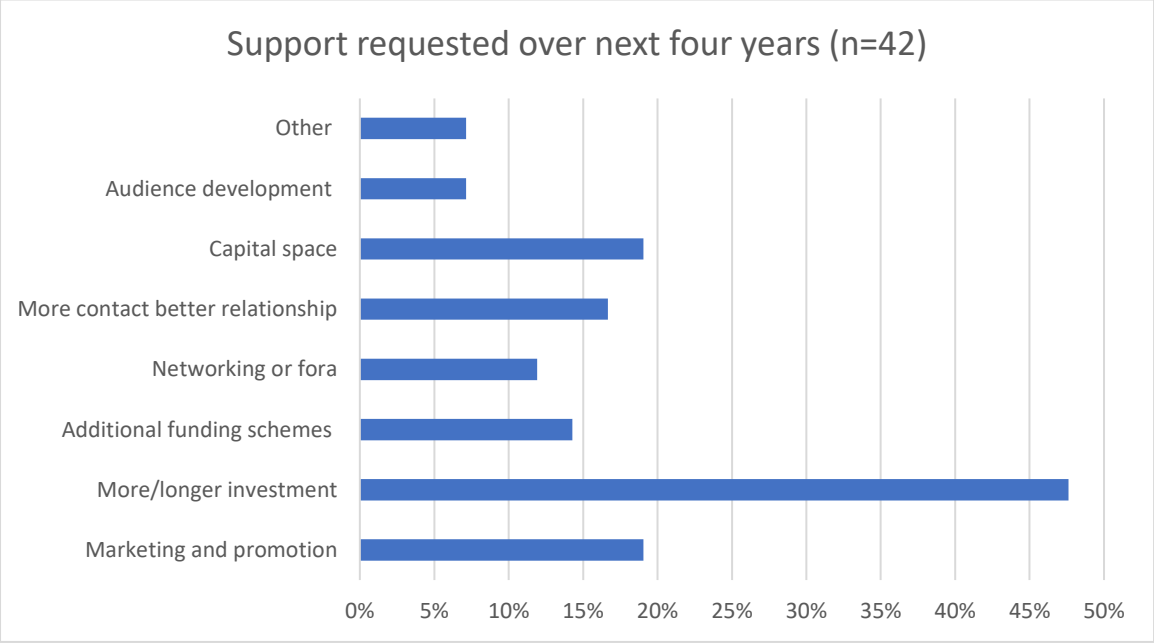
Among those who received little or no support, there was again disappointment that expectations had not been realised.

"'Other' opportunities we were told we would have, at the start of [CMAG] period, have not materialised. Support has markedly reduced from the partner-working operations and relationships that were in place in previous times. The 'partnership' with City Council has not been fostered."

"We were disappointed that there was less of a collaborative relationship with the culture team than we originally expected. it seemed to go back to the traditional funder/client relationship, whereas at the time of application there was promise of more one to one support to develop"

Future support needs

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants were asked in the survey, "How else could the council support you in the next four years?" Unsurprisingly, the most frequent response (48 per cent) was for more or longer-term investment including three- or four-year funding (instead of two). Other responses included support for marketing and promotion (19 per cent) including social media and shared resources (like the Festivals Forum flag fields); support for finding, securing or developing property (19 per cent); and more contact or a better relationship with the council (17 per cent) including staff and councillors.



At one workshop it was described how councillors used to "show up [to events] like showers". However, this no longer happens, and grantees would welcome the support of staff to help build relationships with councillors, for example, by acting as a liaison for individual organisations or hosting an annual meet and greet.

Grantees would also like Culture and Arts staff to attend more events and activities to get a fuller understanding of what they support. However, they stressed that staff and councillors should also come along to "not just when there is free drink and celebrities" but also

"normal" activities so they would understand "that workshop for 15 people was incredible, that's what we're doing for our citizens".

Within the Culture and Arts team, now it is at full complement and has had some time to bed in, there is a strong desire to experience more events and activities in what they appreciate to be a "strong and diverse arts scene that can hold its own against other comparable cities".

Transition

While there was resentment in the sector that some unsuccessful applicants were awarded more funding than successful applicants, Belfast City Council considered Transition was an appropriate response to significant strategic change. Some clients had benefited from CMAF core funding for over seven years or even longer via other core multi-annual grants that pre-dated CMAF.

> *"Transition is a healthy way to manage the change that is needed."*

> *"It was very healthy and considerate for the council to provide a cushion for those who fell out. But it is important that people do fall out to make changes to pursue the strategy."*

The external developmental support was considered particularly important in helping organisations develop and "ask 'where next?'." One Transition organisation that took part in this review commented

> *"The consultant was valuable, they helped me calm down and look at organisational development."*

Funding helped meet programming costs as well as ongoing running costs.

> *"I know we can't assume we'll get a grant, but it did leave a hole especially in terms of outreach – so Transition did help bridge the gap immediately, and I guess it was space for us to get ready for going longer-term without a BCC grant."*

Transition consultees suggested alternative support if CMAG is not attainable.

> *"We would like to see Transition again – or better would be larger project grants for outreach or engagement if not for the core arts element. CMAG is only small part of our turnover but we really do need to keep up the engagement and outreach piece for the people of Belfast."*

> *"If organisations cannot get in to CMAG, then could there be some other recognition of standards? A hallmark or some way that even if you cannot get funds, you still get assurance and some mark that you are seen as valuable?"*

They would also have welcomed more feedback on their applications.

Two Transition organisations subsequently successfully reapplied for two-year funding in the second round (including one was previously ineligible due to the £100,000 turnover threshold). Two did not reapply. Seven reapplied and were unsuccessful.

Transition recipients also went on to secure other Belfast City Council project grants.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is evidence that Belfast City Council's CMAG programme follows a robust process and is designed to support the council's strategic ambitions as set down in A City Imagining.

In keeping with National Audit Office good practice guidance, there is evidence that:

1. Risk is managed on a spectrum dependent on the type (restricted project and unrestricted grant-in-aid), value and duration of the grant.
2. It is not risk averse but balances the risk to the council and the grantee, in particular in relation to Imagine and Activate grants.
3. It is built on a previous comparator scheme and utilises expertise of those with understanding of the sector and experience of similar grant schemes, including CGU.
4. Uptake of funding was accurately projected, and there is balance, on one hand, between encouraging uptake and minimising administrative burdens and, on the other, ensuring that the support is used as intended, and the council is confident that the funding targets and benefits the right organisations.
5. The sector has been engaged in the review of the scheme after both two and four years, which will influence the next cycle of funding.
6. There is no similar multi-annual strategic fund open to the sector.

However, it has not been possible to robustly evaluate whether CMAG has achieved its aims or the extent to which it contributed to A City Imagining outcomes. This is largely due to extenuating circumstances in the external and internal operating environment which meant neither the council nor the sector could operate as planned.

The following recommendations are intended to further enhance the grant process, impact and evaluation.

Evaluation

A draft evaluation framework was developed by the council in 2021/22. It includes recommendations for performance monitoring and client and programme evaluation, but it was stalled due to the pandemic.

An evaluation process must be implemented to enable evidence to be collected throughout the next four-year cycle. This will enable the council to prove the value of its investment as well as improve its funding practice.

There should also be an annual performance review.

The council should therefore review, revise and implement the framework in consultation with grantees (alongside relevant findings from this report).

There should also be, at least in the interim, the option for grantees to provide narrative feedback in monitoring forms.

Support for applicants

Engagement with the sector during this review indicated that there are misperceptions about CMAG that may have repercussions for applicants. The application process may also be easier for organisations with experience of CMAG or council funding in general.

The council should roll out information sessions and advice clinics. This will also provide an opportunity for the sector to meet CGU and Culture and Arts teams.

Prioritisation of CMAG

There remains a perception that CMAG is "just funding". On a practical level, staff should be encouraged to block out time for administration that otherwise results in delays for grantees. Staff should also be supported to take on a more developmental role, including training, time to develop relationships and time in lieu to attend funding events and activities.

A dedicated staff member could also be assigned to programme manage CMAG.

Key messaging

There should be clear consistent messaging to ensure that all applicants understand the purpose of the fund. This should also be reviewed in the guidance notes.

There should also be clear and consistent messaging around the administration of the fund. Relationship managers should be a key conduit. There could also be an induction for all or new grantees.

Key messaging should clarify CMAG grantees' eligibility to apply to other council funding. The council should also consider the interface between 2024 and CMAG and whether 2024 projects and commissions constitute organisations' core programmes.

Communications should start with the findings of this review including what will and will not be changed as a result and why.

Relationships management

The council should consider the extent to which it is resourced to provide one-to-one relationship management alongside options such as forums, group meetings and newsletters.

Within the scope of resources, relationship managers should develop a bespoke, two-way "relationship contract" with their clients.

The council should also explore options to help organisations build relationships with councillors.

Volunteer eligibility criteria

The council should consider removing this requirement. Instead, it should ensure that it is satisfied that volunteering is considered within the assessment criteria as an indicator of A City Belonging, Challenging or Creating.

Eligibility criteria for arts and heritage applicants

Arts and heritage eligibility criteria including audience and turnover are based on historic baselines. Covid will have created peaks and troughs, and recent baselines are no longer

robust. It is therefore recommended that arts and heritage organisations are allowed to base their application on projections (as per festivals and events applicants) with the caveat that historic performance will be used to assess whether projections are realistic (and potentially level of award; see Level of award recommendation below).

Applicants may need additional space within the application form to explain variances or exceptions.

(While the historic baselines were unpopular among the sector, this recommendation is made on the basis of the pandemic, not popularity.)

Audience eligibility criteria

The council should analyse recent monitoring returns to consider whether audience eligibility criteria are still appropriate.

Staff employment criteria

The following criteria should apply as an indication of capacity and need. Any exceptions should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Imagine	Activate	Anchor	Enable
Has or will employ in the first year, 3+	Has or will employ in the first year, 1+	3+	1+

Level of award

To manage expectations, the council should agree in advance whether applicants can expect a significant change in funding or should request an incremental increase or standstill and communicate this to applicants. In so doing, it should consider the desirability of awarding fewer organisations larger grants.

The council should also consider telling applicants the average value of grants made in the first round, and the number and value of grants it intends to make in the second cycle.

The council should consider the feasibility of inflation-linked or mid-term increases for four-year grantees.

Duration of funding

Most CMAG grantees got *de facto* four-year funding. The council should consider awarding all grants on a four-year basis subject to developing a longer-term project fund of scale that could support new and emerging organisations. This would reduce administrative burden on both applicants and the council.

Names

The council should change the names of the funds. The preferred option appears to be to refer to them by their descriptors (four-year arts and heritage, two-year festivals and events and so on).

Timing

The council should notify the sector of when it intends to open and close the grant as far in advance as possible.

Application form

The application form should be reviewed to identify any questions or attachments (such as board minutes) that could be removed or made only applicable to four-year applicants. While this would benefit both applicants and assessors, it should be noted that any changes to the application form will need to be carried through to the assessment form at the back end, which may result in more significant changes than tolerable within the current portal contract.

Assessment process

The council should consider providing applicants with more detail on the assessment process and criteria.

The council should use external subject matter expertise to assess at least Imagine applications.

The council should provide new assessors with training and consider bringing in external support from assessors with experience of similar schemes.

Feedback

Feedback to applicants is available on request. The council should consider offering it to all applicants, resources allowing.

Transition

The council should consider how it will support any existing Imagine or Anchor client that applies unsuccessfully in the second cycle. However, it is not recommended that the council provides a formal scheme such as Transition. Rather, given the variance in Anchor awards in particular, this should be done on a case-by-case basis.

Developmental support

The council should revisit and resource plans for wraparound developmental support for CMAG clients.

It should include support to help clients with accessibility and environmental sustainability.

Online grants portal

Feedback from grantees in relation to online reprofiling should be used to inform the specification to tender for the new online grants portal.

Administration

The administration of all grants should be migrated back to CGU. The process should include reconciliation of all financial and monitoring records.

Project funding

The council should review existing project funding with a view to introducing a longer-term project fund of scale that would reduce pressure on CMAG and help support a diverse ecosystem.

Equality

It is not known whether Section 75 monitoring returns have identified any differential impact for particular groups applying for funding. The council should carry out additional research and an equality screening to identify particular barriers and potential mitigations.

Appendix 1: CMAG grant recipients

Imagine

Arts Ekta

Féile An Phobail

Science Festivals NI

Young At Art

Anchor

Belfast Community Circus School Limited

Crescent Arts Centre

Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich

Lyric Theatre

Oh Yeah Music Centre

The Black Box Trust

The Duncairn

The MAC

Ulster Orchestra Society

Activate 2020/21–21/22

Belfast Film Festival

Belfast International Arts Festival

Belfast Photo Festival

Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival

Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival

Docs Ireland

EastSide Arts

Féile An Phobail

Festival Of Fools

Outburst Arts Festival

The Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival

The Odyssey Trust

Enable 2020/21–21/22

An Droichead

Beat Carnival

Belfast Exposed

Bruiser Theatre Company

Community Arts Partnership

Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain

DU Dance

Dumbworld

Golden Thread Gallery

Green Shoot Productions

Kabosh

Kids In Control

Linen Hall Library

Maiden Voyage

Moving On Music

New Lodge Arts

Northern Ireland Opera

Open Arts

Photo Works North/Source Magazine

Prime Cut Productions

Queen's Film Theatre

Replay Theatre Company

Strand Arts Centre

Streetwise Community Circus

Nerve Belfast

Tinderbox Theatre Company

Ulster Architectural Heritage Society

WheelWorks

YouthAction Northern Ireland

Activate 22/23–23/24

Belfast City Marathon

Belfast Film Festival

Belfast International Arts Festival

Belfast Photo Festival

Belfast Summer School Of Traditional Music

Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival

Docs Ireland

EastSide Arts

Féile An Phobail

Festival Of Fools

Imagine Belfast

Out to Lunch

Outburst Arts Festival

The Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival

The Odyssey Trust

Enable 22/23–23/24

An Droichead

Beat Carnival

Belfast Exposed

Bruiser Theatre Company

Community Arts Partnership

Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain

DU Dance

Dumbworld

Fighting Words Northern Ireland

Golden Thread Gallery

Kabosh

Kids In Control

Linen Hall Library

Maiden Voyage

Moving On Music

Open Arts

Photo Works North/Source Magazine

Prime Cut Productions

Queen's Film Theatre

Replay Theatre Company

Strand Arts Centre

Streetwise Community Circus

Terra Nova Productions

Nerve Belfast

University Of Atypical

WheelWorks

YouthAction Northern Ireland

Appendix 2: Organisations that participated in workshops or interviews

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their expertise and experience including those organisations that took part anonymously in the surveys.

ArtsEkta

Belfast Exposed

Belfast International Arts Festival

Belfast Photo Festival

Circusful

Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain

Docs Ireland

EastSide Arts

Festival of Fools

Fighting Words

Golden Thread Gallery

Grand Opera House

Imagine

Kabosh

Kids in Control

Linen Hall Library

Maiden Dance

Moving on Music

NI Science Festival

Oh Yeah

Prime Cut

Queen's Film Theatre

Replay

Strand Arts Centre

Streetwise Circus

Terra Nova

The Beat

The Crescent Arts Centre

The MAC

Ulster Orchestra

University of Atypical

Young at Art

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	Update on Music Strategy
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the music strategy, "Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast" including its corresponding priorities. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress to date and seek approval to the allocation of funding to a number of important strands of the music strategy.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, "Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast" - Approve the allocation of £5,000 towards the costs of an international exchange with London, Ontario Canada - Allocate £20,000 to the creation of a pilot micro grants scheme for artists.
3.0	**Main report**

3.1	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the final "Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast". Mirroring A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are a number of actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector. Theme 1: Place artists at the heart - Recognising the value of creators Theme 2: Nurture the sector - Strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators Theme 3: Ignite the live experience - Liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO - Sharing the gift of music with the people of Belfast
3.2	**Update on Music Board** The Music Strategy sets out governance recommendations for Belfast Music, including the formation of a Belfast Region Music Board, comprising between 15 and 20 members, to bring to life the UNESCO City of Music designation. The board will help to embed music in all communities across the city to make music a sustainable career option for creators and people who support them. Following agreement of the full Music Strategy in December 2022, an open call was launched for applications to join the Belfast Region Music Board with applications closing in February 2023. Members received an update on the recruitment process and selection of the board in April 2023. Since this meeting, the final selection of board members is confirmed and details of board members are available in Appendix 1.
3.3	As noted by members in the April 2023 Committee, there was a lack of applications from the marching bands community. Officials have engaged with members of this sector and the music board has agreed to co-opt a representative from this sector to the board from June 2023. The board is meeting monthly, with two meetings held to date, to map further initiatives to roll out in this financial year and beyond. A Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed at the July meeting.
3.4	**Update on current initiatives** In April 2023, Members received an update and agreed financial allocations for a range of ongoing initiatives. At this meeting, members agreed to allocate £20,000 to work in conjunction with the Music Venue Trust (MVT) to run a programme specifically targeted at

	venues in Belfast. Officials have been engaging with MVT to launch the scheme and this will be announced in mid-June 2023.
3.5	On 1st and 2nd June, the Output Conference was delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, featuring a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity included music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies. The second day of output featured a community engagement and networking event at 2 Royal Avenue, followed by a Music Industry Session where delegates heard from delegates from Hannover, Germany regarding their journey as a UNESCO City of Music.
3.6	Priority 2.2 within Theme 1 of the Music Matters strategy relates to sourcing performance opportunities for Belfast music creators to perform internationally. In April 2023, Members received an update on an international exchange with UCoM City London, Canada, that will begin in July 2023. This opportunity will allow for two folk-music artists, namely Ciara O'Neill and Niall McDowell, to be provided with attendance at a song-writing camp, two pre-festival performances, one main-stage performance at Home County Music and Art Festival, as well as music industry 1-1 meetings across Ontario with agents, bookers and other personnel that will benefit the Belfast artists. In October 2023, two artists and talent agents from Ontario will arrive in Belfast to appear at the Belfast International Arts Festival and take part in a wraparound programme of similar activity. It is proposed to allocate £5000 towards the costs of this exchange, matching the contribution from UCoM City London, Canada.
3.7	**Ongoing development** UNESCO Music delivery is funded from existing recurring and non-recurring departmental funds. At the meeting of the Special Policy and Resources Committee in April 2021, members agreed an allocation of resources to the delivery of the music strategy. As contained in the Belfast 2024 paper, £900k has been allocated towards City of Music and the Music Strategy for delivery on key developmental activities across 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively.
3.8	There are a range of pre-existing commitments for the remaining financial year, including Gradam Ceoil bursaries, the creation of a music support service, delivery of the Output Conference, the delivery of a Music Industry Mentoring Programme, international exchanges and the Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues.
3.9	With the remaining budget for the 2023/24 financial year, Council is collaborating and consulting with the Belfast Music Region Board on the priorities most necessary to fulfil during this period. The budget will be split between the four themes of the strategy and each

theme will have priorities that will be completed. It is anticipated that the profile of spend against themes will be:

Theme	Areas covered within initiatives	Budget profile
One – Placing Artists at the Heart	• Enhancing funding programmes for music creatives – e.g micro-grant scheme for artists • Professional development opportunities to educate and equip music creators • Opportunities for music creatives to connect and collaborate with their peers locally, nationally and internationally. • Series of initiatives to ensure that music is inclusive, accessible and open to everyone in our city.	£90,000
Two - Nurture the Sector	• Financial assistance available to freelancers, organisations and businesses whose primary role is to enable, support and develop creators. • Professional development opportunities to educate and equip music organisations and businesses • Funded opportunities to engage and support the future generation of creative freelancers, cultural leaders and music business entrepreneurs	£70,000
Three – Ignite the Live Experience	• Development of a thriving, sustainable and strong live music sector including a review existing licensing frameworks • Enhance Belfast's night-time economy, culture and governance • Implementing initiatives to ensure the health and safety, both physically and in terms of mental well-being, of performers and attendees at live music events. • Supporting greening the live music sector	£40,000
Four - Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO	• Enhanced strategic communications to make it easier for locals and visitors to find out about the music events and activities taking place across Belfast. • Ensuring citizens and visiting audiences have access to incredible and unique music experiences • Partner with tourism bodies, Sister Cities and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network to promote Belfast as a world class music destination	£40,000

3.10	A detailed and profiled delivery plan, containing initiatives to address these areas, will reviewed and discussed at the Music Board in June and July 223. A further paper outlining the initiatives and their detailed corresponding budgets will be presented to members in August 2023.
3.11	<u>Micro-Grant scheme</u> Theme 1 of the Music Strategy has a focus on artist development, with priority 9.5 including a commitment to fund initiatives to alleviate the costs incurred by music creators in Belfast. It is proposed to allocate £20,000 to develop a micro-grant programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. The structure and criteria for this scheme will be developed in collaboration and consultation with the Belfast Music Region Board and will be launched in Autumn 2023.
3.12	**Financial and Resource Implications** • Allocate £5,000 towards the costs of this exchange, matching the contribution from UCoM City London, Canada • Allocate £20,000 to the creation of a pilot micro grants scheme for artists. These costs are to be met from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development.
3.13	**Equality & Good Relations Implications** This music strategy is part of the overarching cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of any initiatives.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Membership of music programme board

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APPENDIX 1.

Belfast Region Music Board

LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS

Board Member	Organisation/Portfolio
Aisling Agnew	Professional Flautist / Concert Manager
Paul Connolly	Musician / Workshop Facilitator / Lecturer
Brian Coney	Editor / Writer / Musicians / PR Representation / The Thin Air
John D'Arcy	Digital Media Lecturer at QUB
Joe Dougan	Director, TSW Management / The Limelight / Shine / Belsonic
Claire Kieran	Oifigeach Imeachtaí at An Droichead
Jenny Kirkwood	Music Therapist, Public Health Agency
Alice Lewis	National Director at Live Music Now
Rebekah Lutton	Singer-Songwriter
Ben Magee	Director of New Champion Management
Paula McColl	Creative Producer at Moving on Music
Rory McConnell	Editor, Music Arts & Events at BBC Northern Ireland
Peter McVeigh	Lecturer in Music & Course Co-Ordinator at SERC, Singer-Songwriter
Miceál Mullen	Communications Officer for European Music Council
Cheylene Murphy	Freelance Musician
Maurane Ramon	Client & Communications Manager at Thrive
Joseph Rickets	Artist Manager at Nxgen Music Group
Naoise Roo Callan	Festival Development & Coordinator for NI Mental Health Arts Festival
Bethany Simpson	Concerts Manager Belfast Music Society
Boyd Sleater	Co-Founder of Free the Night, Coordinator of NI Humanists
Anthony Toner	Freelance Singer-Songwriter
Abbie Triggs	Director of Operations & Business Development On Music Ltd
Brian Coney	Editor / Writer / Musicians / PR Representation / The Thin Air
Glenn Millar/Ron Stitt	Marching Bands – Made to Parade Podcast and Girdwood Star Flute Band

BCC STAFF LIST

BCC Staff	BCC Management and Secretariat Support
Chris McCreery	Culture Manager, Belfast City Council
Nikki MacRae	Lead Officer/CDO, Belfast City Council
Elizabeth Donaldson	Secretariat Support, Culture Assistant, Belfast City Council

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CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Manager, Culture Development Unit

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	Belfast City Council is expected to be invited to apply for and administer the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24 on behalf of Belfast based arts, culture (including leisure) or heritage organisations.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that the Chief Executive exercise his delegated authority to: - Grant permission for Council to apply for, promote, assess and manage the Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Department for Communities is inviting local Councils to administer the Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24 within their respective local Council areas and to apply for funding to the Department in early July 2023. The Department expects to formally launch the programme as a competitive process in late June 2023. We have been advised that a total fund of £624,000 is available for this programme.
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; and iii. Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.
3.3	The Council oversees the assessment and recommendation of projects via a competitive open call internally and externally and is responsible for delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.
3.4	The Culture Development Unit (previously Tourism, Culture Heritage & Arts Unit) managed the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Access and Inclusion Programme within Belfast and received support for 24 projects with total value of £412,554, of which five were Council projects. In 2020/21, they administered 11 Access and Inclusion grants with a total value of £185,443 and 9 Programme grants in 2021/22 with a total value of £143,667. The total fund available in 2022/23 reduced by almost 50%, they administered 3 external projects and one Council project with a total value of £99,701.00. Examples of projects supported include improved access to City Hall and the Tropical Ravine; easier access for audience and participants to not for profit cultural venues across the city; installation of new specialised playground facilities and changing spaces; and provision of equipment to provide immersive theatrical experiences for children with complex needs.

3.5	Capital works and equipment costs are eligible under this programme. The maximum grant available is £30,000, (the maximum project cost cannot exceed £80,000), and applicants are required to contribute at least 10% of the total project costs. To receive a £30,000 grant therefore, applicants must provide a contribution of at least £3,000.
3.6	This year, Department for Communities is particularly keen to welcome applications for Changing Places facilities, accessible equipment for play parks and projects that will impact positively on sustainability and climate change.
3.7	Projects must complete on or before 31 March 2024. Department for Communities has advised that no extensions will be considered to the project completion date.
3.8	Financial & Resource Implications Contribution of at least 10% of project cost is an eligibility condition. This resource will need to be sourced by the applicant. Council has staff resources to oversee the administration of this Programme.
3.9	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment The Culture Development Unit will work closely with the Council's Equality Unit and the Department for Communities to ensure positive equality implications which is the central component of the Programme. Officers will discuss the Programme with the Council's Disability Advisory Panel. There are no rural needs or good relations implications.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	There are no appendices for this report.

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Christmas Programme Update
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry Mc Mullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
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**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with further information on the Christmas event as previously requested.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that: – In light of further information being provided, Members agree on the approach/format to Christmas 2023 – Note the contents of the report in relation to the Lighting Scheme
3.0	**Main report**

3.1	**Christmas Programme 2023** On an annual basis, the Council's Culture and Events Units delivers a series of large-scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. This is further supported by the activity of other teams who support a number of annual programmes and activities and the Markets Unit who manage the delivery of the Christmas Market at City Hall in addition to year-round activity at St George's and Smithfield markets.
3.2	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with further information and the costing of the various options for the delivery of Christmas 2023. This report follows on from a report to City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 8th March 2023, which focused on an Evaluation of the Christmas 2022 Programme.
3.2.1	At the March 2023 meeting, officers further presented an option to merge the old Christmas switch-on format (preferred option prior to the pandemic) with the city-centre-wide programme used in 2021 and 2022 which would have seen a small stage at Castle Junction/Donegall Place, allowing the audience within Donegall Place to view the lighting of the Tree and Festive Lighting within the immediate City Centre, without the requirement to close Donegall Square North. The entertainment throughout the City Centre could then be programmed
3.2.2	As per Members request, this report will give cognisance to the resumption of the traditional 'switch on' event while considering health and safety, community engagement and local organisation involvement, choir competitions, a procession, environmental impact, budget availability, comparison of event feedback of recent Christmas programmes and the extension of the lighting schemes. All of which will assist the forward planning of the future Christmas programme for 2023 and beyond.
3.2.3	At April City Growth and Regeneration Committee, a budget of £122,864 was agreed for the Christmas 2023 programme as part of the in-year work programme for the Tourism unit and It is important to note that the Christmas 2023 programme is the launch pad into the 'Belfast 2024' programme and whilst programming will deliver against core thematic alignment, there may also be opportunity for additional budget uplift as part of this.
3.3	Officers have considered and presented three possible programming scenarios and associated budget requirements as below:

3.4 **Option 1: Return to the "Pre-Covid" Switch on Style event.**

The table below summarises the anticipated expenditure. Forecasts are based on 2019 event costs with an allowance for inflation and additional measures required to facilitate a safe event (as recommended in the external H&S report). These additional measures have distinct cost implications due to the longer build and de-rig period of the event: equipment will be hired for a longer period and will require security for the duration. There will be further road closures to accommodate stakeholders. It is important to note that consultation with both PSNI and Translink is considered in line with event management and the impact of intended road closures to the delivery of their core services and associated cost implications.

Category	Description	Indicative cost
Entertainment	on stage performance, music and show pieces	£18,000
Production	production management, stage, PA, ancillary equipment, screens,	£65,000
H&S, licensing, legal	licenses, first aid, insurance, H&S advisor, stewarding	£24,000
Traffic Management	road closure, parking bay suspension, traffic management contractor	£8,000
Survey	Socio-economic survey	£8,000
Total		£123,000

3.5 **Option 2: Continue with a city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 and 2022:**

Costs are based on 2022 event costs, with an allowance for inflation.

Category	Description	Indicative cost
Entertainment	Variety of performer throughout city centre, window animation, parade, small allocation to 2RA	£41,000
Lighting	Lighting projections, displays, lighting for window animation, includes equipment	£26,000
Production	production management, Riser stage, PA, ancillary equipment,	£12,000

H&S, licensing, legal	licenses, first aid, insurance, H&S advisor, stewarding	£20,500
Traffic Management	road closure, parking bay suspension, traffic management contractor	£4,200
Survey	Socio-economic survey	£5,100
	Programming 2 Royal Ave for the evening	£5,000
Total		£115,000

It is important to note that neither of the above two options includes provision for subsequent weekends. Since 2019, there has been an allocation for animation of the 4-5 weekends in the run up to Christmas, funded from non-recurrent reserves. Which is not available in 23/24 financial year.

3.6 **Option 3: Combination of a Switch-on event and city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 & 2022 (as per March Committee report), with an allocation for subsequent weekends.**

A solution could be found in taking attributes of the old format, hosted within the 2021/2022 event space. A 'switch on' element, could take place on a small riser stage/platform at Castle Junction/Donegall Place, close to 2RA - allowing the audience within Donegall Place to view the lighting of the Tree and Festive Lighting within the immediate City Centre, without the requirement to close Donegall Square North. A larger PA system would be required for this element. The entertainment throughout the City Centre would be programmed over a two-hour period and would accommodate the parade element delivered in 2022.

3.7 An allocation of the budget would deliver activity at 2 Royal Ave (a success in 2022, and wet weather contingency offering) and weekends in the run up to Christmas, supplemented by other city centre activity. However, to accommodate this expenditure there would be a reduction in the allocation to both entertainment and lighting displays.

Category	**Description**	**Indicative cost**
Entertainment	Variety of performer throughout city centre, window animation, parade,	£37,700
Lighting	Lighting projections, displays, lighting for window animation, includes equipment	£15,000

Production	production management, Riser stage, Larger PA, ancillary equipment,	£16,000
H&S, licensing, legal	licenses, first aid, insurance, H&S advisor, stewarding	£15,000
Traffic Management	road closure, parking bay suspension, traffic management contractor	£4,200
Survey	Socio-economic survey.	£5,100
Subsequent Weekends	Programming of 2 Royal Ave from opening weekend, throughout period, with additional weekend animation & music	£30,000
Total		£123,000

3.8 **Health and Safety Consultation:**

As per Members request, the Events Team have sought independent health and safety advise on each of the above options, the salient findings of this are as follows:

- the traditional Switch On Event in front of City Hall, has a long history and evolved over more than two decades
- The challenges faced over that period have influenced the evolution of the event
- The most recent iterations present a variety of health & safety implications for both the public and staff involved in the build, delivery and de-rig of the event. Similar public civic events, where incidents took place, illustrate the implications on local authorities.
- By contrast the 2021 & 2022 format carries relatively low risk from a health & safety perspective.
- Stakeholders have clearly stated a preference for the more recent format but accept that the 'traditional' switch on could still take place with mitigations in place.
- These mitigations will result in additional resources being required to deliver a safe event, which also meets the expectations of stakeholders.

The full report is attached in Appendix 1

3.9 **Public Engagement on Christmas (conducted by Thrive)**

	This provided insight on people's behaviours and how Christmas events make them feel/shape their sense of place, although did not focus on the format of the switch on event. Some General key findings on how people in Belfast feel about the city centre: • Everyone repeatedly mentioned how important publicly owned spaces are to keep people coming in and feeling proud of Belfast, a reflection of civic pride in the architectural heritage which exists throughout the city and a desire to preserve it for future generations to enjoy. • There was a desire to see more public spaces be used throughout the town centre: outdoor seating, green areas, nice places for people to exist without having to spend money. This connected to the panel's desire for the city centre to be a space where many people live, reflecting the diversity of the rest of the county.
3.10	**Creative Programming & Alignment with the Cultural Strategy – A City Imagining** Members are asked to note that the newer format compliments the Cultural Strategy – A City Imagining. Several priorities are actioned via the Christmas Programme. For example, Priority 1 of 'A City Belonging' is to *develop and deliver a co-design model for all cultural programmes* while Priority 9 under 'A City Creating' specifies to *involve creative and cultural practitioners in service design across Council;* In 2021, 33 Belfast based organisations from the cultural, arts and theatre/performance sectors were engaged to take part in this event and provide the animation over the 2 nights, with an additional 2 companies coming in from GB and 1 from Ireland. A smaller number were used in 2022, however, this was only one night. An action under priority 4 is *further develop the city as a gallery* – something the newer format delivers comprehensively through street art, static window displays, and various lighting initiatives. In a similar vein, Priority 5 (A City Challenging) focuses on placemaking - one action being '*deliver playful city initiative to improve the quality, accessibility and openness of public spaces*' The expansive nature of the Christmas programme of 2021 & 2022 across the City centre, transformed underused public spaces into vibrant, bright, intriguing and theatrical space via music, animation and window dressing. Pending final decision, and as per Members request the Events Team will work with Culture colleagues in the Belfast 2024 Team to deliver 'community engagement and local organisation involvement, choir competitions and a procession'.

3.11	**Environmental Impact:** As per Members request, Officers have viewed all options presented through the lens of Environmental Impact. Over the last 5-6 years the events team have tried to remove as much physical infrastructure as possible that lends to creative development and delivers a more organic event creating higher levels of sustainability in increasing employment of local talent performing at the event, creating live hubs of music and animation across city centre. The Events team give cognisance to sustainability throughout and where possible utilise existing power supplies, infrastructure and natural spaces lending to live programming, the footprint for the original format exceeds the current format with additional infrastructure requirements.
3.12	**Future Extension of the Lighting Scheme:** At March Committee, Members were advised that Christmas Lighting Scheme in 2022 was year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme. The scheme was identical to the 2021 programme, with the addition of icicles on Ann Street and the positioning and lighting on 12 additional trees on Donegall place. Feedback on the scheme was positive, however, there continues to be requests for an extension of the scheme to include arterial routes. This also includes lighting projections and additional illuminations across the city.
3.13	The budget for the Christmas lights has remained unchanged in the last three years and the Economic Development division do not have budget available to fund the expansion of the lighting scheme. Members should also be aware that any extension would require a significant lead in time to secure permissions, infrastructure and lighting.
3.14	**Financial & Resource Implications**
	There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals. However it should be noted, that in relation to Christmas 2024 neither option 1 or 2 allows for subsequent weekend activity. Should there be a desire to integrate this element under options 1 or 2 additional resource would need to be allocated. Any extension of the existing Festive Lighting Scheme would require additional resources.
3.15	**Equality & Good Relations Implications** None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Christmas external H&S report

Belfast City Council Christmas Lights Event – Safety Implications

Forward

This Report will consider the safety implications for the Christmas Lights Event with respect to the Stage Format that was utilised prior to 2020 when civic events were impacted by the COVID outbreak and the associated restrictions It will also consider the safety implications with respect to the Revised Format utilised since 2020 with entertainment being provided at multiple locations in the City Centre.

Introduction

The Christmas Lights Event has been an annual civic highlight over the past number of decades. Until 2020 with the onset of COVID the Event has been hosted at the iconic location of the front of City Hall. Since the early 2000s the Event has coincided with the opening of the Christmas Market. The Christmas Lights Event and the opening of the Christmas Market has been widely viewed as the beginning of the Christmas season.

The Christmas Lights Event Site incorporates a stage and ancillary structures being located on the cobbles to the front of the City Hall grounds, and on the pavement to either side of this area, with the spectators viewing the show from the area to the front of the stage and to the ‘east side’ of Donegall Square North, to the ‘west side’ of Donegall Square North, and on Donegall Place.

History for the Entertainment Arrangements/ Crowd Management Arrangements for the Christmas Lights Event

In the late 1980s the Event attracted a wide demographic audience with a mix of young families to see the ‘switch on’, curious shoppers, and groups of teenagers to see a live band that performed following the ‘switch on’. The numbers attending was not excessive and most of the spectators appeared to enjoy the Event with very few incidents of bad behaviour.

During the 90s the numbers attending increased, and the entertainment on the stage included appearances by performers who had appeared on television talent shows. A greater proportion of teenagers began attending with many behaving in an excitable manner which although generally innocent in nature, was unsettling for the families and young children present.

Unfortunately, in later years groups of youths from differing communities began to attend the Christmas Lights Event and although they were managed by Security Personnel at the Event Site, they arranged fights remote from the Event Site using mobile phones. There were incidents of significant disorder on a number of occasions at various locations including Castle Court.

It was therefore decided that only 'child friendly' acts would be booked for the Christmas Lights Event, and that following the entertainment and the Christmas Lights being 'switched on' there would be two Christmas songs played over the PA and the Event would be brought to a conclusion.

The revised stage offering resulted in the audience again being dominated by young families however numbers continued to increase.

From 2005 onwards a Christmas Market was hosted in the grounds of the City Hall. Initially the Market opened at approximately 7-30 pm at the time of the Christmas Lights 'switch on'. This brought additional numbers to the Event Site and adjacent areas with large queues forming at the entrances to the Christmas Market. The opening time for the Christmas Market has latterly been brought forward to mid-day prior to the 'switch-on'. This addressed the queuing issue.

As stated above, the numbers of spectators attending the 'switch on' itself continued to rise and following concerns regarding congestion in the area to the front of the stage it was decided that the numbers of spectators attending should be managed. The site was enclosed by pedestrian barriers and tickets were issued free of charge upon application in the weeks prior to the Christmas Lights Event. This system worked reasonably well although each year a number of persons who had obtained tickets did not show up at the Event (a problem experienced at many events where tickets are issued free of charge) until the onset of COVID in 2020.

History of Legislative Control of Outdoor Events

During the 1980s safety at outdoor entertainment events was relatively unregulated with very limited Guidance Documentation available.

Following a number of incidents and near misses in the 1980s including fatalities at a festival in Donnington England, the Guide to Safety at Outdoor Events was drafted and issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

The number of outdoor events including civic events in the British Isles increased dramatically during the following years – not all were well planned or well organised.

A number of serious incidents subsequently occurred at outdoor events including over 60 people being seriously injured at the Christmas Lights Event in Birmingham in 2009. There were also incidents at the Christmas Lights Event in Bournemouth in 2009. In 2011 2 people were killed at a civic event in Great Yarmouth where the Local Authority was held culpable for breaches of Health and Safety Legislation.

Since the late 1990s then a number of Safety Guidance Documents relating to Event Safety have been published and the industry has become increasingly more regulated. There has also been a number of documents issued relating to the provision of facilities for persons with access issues.

History of Events on Donegall Square West/ Donegall Place

A number of large-scale entertainment events (other than the Christmas Lights Events have been hosted on the roadways to the front of City Hall in recent years including:

- The Millennium Celebrations on New Years Eve 2000 – A ‘drive in’ stage, generator and associated barriers were located on the cobbles to front of City Hall. No other infrastructure was provided. There was unrestricted access to the Event Site as there were other events taking place in the City Centre that evening. Donegall Square North was closed from 7-00 pm on New Years Eve until 2-30 am on the following day.

- A Radio 1 Live Broadcast on New Years Eve 2001 — A stage was built on the cobbles to the front of City Hall. The Site perimeter was secured using 'heras fencing' to manage access (18,000 tickets were issued). Donegall Square North was closed from 5-00 pm on New Years Eve, until 2-30 am on the following day. The pavement to the front of the City Hall grounds was closed for 5 days.
- A Radio 1 Live Broadcast on New Years Eve 2002 — A stage was built on the cobbles to the front of the City Hall grounds. The Site perimeter was secured using 'heras fencing' to manage access (18,000 tickets were issued). Donegall Square North was closed from 5-00 pm on New Years Eve, until 2-30 am on the following day. The pavement to the front of the City Hall grounds was closed for 5 days.
- A BBC Live Broadcast 2009 – A stage spanned the grounds of the City Hall and the cobbles on Donegall Square North. A 'front of house unit', a universal access platform, camera platforms and tiered seating were built on Donegall Square North. The perimeter of the Site was secured using 'heras fencing' to manage access (10,000 tickets were issued). Donegall Square North was closed on a number of occasions mostly after 10-00 pm to facilitate the build. Donegall Square North was closed from 5-00 pm – 3-00 am on the day of the Event to complete the build, conduct the concert and to facilitate the 'takedown'.
- A Red Bull Formula 1 'Show Run' Event in 2010 – A Formula 1 Garage was built inside the City Hall grounds. Barriers were placed along Wellington Street, Donegall Square North, Chichester Street, and associated junctions, and to an 'outer cordon' to secure the viewing areas. Much of the build work was carried out very early on a Saturday morning and the 'takedown' work was undertaken very early on the Sunday morning. The roadways were closed from 7 pm until 9-30 pm on the evening of the Event to complete the build and to facilitate the 'Show Run'.
- An MTV Live Broadcast 2011 – A stage spanned the grounds of the City Hall and the cobbles on Donegall Square North. A 'front of house unit', a universal access platform, camera platforms and tiered seating were built on Donegall Square North. The perimeter of the Site was secured using 'heras fencing' to manage access (18,000 tickets were issued), Donegall Square North was closed on a number of occasions on the evenings prior to the event mostly after 10-00 pm to facilitate the build. Donegall Square North and Donegall Place were closed from 5-00 pm on the evening of the

event until 5-00 am on the following day to complete the build, conduct the concert and to facilitate the 'takedown'.

- Red Bull Formula 1 'Show Run' Event in 2018 – A Formula 1 Garage was built inside the City Hall Grounds. Barriers were placed along Wellington Street, Donegall Square North, Chichester Street, and associated junctions' and to an 'outer cordon' to secure the viewing areas. Much of the build work was carried out very early on a Saturday morning and the 'takedown' work very early on the Sunday morning. The roadways were closed from 7 pm until 9-30 pm on the evening of the Event to complete the build and to facilitate the 'Show Run'.
- A concert planned for New Years Eve 2003 had to be cancelled a few hours prior to the Event, due to deteriorating weather conditions. The performances were relocated to indoor venues, This demonstrates that difficult weather conditions can impact on the working environment particularly during winter months.

History of the Road layout to the front of the City Hall Grounds

During the early 1980s there were 4 lanes of traffic flowing from Wellington Street along Donegall Square North to its junction with Donegall Place. Vehicles could either proceed toward Chichester street or turn to the left along Donegall Place. Vehicles proceeding toward Chichester Street also had the option of turning right into Donegall Square East.

During the late 1990s Donegall Place became a 'one way' thoroughfare with traffic flowing from Castle Junction toward Donegall Square North. During the 2000s the pavements were widened and eventually traffic was reduced to one lane. Street scaping was undertaken including the provision of street furniture.

In recent years Donegall Square West has been used by Translink as a transport hub with general traffic being largely excluded from the thoroughfare. Buses emerge from Donegall Square West onto Donegall Square North and proceed to other parts of the city. Other bus routes approach Donegall Square North from Wellington Street and from Donegall Place. Closing Donegall Square North for any reason has a very significant impact on Translink operations during operational times.

The roadway on Wellington Street/ Donegall Square North and Chichester Street has been reduced to 3 lanes with the pavements being widened including the provision of car parking and bus stops. One of the lanes is now a dedicated bus lane.

More recently the 'glider' service has been introduced providing a frequent service from the east of the city to and from the west of the city.

Christmas Market

The Christmas Market was first hosted in the grounds of City Hall in 2005. The build for the Market commences in early November with the Market opening on the day of the Christmas Lights Event.

There is much building and stocking activity from very early morning on the Christmas Market opening day/ Christmas Lights Event day, when the stage set up is also taking place.

In recent years the Market has extended with units being located on the pavement on Donegal Square North to the front of the City Hall grounds. Some of these units have been vacated and used as production cabins and dressing accommodation for the Christmas Lights Event.

As stated above the Market initially opened immediately following the 'switch-on' of the Christmas Lights however in an effort to improve crowd management arrangements the opening time for the Market has more recently been moved to mid-day, prior to the Christmas Lights Event. This has proved to have been a success for both the Market and for the Christmas Lights Event.

It should be noted that the pedestrian gates to the front of the City Hall Grounds must be available as emergency exits from the Christmas Market both during the build and 'takedown' and during the Christmas Lights Event.

Structures/ Services Required for a Stage Type Show for the Christmas Lights Event and their Associated Issues

Overview

The build and ‘takedown’ for the Christmas Lights Event differs from the vast majority of other events hosted in the city in that most other site builds/ takedowns and particularly stage builds/ takedowns are undertaken in a secure space with unauthorised persons excluded. There is generally appropriate working space and ‘boneyard’ space (storage space for equipment). There are also appropriate arrangements for lorries to deliver and collect equipment etc. in a secure area.

Stage/ Big Screens

The use of a ‘drive-in’ stage obviates the need for a lengthy build period in an ‘active’ area. The area must be secured prior to the arrival of the stage. The ‘footprint’ of the stage requires the inner lane of Donegall Square North being utilised, with a Road Closure Order being required for the period when the stage is in place. Forward signage etc for traffic is also required in the lead up to, and during the Event. The PA, lighting, ‘backline’ equipment etc. required for the stage set-up can be delivered by truck that would park in the inner lane (now closed) and transferred to the stage area and integrated into the ‘show build’ accordingly. The lorry will then be driven away and will return at some point after the show when the process will be reversed.

The ‘big screens’ will be positioned approximately 25 meters to ‘stage left’ and to ‘stage right’ of the stage using similar methodology.

Issues

The pavement to the front of the City Hall will be closed with pedestrians having to be redirected across Donegall Square North or diverted across the front of the stage via a pedestrian route formed using barriers. Some pedestrians choose to cross Donegall Square North at points other than those designated for pedestrian crossings.

The inner lane of the roadway on Donegall Square North will be closed to traffic to facilitate the ‘footprint’ of the stage, the pedestrian diversion route, and trucks parking whilst off loading and collecting equipment. This impacts on vehicle flow in the area.

Event personnel will be carrying out a wide variety of tasks in a confined area and on occasions close to moving traffic.

There is a limited ‘window’ for delivering stock to the Christmas Market between the completion of the build to the Market and the opening time of the Market, thus deliveries to the Market are taking place on the morning of the Christmas Lights Event and the associated Site Build.

The pedestrian gates leading from the City Hall grounds onto Donegall Square North are emergency exits routes from the Christmas Market and therefore must be maintained as such.

Control Room/ First Aid Point – Double Stacked Portacabin

In recent years a double stacked ‘portacabin’ has been located on the corner of Donegall Square North and Donegall Place (‘west side’). The ground floor cabin has been used as a First Aid Room and the upper cabin has been used as an Event Control Point.

The ‘portacbins’ are delivered on a ‘flatbed’ lorry fitted with a ‘hi ab’. The area where the structure is to be located is secured using pedestrian fencing and tape. The ground floor cabin is lifted from the lorry into position by ‘hi ab’. The upper cabin is then lifted into position again by ‘hi ab’ and the access steps are then placed in position. The process has to be reversed when the ‘portacabins’ are removed.

Issues

Pedestrian access to the area has to be halted when the positioning and removal processes are being undertaking. Pedestrians have to be diverted around the location, however despite the use of pedestrian barriers, tape and stewards’ compliance can often be challenging.

Pedestrian access routes in the area of the facility are compromised when the ‘double stack’ is in position.

Again, Event Personnel on occasions are working close to moving vehicles.

Access Platforms

In recent years access platforms have been built on the ‘northern side of the pavement’ on Donegall Square North (west side) and Donegall Square North (east side). Each of the build areas are secured using pedestrian barriers, tape, and stewards. The equipment is delivered by truck and built in situ with the process being reversed during the ‘takedown’.

Issues

Pedestrian access to the areas where the platforms are located has to be halted during the build and ‘takedown’ processes. Pedestrians have to be diverted around the locations, however, as stated above despite the use of pedestrian barriers, tape and stewards’ compliance can often be challenging.

Pedestrian access routes in the area of the facility are compromised when the platforms are in position.

Again, Event Personnel on occasions are working close to moving vehicles.

The Taxi Rank on Donegall Square North (east side) has to be relocated.

Perimeter Fencing

Stillages of pedestrian fencing are delivered by lorry to various positions around the Site during the early hours of the morning of the Christmas Lights Event. Stillages are ‘off loaded’ and placed in position using a forklift truck. The units will be collected following the Event set into the stillages and loaded onto a lorry using a forklift truck.

Perimeter fencing including access lanes has to be positioned as to form barrier lines on Donegall Square West, Donegall Square North and on Donegall Square East. In order to keep traffic flowing as long as possible a Road Closure Order for the remaining traffic lanes is implemented as late as possible as to facilitate the flow of traffic that will include vehicles transporting shoppers. Buses have to be diverted with the ensuing challenge of advising the travelling public of the route changes.

Issues

As stated above the timing of the Road Closure being as late as practical prior to the Christmas Lights Event commencing presents a number of challenges:

- The use of a forklift truck on ‘live roads’ using banksmen to deliver the stillages to the respective areas.
- Despite announcements being made and the actions of stewards’ significant numbers of attendees who are in the area, run across Donegall Square North once the Closure Process commences but whilst traffic is still flowing, to obtain prime viewing positions.
- Significant resources are utilised clearing vehicles from parking bays in the Event Site and apron areas in the period prior to the Road Closure.
- The Road Closure is extremely difficult to implement due to cars emerging from alleys etc. again providing a pedestrian/ vehicle interface.
- The barrier lines must be built quickly as to secure the integrity of the Site with patrons either inside of the Event Site or approaching the Event Site, and shoppers leaving the Event Site, thus Event Personnel are carrying and moving barriers with significant numbers of pedestrians in the work areas.
- Some persons without tickets obtain access to the Event Site (an estimate of the numbers is factored into the Viewing Capacity and ticket issue).

Additional Control Measures that could be Implemented

When assessing the implementation of additional Control Measures the practicalities, costs, and what is achievable must be considered. In addition, consideration must be given to the ‘knock on’ impacts – by addressing one issue do we simply move the problem to somewhere else?

The following may be considered:

- A ‘cut off time’ for the delivery of stock to the Christmas Market could be agreed that would provide the traders with an appropriate period of time to complete deliveries on the morning of the Christmas Lights Event/ Market opening day and provide a reasonable ‘window’ for the Event Personnel to locate infra structure prior to the early morning build-up of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the Donegall Square North area.

This would require careful coordination between the Christmas Lights Event Personnel, and the Management of the Christmas Market.

- The Control Room could be relocated to a suitable office on the upper floor to the front of the City Hall (a City Hall Office has been used in previous years – the Emergency Control Room located to the rear of the City Hall does not provide a 'hands on' view of the Event Site. A First Aid Point could be relocated to a less active area or possibly to a Market Cabin to the front of the City Hall grounds on Donegall Square North.
  This would result in perhaps one of the most hazardous operations being obviated but would require appropriate alternative accommodation for the Event Control Point and the First Aid Point being agreed.

- The 'take down' for the Stage and associated production equipment, the 'big screens' and the accessible platforms that would normally take place following the show would instead be undertaken during the early hours of Sunday morning.
  The Event Personnel would 'break' the barrier lines immediately after the spectators vacated the Event Site but would not undertake any other activities that required accessing the traffic lanes until the early hours of the following morning.
  This would enable the traffic lanes to re-open at an earlier time following the Event.
  The bulk of the 'takedown' work would then take place at a time when pedestrian flow and traffic flow would be minimal.
  Unfortunately, there is likely to be an increase in costs as equipment would be hired for a longer period, and Event Personnel would be 'brought back' during the early Sunday morning period.

Revised Christmas Lights Format

Following the onset of COVID a Revised Format has been adopted for the Christmas Lights Event. Entertainers have been engaged to perform in shop units and from public spaces, and lighting has been utilised to illuminate the frontages of some buildings. A Christmas Parade comprising of floats and performers navigated its way along a designated route (mostly pedestrianised) through much of the commercial centre of the City during the 2022 Event.

Site Build/ Takedown

The Revised Format is relatively risk free. The site build at the various locations is less complex and can be undertaken without Road Closures and poses limited risk to passers-by. The majority of the performances are located in pedestrianised areas or in areas where there are wide pavements.

Issues

Many of the performance sites rely on the cooperation of building owners and the safety arrangements for the respective buildings (the integrity of the electrical supply, the emergency exiting arrangements etc.).

A short distance of the Parade Route I 2022 traversed active roadways and thus required PSNI attendance for a short period of time.

The Site of the Revised Format covers a large area and thus is less easy to monitor.

Stakeholders

A number of Stakeholder Groups were contacted regarding the Format that might be adopted for future Christmas Lights Events. The PSNI, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, the Road Service and Translink all advised that the Revised Christmas Light Format provides little or no issues for their respective organisations. They have also advised that although the Stage Format can present significant challenges, these challenges can be managed. All of the organisations have advised that they recognise the importance of this Civic Event and will work with the Council in its delivery using either Format.

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	10X PLACE – draft consultation response
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** [ ] **No** [X]

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** [X] **No** [ ]

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on a call for evidence from the Department for the Economy regarding Place 10X. The call closes on 9 July 2023.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to: • Note the Place 10X call for evidence • Agree the draft response to the call, as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Members will be aware that the Department for the Economy (DfE) launched their 10X Economic Vision in 2021. This is the Department's plan to create a pathway to transform the economy in a way that is inclusive, innovative and sustainable.

3.2	Since its publication, the Department has been working to consider how the practical implementation of overarching objectives set out in the 10X Economic Vision is to be achieved. It has issued a number of related documents such as the Skills Strategy (Skills for a 10X Economy) and has been working on appropriate metrics to track progress. While the budget situation in all departments is currently unclear, it is proposed that DfE investment will be re-profiled to align with the 10X ambition – and this will mean that all delivery supported by the Department will be directed towards activity that can support the 10X ambition.
3.3	One of the key considerations for the strategy is the issue of "place". To consider how this should be reflected in departmental investment, DfE has recently launched a call for evidence relating to sub-regional economic approaches – working title "Place 10X". The call for evidence involves six prescribed questions. These are: 1. What is the problem we are trying to solve? 2. What geographic areas should Place 10X cover? 3. What is expected of delivery partners? 4. What interventions could or already occur? 5. What does success look like? 6. Is the Department's view of place and use of Place 10X correct?
3.4	Members will be aware that the issue of place-based approaches to economic development and investment has been a recurring theme in recent policy documents. There is no clear definition – and it can mean different things in different contexts. In 2022, the 11 councils commissioned a piece of research on "A place-based approach to supporting economic development in Northern Ireland". The high-level findings of this work were: • Place-based approaches are closely aligned with devolution debate. However, in practice, they can range from stronger partnership working on basis of agreed plans (e.g. community planning model) to additional devolution of responsibilities (regeneration of particular interest in this field) • Need for all regional approaches to identify sub-regional variations – but with the ability to flex depending on the issue and in line with local geographies/working areas • Opportunity to use Shared Prosperity funding to re-position role of councils in developing and delivering solutions that reflect local needs (within an overall framework) • City and Growth Deals demonstrate value of aggregating demand – are the current structures the right ones on an ongoing basis and for all economic matters?

3.5	A summary of the six questions posed and draft responses to each of these have been collated and are attached in Appendix 1. Members are asked to review the draft responses and confirm their agreement that this can be submitted to DfE as the Belfast City Council response to the call or to raise any other matters that they wish to incorporate. They should note that this is a call for evidence rather than a fully-developed approach to place-based economic development – this will follow once responses to this consultation are analysed.
3.6	From the perspective of Belfast City Council, the fact that the regional government department with responsibility for economic growth has identified the need for flexible solutions that are reflective of local need and opportunity is welcome. As a result, the tone of the draft response is to recognise and support the need for place-based approaches. However the response also suggests that there is a more effective mechanism for achieving this, namely to utilise the data, insights and structures that already exist at local level (e.g. Community Planning Partnerships) to identify local challenges and opportunities and then either focus efforts at that level or look across the board to consider cross-area commonalities if that would make a more effective intervention.
3.7	What is not yet clear is how the Department will take account of these "sub-regional" geographies in their policy-making and investment – and what is in scope under this approach. For example, DfE is responsible for a range of activities ranging from skills support (including funding of further and higher education); investment and sector development support (delivered through agencies such as Invest NI and Tourism NI) and energy policy. The consultation does not clarify whether all policy areas will be covered by the proposed approach. It is also important to note that this is a departmental rather than a civil service-wide response – so it will not apply to other relevant areas impacting on economic development such as regeneration, local transport and infrastructure.
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> No specific financial or resource implications.
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The Department will be required to undertake an EQIA on any proposed approach before it can be adopted.
4.0	**Appendices -Documents attached**
	Appendix 1: Place 10X – draft Belfast City Council response to call for evidence.

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Appendix 1: Call for Evidence – Place 10X – June 2023

Q1: What is the problem we are trying to solve?

Summary

- The call for evidence notes that: "*There is a Departmental macro regional approach (10X) and there are local government approaches but no defined DfE sub-regional approach and no strategic link between those three levels – is there a need for a sub-regional level?*".
- In order to assess whether there are variations in performance, the Department has included a series of datasets aggregated up from local government district data to the level of the four City and Growth Deal areas. For info, these are:
    - Belfast Region City Deal – comprising Belfast City Council; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council
    - Mid South West Growth Deal comprising Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council; Mid Ulster District Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
    - Derry and Strabane Growth Deal comprising Derry City and Strabane District Council area only
    - Causeway Growth Deal comprising Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council). *Have used CGD geographies for an initial assessment of disparities on key issues (employment; income; qualifications; entrepreneurship)*
- In summary, they suggest that the analysis demonstrates that there is work to do to "level up"…and the inference is that this justifies the need for a sub-regional approach
- For the second part of this question, they ask "*If the Department has a role to play at a sub-regional level, does it then follow that there is a role at council area? What could this be given the role and remit of local government? Should DfE be involved only sub-regionally initially leaving the local space to councils, business, academia and communities?*"

Suggested response

- We welcome the recognition of a need for more flexible approach in the implementation of regional policy objectives. We note the variations in the data provided and, while the data is only part of the picture and does not consider issues such as support infrastructure in place;

strength and availability of networks and relationships, it can provide an important benchmark against which to set objectives and track progress

- There is some confusion over the use whether the department's intention is that place-based will automatically mean sub-regional – or whether the defined geography will vary depending on the issue under discussion (with local council level as the likely point from which all interventions build up). We fully endorse the need for flexible implementation of regional policy at a local level – but simply creating a sub-regional tier without additional transfer of statutory authority will not necessarily achieve that ambition, in our view
- A key concern for us is that, as currently described, the sub-regional approach could actually just represent another layer of bureaucracy and accountability that may not add any value
- The question around whether the Department has a role to play at local level (part B of the question 1) – we would encourage the department to engage through the existing community planning mechanisms. We consider that, by greater engagement and an appropriate investment of resources at a local level, the department – along with other partners – can both make its resources work more effectively and in line with local need. This can also help support the delivery of regional ambitions and objectives. The proposed approach appears to suggest additional activity. Instead we would propose that, if the department found a way to work better with partners at a local level – and was prepared to be flexible in the implementation of its key policy areas at a local level – they would achieve the objectives set out in Place 10X
- We consider that local authorities can provide a range of support role in the department's proposals around sub-regional economic development. In addition to our delivery responsibility in a number of areas, we can play an important convening role and are well placed to advice on relationships, networks, key contacts and local infrastructure.

Q2: What geographic areas should 10X cover?

Summary

- The call for evidence proposes three possible strands to geographic approach:
    - Sub-regional (based on City and Growth Deal geographies)
    - Local (council)
    - Custom (e.g. cross-border)

- It suggests that the City/Growth Deal geography is "*most appropriate starting sub-regional model for Place 10X*" and notes that, given the progress made to date at this level "*taking a consistent approach beyond the programme for this purpose would therefore be reasonable*".

Suggested response

- We acknowledge and support the work undertaken through City and Growth Deals – they have encouraged new ways of thinking and collaborating across local authority boundaries and will support the delivery of investment projects that will be critical for future economic growth across the region
- In our view, the Department should take a case by case approach to investment – rather than creating a new sub-regional "tier". Local authority boundaries appear to the appropriate building blocks from which to build up or drill down
- We consider that the approach needs to be appropriate to the matter in hand. For example, the eleven councils are currently commissioning a new approach to business start-up and growth and we have proposed that the "sub-regional" approach will see the region broken into five areas – based on business population. The local government boundary is the building block for the five area structure. We consider that, in this instance, it will give the right mix of local flavour alongside an appropriate volume that will generate interest from the market. In this way, we have acknowledged the need to work outside of the 11 council structure but have done so in a way that makes sense for this policy action. We propose that this same approach should be used by DfE.

Q3: What is expected of delivery partners?

Summary

- The call notes that "*If DfE can use the evidence base to further identify sub-regional disparities…delivery partners such as Invest NI could direct focused support to tackle disparities at that level*". Councils will take the view that they are consistently identifying disparities and local challenges – and working with partners such as Invest NI to address those. Invest NI already provides data on its performance at local level – and is a statutory partner for Community Planning. Our experience is that, while there is an appetite for some local flex, the mandate for change is limited

- In our view, simply identifying data without any policy commitment will render this approach limited in its capacity to make any significant change
- The call also notes that "*local councils can play a key role in working with the Department to align their priorities with DfE's macro indicators for success*". This is simply stating what the current approach is: councils are constantly working in the context of regional approaches and considering how we can respond to those – the real issue is what DfE is going to invest and how it is going to resource this new approach.

Suggested response

- The proposed approach aligns closely with community planning which already operates at the local authority level. The challenge here can be to move departments beyond "having regard to" commitments, to compelling them to delivery. If Place 10X can success in doing this, it will have a better chance of making a difference and addressing existing disparities
- Given the volume of work already under way through community planning: building a baseline of economic and social performance; identifying – with partners – priority activities to address challenges and support development within the area – it is proposed that DfE engages with the councils to understand how the sub-regional approach can align to this work. If this doesn't happen, we see a risk that this could be just another layer on top of community planning
- Councils are familiar with meeting regional objectives – the challenge is lack of flexibility in how resources can be deployed to support delivery
- We are unsure from the call for evidence what the purpose of the sub-regional approach is likely to be. Is it simply to improve engagement? Or is there any view that it can provide a mechanism for delegating delivery responsibility to the appropriate level? If it is the former, our concern is that this will simply introduce another tier of activity – with no guarantee of adding value.

Q4: What interventions could or already occur?

Summary

- The call notes that *"Interventions can take a range of forms – from policy and legislative changes to….funded programme interventions that are targeted rather than rolled out at a regional level"…*

- It continues: "*A collaboratively produced delivery plan setting out the way forward should capture not only DfE interventions but those at local government level, and associated actions of other NICS place projects with some economic benefit…it is important that all partners have a say in the prioritisation of interventions"*. The instinct in reading this is to ask the question as to how this differs from community planning? Is it the same thing but at a sub-regional level?

Suggested response

- We agree with the need for a consistent, shared response to place-based economic development – starting with DfE but ideally extending beyond this to cover other related areas (such as regeneration and local infrastructure)
- We have some concerns with the proposals for a "collaboratively produced delivery plan" – principally because it risks duplicating effort with no guarantee of impact. Instead, we would encourage more targeted engagement and active membership of structures such as community planning and other collaborative working at local level. These can provide a mechanism for the translation of regional objectives at a local level – and ultimately help tackle inequality and unlock local potential.

Q5: What are the indicators of success?

Summary

- The call acknowledges that much of the economic data is available at council level. It includes a number of suggested categories of data to be collated including:
    - Population and its make up
    - Breakdown of industry
    - Entrepreneurship and Business Growth
    - Labour Market
    - Skills and Qualifications
    - Quality of life, wellbeing and equality
    - Innovation.
- It also notes that there will be some work required to link the agreed data sets to the 10X ambitions. In terms of internal working, it recognises the need to consider how "place" is taken account of in new policy actions and suggests that this could be done by referencing

this in impact assessments etc. Whether this is simply to note that the issue of place is covered or whether it is to propose mitigations/specific actions is unclear at this point.

Suggested response

- We are in broad agreement with the themes for the data sets as proposed in the call with a number of minor amendments:
    - Within the "labour market" theme, we would like to see consideration of specific target groups (those with a disability; females; young people; labour market participation by qualification level etc.)
    - Quality of life, wellbeing and equality – unclear whether this will cover deprivation – if not, we would propose that it does
- We consider that this approach presents a significant opportunity to better data sharing between and across government departments and local authorities. We have begun to make some progress in this regard through our work on Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) but we consider that this approach could help go further
- All councils are currently in the process of reviewing their Community Plans for the next four years. As part of this work, there has been significant data gathering at a local level. It would appear sensible that government should use this data as part of the work on collating local data in order to generate benchmarks and identify comparative areas of challenge and opportunity across the region.

Q6: Is the Department's definition of Place and use of Place 10X correct?

Summary

- The initial working definition proposed is: *locally-designed interventions to deliver innovative, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Building on the existing strengths of a place to unlock potential, to empower communities and to tackle sub-regional and local inequality*
- The call notes that this is not about setting an approach that others (including other departments) will be obliged to follow – it is simply about separating the DfE Place role from that of other departments and "*to create a focus in establishing a sub-regional and local level response in tacking disparities*".

Suggested response

- We welcome this approach from DfE. It acknowledges that areas have different strengths, opportunities and challenges – and that the departments need to build in flexibility in their policy responses to ensure that delivery responds to these
- We consider that there is some inconsistency in the language around local/sub-regional in the context of place: we don't agree that it is about local/sub-regional/regional – we think that it needs to be considered on a case by case basis, depending on the issue
- We consider that councils are well-placed to work with DfE and to advise on appropriate approaches – based on their local knowledge, networks, insights and contacts. This may mean different approaches – and different geographies – for action, depending on the issue in question. We consider that by simply setting a rigid formula of local/sub-regional/regional – and proposing that the "place" activities happen at sub-regional level, there is a risk of additional activity with no guarantee of impact.

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report provides a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that the City Growth & Generation Committee is responsible for, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy & Resources (SP&R) Committee that all standing committees receive regular updates.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that the Committee: • Notes the updates to all Notices of Motion that this Committee is responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and • Agrees to the closure of 3 Notices of Motion, as referenced in Appendix 1 and noted in paragraph 3.4 below.

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	At the SP&R Committee meeting on 25th October 2019, members agreed "*that this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:* *1. Date received* *2. Notice of motion title* *3. Submitted by which Councillor* *4. Council meeting date* *5. Committee motion is referred to* *6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated* *7. Month it will be reported back to committee* *8. Other action to be taken."*
3.2	It was subsequently agreed that quarterly updates would be brought to the council's statutory committees providing a regular update on the progress of each motion for which the committee is responsible for.
3.3	At the SP&R Committee on 20th November 2020, members approved the arrangement for the future management of motions, which included recommendations that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons: • **Category 1** – **Notice of Motion contained an action that has been completed**. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a Notice of Motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Motion. As these are not technically part of the Notice of Motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of Motion can therefore be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. • **Category 2 - Notice of Motion has become Council policy or absorbed into a strategic programme of work.** These Motions did not contain a specific task that could be completed but rather they are more strategic in nature and require changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented

	through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.
3.4	There are presently 13 Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which the City Growth & Regeneration (CG&R) Committee is responsible for. Members are asked to approve the recommendation to close 3 motions (detailed below) and note status updates for the remaining 10 motions which remain open. Additional information is included at Appendix 1. **Category 1 Recommended Closures**: • Letter to DfI re Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan (ID = 274). • Presentation re GP services in Belfast (ID = 291). **Category 2 Recommended Closure**: • Development of Community Wealth Building framework (ID = 211).
3.5	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There are no additional financial implications attached to this report. Finance and resource implications are considered by Committee when taking decisions on the specific Notices of Motion and Issues Raised by Members.
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents attached**
	Appendix 1: Notices of Motion Live Database – CG&R Committee

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City Growth & Regeneration Notice of Motions

Notices of Motion and Issued Raised in Advance that remain OPEN

ID	Date	Notice of Motion	Proposed By	Referral Route	Lead Officer	Latest Status Update
72	04/03/2020	Review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme	Cllr O'Hara	Issue Raised in Advance (CG&R)	John Greer	An update was brought to February's CG&R Committee. It noted that as part of the ongoing review into potential discounts, Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, added date of birth as an essential criterion for users from 13 October 2022. It was further agreed to wait as usage data is collated to ensure we have an accurate portrayal of the age demographic. An update will be brought to a future meeting.
152	13/01/2021	Environmental Infrastructure in Council Car Parks	Cllr Heading	Issue Raised in Advance (CG&R)	John Tully	The council's Climate team commissioned consultants to develop an EV strategy. It is expected that this work will complete at the end of June 2023, to allow alignment with the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan.
153	13/01/2021	Disabled Parking Accreditation Scheme	Cllr McMullan	Issue Raised in Advance (CG&R)	Cathy Reynolds	Disability Motoring UK's Disabled Parking Accreditation scheme have confirmed that all council off-street car parks meet their recommendations for blue badge parking bays. Nevertheless, we are continuing to work with colleagues in Facilities Maintenance and partners in DfI, to gain approvals and determine costs, to introduce the recommendations from the Audit.
208	04/10/2021	Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy	Cllr de Faoite	Notice of Motion – straight to CG&R	John Greer	This work is being progressed with the City Centre All-Party Working Group following the development of a Night-Time Economy framework. Following engagement with the BIDs, this motion will be coordinated with the ongoing Purple Flag accreditation process.
217	01/11/2021	Tourism Street Signage	Cllr Long	Notice of Motion - referred by S&B Committee	John Greer	April's CG&R Committee approved work plans for Tourism and Culture for 2023/24. These include plans for a 'Heritage Audit' and an 'Audit of Visitor Signage', which may help inform this motion and determine the resource requirement.
289	01/12/2022	Translink - Night-time provision of services	Cllr Lyons	Notice of Motion – debated at council	Cathy Reynolds	New Update: Officers are engaging with Translink through community planning structures and processes. As part of the review of the Belfast Agenda the Connectivity Active and Sustainable Travel draft action plan currently includes the following action which Translink have committed to lead on:

						'Expand the timetable with a greater service in evenings and funding for the provision of night-time services'.
303	24/01/2023	Support the network of WW2-era Pillboxes	Ald Dorrian	Notice of Motion - referred by S&B Committee	John Greer	New Update: Committee adopted the motion and agreed, in the first instance, that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how it might be facilitated, resourced and managed.
309	22/02/2023	Rent Controls	Cllr Beattie	Issue Raised in Advance (Special CG&R)	Cathy Reynolds	New Update: Letters were drafted and sent to the Head of the Civil Service and the DfC Permanent Secretary (24/03/2023). As of end May, one response had been received. The outstanding response is being chased, before both will be presented to Committee
310	08/03/2023	Lifelong Learning Alliance	Cllr Spratt	Issue Raised in Advance (CG&R)	John Greer	New Update: Democratic Services are drafting an invite to be sent to the organisation inviting them to present at the August special committee meeting.
314	04/03/2023	Rosetta Way – "quietway"	Cllr De Faoite	Notice of Motion – straight to CG&R	Cathy Reynolds	New Update: Democratic Services issued a letter to the DfI Permanent Secretary on 17/04/2023.

Notices of Motion and Issued Raised in Advance recommended to CLOSE

ID	Date	Notice of Motion	Proposed By	Referral Route	Lead Officer	Update / Latest Status
211	04/10/2021	Community Wealth Building	Cllr Murphy	Notice of Motion – straight to CG&R	John Greer	**Recommend to close (Category 2)** Following consideration of the DfC Ministerial established Independent Expert Advisory Panel's recommendations on Community Wealth Building and how these relate to work underway within Council a report was submitted to the Social Policy Working Group (SPWG) highlighting that the Council's approach to Inclusive Growth and the underpinning enabling levers and key projects will help deliver the ambitions of community wealth building (CWB), e.g. social value procurement, Real Living Wage accreditation, employability and skills, social enterprise and co-operative support, bespoke asset management transfer pilots, Belfast Business Promise. A further assessment and critique of Council activity in relation to the CWB pillars to identify the gaps and opportunities has been considered by the SPWG and will continue to inform its programme of work. Progress on the pillars of activity will be brought through the SPWG and the respective Committees going forward as work continues to evolve, in the absence of central government funding for CWB activity.
274	28/09/2022	Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan	Cllr de Faoite	Issue Raised in Advance (Special CG&R)	John Greer	**Recommend to close (Category 1)** Democratic Services wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure as agreed and the Private Office response was brought to Committee in November 2022. It indicated that DfI officials are currently developing several schemes within the BCNDP for inclusion in a short-term plan for delivery between 2022 and 2025. Secondly, regarding the request for a controlled crossing on the Ravenhill Road at the Ardenlee Avenue junction, local officials will need to carry out a survey after which they will write to council to advise of the outcome.
291	07/12/2022	GP services in Belfast	Cllr Heading	Issue Raised in Advance (CG&R)	Cathy Reynolds	**Recommend to close (Category 1)** Representatives from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group presented to the Special CG&R Committee meeting on 22 Feb 2023.

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CITY GROWTH & REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme
Date:	14th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Fintan Grant, Operational Development Manager Cathryn Mc Oscar, Assets Development Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To update Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme for 2022-2023 financial year (year 7 of operation).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • note the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for 2022-2023 financial year (year 7 of operation)

	• note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people; • note the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion. • note the update that tender will be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Background** The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015 as part Belfast City Council's physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception using bikes and supporting infrastructure from 'Nextbike by TIER'. The scheme currently operates with 455 bikes (including those in reserve for new stands) and 52 docking stations.
3.2	<u>Expansion of the Scheme</u> At CG&R on 12 May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast Bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. All stations below are now operational • Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre • Olympia Leisure Centre • Kennedy Centre • Waterworks Council officers are currently liaising with the operator and supplier to improve the supply chain issues for future installations.
3.3	At CG&R on 9 June 2021 it was agreed to proceed with an additional 15 docking stations. At SP&R on 18 June 2021 members agreed for £500,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal.
3.4	Works are ongoing for the design and installation of eight stations in Phase 1 (to be installed in 2023): • North: Yorkgate and Shore Road • West: St Mary's College and Shankill Road

	• South: Lisburn Road and Malone Road • East: Castlereagh Road, Upper Newtownards Road. There are plans for seven stations in Phase 2
3.5	As previously agreed by the committee, discussion and agreement through Area Working Groups is required to determine exact locations and consider those against the Site Expansion Matrix. These site options and discussions with Area Working Groups commenced in November 2022. The AWGs have agreed the exact locations in their respective areas.
3.6	<u>Operational Performance</u> Availability Following the ongoing challenges sourcing replacement bike parts, this issue has been resolved and the number of bikes on the street during Q4 has increased. The average daily bikes on the street during Q4 was 295.
3.7	An additional 180 bikes have been purchased to facilitate the ongoing docking station expansion, and this stock will be filtered onto the street, so availability levels are expected to further increase in coming months.
3.8	<u>Membership</u> There were 16,282 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q4. Nextbike by Tier the current provider changed their payment operator during Q4 and as such the details of non-active members are no longer recorded as registered users. Going forward all active users will need to update their information with the new supplier. • In Q4 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships remained the most popular form of membership, accounting for 83% of users. • Annual memberships accounted for 15% of users. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG. • Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for just over 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.
3.9	<u>Journeys</u> There have been 1,350,153 journeys since the scheme was launched including 24,118 journeys during Q4 Year 7.

	Although this is a decrease of 20% from the same period in Year 6 (which was an exceptionally busy year for the scheme), journeys during this period also decreased by 24% against Q4 average since the scheme commenced, which poor weather contributed to.
	<u>Vandalism</u>
3.10	Members will be aware that vandalism is an ongoing problem. Upgrades to the forks to help prevent the unauthorised removal of bikes has been successful however, damage is now being caused to the rear wheels and to the docking points while bikes are being forced from docking stations.
3.11	There were 52 instances of vandalism is Q4. This is much lower than previous periods and lower than the quarterly average by 31%. Vandalism costs payable by the Council for this period is £5,782. Whilst this figure is significantly lower than the previous quarter, it is higher than the quarterly average (£2,734)
3.12	Members should note that generally the number of vandalism incidents has decreased in recent times, however vandalism costs have increased due to the higher cost of parts associated with a higher quality of bike. Bikes were upgraded to 'SMART' bikes in 2021. For comparison, in the same period in 2017, there were 154 instances of vandalism at a cost of £5,237 i.e. lower incidents but at a higher cost. See Appendix 1 tables 2 and 3 for annual comparison.
3.13	Members should also note that following the upgrade to 'SMART' bikes, the amount of theft has decreased due to GPS tracking in the bike allowing for recovery. The operator is very proactive at retrieving missing bikes.
3.14	The bikes operator continues to deliver operational improvements and community engagement initiatives with PSNI to help decrease vandalism incidents.
	<u>Subscriptions and Usage Revenue</u>
3.15	Income from fees and charges in Q4 was £19,930. This is 48% lower than average for this period. This could be due to a number of contributing factors including poor weather and change of payment provider. Income from fees and charges for the 2022-2023 financial year was £176,171

3.16	MARCOMMS Marketing activity during Q4 included: • Social Media messaging and video promotion on “Lock it Dock it” • Article in Winter City Matters magazine (circulation of 160k homes); on new stations at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Olympia Leisure Centre, The Kennedy Centre and the Waterwork. Belfast Bikes currently has 5.1k followers on Twitter; 1.7k on Facebook; and 1.1k on Instagram.
3.17	Operator contract NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bikes scheme, with a contract renewal available until 2024. Council staff are currently reviewing the scheme and will make future recommendations for the management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme as part of a new procurement package.
3.18	Sponsorship Sponsorship ended in September 2022 and council officers are currently assessing procurement options for a new sponsor of the scheme.
3.19	Response to Notice of Motion Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O’Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to investigate “ *as part of the current strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, consideration be given to granting free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme”.*
3.20	Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, added date of birth (D.O.B.) as an essential criteria for users from 13 October 2022. It would be prudent to wait approximately six months to allow the majority of users to upgrade their information before accurate age demographics can be determined.
3.21	However, initial reports indicate 53% of users fall within the ‘25 and under’ age group. Providing free usage to under 25’s is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on revenue generated from the bike scheme, which directly contributes to operating costs.

3.22 Update on Covered Cycle Stands city-wide

Whilst Covered Cycle Stands are not part of the Belfast Bikes scheme, both initiatives are aligned to the Bolder Vision with a focus on improvements in the active travel provision and infrastructure across the city. Covered Cycle Stands are part of the Active Travel Enablers project.

3.23 Phase 1

Under the DfI Sustainable and Active Travel elements of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, 10 covered cycle stands were funded city-wide. Locations were agreed in previous CGR Committee and the status is as follows:

Gasworks	Installed July 2022
St. George's Market	Stand delivered but still awaiting DfI approval
Grosvenor Community Centre	Installed September 2022
Shankill Leisure Centre	Installed July 2022
Belmont Park	Installed August 2022
Inverary Community Centre	Installed August 2022
Belfast Zoo	Installed August 2022
Waterworks	Installed August 2022
Belvoir Activity Centre	Installed August 2022
Mary Peter's Track	Installed September 2022

3.24 Phase 2

Members received an update on the DfI funding for the Active Travel Enabling Projects in March 2022 that outlined the projects, budget and timeframe for delivery. In terms of the covered cycle stands, officers drew upon the priority areas identified by Sustrans, and these locations were also assessed in terms of the deliverability within the timeframe as well as the key criteria aligned to cycle infrastructure provision.

Following a procurement process, a supplier has been appointed for the next 10 covered cycle stands being delivered currently.

3.25 Financial & Resource Implications

Finance

There are no specific financial or resource implications contained within this report.

3.26 Equality or Good Relations Implications

	None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Belfast Bikes - Performance Data Q4 (Jan 2023- March 23)

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Table 1 – Belfast Bike rentals by Month and Year

Month	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
April	2,162	15,163	17,253	13,274	13,306	0*	30,693	10,617
May	16,151	20,490	21,689	17,867	16,720	0*	20,533	12,711
June	20,828	20,404	21,902	17,448	14,698	0*	26,142	15,579
July	19,807	16,593	18,461	16,878	15,350	2,898	25,310	17,891
August	17,709	21,345	19,756	15,406	13,799	4,693	23,840	20,858
September	19,448	21,448	17,037	15,438	11,959	4,755	22,968	17,426
October	18,807	21,270	17,348	19,373	12,402	3,274	18,587	14,564
November	15,274	18,676	12,726	15,031	9,173	3,462	15,716	11,794
December	13,036	15,022	7,724	10,526	7,829	3,149	9,678	7094
January	12,121	16,300	9,461	13,316	9,712	4,967	10,053	6928
February	13,846	15,695	10,640	13,434	7,540	9,233	8,137	8057
March	14,982	19,064	11,199	12,314	4,761	28,903	12,119	9133
Total	**184,171**	**221,470**	**185,196**	**180,305**	**137,249**	**65,334**	**223,776**	**152,652**

**Not operational due to Covid-19*

Table 2 - Vandalism costs to Council

Mth	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/23
Apr		£411.00	£429.24	£225.72	£1,060	£0.00	£3,449.83	£0.00
May	£949	£1,862	£2,970.54	£0.00	£1,707	£0.00	£1,766.12	£748.91
Jun	£1,005	£1,025	£1,829.92	£977.04	£2,303	£0.00	£1,934.00	£3,371.76
Jul	£0.00	£846.08	£1,793.98	£0.00	£904	£404.21	£1,427.00	£7,256.48
Aug	£744	£2,258	£1,794.00	£222.15	£1,374	£967.16	£1,815.32	£3,573.92
Sep	£356	£3,527	£2,444.02	£1,635	£0.00	£991.79	£1,809.04	£6,370.18
Oct	£556	£1,297	£4,918.74	£0.00	£939.41	£0.00	£397.23	£7,303.39
Nov	£674	£771.22	£2,459.30	£2,316	£701.91	£0.00	£1,314.79	£2838.65
Dec	£0.00	£2,374	-£135.48	£0.00	£417.24	£0.00	£ 0.00	£1592.39
Jan	£0.00	£1,170	£1,763.62	£1,130	£1,274	£259.31	£0.00	£860.63
Feb	£0.00	£3,227	£1,112.26	£930.35	£0.00	£432.43	£ 173.06	£2,862.04
Mar	£0.00	£840.68	£464.54	£119.20	£215.05	£3,153	£494.28	£2059.35
Total	**£4,285**	**£19,612**	**£21,844**	**£7,556**	**£10,898**	**£6,208**	**£13,913**	**£38,837.67**

Table 3 – Vandalism incidents

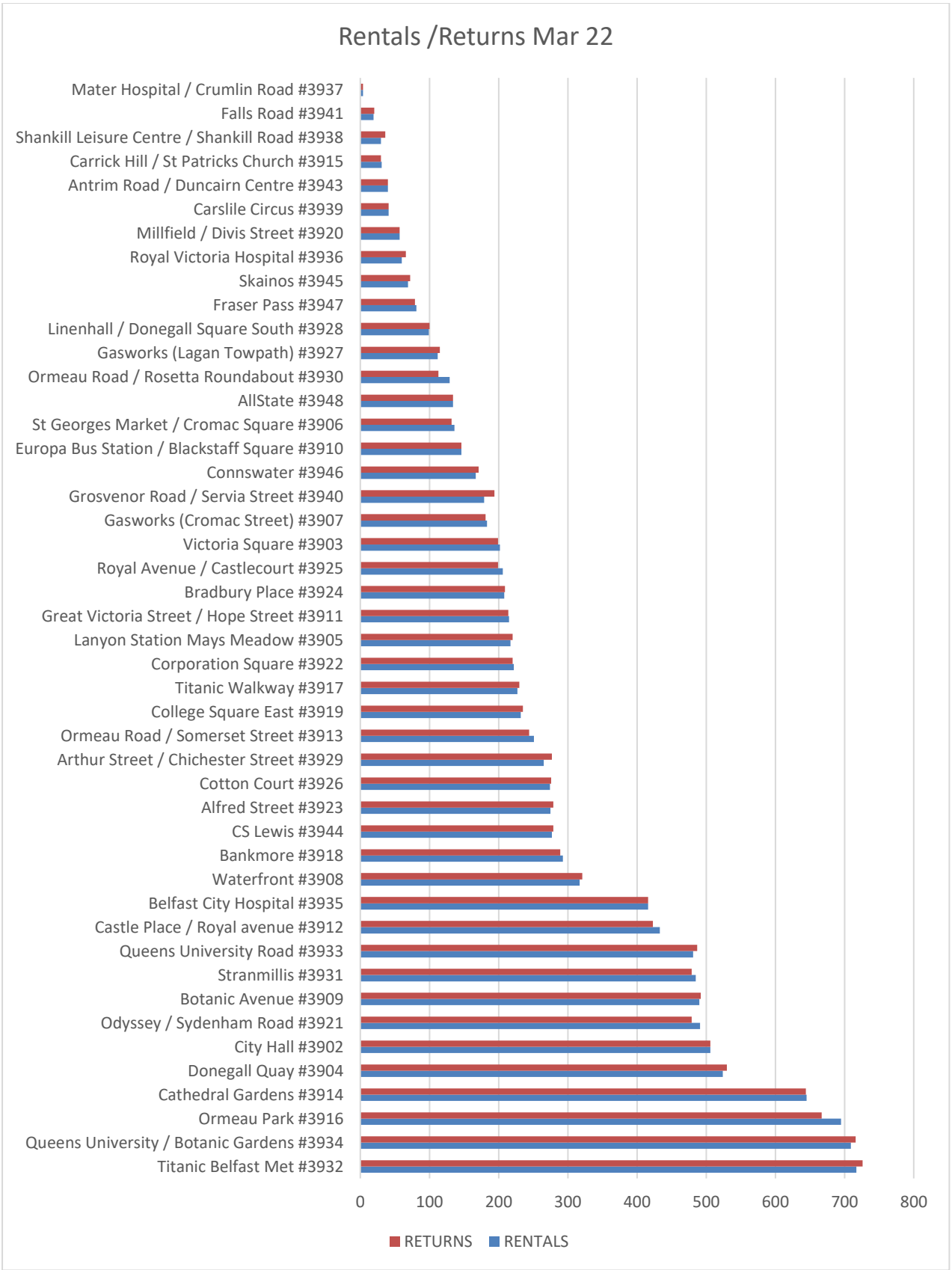
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Apr		16	82	35	23	17	84	17
May	7	50	111	31	45	0	70	17
June	6	19	78	32	54	0	47	24
July	13	17	61	28	31	21	48	35
Aug	14	28	84	34	8	31	40	27
Sept	16	17	98	87	5	43	61	68
Oct	15	22	107	27	26	13	34	50
Nov	11	28	78	12	18	15	18	41
Dec	7	47	41	37	23	15	5	5
Jan	7	41	23	19	27	14	13	3
Feb	4	59	35	33	17	14	18	10
Mar	4	54	29	20	17	92	12	15
Total	**104**	**398**	**827**	**395**	**294**	**275**	**450**	**312**

Table 4 – Location of docking stations March 2023 (alphabetical order)

Place name	Official Station	Station number	Bike racks
Alfred Street	1	3923	14
AllState	1	3948	12
Antrim Road / Duncairn Centre	1	3943	8
Arthur Street / Chichester Street	1	3929	8
Bankmore	1	3918	16
Belfast City Hospital	1	3935	18
Botanic Avenue	1	3909	16
Bradbury Place	1	3924	16
Carrick Hill / St Patricks Church	1	3915	12
Carlisle Circus	1	3939	20
Castle Place / Royal Avenue	1	3912	22
Cathedral Gardens	1	3914	20
City Hall	1	3902	20
College Square East	1	3919	16
Connswater	1	3946	10
Corporation Square	1	3922	14
Cotton Court	1	3926	12
CS Lewis	1	3944	16
Donegall Quay	1	3904	16
Europa Bus Station / Blackstaff Square	1	3910	16
Falls Road	1	3941	8
Fraser Pass	1	3947	14
Gasworks (Cromac Street)	1	3907	12
Gasworks (Lagan Towpath)	1	3927	16
Girwood Community Hub / Cliftonville Park Avenue	1	3942	14
Great Victoria Street / Hope Street	1	3911	18
Grosvenor Road / Servia Street	1	3940	12
Kennedy Centre	1	3981	9
Lanyon Station Mays Meadow	1	3905	20
Linenhall / Donegall Square South	1	3928	16
Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre	1	3900	12
Mater Hospital / Crumlin Road	1	3937	10
Millfield / Divis Street	1	3920	18
Odyssey / Sydenham Road	1	3921	22
Olympia Leisure Centre	1	3994	12
Ormeau Park	1	3916	12
Ormeau Road / Rosetta Roundabout	1	3930	16
Ormeau Road / Somerset Street	1	3913	12
Queens University / Botanic Gardens	1	3934	14
Queens University Road	1	3933	16
Royal Avenue / Castlecourt	1	3925	12
Royal Victoria Hospital	1	3936	20
Shankill Leisure Centre / Shankill Road	1	3938	18
Skainos	1	3945	8

St Georges Market / Cromac Square	1	3906	12
Stranmillis	1	3931	14
Titanic Belfast Met	1	3932	18
Titanic Walkway	1	3917	20
Victoria Square	1	3903	10
Waterfront	1	3908	24
Waterworks	1	3985	10

Graph 1 – Rentals and returns for each station (in order of popularity)


Rentals /Returns Mar 22
Mater Hospital / Crumlin Road #3937
Falls Road #3941
Shankill Leisure Centre / Shankill Road #3938
Carrick Hill / St Patricks Church #3915
Antrim Road / Duncairn Centre #3943
Carslile Circus #3939
Millfield / Divis Street #3920
Royal Victoria Hospital #3936
Skainos #3945
Fraser Pass #3947
Linenhall / Donegall Square South #3928
Gasworks (Lagan Towpath) #3927
Ormeau Road / Rosetta Roundabout #3930
AllState #3948
St Georges Market / Cromac Square #3906
Europa Bus Station / Blackstaff Square #3910
Connswater #3946
Grosvenor Road / Servia Street #3940
Gasworks (Cromac Street) #3907
Victoria Square #3903
Royal Avenue / Castlecourt #3925
Bradbury Place #3924
Great Victoria Street / Hope Street #3911
Lanyon Station Mays Meadow #3905
Corporation Square #3922
Titanic Walkway #3917
College Square East #3919
Ormeau Road / Somerset Street #3913
Arthur Street / Chichester Street #3929
Cotton Court #3926
Alfred Street #3923
CS Lewis #3944
Bankmore #3918
Waterfront #3908
Belfast City Hospital #3935
Castle Place / Royal avenue #3912
Queens University Road #3933
Stranmillis #3931
Botanic Avenue #3909
Odyssey / Sydenham Road #3921
City Hall #3902
Donegall Quay #3904
Cathedral Gardens #3914
Ormeau Park #3916
Queens University / Botanic Gardens #3934
Titanic Belfast Met #3932
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
RETURNS
RENTALS