

# BELFAST STORIES

Public Consultation

August - November 2022

Belfast, in its own words.



Belfast is a  
city filled  
with stories.

## **BELFAST STORIES**

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



It's time for  
you to have  
your say.

Public Consultation  
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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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# A thousand stories told a million different ways.

## 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](https://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](mailto:belfaststories@belfastcity.gov.uk)

☎ 028 9027 0405

Use our sign language interpreter services by visiting [belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/main-council-offices#176-2](https://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](https://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:

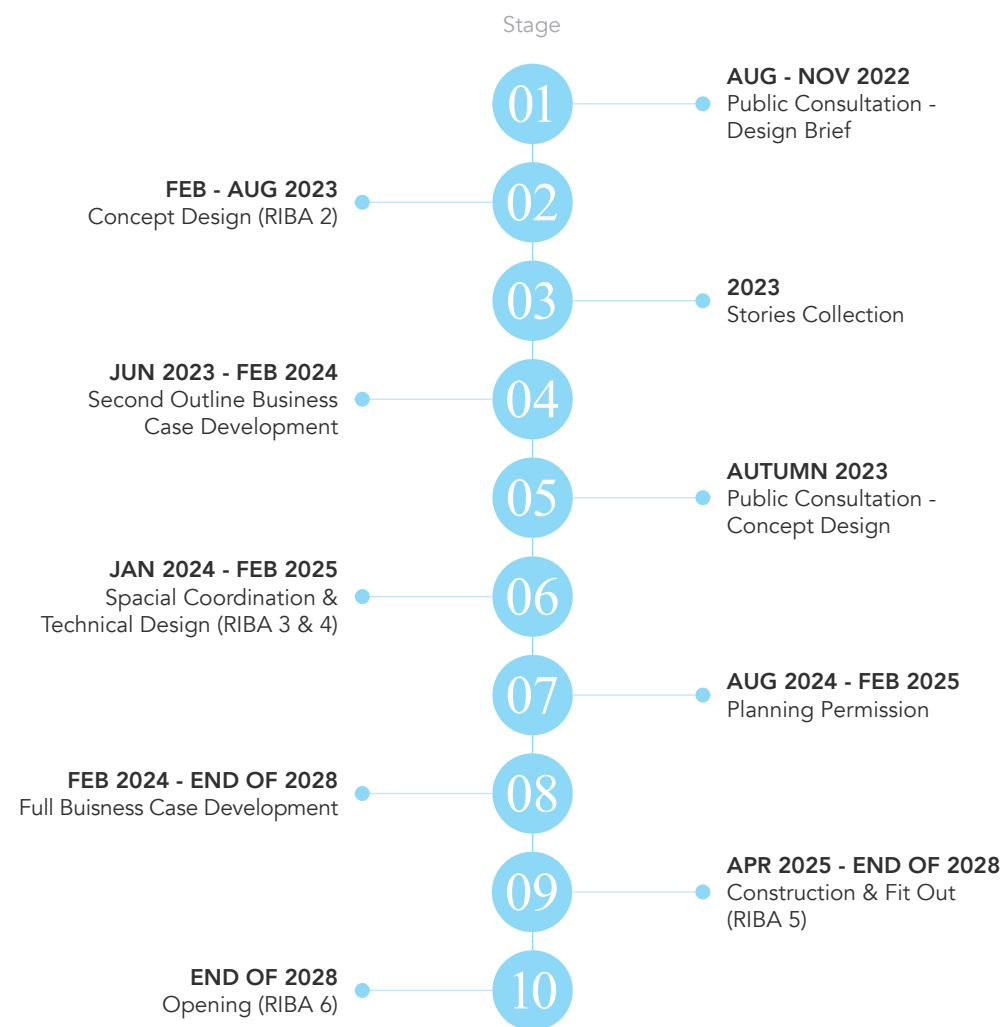
1. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development and
2. making sure that Belfast Stories is for everyone. This means making sure that the building is welcoming and accessible and everyone can see themselves reflected in its stories. 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.

## 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



**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 spatial 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.

# Belfast Stories are priceless. That's why we keep them in a bank.



# 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<sup>2</sup> 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.

## 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

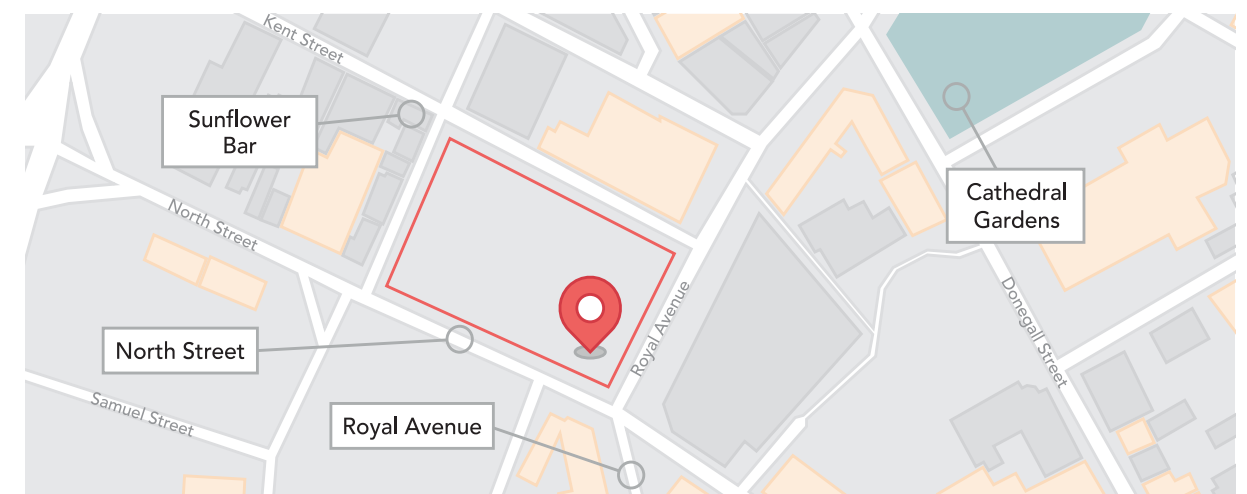
These spaces will be brought to life through a programme of events, pop-up shops and street food.

## Have your say

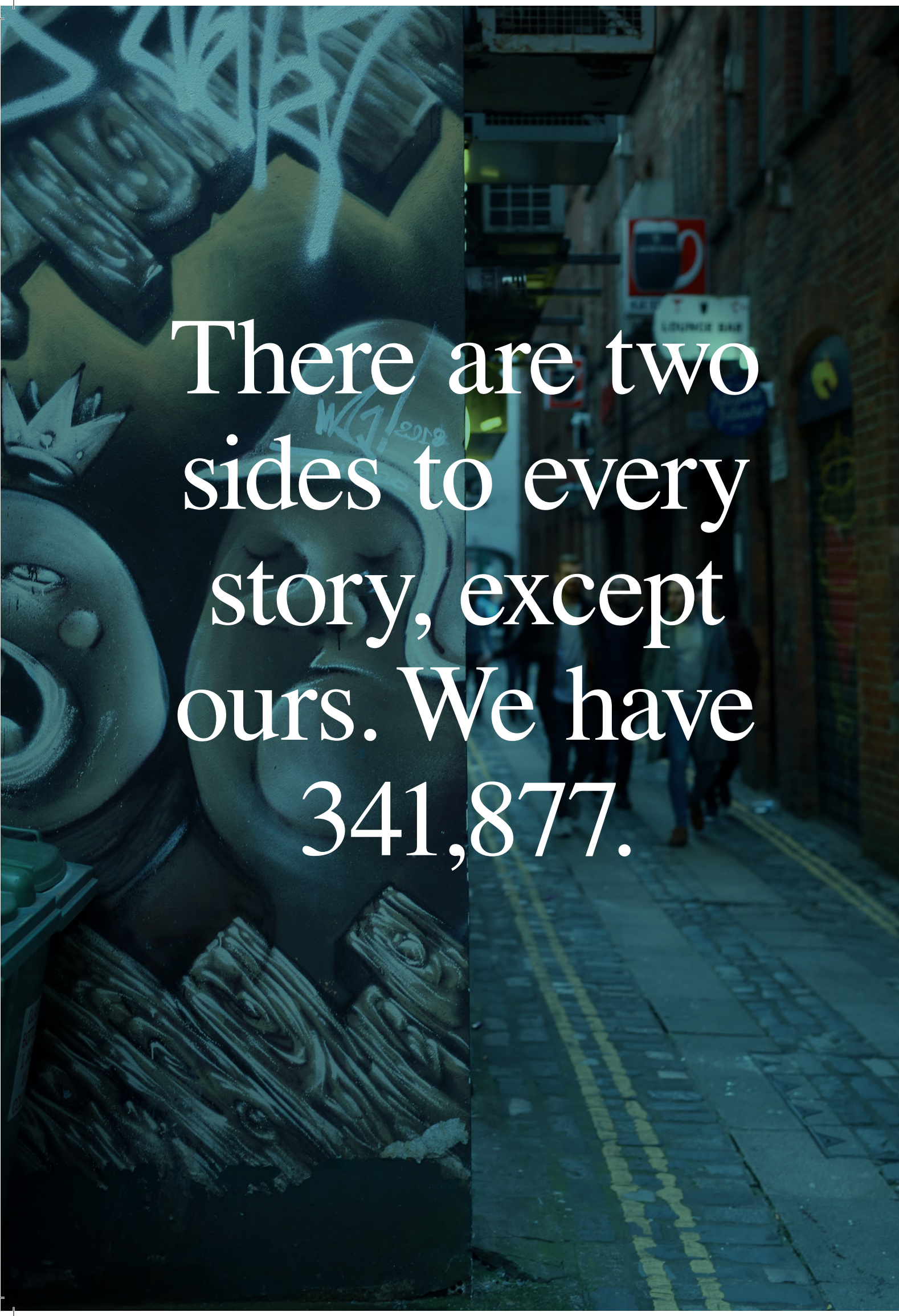
Q1 Are you excited about Belfast Stories?

Q2 Why do you feel this way?

Complete the online survey at [yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk](https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk)







There are two  
sides to every  
story, except  
ours. We have  
341,877.

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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](https://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.

<sup>1</sup>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.

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](https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk)





Americans have  
177 words to  
describe 'home'.  
That's nothing.  
We have 23.7  
million words to  
describe Belfast.

## 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](https://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/](https://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/](https://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

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

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Complete the online survey at  
[yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk](https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk)





# Belfast Stories. The word on the street. (North Street, to be precise.)

## 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](https://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](https://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](https://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](mailto:belfaststories@belfastcity.gov.uk)

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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.

Contact the Belfast Stories team on:

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