



Subject:	Major Events
Date:	14 th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Major Events programme; including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note the contents of this report on the Maritime Festival.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<p>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.</p>
3.3	<p>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.</p>
3.4	<p>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.</p>
3.5	<p>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.</p>
3.6	Way Forward St Patrick’s Day 2024-2026

	<p>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.</p>
<p>3.7</p>	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>3.8</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>3.9</p>	<p>The feedback received on the St Patrick’s Day events has been positive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>4.0</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>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</p>

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.

<p>4.7</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous Experience of similar scale cultural programmes/projects • Capability and Capacity • Concept and Feasibility • Co-Design & Inclusivity • Financial Sustainability • Partnership Approach • Cost
<p>4.8</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>4.9</p>	<p>Future Proofing - An Executive Summary - A new approach to St Patrick's Programme in Belfast</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>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</p>

	<p>delivery. They will also work with other peers from other successful contractors or delivery partners.</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>5.2</p>	<p>All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil Na h’Eireann</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>5.3</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>5.4</p>	<p>2024 Bid Review & Lessons Learned</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>5.5</p>	<p>There were specific areas for improvement highlighted by voting members and trusted advisors that are detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>5.6</p>	<p><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.</p>

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
 - Ard-Ollamh Award Gala dinner (Wednesday night, 9 Aug)
 - Overseas Reception (Thursday night, 10 Aug)
 - Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra event (Friday night, 11 Aug)
- Tionól Ceoil Leo Rowsome, 1-2 September (Monkstown)
- Comhaltas Christmas Dinner, December (Dublin)

Greater focus on disabled access

5.9

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	<p>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.</p>
6.3	<p>Council Attendance at future Fleadh events including Mullingar</p> <p>5.2.5 addresses the role of the Ards Branch, and the costs associated with supporting the local Comhaltas throughout the bid process.</p> <p>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.</p>
6.4	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>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.</p>
6.5	<p>Bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028</p> <p>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.</p>
6.6	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals.</p> <p>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.</p>

6.7	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The Cultural Strategy - <i>A City Imagining</i> - 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.</p>
7.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 Breakdown of all costs associated with the future bidding for the Fleadh Cheoil</p>