



Subject:	Major Events Update – Christmas Animation Programme 2025
Date:	5 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture & Tourism Pièr Morrow Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide a programme update on the 2025 Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On & additional animation throughout the festive period.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note the contents of the Switch On Programme and additional Christmas animation.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On

	<p>Planning is well advanced for the Switch On event to be delivered on Saturday 15 November 2025. Officers continue to work with internal and external stakeholders on a range of matters to ensure the successful delivery of this signature project.</p> <p>The Christmas Lights Switch On event will be a free of charge ticketed event, with the stage providing family-oriented entertainment including local musicians and performers culminating in the switch on of the lights by our Lord Mayor.</p> <p>Members will be aware that a report to committee in June 2023 recommended several adjustments to the Christmas light switch on to mitigate identified health and safety risks - these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event build in the early hours involving staggered road and lane closures - The careful co-ordination of deliveries of equipment and stock of the Christmas market to facilitate an appropriate cut off to allow for the build of the stage and rig. - The stage and all associated equipment and infrastructure should remain in situ following the event to allow roads to reopen immediately after the event. This will allow of a de-rig to take place on Sunday morning during a less busy period. <p>Members should be aware that the mitigation outlined above has increased some costs related to equipment rental and security. Any expenditure will be found from existing corporate budgets.</p> <p>This year's Switch On programme will be presented by Cool Fm on Saturday 15 November 6.00 -7.30 pm. Donegall Road Primary School will open the show, leading into festive performances from local acts that include Avenue Arts Academy, The O'Hara Sisters and St Agnes's Choral Society to name a few. Two local inspirational personalities will be appearing, champion boxer Lewis Crocker and West End/TV actress/singer Rachel Tucker. The evening guarantees a great show for the City of Belfast.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Additional Christmas Animation Programme</p> <p>As in recent years, 2 Royal Avenue will provide a programme of Christmas themed activities across the six weeks of Christmas to supplement the Switch On and provide a focus throughout the festive period. The programme will be delivered by the operators of the venue, MayWe Events.</p> <p>The Winter Den programme, hosted at 2 Royal Avenue, offers a diverse array of festive events and activities for all ages, running from Saturday, 15 November, through to New Year's Eve on Wednesday, 31 December. Highlights include musical performances, craft workshops, storytelling, a seniors tea dance, and special events tailored to different audiences, beginning with a "Quiet Christmas Tree Switch On" for those with sensory needs. While the programme encompasses classic Christmas celebrations sustainability and inclusivity themes are</p>

	<p>addressed. The annual Santa's Post Office is available throughout, and the programme culminates on New Year's Eve with a festive "NYE Ceili" celebration. The programme provides a comprehensive schedule of holiday entertainment and community engagement throughout the winter season.</p> <p>Officers have, through a competitive procurement process, engaged two organisations to curate and programme further animation throughout the festive period in the City Centre; one programme has a live music focus, whereas the second specifies other types of animation such as street performance. These programmes will ensure that a full range of animation is showcased throughout the city centre during the busy festive shopping period.</p>
3.3	<p>Marketing and Communications Activity</p> <p>Council will operate a digital campaign with online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 15 November, as well as festive animation across the city centre after the switch-on and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. There will also be a post-switch-on digital campaign with a slight variation on artwork to highlight the fact that other activities are taking place across the city throughout the Christmas period.</p> <p>For the switch-on ad campaign, council will be directing people to the Visit Belfast website where tickets will be available from 4 November. For all press and social media activity and post-switch on promotion, council will be directing people to the www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL. This URL will display all Christmas activity and the switch-on event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.</p> <p>Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before ticket release details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight the switch-on date and other Christmas activity including Winter's Den at 2 Royal Avenue, the Christmas Market and post switch-on animation. The winter edition will be circulated to just under 160k homes throughout the first week of November. A press release will also be issued to promote the ticket release and the confirmed details of the event schedule.</p> <p>Members should note that the ticketing of the event involves two releases – one at 10am and a second at 7pm.</p>
4.0	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p> <p>Financial resources will be met from within existing departmental budgets.</p>
5.0	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment</p>

	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.
	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.