



Subject:	Request for the exhibition of unclassified films
Date:	18 February 2026
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control, Ext. 2300
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hipkins, Building Control Manager, Ext. 2435

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To consider a request from Nerve Centre Belfast to permit a one-off showing of three unclassified films to be screened at the QFT on Saturday 28 March 2026, as part of a screening event showcasing student films for participants of their Animation Academy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested, having heard from any representatives of the Nerve centre, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) permit the screening of the three unclassified films in accordance with an age classification of 15, the highest rating which has been specified by the Nerve Centre; or b) permit the screening of the unclassified films in accordance with a different age classification; or c) refuse the screening of unclassified films in the venue.
2.2	Whilst there is a general provision for appeals in relation to the conditions placed on Cinema Licences, there is no right of appeal in respect of this decision.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Council licences cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 for the exhibition of films. The main functions of the legislation relate to technical matters such as structural stability and fire safety and, as such, the powers to issue licences are delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control.
3.2	Unlike other types of Licences there is no public notification and representation process for Cinema Licence applications hence there is normally no involvement of the Committee with Cinema Licensing.
3.3	However, the Order requires the Council to impose conditions or restrictions prohibiting the admission of children to film exhibitions involving the showing of films designated as works unsuitable for children.
3.4	When issuing Licences, the Council establishes Conditions regarding the general running and administration of the premises. One such Condition is that only films which have been classified with a certificate issued by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) may be shown. These conditions are attached at Appendix 1.
3.5	The BBFC is an independent body which classifies all films on behalf of local authorities, and they have strict guidelines and criteria in awarding films a classification. The BBFC categories and criteria guidelines are attached at Appendix 2.
3.6	This system is used by all authorities within the United Kingdom and all commercial films will have been classified through this process. Independent films, shorts and features that have not been classified through the BBFC tend to be shown in private clubs and societies rather than in commercial cinemas licensed by the Council. However, in recent years the Council have received an increased number of requests to consider screening of unclassified films.

3.7	There is a proviso in the Licence Conditions which allows the showing of an unclassified film if the Council is satisfied with the proposal. The Council can also append any Conditions it deems appropriate in relation to that film exhibition, including an age restriction. Such a decision does not attempt to 'classify' the film but merely permits its exhibition in the individual situation applied for.
3.8	The Service has previously received requests to screen unclassified films for which the Licensing Committee has provided its approval.
3.9	The Service reserves the right to take action for a breach of licence if any of the unclassified films are found not to be as described.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.10	The Service has received a request for unclassified films produced by students of the Nerve Centre's Animation Academy to be shown in the QFT. See Appendix 3.
3.11	The Nerve Centre receives funding from the Department for Communities to run a number of Screen Academies for young people aged 16-19 to learn more about the creative industries whilst working on their own projects.
3.12	The intended screening is to showcase work carried out over a six month period by around 25 young people aged 16-10 years, and to celebrate the creativity of the participants in both the BFI (British Film Institute) Film Academy and the Visual Effects Academy.
3.13	The request is to exhibit three short films together in one screening, with only one showing of each film on Saturday 28 March 2026, at 10am - 11.30am in the QFT, Belfast.
3.14	The proposed screening is intended to be by invitation only, with no admission charge and will not be open to the general public.
3.15	The films proposed to be exhibited are listed below with description provided by the Nerve Centre, representatives of which have been involved in the production and had final editorial control of the films:
3.16	<p>Film 1: "An Unlikely Friendship" – under 10 minutes, a short dramatic film.</p> <p>Film synopsis - <i>Scarlett, a warm and friendly new barista, also happens to be a budding fashion designer. She becomes intrigued by one very grumpy regular customer. (Depicted onscreen in puppet form) Scarlett's mission to befriend 'Bill' reveals just how little we have to have in common to find common ground.</i></p> <p><i>There are themes around Bereavement central to the story and there is one use of a mild swear word (Prick).</i></p> <p>The equivalency of Certificate that we would ascribe to this short film is PG.</p>
3.17	<p>Film 2: "Kill Your Darlings" – under 10 minutes, a short dramatic film.</p> <p>Film synopsis - <i>After a series of apparently unconnected women are murdered, and with only a few hours before the killer strikes again, a crack detective and her hapless colleague try to solve the case... but the plot is bigger and dangerously closer to home than she can imagine.</i></p> <p><i>In the script there's use of the phrases 'hell' 'god damn' 'bastard', & 'shit'.</i></p> <p><i>There's no on-screen violence depicted but there are crime scene photos on a scene background board that the camera does cut to Close Ups of. These depict women lying 'dead' some covered in blood - these photos were staged and captured by our participants as part of their set design. These are mid shots / full body shots.</i></p>

	<p><i>In the audio track the viewer does hear a gun fired at the end but onscreen viewers see no evidence of what the consequence were of its firing.</i></p> <p><i>Characters on screen do discuss the crime in the film quite matter of factly.</i></p> <p><i>The equivalency of Certificate that we would ascribe to this short film is 15.</i></p>
3.18	<p>Film 3: “It’s About Time” – under 10 minutes, a short dramatic film.</p> <p>Film synopsis - <i>In the 1950s a young scientist works in his workshop tinkering with a series of weird and wonderful machines. A TV announcer narration sets the context of the Time...of Superpowers gathering both strength and suspicion, and the Cold War crystallising. These offscreen events solidify the scientists resolve to achieve his goal - of securing a means to achieve Time travel in order to escape his perception of an impending Apocalypse... His wife, cleaning up the mess around him, accidentally activates his machine and transports herself to the present day...How will she cope with interacting with the modern world? How will her husband reunite them? It’s About Time....to find out.</i></p> <p><i>There is some very mild perceived peril in the section depicting the transportation of both characters through the Time portal.</i></p> <p><i>The equivalency of Certificate that we would ascribe to this short film is PG.</i></p>
3.19	Representatives of the Nerve Centre have confirmed they have viewed the finished films and identified that they do not foresee any issues with appropriateness of content and would regard Film 1 and 3 as representative of a PG BBFC rating and Film 2 as a 15 BBFC rating.
3.20	None of the films have received classification from BBFC or equivalent body.
3.21	The expertise for film classification is considered to rest with BBFC and other statutory bodies established for this function. The Service has not viewed the films to validate the ratings. The applicant has offered to share the finished film if required.
3.22	A representative from Nerve Centre Belfast will be available at Committee to answer any questions Members may have in relation to the films.
4.0	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p> <p>None. Any required inspections before or during the event will be catered for within existing Service budgets.</p>
5.0	<p>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>There are no issues associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 1 – Conditions of licence • Appendix 2 – BBFC Classification Guidelines • Appendix 3 – Applicant request