

Culture Development Workplan 2026 / 2027

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Core multi-annual funding	Management of year 5 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG). Two-year funding 2026-2028: Total of £1,150,887 across Festival & Events and Arts & Heritage. Four-year funding 2024-2028: £600,240 to four Festivals and Events organisations and £791,783 to ten Arts and Heritage organisations.	April 2026 to March 2027	£2,542,910
Small Grants - Arts and Heritage	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes. (15 cultural projects supported)	April 2026 to March 2027	£153,788
Small Grants - Community Festivals Funding	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes. (20 community festivals supported)	April 2026 to March 2027	£83,000 + DfC match funding (£69,000)
Creative Workspaces	A continuation of programme to support Belfast-based Artist Studio's & Artist Led Directorship models to ensure a stable infrastructure for 2026/27. (12 organisations, collectives and artists-led spaces supported through artist studio organisational grant programme. Grants of £10,000-£20,000 are available to support Artist Studios & Artist Led Directorship models). Any awards exceeding £10,000 will be brought to Committee during the year for approval.	April 2026 to March 2027 Grant programme launched in May 2026	£150,000
Creative Workspaces	Continuation of targeted capacity building programme with Artist Studio and Creative workspace sector, to implement recommendations from artist studio support plan including partnership with Belfast School of Art . Minimum of 3 new graduate residences supported and wider engagement with 10-12 organisations, collectives, artist-led spaces.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Sector Support Programme	Design and deliver wraparound support programme aligned to investment model. Includes support for Festivals Forum, Belfast Visual Arts Forum and Green Arts Forum. Late Night Art Belfast (LNAB) marketing (minimum reach of 12k) and social media contract and Culture Forum included.	April 2026 to March 2027	£77,472
Research and development	Ongoing sector specific research and insights. Commission further research and engagement, collect and analyse data to ensure strategic approach to investment and delivery.	April 2026 to March 2027	£26,000
Heritage development	Next phase of implementation of the Heritage Roadmap including development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes and designing action plans and events through a co-design process. Includes strategic partnership with Belfast Stories and development of Neighbourhood Heritage pilot and the wider heritage ambitions of the cultural strategy. Establish steering group and development of Heritage Forum; review of investment programme opportunities; further develop the heritage network; co-design ways to support the value of both tangible and intangible heritage assets across Belfast; explore opportunities for connection with other culture programmes for example LNAB; build capacity within communities to gather and shape stories of place; embed heritage skills within communities.	April 2026 to March 2027	£68,000

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Cultural animation and Art in Public Realm	Further develop a 'City as a Gallery' or 'Art in the Public Realm' initiatives including Belfast Canvas and Art Unwrapped with Ulster University and National Museums NI.	April 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
	Development of phase two of "legal walls" pilot programme and mentoring programme for Street Art Community. (Street Art mentoring programme reaching a minimum of 30 artists).		£30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Extension of Blueprint Programme for organisational resilience in partnership with Arts & Business NI and key UK and NI partners, with a focus on developing local civic participation within governance models. (At least 10 Belfast based organisations added to this bespoke programme to develop organisational resilience and expand network of peer learning and best practice within the cultural sector has commercial potential).	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Continue partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector. (Support for 20 organisations and individuals)	April 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI to deliver a professional 3-year development and capacity building programme 'Transform' (2025-2028) for artists in theatre & dance sector at differing career stages, focusing on networking, mentoring and creation.	April 2026 to March 2027	£45,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Craft NI to deliver inclusive programme of showcase and professional development events for makers in Belfast including growth of August Craft Month. Includes development of a mentorship and capacity building programme for craft makers.	April 2026 to March 2027	£35,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Visual Arts Ireland (VAI) to deliver a Peer Support Programme. Connecting Visual Artists who fall outside of the studio framework, to include those in rural areas, connecting them to the Belfast Art infrastructure. Providing professional development skills and engagement.	April 2026 to March 2027	£10,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Thrive audience development agency to support audience development across the sector.	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Belfast International Performing Arts showcase in partnership with Culture Ireland and British Council , delivered by Belfast International Arts Festival and Theatre & Dance NI.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
	Belfast 2024 legacy support for North Star - a live music and spoken word performance inspired by the speeches of abolitionist Frederick Douglass during his historic visit to Belfast in 1845. North Star will be staged at the Irish Art Centre in New York June 3 rd to 21st 2026. Match funding provided by British Council.		£10,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people including Gig Buddies programme 2025–2028 in partnership with the Black Box .	April 2026 to March 2027	£45,000

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Capacity Building	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified. Support established organisations to adapt to change and to support new organisations and practitioners to take longer term risks in programming or creative development. Development and delivery of catalyst projects and programmes with community partners. (A minimum of 50 cultural organisations or creative practitioners supported) Ongoing development of Culture Belfast social channels to highlight impact of investment and cultural activity in the city.	April 2026 to March 2027	£64,000
Engagement	Ongoing process to shared placemaking through cultural interventions - deliver second phase of Tools for Togetherness project, establishing a sharing library of artist-led community resources and initial test events with community groups. Support up to 3 pilots of socially engaged artist residencies. Partner with Metal Culture on projects addressing social inclusion, disrupting loneliness and increasing wellbeing through creative activities. Continue partnership with Queens University Belfast (QUB) on creative methods for evaluation. Support organisations to create new models that place citizens (participants & audiences) in decision-making roles, such as joining boards or creating citizen panels in partnership with Arts & Business. Bank of Ideas, a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects. (Up to 3 Artist residencies delivered, 1 UK-wide network, 2 local partnerships, up to 15 cultural organisations supported towards citizen empowerment. (Support a minimum of 35 creative projects supported through a participatory budgeting process)	April 2026 to March 2027	£105,000 £75,000
Culture Night	Public procurement exercise and appointment of a contractor to deliver the 2026 Culture Night programme including supporting marketing activity.	April 2026 to September 2027	£150,000
Music Strategy (Gradam Ceoil)	Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme (multi-year commitment)	April 2026 to March 2027	£18,000
Music Strategy (Place Artists at the Heart – Instruments)	Support and enhance initiatives which provide instruments for local communities across Belfast to ensure individuals, regardless of age, sex or background, have the opportunity to learn or engage with music. (Support for approximately 70 pupils who would not have the means to own an instrument or have tuition beyond primary education).	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Music Strategy (Teenage Kick: Youth Music Programme)	Teenage Kicks: Youth Music Programme – Continuation of programme that will encourage attendance and increase awareness of music events in the city by young people. Concerts in a range of venues will open up the diversity of the music scene and foster a community of young audiences for acts in the city.	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Music Strategy (OurBelfastMusic)	Continuation of Belfast Music “OurBelfastMusic” Social Channels and platforms	April 2026 to March 2027	£15,000
Music Strategy (Output Belfast)	Output Belfast - Direct partnership with Score Draw Music. Output is Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the	September 2026	£33,000

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	conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public		
Music Strategy (Music Venue Trust)	Music Venue Trust - Strategic Partnership with the Music Venue Trust to support the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed.	April 2026 to March 2027	£12,000
Music Strategy (UNESCO Cities Network)	Work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities. Support active participation in UNESCO cultural networks with reciprocal benefits between the cities including but not limited to partnership and artist exchanges with UCoM cities Hannover (Germany) Daegu (South Korea), Essouria (Morocco), London Ontario (Canada), Brno (Czech Republic), Ghent (Belgium), Ramallah (Palestine), Sanlurfa (Turkey), and Varazdin (Croatia). Includes BCC representation on UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings and UNESCO Celebration Day hosted by the Belfast International Arts Festival. Additionally provides pathways for meaningfully engaging artists in traditional art forms from across the UNESCO cities during the 2026 Fleadh.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Music Strategy (Opportunities for disabled musicians)	A partnership with University of Atypical that will support the charity in continuing a fund for the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse community within music to run accessible music events.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Additional UNESCO City of Music Activity	Implementation of "Music Matters" Music Strategy. Delivery of actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Theme 1: Place artists at the heart o Theme 2: Nurture the Sector o Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience o Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO 	May 2026 to March 2027	£210,000
Networking	Support active participation in relevant local, regional and international cultural networks including but not limited to IETM, Eurocities, and other relevant international networks.	April 2026 to March 2027	£10,000

Tourism and Events Workplan 2026 / 2027

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme	Now in its 5 th year, the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme has significantly influenced Belfast's tourism industry and works towards positioning Belfast as a welcoming and inclusive for all visitors. In-year deliverables include industry engagement; business commitment through annual seminar and awards, securing participation from 70 businesses pledging to enhance their accessibility and inclusivity efforts. Capacity Building; assessing the inclusive tourism requirements of Council assets; financial support through Innovation Vouchers; collaboration with disability groups with the aim to be an accessible city; scoping and assessing training toolkit; and marketing.	April 2026 - March 2027	£45,000
Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme	Food and Drink play a pivotal role in shaping travel experiences, accounting for a third of total overnight visitor spending. The Food and Drink Tourism Network established in 2022 has been instrumental in driving industry growth. In-year deliverables include business engagement with approximately 150 businesses through targeted initiatives and events.	April 2026 - March 2027	£60,840
Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing	During the past 20 years there has been an investment of over £3m in visitor interpretative signage and wayfinding in Belfast. In year deliverables include delivery of updated interpretation content, maps, design, visuals and overlays with laminate for minimum 12 interpretative signs within the suite of Council tourism visitor signage; delivery of the welcome banners for Fleadh 2026; and explore opportunities for future investment in tourism interpretation and signage including digital options that will enhance the visitor welcome to and experience of Belfast; which can be used to attract investment and access funding as it becomes available.	April 2026 - March 2027	£26,000
Signage Upkeep	Upkeep, cleaning and maintenance of tourism signage network. In year deliverables include management of contract and delivery of services; and 12 monthly inspections.	April 2026 - March 2027	£50,000
Enhancing the Visitor Experience Priority Actions	Council is working with strategic partners including Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to deliver an enhanced visitor experience through our visitor information centres and at Council owned assets. A visitor attitude survey has been undertaken and the findings from it will help identify gaps and opportunities relating to the visitor expectations and delivery of enhanced visitor welcome and experiences in the city.	April 2026 - March 2027	£36,000
Tourism General Management	A Tourism Panel with city-wide commitment, as identified in Make Yourself At Home has been established. The purpose of this Panel is to be outward-looking, horizon scanning, future proofing and to ensure benchmarking to inform future strategic tourism planning across city stakeholders, underpinning Council's position as a strategic leader in its gateway role.	April 2026 - March 2027	£16,631
Business Tourism - Conference Subvention	Members will be aware that in January 2021 the CG&R Committee agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast can compete nationally and internationally to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace. This fund is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by our partner Tourism NI. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that Belfast, including ICC remains competitive as a business tourism destination. Through the level of conference support, deliver a minimum of 4,000 out-of-state conference delegates for Belfast.	April 2026 - March 2027	£200,000

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Tourism baselines and measurement of tourism in Belfast and contribution to the NI Economy	The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local Council level continues to be impacted by the reduction in number of surveys and depth of detailed statistics by our national statistics agency NISRA, therefore it is important that Belfast can establish its own baselines and measure the social and economic impact of tourism to ensure that the contribution of Belfast to the NI economy is recognised and that ongoing investment in Belfast is secured. In year deliverables will include the continued implementation of the Tourism dashboard for Belfast; primary research to address known data gaps; utilising data led insights to inform positioning of Belfast as a leisure and business destination; and work with partners to share insights and examine data sources which measure the social, economic and environmental impact of tourism.	April 2026 - March 2027	£70,000
Sustainable Tourism: Global Destination Sustainability Index & Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including Green Tourism certification	Belfast completed its first index benchmarking and application in 2022, following which an application was made for 2025 which placed Belfast 9th out of 89 cities as a sustainable business tourism destination under the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index).The GDS index is a third-party evaluation of the destination's environmental, social, supplier and destination management performance across 77 indicators assessing policies and infrastructure, destination management and sustainability performance amongst the tourism supply-chain. In year deliverables will include forward planning for Climate Change; scoping of sustainability issues and solutions for major events in Belfast including Fleadh; delivery of a sustainable leaders' business event; provision of support in partnership with Green Tourism UK; work with TNI and Failte Ireland on the all-Ireland sustainability accreditation framework.	April 2026- March 2027	£25,500
City Events	On an annual/biannual basis, the Council's City Events Unit 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. The Tourism, Culture & Events also support several annual programmes and activities. Our cultural and tourism strategic priorities sets out long term recommendations for events in the city including better alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.	April 2026 - March 2027	As detailed below.
Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Plan the 2027 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities. This now biennial event will feature an array of local creative, will attract tens of thousands of visitors across a weekend in June 2027, and have specific KPIs on targeting an international audience.	April 2026 – November 2027	£217,000 (budget carried over into the 2027-28 year of event delivery)
Christmas	Christmas - delivery of the Christmas Lights Switch on event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall. As with 2025, there is the intention to supplement the Switch On with a six-week programme by city centre animation - both music and non-musical performance.	July 2026 - December 2026	£152,864
Christmas Lights	Christmas Lighting - delivery management of new tender for 2026 and beyond.	April 2026 - March 2027	£300,000

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St Patricks Day	Building on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations, featuring the in-house delivered parade and city-wide projects delivered by partners. Work will also commence in 2026-27 on the new tender for Creative provision for St Patricks Day 2028-2030.	August 2026 -April 2027	£300,000
Lord Mayor's Day	This event is a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Avenue.	April 2026- June 2027	£45,500
International Events	Working with city partners to plan ahead for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy. This will also include engagement with NI partners on to maximise Belfast's position in the bid for the Women's World Cup 2035.	April 2026- March 2027	£40,000
Small Grants Project Funding	Support for ten sport grants to ensure development and delivery of community-based sporting events (ten local sporting events).	April 2026 - March 2027	£80,000