



Subject:	External Markets Approvals
Date:	13 May 2026
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Clodagh Cassin, Markets 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for two external markets, namely Titanic Quarter Night Market and Food Festival in August 2026 as well as a series of Sunday markets in Writers' Square.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve an external market at Titanic as part of the 2026 Fleadh• Approve a series of Sunday markets at Writers' Square.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Belfast City Council has exclusive rights to hold markets in Belfast. Anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Council for permission. The Markets Unit has recently received two applications for external markets.

3.2	<p><u>Titanic Quarter Night Market</u></p> <p>An application has been received from Urban Events, working on behalf of the Belfast Maritime Trust, Titanic Belfast, and Titanic Quarter Belfast to deliver a programme of complementary activity at Hamilton Dock, located in front of the SS <i>Nomadic</i>, during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026. They are hoping to have 40 stalls at the event.</p>
3.3	<p>This programme is designed to enhance the existing cultural offering within the Titanic Quarter across the Fleadh period, working alongside scheduled activity such as the Belfast Film Festival outdoor movies and walkabout entertainment. The intention is not to compete with the city centre programme, but to provide a high-quality, accessible alternative that supports the wider visitor experience.</p>
3.4	<p>The proposed activity will consist of a series of curated market-led events, programmed across four consecutive days, offering both daytime and evening engagement. These events are designed to serve multiple audiences, including visitors to the Fleadh, tourists and residents within the Titanic Quarter, residents of East Belfast, and those staying within the temporary Fleadh campsite. The programme will provide a welcoming, family-friendly environment and an accessible option for those seeking to engage with the atmosphere of the Fleadh without entering the city centre footprint.</p>
3.5	<p>In addition, the events will create a supported and structured trading environment for small businesses and independent producers. This is particularly important for traders who wish to benefit from the increased footfall associated with the Fleadh but may not be equipped to operate within the longer trading hours, access times and logistical requirements of city centre trading. The site at Hamilton Dock offers a controlled environment where access, parking, infrastructure, and operational support are facilitated. The use of Hamilton Dock has received landowner permissions, with ongoing engagement and agreement.</p>
3.6	<p>The event programme is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 & 7 August – Titanic Quarter Night Markets Evening: focused markets operating in a vibrant, social environment, with an emphasis on food, music, and creative activity. These events will support the evening economy within the area while remaining accessible, inclusive, and appropriately managed within a controlled event environment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 & 9 August – Titanic Quarter Food Festival: a daytime food festival showcasing high-quality local producers and street food traders, celebrating the best of regional and artisan food offerings. The programme will include a live food demonstration kitchen and a dedicated “Meet the Maker” area, providing opportunities for visitors to engage directly with producers and learn more about their products. Programming for these elements is currently in development and is expected to feature guest contributors. 																								
3.7	<p><u>Regular Sunday Market, Writers’ Square</u></p> <p>The Markets Team has received another application from Urban Events, proposing a regular Sunday market in Writers’ Square. The proposed dates and times are as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="316 748 970 1370"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Time</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>28 June 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 July 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19 July 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23 August 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30 August 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 September 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13 September 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 September 2026</td> <td>Late night – 5pm-10pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 September 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>27 September 2026</td> <td>12pm-5pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30 October 2026</td> <td>Late night – 5pm-10pm</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Time	28 June 2026	12pm-5pm	5 July 2026	12pm-5pm	19 July 2026	12pm-5pm	23 August 2026	12pm-5pm	30 August 2026	12pm-5pm	6 September 2026	12pm-5pm	13 September 2026	12pm-5pm	18 September 2026	Late night – 5pm-10pm	20 September 2026	12pm-5pm	27 September 2026	12pm-5pm	30 October 2026	Late night – 5pm-10pm
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3.8	<p>The markets will be operated on behalf of the Cathedral Quarter BID by Urban Events. The BID respects the importance of St George’s Market as a protected and established asset within the city, both historically and commercially. The proposed Writers’ Square market is not intended to compete with or detract from St George’s Market, but instead to respond to a separate and currently unmet need within the Cathedral Quarter.</p>																								
3.9	<p>The location, time of year (peak season), format and scale have all been designed with St George’s Market in mind, to ensure the proposal does not detract from or compete with it. The market is aimed at serving a different audience and part of the city, particularly visitors and footfall already within the Cathedral Quarter, rather than drawing from St George’s. In addition to supporting tourism, hospitality, commercial and residential activity within the</p>																								

	Cathedral Quarter and wider North Belfast, the market also plays an important role in increasing positive use of Writers' Square. This also helps address ongoing anti-social and problematic behaviour in the area, which the Cathedral Quarter BID, DfC and PSNI have been actively working to combat.
3.10	While the application references a weekly market, this is only for a defined seasonal trial period, not a continuous year-round offering. The programme is structured in blocks, with several weeks' break between operating periods, to avoid establishing a direct ongoing weekly alternative to St George's Market. The intention is to test demand and deliver targeted activation during peak periods, rather than replicate an established weekly market model. St George's Market operates on Sundays from 10am–3pm. The proposed operating hours for Writers' Square are 12pm–5pm, intentionally set to open later and extend beyond St George's trading window. This was a deliberate decision to avoid direct overlap and competition, while supporting afternoon and early evening activity within the Cathedral Quarter.
3.11	While the request is for a market that will attract up to 40 traders, a more realistic assessment is that the market will attract 20–25 traders on most market dates. The higher number has been included to allow flexibility for occasional increases around seasonal events, late night markets, and periods of higher demand, rather than representing the weekly norm.
3.12	The market is positioned as an outdoor, small-scale, curated variety/specialist market, focused on arts, crafts and a limited number of high-quality ambient food producers. This differs from the broader and more established offering at St George's Market and is intended to complement rather than replicate existing provision.
4.0	Finance & Resource Implications
	These markets will bring an income to the council of £1,500.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas.
6.0	Appendices
	None