



Subject:	City Centre Regeneration – City Animation
Date:	22 nd April 2015
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, Ext 3509
Contact Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, Ext 3509

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which is currently out to public consultation, highlights the importance of world class events and the animation of the city as important elements of creating a vibrancy within the city centre, attracting overnight visitors and enhancing the international reputation of the city in the global market place.
1.2	The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is also out to consultation similarly identifies “ <i>improving the quality and international appeal of the events and festivals on offer</i> ” as one of the main improvements required in terms of developing tourism in the city.
1.3	The purpose of this report is to inform members of a number of opportunities for the Council to support a number of large scale events which align with these strategies and which are due to take place across the city in the course of the current financial year.
1.4	The Development Department is currently in the process of commissioning a citywide Events and Festivals Strategy which will provide the policy framework for the resourcing of events and festivals from 1 April 2016 onwards. The events referred to in this report will predate the conclusion of this strategy.

1.5	Members are therefore being asked to consider these opportunities in the context of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and the Belfast Integrated Tourism Framework. These events will also form part of the overall events programme for the new council in 2015 which also includes other events already funded such as community festivals, Tall Ships, Friel Festival, etc.
1.6	The proposed contributions to these events would be met from the existing regeneration budget.
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of this report • Consider contributions to the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – BBC Proms in the Park - £95K – Belfast International Festival - £25k – Belfast Tattoo - £25k – Belfast Pride - £25k – Cyclovia - £15K
	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which is currently out to public consultation, highlights the importance of world class events and the animation of the city as important elements of creating a vibrancy within the city centre, attracting overnight visitors and enhancing the international reputation of the city in the global market place.
3.2	The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is also out to consultation similarly identifies “ <i>improving the quality and international appeal of the events and festivals on offer</i> ” as one of the main improvements required in terms of developing tourism in the city.
3.3	The strategy highlights the need to develop a series of six “Signature Events” that have the potential to attract out of state bed-nights and positive international publicity for the city.

3.4	<p>This issue was picked up by the Development Committee of the previous Council when considering the issue of competing for international events and it was suggested that the Council develop a citywide Events and Festivals Strategy to inform the types of events and festivals that the Council should allocate resources to in the future. At its January 2015 meeting, the former Shadow Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed to commission such a strategy.</p>
3.5	<p>The events which the council will want to consider fall into three broad categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="359 604 1452 705">1) Large Scale International Events such as Giro d'Italia, MTV EMAs, Tall Ships and World Police and Fire Games; <li data-bbox="359 761 1452 896">2) City Festivals which have the potential to attract tourists and have a positive economic benefit e.g. Belfast festival at Culture Night, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, Feile, and Titanic Maritime Festival etc; <li data-bbox="359 952 1452 1052">3) Community based festivals which engage local communities, enhance civic pride and engender good relations and community engagement;
3.6	<p>With the exception of the annual events programme delivered by the Council's own City Events Unit which is almost solely financed by the Council, almost every other event is funded through a cocktail of funding from various sources including Tourism NI, The Arts Council, DCAL and DSD. The sustainability of many of these events is now under threat due to cuts in the Executive's budget and the subsequent reductions in the budgets for events within various agencies moving forward. As an example, Culture Night potentially faces cuts from ACNI, DSD and Tourism NI.</p>
3.7	<p>The Director of Development is currently commissioning support for the development of a Citywide Events and Festivals Strategy. This strategy will take into account the resources which will be available from other sources to support events in the city once those budgets become known. It is likely that the strategy will not be complete until summer 2015 and therefore will be used to guide policy from the 2016/17 financial year onwards.</p>
3.8	<p>In recent weeks the Council has been made aware of a number of events which would benefit from a 'one off investment' by the Council in advance of the completion of the city</p>

events and festivals strategy. This investment is required to either ensure the events can actually take place or to allow the events to be enhanced in terms of scale and impact. Details of each of the events as far as is known is set out in the paragraphs below and whilst the events and festivals strategy has not been developed, each of the events below align with the objectives of animating the city centre, presenting a positive image of the city in key tourism and investment markets or have the potential to develop into future “signature events” which can drive up tourism spend within the city.

BBC Proms in the Park

- 3.9 In recent years the Council has contributed £100k to the cost of staging the BBC Proms in the Park in the city. This has been a very successful event in terms of both community participation and positive broadcast coverage for Belfast as a city across the key tourism markets of Britain and Ireland. Last year the BBC invested in additional infrastructure to increase participation from 8,000 to 11,000 attendees with tickets being made available for the event free of charge to ensure the event is attended by a broad spectrum of the local population.
- 3.10 Following a previous approach by the BBC, the Council decided to allocate £100k towards the cost of hosting the Sports Personality of the Year awards in Belfast, in the expectation that in 2015 the Proms in the Park would be broadcast from Fermanagh. The new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has indicated that it does not have the resources to support the event so there is the potential for this popular event to once again be broadcast from Belfast, in addition to the Sports Personality of the Year. Broadcast events of this nature are important in portraying a positive image of the city in the face of on-going negative perceptions which still exist in the GB and Irish tourism markets.
- 3.11 The BBC has indicated that if the Council were in a position to make a contribution of £95k, this would ensure that Belfast is included within the locations from which the Proms will be broadcast this year. This would secure significant additional visitors to the city.
- 3.12 Council Officers have asked the BBC to set out what additional activity it would be prepared to undertake within the city should this funding be made available given the situation with Sports Personality of the Year. In response the BBC has made a number of additional commitments including:-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of programming on television and radio to complement the Sports Personality of the Year assuming the bid to London is successful along with an extensive community engagement programme through the BBC's "Get inspired" Programme; • A major television and radio event broadcast from the Crumlin Road Gaol as part of the national BBC Music Day which will feature the Ulster Orchestra and musicians from the area; • Provision of interactive displays and exhibitions as part of Tall Ships 2015 and subject to final approvals primetime network wide coverage of the event to a UK and ROI audience of over 5m people.
3.13	<p>The activities outlined above present a real opportunity to positively promote the city in a very positive light to Belfast's two key tourism markets over the course of the next nine months.</p>
	<p><u>Belfast International Festival (formerly the Belfast Festival at Queens)</u></p>
3.14	<p>Members will be aware through extensive media coverage that Queen's University has announced that due to cuts in its budget and the need to focus on its core business of Higher Education, the University is no longer in a position to support the Belfast Festival. Following a number of meetings with the core funders, the festival director, Richard Wakeley has proposed the setting up of a new "not for profit "entity to continue to deliver the festival in 2015, rebranded as the Belfast International Festival. He has also agreed to a future review of the new festival in the context of the Citywide Events and Festivals Strategy being commissioned by the Council.</p>
3.15	<p>The other funders - namely Arts Council NI, Tourism NI and the British Council - are supportive of this approach in principal and have agreed, subject to support forthcoming from BCC, that funding commitments to the Festival at Queen's transfers to the new entity.</p>
3.16	<p>Each of the funders have agreed to commit the same level of resources as they did in 2014 in order to sustain the festival and have asked that Belfast City Council commits to do likewise.</p>
3.17	<p>Last year the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed to commit an additional £25k, bringing its total contribution to the festival in 2014 to £64k. In response to this</p>

investment the festival engaged in a wide range of activity with partners in the community sector and venues across the city. The Festival Director is committed to continuing to engage in this way across the city should the Festival get the support necessary to proceed in 2015. The concept of a Belfast International Festival aligns fully with both the City Centre Regeneration and Tourism strategies. Similar festivals take place annually in cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Dublin and are seen as critical to the cities' reputation as centres of cultural and creative excellence.

Ciclovia 2015

3.18 A proposal has been received by the Council from a group called Upbeat on behalf of a number of organisations known as the "Ciclovia Group" which includes organisations such as Sustrans, NI Greenways and a cross party group of MLAs which are promoting the development of the "Ciclovia" concept in Belfast. This is an international movement which promotes the closure of streets within cities in order to facilitate walking and, in particular, cycling on certain days in city centres.

3.19 It is proposed that an event to promote the movement takes place in Belfast on Sunday 14 June to mark the start of Bike Week in the Botanic Avenue/Dublin Road Area of the city. This will also provide a good opportunity to further promote the Council's Public Bike Hire Scheme which is due to launch on 27 April.

3.20 The total cost of the event is estimated at £30k. The Council's contribution would be £15k with the remainder coming from DRD (£10k) and a private sector sponsor (£5k).

Belfast Pride 2015

3.21 Belfast Pride Festival hopes to offer a broader range of events as part of their 25 Year Celebrations. The organisers wish to increase the scale and impact of the event and regard it as an opportunity to promote Belfast as a modern, tolerant and multi-cultural cosmopolitan city. To enable this to happen a one-off contribution of £25k would be required.

Belfast Tattoo 2015

The Belfast Tattoo is a relatively new large scale event in the city which celebrates its

<p>3.22</p> <p>3.23</p> <p>3.24</p>	<p>Ulster-Scots culture and has taken place in the Odyssey Arena over the past two years. This event has not received any Council funding to date and this proposal is to allow the event to bring in international bands and to be held over two nights, thus creating a demand for bed-nights in the city. Again it is understood that the funding required is likely to be in the region of £25k.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications:</u></p> <p>If approved, the total cost to Council of supporting the events outlined above would be £185k, which would be met from within the existing City Centre Regeneration budget. The contributions required are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Proms in the Park - £95K • Belfast International Festival - £25k • Belfast Tattoo - £25k • Belfast Pride - £25k • Cyclovia - £15K <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>These events will support the promotion of the city centre as a shared space and the participation of all sections of the community in Belfast and beyond.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>