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| <b>Subject:</b>           | Northern Ireland Science Festival                                       |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 11 November 2015                                                        |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Donal Durkan, Director of Development                                   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development |

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

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1.1        | The purpose of this report is to update Members on a request for sponsorship received by the Northern Ireland Science Festival and to outline the proposed programme for the event in early 2016, as well as some of the potential benefits to the city in supporting this festival. |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2.1        | Members are asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Note the contents of this report and</li><li>- Agree to sponsorship of £35,000 from existing budgets for the Northern Ireland Science Festival 2016.</li></ul>                                                          |

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| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main report</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3.1        | <p>The Northern Ireland Science Festival delivered its inaugural event in February to March 2015. The Festival took place over 11 days offering more than 100 events in 27 venues presenting local and international work that focused on a wide range of themes including science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The daytime programme targeted children and young people with workshops, talks and interactive activities while in the evening the Festival presented an eclectic mix of scientific debates, talks, theatre, comedy, music and film.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 3.2        | <p>The event was organised by Science Festivals NI, a unique collaboration of major STEM outreach organisations in Northern Ireland. Funding for the event was provided by a number of organisations including the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Belfast City Council, Queen’s University, Ulster University, Invest NI and the British Council.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3.3        | <p>Science Festivals are a relatively new type of event that is growing in popularity worldwide, with cities such as New York, Edinburgh, San Francisco and Dubai hosting large scale events as part of their wider cultural framework. In 2015, the NI Science Festival joined this international group by becoming the largest festival of its kind on the island of Ireland and one of the largest in Western Europe.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3.4        | <p>The 2015 festival was considered to be a major success, exceeding agreed targets and competing with other established science festivals. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Audience numbers significantly exceeding the initial target of 10,000 set out in funding agreement with a total of 28,708 for ticketed events and workshops and a further 22,606 visits to interactive exhibitions</li> <li>– Given the level of interest from venues, performers, academics and partners, the festival greatly exceeded its target of 50 events with over 100 events taking place across 27 venues</li> <li>– Satisfaction rates from attendees was very positive with 85% of attendees stating that they would come to similar events in the future whilst 74% stated that the festival had increased their interest in STEM</li> <li>– Schools and young people formed the majority of the audience (68%). However the festival’s programme for adults, teachers and parents also proved popular, with the majority of shows sold out.</li> </ul> |

3.5

In addition to this engagement with local audiences, the Festival also exceeded targets in respect to international profile. This included:

- The Festival’s media impact included 60 articles appearing in local and national newspapers; 14 broadcast pieces and 107 articles were published online
- The Festival also gained international online coverage from sources such as Huffington Post, Yahoo News, Sky News, UK Wired Magazine and BBC Focus Magazine
- According to the media monitoring metrics employed by Nimms, the Festival’s broadcast and print coverage had a value of £354,863
- The Festival also teamed up with the Department for Employment and Learning to publish a STEM careers supplement for both the Newsletter and Irish News which reached a circulation of 80,332 and 39,935 respectively
- The Festival also attracted out of state visitors making a significant contribution to Belfast’s economy with postcodes from the audiences indicating that 8% of audiences stayed overnight in the city (around 4000 bed nights).

#### Proposed Programme 2016

3.6

The 2016 event will take place at the end of February/early March 2016. The core objective of the Festival continues to be a commitment to reaching a broad and diverse audience to increase the accessibility of science and to promote learning. This is in line with the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda to improve skills and employability, make the city an attractive location for investors and improve vibrancy and city animation. This will once again be achieved through a series of events and partnerships that link science into different areas of interest. The Programme themes are currently emerging and will include:

- Food Science - attracting a new audience through events in venues such as St George’s Market
- Sports Science – the festival will work with Sport NI, W5, Ulster University and Queen’s University on a series of activities
- A number of events will focus on the crossover between art and science. This theme is centred around an exhibition and workshops by the festival’s “artist in residence” as well as a photography exhibition in Titanic Belfast
- The Festival will also host events on photography, invention, history and wildlife in addition to the core themes of science, sport, food, engineering, technology, art and mathematics.

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| 3.7 | <p>There are opportunities for a number of the Council’s services to engage with the Science Festival to promote their work in innovative ways, particularly to young audiences, and to engage more residents around key issues for the city. These may include managing waste and food waste in particular; supporting active communities and promoting mobility and encouraging access to arts and culture for all residents. In addition, the innovative nature of many of the events – alongside the flagship events already lined up – will act as an attraction for people coming from outside of the city into Belfast, for the purpose of attending some of these specific events or associated activities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3.8 | <p>The success of the 2015 event has helped to secure international events with a high calibre of speakers. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Talks by international experts including Robert Winston, the psychologist Richard Wiseman and New York-based, world renowned physicist Brian Greene</li> <li>– A partnership with the BBC to develop a three day digital technology event in Belfast city centre</li> <li>– Given the success of hosting the largest ever Turing Lecture in Belfast City Hall in 2015, the festival will host this internationally renowned lecture series for Belfast for an unprecedented second year. Belfast secured the event again this year, overcoming competition from many other cities</li> <li>– In partnership with the British Council, the Festival has developed a new “artist in residence” programme and will also host the international science communication competition Famelab</li> <li>– The Festival will partner with the World Science Festival in New York to host an ambitious theatre show on Albert Einstein in the Grand Opera House</li> <li>– Working with local schools, the Festival is building on its Guinness World Record in 2015 by developing the “Big Global Experiment” with the Royal Society of Chemistry. Schools and community groups from across Belfast will be invited to take part in a collaborative experiment with schools across Europe.</li> </ul> |
| 3.9 | <p>In addition to these public events, the Festival is also helping to secure other investment in Belfast as a conference destination with a number of organisations using it as a platform for their own events. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Institute of Physics hosting its spring UK wide conference in Belfast to coincide with the festival</li> <li>– The British Science Association hosting a meeting of the network of the UK Science</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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|            | Festivals during the event.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.10       | <p>The Festival has strong alignment with the city’s investment, education and tourism priorities as outlined in the Belfast Agenda; the Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. In particular this is achieved through an emphasis on skills and educational attainment, international profiling, city events and programming. The message is consistent with the emerging city positioning work which is attempting to create a new narrative for Belfast that is based on the quality of its talent, reflecting its rich industrial heritage and its emerging specialisms in new technologies.</p> <p><b>Financial and Resource Implications</b></p> |
| 3.11       | <p>The total budget for the festival is estimated at £142,500. Funding of £50,000 has been secured from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) for the next four years. For the 2016 festival, funding of £7,500 has also been secured from the Department of Social Development. A further £40,000 is being sought from the universities and the Festival expects to generate £10,000 from ticket sales. The amount of sponsorship requested from Belfast City Council is £35,000, in line with the award made in 2015. This funding is available within existing Departmental budget estimates.</p> <p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implications</b></p>                                           |
| 3.12       | <p>There are no specific equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|            | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |