



Cultural Framework for Belfast

Action Plan 2016-2020



Draft November 2015



Belfast
City Council

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Copies of the full Cultural Framework for Belfast published in 2012 are available on request or from our webpage:
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culture

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INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Framework was launched in October 2012. This Framework was created in consultation with the culture, arts and heritage sectors across Belfast. The significant volume of achievements over these past three years is evidence of that ongoing partnership approach. As the Framework moves to a second phase, this new action plan sets out our priorities for the next four years.

Culture and arts make a vital contribution to this city helping to improve quality of life, drive the economy and make Belfast a shared, welcoming and proud city.

In 2013, Belfast City Council significantly increased its direct funding for culture however for many organisations this amounts to only a small contribution towards their annual turnover. In recent years further cuts to public funding of arts and heritage has resulted in increased pressure on organisations to sustain the programmes of activities, festivals and events that are such a vital part of the life of the city.

It is also changing times in local government with the recent transfer of a number of powers and areas of work to local councils in April 2015 with further changes planned. Culture and arts continue to be a valued and important part of the future of the city.

In 2012 we agreed a vision for 2020 that:

“Everyone in Belfast experiences and is inspired by our city’s diverse and distinctive culture and arts. Arts and heritage are valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth, and the city’s culture and creativity is renowned throughout the world.”

This vision is supported by four key themes: Distinctly Belfast; Inspiring Communities; Attracting Audiences; and Strengthening the Sector.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

There have been a number of key achievements in the period since the Cultural Framework was launched in 2012. These were supported by substantial direct investment to arts and heritage organisations. Our new funding schemes totalled an annual investment of £1.8m in the sector amounting to an increase of 25 per cent on the previous year's budget. This investment helped organisations reach audiences of just under 4 million, engage with approximately 170,000 participants, and provide around 8,000 employment opportunities for artists each year.

Belfast gets a fantastic return on Belfast City Council's funding of arts and heritage, approximately £8 for the city for every £1 of our investment. But arts and heritage is more than a sum of these parts helping to make Belfast a better city to live in, work in and visit.

INVESTMENT

£4.1m in 52 arts and heritage organisations through core multi annual funding;

£176,000 through PEACE III in 11 community arts Creative Legacies projects;

£180,000 invested in 12 large festivals through the PEACE III City of Festivals Programme;

Nearly half a million pounds invested to support over 100 arts and heritage projects

Supporting nearly 100 community festivals in partnership with Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, with funding of over £400,000

Investing £900,000 in 7 flagship projects through a new fund, Creative and Cultural Belfast, in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Where do culture, arts and heritage fit in to our overall vision for the city?

Since 2012 there have been a number of significant developments and we believe that it truly is a time for transformation for the city. Belfast is the economic driver of the region, the capital city and the cultural and creative hub of Northern Ireland. The city has changed dramatically in the past ten years with physical changes, population growth, and community development.

Over this past year a number of key strategies have been launched that will help give shape to our plans for the city. These have included a City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan which recognises that the city centre is the driver of the regional economy. A healthy and prosperous city centre therefore isn't just important for the local area, it benefits all of Belfast and Northern Ireland. This plan looks at the physical space and considers market and economic analysis of the city centre's office and retail offer, as well as priorities for tourism development and job creation. It is recognised that there

may be an opportunity to provide a physical presence for a cultural and creative hub within the City Centre. The Integrated Tourism Strategy for Belfast 2015-2020 has the ambitious aim of doubling the value of tourism for the city over the next 5 years and the contribution that culture, arts and heritage makes to the international positioning of Belfast is considerable.

Alongside these ambitions are challenges that the city must continue to address. As part of local government reform, council took on responsibility for community planning in April 2015. This involves public services working together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people. Working with a wide range of partners, including representatives from the statutory, business, higher education, community and voluntary sectors, we will develop a long-term plan to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the city.

The cultural sector has an important role to play in all of these developments to support talent and connect locally and globally to tell the Belfast story.

Theme ONE

Distinctly Belfast

Walled by hills, nestled around the banks of a river flowing to the lough, Belfast's heritage, archaeology, architecture and townscape tell the city's physical and social stories. Our art is unusually rich in the quality and variety of our artists and arts organisations, and we are home to the finest practitioners who are receiving international awards and acclaim. We have a unique history and a future full of promise. This is what makes Belfast distinct.

The challenge, in a rapidly globalising world, is to connect Belfast to its arts and heritage, developing cultural programmes that reflect and engage with our people and communities, their issues and interests. But Belfast is more than its physical space or administrative boundaries. It is a confident and contemporary European city. Culture and arts can showcase Belfast as a distinctive, dynamic and world-class place to live in, work in, and visit.

A strong and lively sector is also a sustainable sector, and it will attract and retain artistic talent. Distinctly Belfast is about high quality work that resonates with the people of Belfast and broadcasts our unique qualities to the wider world, enabling the city and its culture to be recognised and valued at home and abroad.

On one side of the coin, meaningful, engaging culture and arts will connect all our residents to our city, creating a more confident and cohesive society. On the other side, a city that truly celebrates its artists and promotes its culture, arts and heritage will connect internationally, drawing in tourists, attracting investors and boosting the economy, making our city truly competitive on the world stage.



Aims	Commitment	Actions/ Targets	What success will look like
Connecting people to the city, its stories, places, arts and heritage.	Support high quality cultural programmes that resonate with the people of Belfast. Attract, nurture and retain artistic and creative talent.	Support 8,000 artists' contracts per year. Set up Heritage Forum by 2016. Deliver a City as a Gallery/ Art in the Public Realm Initiative to be supported through external funding by 2018.	Belfast will be internationally recognised for its cultural excellence.
Promoting the value and authenticity of the city's heritage.	Promote the use of culture, arts and heritage to animate the city and create vibrant, welcoming places.	Conduct a feasibility study into a permanent Belfast Story exhibition to be completed by 2020.	The people of Belfast will value the contribution culture, arts and heritage makes to the city.
Promoting Belfast as a contemporary and creative city.	Promote and enhance access to Belfast's heritage. Develop opportunities to showcase the quality of Belfast's distinctive culture, arts and heritage locally, nationally and internationally.	Deliver a Bringing Belfast's Heritage to Life exhibition by 2018. Publish a Public Art Policy by 2018. Support 50 international partnerships by 2020.	
Placing culture, arts and heritage at the heart of Belfast's ongoing narrative.	Support artists to develop relationships and participate in global networks. Support outward and inward programmes and increase investment opportunities in Belfast's culture, arts and heritage. Support the development of new products and initiatives.	Develop a new support programme by 2017 to showcase Belfast's arts & heritage through local, national and international opportunities. Support the development of new work that presents Belfast as a contemporary cultural city through revised funding programmes by 2017. Scope the potential for character and style guidelines to be included in the planning processes by 2020. Explore the option to develop an inventory of buildings of cultural significance by 2018 and how this could be utilised by stakeholders to promote the conservation of Belfast's built heritage.	

Theme TWO

Inspiring Communities

Belfast City Council recognises that our people and our communities are the lifeblood of the city. Engaged and active communities are not the by-product of a successful city - they are a prerequisite for its success. During the development of the Framework and throughout the delivery of the 2012-15 Action Plan, our partners have been emphasising that engaging communities across the city must be a priority.

Community arts, outreach and audience development all create opportunity and encourage people to learn new skills. Festivals in particular can offer new experiences and open up communities to new people and other cultures.

This improves social cohesion and quality of life, building confidence at an individual, community and whole-city level.

This is a significant achievement in its own right, but these activities also help to grow audiences for the whole cultural scene, increasing the demand for arts and heritage and, in turn, shaping the future of our cultural city.



Aims	Commitment	Actions /Targets	What success will look like
<p>Removing barriers to participation to ensure all sections of the community can engage with high quality culture, arts and heritage.</p> <p>Enabling people to value and understand their place.</p> <p>Developing shared cultural space, celebrating and promoting local cultures and communities.</p> <p>Targeting areas and communities with low levels of engagement in culture, arts and heritage.</p>	<p>Build upon existing infrastructure to sustain partnerships between the community and cultural sectors.</p> <p>Encourage and support new partnerships between the community and cultural sectors.</p> <p>Improve communication with hard to reach communities.</p> <p>Ensure support for diverse range of programmes with targeted initiatives for priority groups.</p> <p>Establish baselines in order to improve community and cultural engagement initiatives*</p> <p>Nurture culturally curious communities and support people to live creative lives.</p> <p>Promote the value of cultural engagement across Council programmes and strategies.</p>	<p>800,000 people will have participated in culture, arts and heritage activities by 2020.</p> <p>Support a minimum of 5 artist-in-residence programmes across Belfast by 2018.</p> <p>Deliver community festivals training programme by 2016.</p> <p>Deliver capacity building programme to increase quality of community led arts programmes by 2017.</p> <p>Complete cultural mapping of Belfast by 2016 and update annually*</p> <p>Deliver access to artefacts programme for Belfast in partnership with other agencies by 2020.</p> <p>Deliver a heritage skills development programme by 2018.</p> <p>£1.2m invested in engagement programme in culture, arts and heritage from non-Council sources.</p> <p>Support participation in voluntary and amateur arts activities through key partnerships.</p> <p>Support shared cultural spaces across the city.</p>	<p>Belfast will be a more active, engaged and inclusive city.</p>

* Further commitments and targets will be developed following establishment of baselines and completion of cultural mapping.

Theme THREE

Attracting Audiences

This theme is about engaging, retaining and developing audiences - one of the most critical challenges facing the cultural sector today. Culture and arts is part of the experience economy. Audiences value the feeling of being engaged. Surrounding restaurants, hotels and businesses also benefit from increased footfall, supporting the wider service economy.

Heritage is our most accessible cultural asset - it is the backdrop to our daily lives and a magnet for tourists. Visitors to the city in particular bring additional spending power and attract yet more visitors by broadcasting the Belfast story around the world. Increased income can help organisations grow, but engaged audiences also sustain the cultural scene as a whole, increasing the demand for high-quality, culturally relevant programming.

Ultimately, our audiences are advocates for our future cultural provision. Growing audiences is important. In recent years, we have invested in the cultural

infrastructure, and now we must ensure that there is the demand to sustain the supply. However, sustaining existing audiences is also vital. Audience NI's audit of Belfast audiences has indicated that 1 in 5 households attend ticketed events each year and this figure has not increased in the period 2012-15. Attracting audiences is especially difficult in the current economic climate. Few organisations have dedicated marketing staff, while the decline of culture and arts coverage in the media has led to less exposure and profile. And there is no dedicated, coherent marketing resource for culture and arts.

Increasingly, the only platform to market activity is social media. Much more can be done to improve access to culture and arts across Belfast, including working closely with stakeholders, agencies and media to encourage enjoyment of what the city has to offer. Consideration must also be given to establishing a dedicated marketing resource to promote Belfast's culture and arts.

Aims	Commitment	Actions /Targets	What success will look like
Increase the numbers of residents taking part in culture, arts and heritage.	<p>Identify and carry out appropriate benchmarking.</p> <p>Gather, share and apply learnings from relevant data.</p>	<p>Audit of existing research carried out by 2016; commission relevant research and publish insights.</p> <p>Establish Strategic Attracting Audiences steering group for the city by 2016 including arts, heritage and tourism bodies.</p>	Everyone will be aware of Belfast's diverse culture, arts and heritage offer.
Increasing the number of visitors taking part in culture, arts and heritage.	<p>Focus on innovative and consistent use of digital platforms for marketing and visitor information.</p> <p>Develop and enhance the audience experience of culture, arts and heritage in the city.</p>	<p>Establish research working group by 2016.</p> <p>Establish baseline for number of residents and visitors attending cultural activity by 2016 and grow by 5% by 2020.</p>	
Promoting Belfast as a diverse and dynamic cultural city to existing and potential out-of-state audiences.	<p>Position Belfast as an international creative and cultural city.</p> <p>Strategic nurturing of media relations</p> <p>Develop a strategic partnership approach to marketing planning and activity.</p> <p>Promote the value of marketing and PR through Council-led up-skilling via learning, development and knowledge sharing platforms.</p>	<p>By 2020 increase the number of residents attending ticketed events from 1 in every 5 to 1 in every 4.</p> <p>Establish communications working group by 2016.</p> <p>Invest in media monitor for Belfast's culture, arts and heritage; establish 2 year baseline and 2 year growth by 2020.</p> <p>Deliver tailored training/ upskilling programmes including but not limited to audience engagement and digital innovation by 2018.</p> <p>Establish framework for measuring non-ticketed activities by 2018 and establish baseline by 2020.</p> <p>Invest in an appropriate communications platform for culture in Belfast by 2017.</p> <p>Invest in tailored audience development programmes and projects throughout period 2016-2020.</p> <p>Improve visitor/audience servicing in the city including signage and signposting by 2017.</p>	

Theme FOUR

Strengthening the sector

Belfast's culture and arts scene is vibrant and varied, and it contributes significantly to the life of the city. But it is reliant on public subsidy in a time of economic constraint, which is a risk to its sustainability. We recognise that the market alone will never wholly support our cultural organisations - indeed, this is one of the reasons why we fund them. However, culture and arts can help lead us out of recession, providing creative solutions in challenging times.

And as a building block for prosperity, they provide a platform for other industries, creating jobs and driving indirect income in to the city, for example, in the tourism and creative industries sectors. To enable organisations to unlock their economic potential, we will facilitate skills training and help them seek out and avail of new income streams. This will include opening doors to tourism and creative industries, growing closer relationships with other sectors and with European partners and providing business

development support to help them become more successful.



A Cultural Framework for Belfast cannot be achieved in isolation, and we will work in partnership with other key agencies, including through a proposed memorandum of understanding with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Internally, we will work across all business areas within Council - from City Events and Venues to Parks and Good Relations - to ensure our cultural organisations are used and supported in the continued development of the city.

Aims	Commitment	Actions /Targets	What success will look like
Providing opportunities for organisations to develop and diversify their income streams.	Maintain financial investment in culture, arts and heritage.	For every £1 we invest, a further £8 will be generated.	We will have a strong, skilled and multifaceted arts and heritage infrastructure across the city.
Increasing investment in culture, arts and heritage organisations.	Facilitate collaborations and partnerships.	£2m of external funding by 2020.	
Developing better infrastructure for skills development in Belfast.	Support organisations to identify and increase assets.	Support 300 full time jobs a year.	Our culture and arts offer will be more competitive than other UK and ROI cities.
Promoting partnership working and collaboration.	Identify and attract external funding, as appropriate, including EU.	Establish MoUs with key strategic partners.	
	Increase access to creative/make space.	Carry out audit of current support for career development and identify gaps by 2017.	
	Promote entrepreneurial skills development.	Carry out review of small grants programmes by 2016 and launch new programme by April 2017.	
	Ensure there is an effective strategy for ongoing support of existing cultural infrastructure.	Establish creative/ cultural ambassadors scheme.	
	Ensure cultural sector's contribution to the city is recognised in the Belfast Agenda.	Deliver tailored skills and career development programmes by 2018.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Deliver support programme for creative start up/ new business models by 2018.	
	Ensure cultural sector's contribution to the city is recognised in the Belfast Agenda.	Invest in research and development through appropriate small grants by 2017.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Provide development grants for organisations not currently in receipt of core funding by 2018.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Benchmark Belfast against comparator cities and carry out annual research by 2017.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Support peer to peer cultural partnerships between Belfast based organisations/ artists and national/ international partners by 2018.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Review supply of work spaces, studios and creative spaces and develop plans to address unmet demand including use of Council owned buildings by 2019.	
	Develop and support research priorities for the arts and heritage sectors.	Ongoing support for Forums including Culture, Festivals and Visual Arts.	