



Subject:	Belfast Story Visitor Attraction Update
Date:	14 September 2016
Reporting Officer:	Nuala Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development
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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
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update Members on the ongoing development of proposals for a new visitor attraction for Belfast City Centre- Outline next steps and programme of work
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the contents of this report, the work undertaken to date and next steps
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background <p>Members will recall that in January 2016 approval was granted to undertake feasibility work on a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction with a further update provided to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in June 2016 outlining progress to date.</p>
3.2	The Belfast City Regeneration and Investment Strategy identifies the need for a major city centre development recommending that serious consideration should be given to the opportunity to create a significant attraction or destination of national or international stature that is distinctive and unique to the city. Such a proposition is further supported by the Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 and the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2016-2020. Both of these strategies identify the role of culture and heritage in engaging with local people

and connecting the city globally.

3.3

A number of other cities have also been examined with examples such as Southbank in London or Guggenheim in Bilbao illustrating the regeneration potential of culture through the creation of world class visitor destinations.

3.4

In parallel to the development of a strategy for the city centre a number of proposals were emerging for further investment in cultural infrastructure.

3.5

Despite the merits of these proposed developments, each as an individual stand alone project was not considered to fully meet the challenge of regeneration and the need to be transformational for the city centre and visitor economy. Nor may they be able to create a sustainable venture in their own right. However across the proposals there were strong synergies with the cultural heritage and contemporary appeal of the city.

3.6

Facilitated by Council a number of key stakeholders from across the city came together representing tourism (Tourism NI), the arts (Arts Council), museums (National Museums), film (NI Screen) and education (Ulster University) to explore whether there was in fact an opportunity to reconsider these proposals to create a stronger single proposition with a focus on telling the Belfast Story.

Belfast Story

3.7

The Belfast Story Attraction (previously referred to as a Creative / Cultural Hub) would be the cornerstone or anchor of a new destination that would create an experience that is authentic and distinctive to Belfast that supports local people to connect to the rest of the world and is a visible and confident expression of the city's cultural heritage and future aspirations.

3.8

The emerging concept has a number of key component parts including:

- Belfast Stories visitor attraction – telling the story through music art, literature, our great people and achievements etc.
- Discovery and experiences of the story that make people want to explore more throughout the city and beyond
- A Northern Ireland film centre including a cultural cinema
- Permanent and temporary exhibition space that can accommodate and support collaborations with major international artists and cultural brands

- A shared space for cultural / digital / media skills development
- Commercial space for retail, food and beverage

3.9

As well as seeking to represent a chronology of the city in a very interactive way the attraction would be focussed on the stories of the people and the place with particular emphasis on themes such as Music, Literature, Art and Film.

3.10

Critical to this emerging proposition is the preferred location. The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy identified a number of special action areas requiring tailored responses and interventions. Also highlighted was the need for increased connectivity to ensure that the overall impact of investment is greater than the sum of its parts.

3.11

The Royal Avenue North area has been identified as a potential location for a number of important reasons:

- Inner North is a Special Action Area identified in the City Centre Regeneration Plan and requires direct intervention
- There is a need to drive footfall down and across Royal Avenue
- The Belfast Story can be a major anchor that will support future investment in the city centre including retail and other sectors
- There is an opportunity to support the development of a wider ‘Cultural Corridor’

3.12

There has been significant investment in this area already with the Ulster University development as well as plans for a major refurbishment of Central Library. The Belfast Story Attraction could also help further realise the impact of these other investments by acting as one of the anchors for this emerging cluster as well as driving footfall and increasing spend in the city centre.

Work to date

3.13

Feasibility work to date has largely considered the proposal under three priority areas:

- The need for regeneration
- The need to enhance the tourism offer of the city
- The need for innovation and skills development to help grow the economy

This work has recommended a destination approach incorporating a number of experiences rather than a single building approach. This ‘mall’ style development can

3.14	<p>support a number of the key components as outlined above at 3.8</p>
3.15	<p>Additional research conducted to assess at this early stage the potential economic impact concluded that in a medium growth scenario there could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 24.7 % growth in overnight stays – 29.8% growth in number of nights stayed – 10.5% growth in spend per night
3.16	<p>Further catalytic impacts include the potential for the hub to signpost to and support the existing cultural and tourism infrastructure in the city and beyond resulting in an overall step change.</p>
3.17	<p>Next steps</p> <p>There is a requirement to further continue to develop the concept of the Belfast Story and continue to test and refine the proposition. A number of key work streams have been identified to support this ongoing development including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of Belfast stories concept including a detailed design exercise – Agreement on governance, organisational design and structure including identifying an appropriate governance and operating model for the project which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the various key stakeholders – Masterplanning and delivery options – Wider stakeholder engagement – A viable funding model <p>This work programme will then culminate in the development of an Outline Business Case.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Staff from the City Centre Regeneration Team will continue to take forward the work programme working with partner organisations. A further update report will be taken to City</p>
3.19	<p>Growth and Regeneration Committee in due course with costings for the development of an outline business case.</p> <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relations implications at this stage. Equality and Good</p>

3.20	Relations implications will be examined as the project develops.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None.