



Subject:	Northern Ireland Science Festival
Date:	8 November 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Clare Mullen, Tourism, Culture, Arts & Heritage 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 the report is to update Members on a request for sponsorship for the 2018 Northern Ireland Science Festival based on the success of the 2017 event. The festival will take place from 15 to 25 February 2018 in venues across the city and throughout Northern Ireland.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the contents of this report and- Agree to allocate £35,000 from existing budgets for festivals of this nature, to the Northern Ireland Science Festival 2018 as per the agreement in October 2016.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p data-bbox="272 208 432 237"><u>Background</u></p> <p data-bbox="272 255 1471 591">The Northern Ireland Science Festival has been taking place annually since 2015. The 2017 event took place over 11 days in February 2017. It offered over 180 events across a wide range of 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 science debates, talks, theatre, comedy and music to engage youth groups as well as adults and families.</p>
3.2	<p data-bbox="272 658 1471 1048">The event was organised by Science Festivals NI, a unique collaboration of major STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) outreach organisations in Northern Ireland. Belfast's exceptional higher level skills talent pool is the primary reason why investors choose the city. Events such as the NI Science Festival help grow collaborations between such organisations and individuals, showcasing Belfast in a positive light. Funding for the event was provided by a number of organisations including the then Department for Employment and Learning, the British Council, Queen's University and the Ulster University and Belfast City Council.</p>
3.3	<p data-bbox="272 1115 1471 1397">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 frameworks. In 2015, the inaugural 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 Europe. Since the first Festival in 2015, the event has continued to go from strength to strength.</p>
3.4	<p data-bbox="272 1464 1471 1554">Since it was established in 2015, the festival has continued to exceed agreed targets, and successfully competing with other established science festivals.</p>
3.5	<p data-bbox="272 1621 884 1650">Evaluation of the 2017 achieved the following :</p> <ul data-bbox="272 1718 1471 2013" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="272 1718 1471 1807">- Audience numbers of 63,000 exceeded the 2017 target of 60,000 set out in the funding agreement; <li data-bbox="272 1874 1471 1964">- 182 events took place across a range of venues, with approximately 85% of audiences coming to events taking place in Belfast; <li data-bbox="272 1975 1471 2013">- 94% of attendees indicated that they would visit the Festival again, with 71% of survey

respondents indicating that they were more likely to pursue or encourage others to pursue a career in STEM following the Festival;

- The Festival's wide ranging programme is designed to reach a wide demographic. The Festival's audience is made up of young people (40%), adults, teachers and parents (51%) and schools (9%);
- As a percentage of the audience, the number of extensive engagements rose to 63% of the audience (compared to 39% in 2016) which equates to an additional 9760 tickets sold compared to 2016 figures (30,714 tickets sold in 2016);
- An analysis of postcodes from across the UK indicates a significant section of the Festival audience came from England, with London proving to be a particular hotspot;
- The Festival's growing international reputation meant that it was able to attract some of the top names in science, resulting in headline acts that attracted international attention.
- Several out of state visitors visited Belfast to observe the Festival as a model of best practice. The Norwegian Research Council sent a team of 50 people to the Festival for five days to learn how the Festival operates while the British Council also brought a delegation of 52 Newton Fund scholars from across 8 countries to the Festival;
- The Festival's media coverage increased dramatically from previous years with 114 print, 82 online and 11 broadcast items. The total PR value of coverage received by the Festival was equivalent to £349,229.79, a notable increase from £47.5k in 2016.

3.6 Proposed 2018 Programme

The 2018 Festival will take place from 15 - 25 February 2018. 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.

3.7 The Programme themes include:

- Tech and Digital – linking with local companies and international experts, this theme consists of talks, debates and workshops on areas such as coding;
- Engineering and robotics – highlighting the advances in engineering and robotics across Belfast, including some of the unique strengths of Belfast businesses in this field;
- Food Science – attracting a new audience through events linking with local restaurants, cafes and venues, including as St George's Market;
- Art and Science - 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 celebration of Lillian Bland by the Ulster Orchestra;

- The Festival will also host events on photography, invention, history and wildlife in addition to the core themes such as mathematics, physics and space.

3.8 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 the support programmes on education and skills, profiling Council's business start-up and business growth programmes and profiling 'investing in Belfast'. There may also be opportunities for community engagement activity, 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. A postcode analysis for the Festival indicates that a large proportion of the previous Festival's audiences come from outside Belfast.

3.9 The success of the 2017 event has helped to secure international events with a high calibre of speakers for the 2018 programme.

3.10 These include:

- Talks by the 21st century's most famous Astronaut Chris Hadfield;
- A specific focus on women in STEM;
- A partnership with the BBC around employability and skills, with opportunities to link to the Council work in this area;
- The annual Turing Lecture hosted in Belfast City Hall;
- A "artist in residence" programme in partnership with the British Council ;
- Several events focused on key issues in tech such as cyber security, smart cities and the internet of things;
- A partnership with Belfast Zoo, "Zoo Ambassador" day. Behind the scenes partnership work with Queen's University Belfast and the Zoo's Animal Welfare Programmes alongside the "Get 'bee-hind' bee conservation project and the Red Squirrel conservation project;
- Programmed workshop in partnership with Bounce Culture. The workshops will be aimed at Young People within Belfast and will be focused around digital technology, beat making techniques and visual art;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second year partnership with the Botanic Gardens Belfast aligned to the re-opening of the Tropical Ravine; - Titanic Belfast STEM Quest Final. Aimed at school children throughout Northern Ireland at Key Stage 3 Level. <p>3.11 The Festival has strong alignment with the city’s investment, education, skills 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 city positioning work which is has created 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>3.12 <u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> There are no specific equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.</p> <p>3.13 <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> The total budget for the Festival is estimated at £237,000. Funding of £83,000 has been secured from the Department for the Economy (this includes £50,000 of core funding), £5,000 from the British Council, £20,000 respectively from Queen’s University and Ulster University. A further £19,000 has been secured from Tourism NI alongside £10,000 from the Matrix Panel and £10,000 from Corporate sponsors MCS recruitment. The Festival anticipates ticket sales to generate around £35,000. The allocation requested from Belfast City Council is £35,000, in line with the awards made since 2015. This funding is available within existing Departmental budget estimates.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None