



‘St Patrick’s Day Celebrations in Belfast ’

A FUTURE PERSPECTIVE FROM FÉILE AN PHOBAIL – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Féile an Phobail have carried out a series of consultations exercises and surveys of the current St Patrick Day Offering in Belfast City Centre.

Féile an Phobail have a belief that the City could be more ambitious with its current St Patricks Day offering, especially when compared to other Cities across the world, and the organisation is keen to play a more central role in developing a product that represents the unique diversity of and story of Belfast as part of its annual celebrations.

An outline of what the full report contains is detailed below;

- 1. Introduction and Background** – outlines the background to the study, the role of the organisation, and an overview of the terms of reference for the study.
- 2. Strategic Fit and Context of the Proposal** – this section demonstrates how an improved St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast meets with current local, regional and national policy on Tourism, the Arts and Social Enterprise
- 3. Survey Findings + Consultation** – this section provides an overview of the key findings from the surveys carried out across the city and findings from the consultation that was carried out with key Strategic Agencies involved in delivering Tourism Products for the City.
- 4. Learning from Best Practice** – this section provides some examples of St Patricks Day activities, events and themes that could be integrated into an enhanced experience for those celebrating St Patricks Day in Belfast.
- 5. Future Vision for St Patricks Day in Belfast** - this section will outline the organisational mission, vision and the aims and objectives of for an enhanced and indigenous St Patricks Day Experience in Belfast
- 6. Audience Development Plan and Content** – this section provides a structural overview and framework for the types activities and events that Féile an Phobail would propose to include as part of a community led, inclusive and ambitious St Patricks Day Festival across the city.

- 7. Marketing Strategy and Plan** – will provide information on the marketing strategy and activities associated with the development for a new and enhanced St Patricks Day Festival in the City.
- 8. Future Management and Resource Considerations** – will provide a proposed structure for the development and management of the St Patricks Day Festival across Belfast. This section also presents high level financial resource estimates that will be required to deliver the Festival across Belfast.
- 9. Benefits of Delivering a St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast** - this section will outline the likely benefits to the people and the City across a range of themes.
- 10. Strategic Imperatives, Critical Path, Implementation and Next Steps** – this section will outline the key findings of the full report and provide details on some next steps related to the development of a St Patricks Day Festival.
- 11. Summary and Conclusion** – will outline the key findings in a short, concise chapter.

Féile an Phobail hope to create a strategic relationship with Belfast City Council, and other key agencies that have a responsibility for driving Tourism and Cultural / Art's activities in the centre of Belfast.

The full report's aim is to articulate the potential that a St Patricks Day Festival could have on the City and provide some high level detail of Festival Structure, best practice learning and benefits for delivering the same.

In addition, should Belfast City Council and other key agencies decide that a St Patricks Day Festival is a worthwhile approach for the event, then Féile an Phobail would like to be provided with an opportunity to support the delivery of this festival as partner or potential delivery agent.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As part of the research and development process for a proposed St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast, a range of additional actions were undertaken to help inform and shape the proposed offering and vision of Féile an Phobail. These actions are outlined below;

1. Discussion with a range of public funding and key statutory / stakeholder agencies
2. Best practice research into how other Cities deliver unique St Patricks Day experience. The research involved best practice visits to Liverpool, Swansea and New York.
3. A SWOT analysis of the current St Patricks Day experience was cross matched with a SWOT analysis of Féile an Phobail. This became the foundation upon which the concept of a St Patricks Day Festival was developed.
4. A marketing and branding workshop(s) was undertaken to help define the proposed experience in light of the findings from the Community Survey (2 x half day workshops)
5. Presentations were made to the Senior Officers / Elected Members of Belfast City Council with specific relevance to developing a new concept for a St Patricks Day experience in the City.
6. A detailed benefits realisation plan has been prepared for the Festival Concept
7. A detailed project implementation plan has been prepared for the project should there exist a willingness to take the St Patricks Day Festival forward in Belfast.

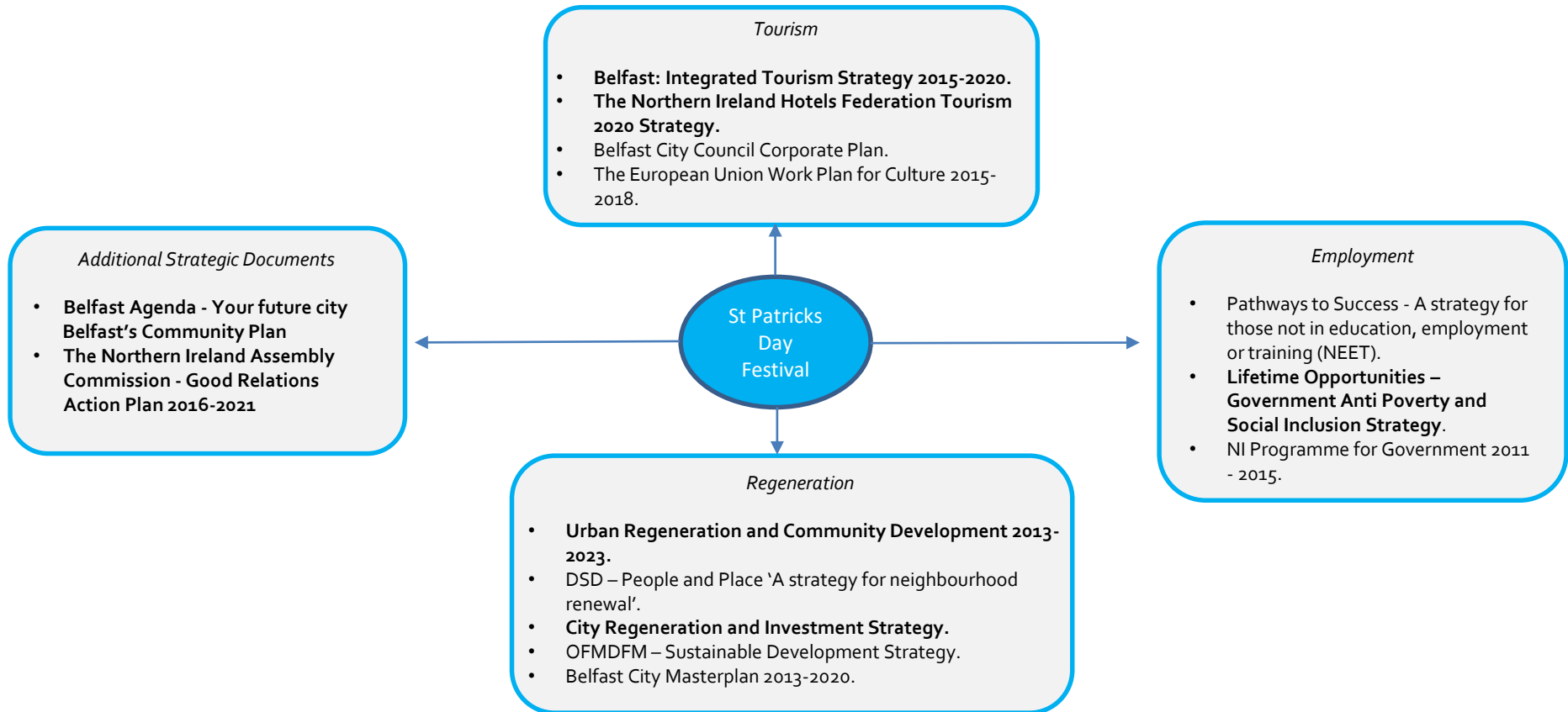
As a process, Féile an Phobail have tried to deploy the following;

- a) Draw from the learning that exists from the current offering in the City
- b) Listen to peoples views of St Patricks Day in Belfast currently
- c) Benchmark against other Cities in Northern Ireland, Ireland an beyond
- d) Develop a new concept for Belfast – A St Patricks Day Festival that has an impact on local communities as well as the City Centre
- e) Develop a framework for audience development, content and marketing
- f) Present a suggested management structure and indicative resource / investment plan for the concept
- g) Seek approval from Belfast City Council and others to take the St Patricks Day Festival beyond this early concept stage.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This section of the Executive Summary outlines clearly how a proposed St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast complements the attainment of the aims and objectives of numerous government departmental strategies. It will also highlight the multiple benefits that are accrued from the successes and the profile of the St Patrick’s Day Festival in Belfast. The full report outlines how a Festival will impact with, positively influence and contribute to the following strategies;



For the purposes of the Executive Summary, an overview of how the Festival Concept contributes to the following 2 key strategies has been presented overleaf;

1. Belfast Agenda :Your future city, Belfast’s Community Plan
2. Belfast City Council: Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The following table outlines how the proposed St Patricks Festival aligns with the Belfast Agenda in the following ways;

Strategy / Policy Title	Key Policy Details that Fit with Project	Contribution of project
<p>The Belfast Agenda Your future city: Belfast’s Community Plan</p> <p>A vision for Belfast in 2035</p>	<p>The vision for Belfast in 2035 is ‘Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.</p> <p>The Belfast Agenda is focussed on delivering the following key outcomes;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy 2. Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all 3. Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential 4. Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing 5. Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city <p>Over the next 4 years (2017-2021) the Belfast agenda will focus on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing the Economy • Living here • City Development • Working and learning 	<p>The development of a St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast, with an increased audience development strategy and enhanced budget is likely to deliver against a number of priorities and goals within the Belfast Agenda. Some specific examples of how this project links is outlined below</p> <p>Indicator 1.12 – Total Spend by External Visitors – A St Patricks Day Festival with more things to do would help to attract more visitors and increase the spend by Tourists during the Festival in comparison to what they currently spend on the St Patricks Day event n Belfast</p> <p>Indicator 2.4 – Number of Anti Social Behaviour Incidents – Through this festival there will be a proactive approach to dealing with the issues in he Holylands which happen year after years and the under age drinking at City Events.</p> <p>Indicator 2.7 – Proportion of population who believe that their cultural identity is respected - the proposed St Patricks Day Festival will provide opportunities for individual interpretations of St Patricks Day celebrations in Belfast.</p> <p>Indicator 3.8 – Participation in Arts, Indicator 3.9 Participation in sport – these activities will become a key component of the audience development plan</p> <p>Indicator 3.10 – Volunteering – a large element of the overall St Patricks Day Festival will be delivered by volunteers.</p> <p>Indicator 5.4 – Visitor Numbers – An enhanced multi-day St Patricks Day experience in Belfast would help to increase visitor numbers in the City. ⁵</p>

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The following table outlines how the proposed St Patricks Festival aligns with the Belfast City Council Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015 – 2020.

Strategy / Policy Title	Key Policy Details that Fit with Project	Contribution of project
<p>Belfast City Council: Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020</p>	<p>Tourism currently attracts almost 9.5 million visitors to Belfast each year and contributes over £430 million to the local economy. This in turn supports over 9,300 full time jobs. The Belfast: Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 sets out priorities and activities to help us double the impact of tourism to £870 million per annum by 2020.</p> <p>The strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with tourism partners and stakeholders. It aims to focus everyone’s efforts around priority issues. The improvements that it suggests will be delivered in partnership with all organisations that have an interest in increasing tourism into the city.</p> <p>The main improvements identified are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the city’s reputation through better marketing, access to the city, improved services for visitors and better events • To strengthen the tourism sector through quality assurance, training and by developing new products and experiences for visitors. 	<p>This proposed enhancement of the existing St Patricks ‘Day’ celebrations, to a more rounded festival experience will contribute significantly towards enabling the strategy to achieve its aim of doubling the impact of tourism in Belfast to £870 million per annum by 2020.</p> <p>There is no doubt whatsoever that the income and the economic benefits derived in Northern Ireland as a result of the parade, the concert and associated festivities, undertaken across the City by a wide range of stakeholders. This initiative will seek to see the landmark occasion become a more strategic venture, with the adoption of a hub and spoke approach, allowing local involvement, engagement and exposure across the 4 corners of the City, but with an increased focus on expanding the celebration to encourage more night time economic gain, increased offer for visitors that would necessitate extended or overnight stays in the City.</p> <p>This increased profile will enhance reputation and greatly extend the level of marketing and access to the whole City in a strategic, inter connected manner.</p> <p>This is a step change also for the functional delivery of St Patricks Day celebrations and in undertaking a whole City approach we believe this will bring new experiences, new services and initiatives, year on year and an enjoyable rounded experience for all visitors to Belfast,</p>

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

These consultation findings have been drawn from a range of sources including:

- **Community Survey (295)** – completed online and hard copy targeting those who may avail of the events and programme throughout the St Patrick's period.
- **Business Survey (20)** – completed online and hard copy targeting those who may benefit from the St Patrick's programme across the City Centre. Please note that the businesses consulted were hospitality establishments along the parade route.
- **Stakeholder Interviews (5)** – detailed discussion with a range of relevant organisations with a keen interest in St Patrick's Day provision in Belfast.

The consultation and research findings are summarised as:

EVENT ATTENDANCE

The vast majority of community survey respondents (60.5%) had not attended a St Patrick's Day event in the last three years, with 39.5% indicating they had attended an event in the last three years.

When asked their priority for attending the event the following was clear:

- Respondents indicated the **highest priorities** were **'feel it's important to bring my children to cultural and heritage activities'** (33% first rank respondents) and **'feeling connected with my heritage and culture'** (28% first rank respondents).
- **'wish to celebrate and showcase the heritage and culture of St Patrick'** was deemed **second highest priority with 27%**.
- **'Opportunity to meet friends and socialise together'** was deemed a lower priority for respondents with **28%**.

For those who had not attended an event in the last three years the following was presented as a rationale why:

- Respondents indicated the **highest priorities** were **'too much of an inconvenience to travel into Belfast'** (74%) and **'the event activities have not interested me'** (40%).
- The priority with the most second rank results was **'Do not feel a connection with the heritage and culture of St Patrick'** with 37%.
- Respondents indicated there was little priority for **'the event does not celebrate St Patrick's culture and heritage traditionally'** with 33% indicating it was neither the most or least important priority for them.

HOW THE EVENT COULD ATTRACT GREATER PARTICIPATION

As a means of attracting greater participation the following suggestions were provided:

- Have all **relevant schools involved**, not just youth groups.
- **Remove / cease underage drinking** and gangs of youths parading about Belfast.
- **Improved security**, as young people drinking at the event give the perception it is unsafe to attend
- More **widely advertised** as a reflection of a new Ireland free from sectarianism, discrimination, homophobia, etc.
- The St Patrick's Day events are an **important part of Belfast's calendar and cultural identity**.
- Make it a **national holiday**, and celebrate it like the USA.
- Local funding would help organisations **run events for our members in their own area** which would **raise the profile of the day**.
- It would be of great help if the event could be **widened to embrace all cultures** in the Belfast area. Could Ulster Scots enthusiasts be invited?
- We should all be **working together to create a bigger and better event programme for Belfast**
- More **involvement from outlying areas communities** of Belfast to make it more inclusive with potential support through small grants programme.

HOW THE EVENT COULD ATTRACT GREATER PARTICIPATION

- **Use St Georges Market and have a proper food fair** Irish cooking.
- Would love to see **traditional produce being promoted** throughout the Belfast (i.e. **local markets filled with crafts and local food**).
- Would love to see **Belfast light up our major attractions i.e. Titanic in green, colouring the River Lagan green etc.**
- Let's **bring major events to Belfast** at this time youth conferences etc.
- **Sports should be emphasised more** GAA, Rugby, Soccer etc. and their associated events.
- Feel that a **greater effort should be made to involve more ethnic and diverse groups within our community.**
- It should be an event that **promotes Belfast as a modern and vibrant city and consequently encourages tourism.**
- The city should be making a **greater effort for the festivities for the week leading up to St Patrick's Day** while encouraging the **greater Belfast area to get involved** in the parades.
- **Promotions for St Patrick's Day from business suppliers** including, flags, banners etc.
- Consider doing **street events close to businesses to encourage spectators to use them.**
- Should be a lot **more for children, similar to Culture night.**
- **Start the parade in Donegal Square West.**
- Alter the parade route to **include Howard Street.**

BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES

68% of business respondents indicated the current St Patrick's Day event was beneficial to their business operations.

- 75% (15) businesses viewed the St Patrick's Day event as an opportunity to 'give something back to the community'
- Similarly, 75% of businesses secured increased revenue through the event and garnered improved relations with the local community.
- 13 businesses (65%) increased their profile from the event and 14 (70%) used the event as an opportunity to work with other businesses.

This report also took cognisance of other studies conducted by Belfast City Centre Management regarding the St Patrick's Day programme which suggested the following recommendations:

- In Dublin, stores do not open until the parade has passed.
- It has been suggested that an event which runs for a longer period of time at this location and appealed to older adults as well as a younger audience would work better.
- Offer events which are much more varied and spread across the city.
- More needs to be done to address these anti-social behaviour problems.
- The city should try and build on these mixed offerings to create a more attractive and widespread vibe in the city centre.
- attempts need to be made to minimise disruption for traffic within the city and staff travelling to work on the day. The event should ensure that there is sufficient directional signage.

LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICE

This research examined a range of St Patrick's Day events across the world with the aim of gathering key learning to inform any future Belfast programme. The table below outlines key thematic learning across key best practice learning locations:

LOCATION	ORGANISING STRUCTURE	TOURISM IMPACT	CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership approach between Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council, sponsors and other programme partners. Potential to attract support from similar and the same partners as those assisting Dublin (i.e. Tourism Ireland). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracted over 100,000 overseas visitors & estimated 500,000 audience / 1.4m web views Social and economic return to the economy, community and profile relative to investment levels - £2m cost with £73m return Start the tourism season and generate employment opportunities across the City and wider country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> festival and parade is the main focal point on the Island to celebrate St Patrick's Day Underpinning the global St Patrick's Day activity and the overall Irish reputational brand
Downpatrick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and supported by a range of other contributors Community organisations and groups make up majority of floats and parade participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> multi day / programme festival incorporating a range of events catering for a wide spectrum of visitors and participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cross-community festival, is the centrepiece of the celebration 5 days and takes advantage of the historic relevance Downpatrick has with St Patrick
Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festival involves the main parade, and week long fringe festival of Irish cultural events, including Irish music and dance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World's third largest behind Dublin and New York (at a cost of only £70,000). Audience 90,000-100,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> largest Irish population in the UK, as well as Britain's only Irish Quarter passing floats, dancers, and drum corps increasingly reflect the city's cultural diversity
Chicago		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400,000 people gather along the Chicago River to watch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyeing the Chicago River green – a tradition dating back to 1961, is followed by a parade of the City parade lasts about three hours, with dancers and bands making their way up Columbus Drive through Grant Park
New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> starts at 11am on 44th Street and lasts approximately 6 hours Led by a military unit, the foot-powered procession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> world's largest St Patricks Day celebration with more than two million people gathering for the city's grand parade on March 17 The economic benefit to the City on the day is estimated at approximately \$250 million. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Features bands, bagpipes, and dancers, and typically between 150,000 to 250,000 participants and upwards of 2 million people lining the streets Tells a balanced view of St Patrick's parade and its origins in the city (i.e. homesick Irishmen serving in the British Army)

LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICE

It is obvious there is significant learning to be gleaned from the examples presented. Many of the cities demonstrate and provide services and attractions that have emerged from consultation findings. This benchmarking provides validation of those findings and support to begin the process of taking forward possible Belfast St Patrick's Day programme amendments, which are firmly based on evidence of delivery elsewhere across the world. The following bullet points outlines a range of key findings in summary to those presented earlier in this benchmarking section.

- All cities have gained significant return for relatively modest investment amounts:
 - Dublin – less than £2m return of £73m
 - New York – return of £230m
- Notably all festivals have a degree of greening of key sites across the city
- Where St Patrick's Day does not fall on a weekend the majority of cities hold their main event / programme during the weekend nearest St Patrick's Day to maximise spectatorship / participation etc...
- More festivals are increasingly incorporating wider cultural celebrations to reflect the diversity of local communities across relevant cities.
- New York promote the festival allows opportunity for a balanced view of St Patrick to be presented.
- Chance to maximise opportunities for greater number of tourists visiting Ireland / Dublin particularly given the extended stay many opt for giving ample time to travel north to Belfast.
- There is an opportunity to exploit the St Patrick's Day brand for the benefit of the City.
- Having inclusivity laced throughout the festival programme brings significant benefits for the city and its communities (i.e. Birmingham now the third largest festival behind only Dublin and New York.

- Without exception all St Patrick's Day events examined incorporate a multi day programme offering activities and events across the city allowing wider participation that just the parade which forms the centrepiece of celebrations.
- All of the international cities attract a significant number of spectators to their main parades of between 70,000 (Birmingham) and 2 million (New York) yielding fairly significant return in terms of wider participation and attraction.



VISION FOR ST PATRICK'S DAY IN BELFAST EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISION

Féile an Phobail has a very clear view of its intentions for the future development of any future St Patrick's Day festival. This is critical to set the tone for its ambitions to help develop a innovative high quality festival that meets the expectations of people in Belfast, City Stakeholders and importantly those who will ultimately benefit from it.

This vision must be effectively communicated to the wider public and relevant stakeholders and potential funders etc... The overarching vision therefore for the proposed development is detailed below:

"To create and develop a world renowned, welcoming, community led and inclusive festival experience that show cases and celebrates Belfast's interpretation of an authentic St Patrick's Day across the City."

Whilst ambitious, this vision builds on the successes achieved by Belfast City Council since 2008 and aims to rival and exceed St Patrick's Day experiences elsewhere regionally and internationally.

To be delivered in full will require a shift in the ability to be inclusive and coordinated with other cultural events and importantly attract all sections of communities across the country and internationally.

This vision is underpinned by an equally ambitious mission statement which is:

"To provide a unique, Belfast centric, St Patrick's Day Festival Experience, that is celebrated with pride and without prejudice."

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In an increasingly competitive St Patrick's Day market where well established and highly attractive events are commonplace particularly across Ireland and the USA it is imperative that Belfast's offer is innovative and creative whilst maintaining its traditional roots. A number of strategic priorities have been developed to shape and guide thematic areas of festival delivery:

- 1 Develop a reputation as a market leading provider of an innovative and inclusive community led St Patrick's Day Festival
- 2 Delivery of high quality community led events feeding into a unique and unrivalled celebration of St Patrick in Belfast City Centre
- 3 Provide a robust and highly effective management, partnership and governance structure to implement the ambitious festival plans
- 4 Deploy a bespoke, innovative and culturally acceptable integrated marketing and communications strategy to match the events high ambitions

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The following set of guiding principles underpins and shapes this concept;

- **Community Led** – a festival that is rooted in the community providing benefits for local people whilst being showcased in the centre of the city.
- **Commitment and Integrity** – to providing a community led product with dedication, commitment and focus
- **Respectful and Collaborative** – adding value and complementing a cultural offering across Belfast and internationally
- **Quality** – a world class and internationally recognised St Patrick's Day festival similar to the other events that are synonymous with Belfast..

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Integral to this process, Féile an Phobail has developed a series of aims and objectives that, with the development of this ambitious St Patrick's Day programme, will act as parameters within which it and other stakeholders can work to achieve its long term vision. These objectives are outlined in the table below:

Aim	SMART Objectives
<p>1. Develop a reputation as a market leading provider of an innovative and inclusive community led St Patrick's Day festival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure a political champion(s) for the proposed St Patrick's Day festival • Secure appropriate funding and resources to deliver a world class high quality festival of international acclaim • Ensure that the Festival is delivered in partnership and with committed and experienced stakeholders from across the City. • Develop an authentic yet highly attractive festival of events and activities across local communities culminating in a world renowned celebration of St Patrick • Engage a broad range of stakeholders and cross sectoral partners / collaborators to assist this world class delivery including Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, and Tourism Ireland etc... • Create and develop strong links and effective partnerships with other cultural events locally, regionally and internationally • Learn from best practice in the local and international stage implementing only the best aspects for the Belfast festival • Significantly increase participant and visitor numbers to this unique and innovative festival of events locally and internationally
<p>2. Delivery of high quality community led events feeding into a unique and unrivalled celebration of St Patrick in Belfast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborative working with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, and Tourism Ireland • Develop and secure practical links and partnerships with local community and voluntary sector, tourist providers and private organisations with a role to play in facilitating, developing and growing a celebration festival across Belfast for the benefit of local communities • Collaborate to with local community led satellite events as feeder activities culminating in a unique celebration of St Patrick • Secure funding or lobby Belfast City Council to increase the small grants programme for St Patricks Day. This will assist and enable local community events across Belfast and help to tie all events, activities and initiatives into one overarching St Patricks Day Festival.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (Cont'd)

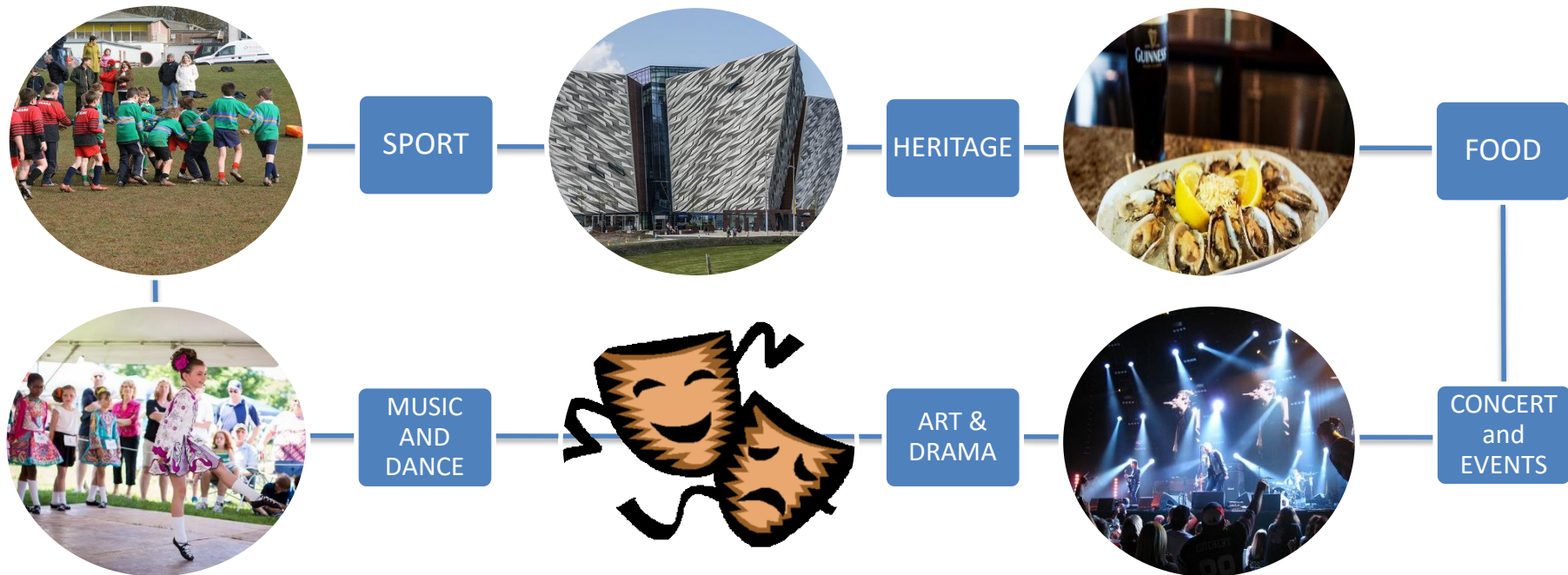
Aim	SMART Objectives
<p>3. Provide a robust and highly effective management, partnership and governance structure to implement our ambitious festival plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop an agreed partnership and governance structure which will be made up of key Tourism Stakeholders, Community Organisations, Statutory Organisations and the Private Sector. • Secure the involvement of key advisors or independent directors with relevant expertise to ensure capacity to successfully implement and operate an festival of this magnitude and scale (this may include joint representation from Derry / Strabane given the recent Capital of Culture Bid) and from Cities that have well established St Patrick's day events in other parts of the world. • Establishment of time bound and specific operational sub groups to oversee specific festival elements • Secure financial support to pump prime key staff costs to implement festival. This may be done through appointment of a lead partner (tender) and resources provided to get the Festival started. • Development a suite of robust best practice operational policies and procedures • Commit to the delivery of ongoing continuous professional development for all relevant St Patrick's Day personnel and associated board members • To ensure that the St Patrick's Day Festival will remain in the long term as a 'collective grouping' of committed partners and not just led by one agency or another.
<p>4. Deploy a bespoke, innovative and culturally acceptable integrated marketing and communications strategy to match our high ambitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strong and easily recognisable brand for a Belfast's St Patrick's Day festival reflecting the uniqueness and attraction of the product • Ensure partnerships and collaborative working with Belfast City Council, Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, and Tourism Ireland to assist branding and market exposure • Secure the input of an appropriately qualified and skilled marketer and communications specialist • Develop an innovative yet robust marketing and communications strategy to shape and guide all St Patrick's Day festival marketing and communications • Development of an appropriately designed and functional website allowing interaction with visitors, booking capabilities, integrated social media functionality, and clean and clear branding. This can be used all year round, and will go a long way to supporting the development of the 'Festival Experience'. • Develop a cutting edge innovative social media presence and associated campaigns

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT THEMES FOR A ST PATRICKS FESTIVAL IN BELFAST

The previous graphic has sought to outline the broad thematic audiences that an enhanced festival will target. These audience groups are consistent with the overall strategic objectives of the Feile an Phobail organisation and indeed all those working in tourism related fields in the City. In particular Feile an Phobail see direct relevance to the following;

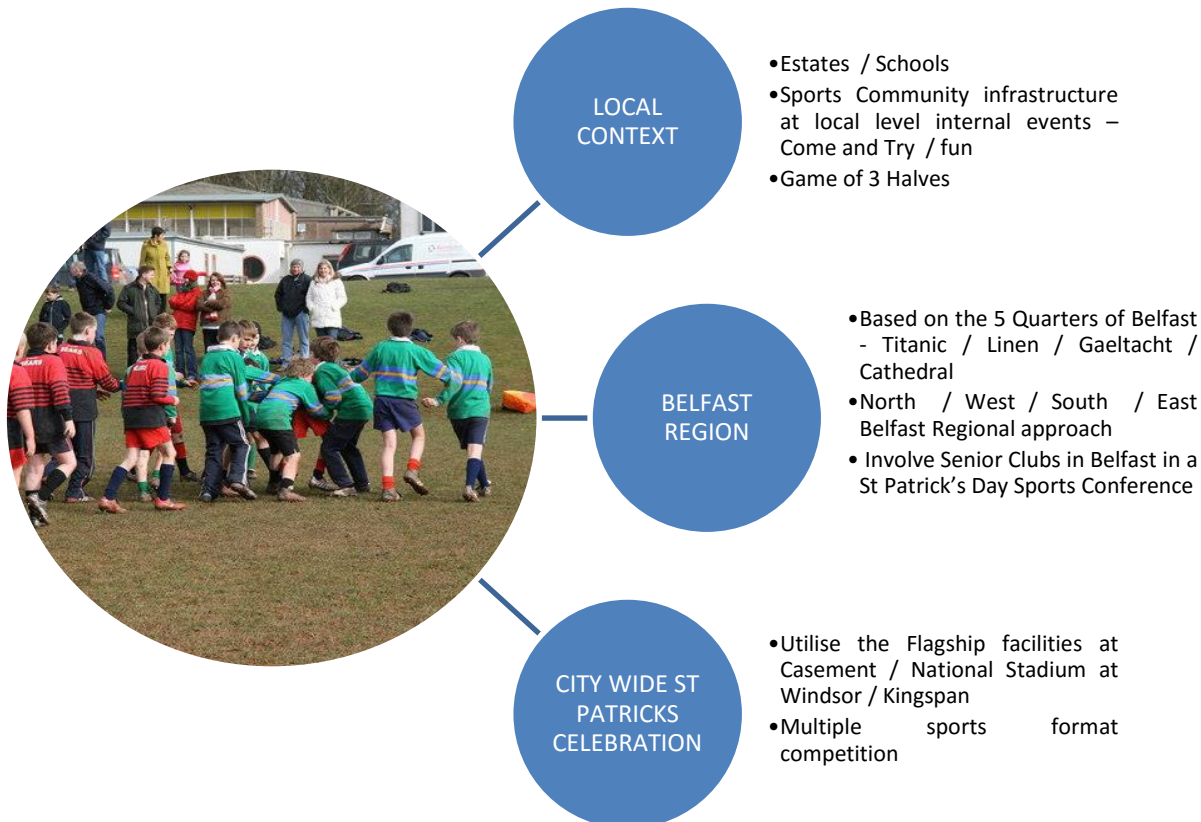
- Focus on needs of customers, partners and COMMUNITY
- Respect each other, promote equality and GOOD RELATIONS
- EXCEED ALL EXPECTATIONS across all aspects of future delivery

The ethos of this overarching approach to both the segments of potential audiences and the programme themes below will be delivered across local community and more Quarter / area based and then into a City Wide Celebration culminating with the City Centre extravaganza.



SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – SPORT

The graphic below seeks to provide a crude overview of a specimen programme of events and occasions that can be delivered as part of a festival using Sport as a theme. The programme may be deliverable on the basis of micro community / local, escalating to the regional areas of Belfast before culminating in more City Centre or strategic City wide initiatives as part of a festival of Sport as part of St Patrick’s celebrations in the City. In addition there are sports events that have traditionally taken place on St Patrick’s Day (Schools Rugby, Hockey and Soccer Finals) yet, they could be added to the overarching festival and may be something that could add to the overall feel and context of a St Patrick’s Day Festival

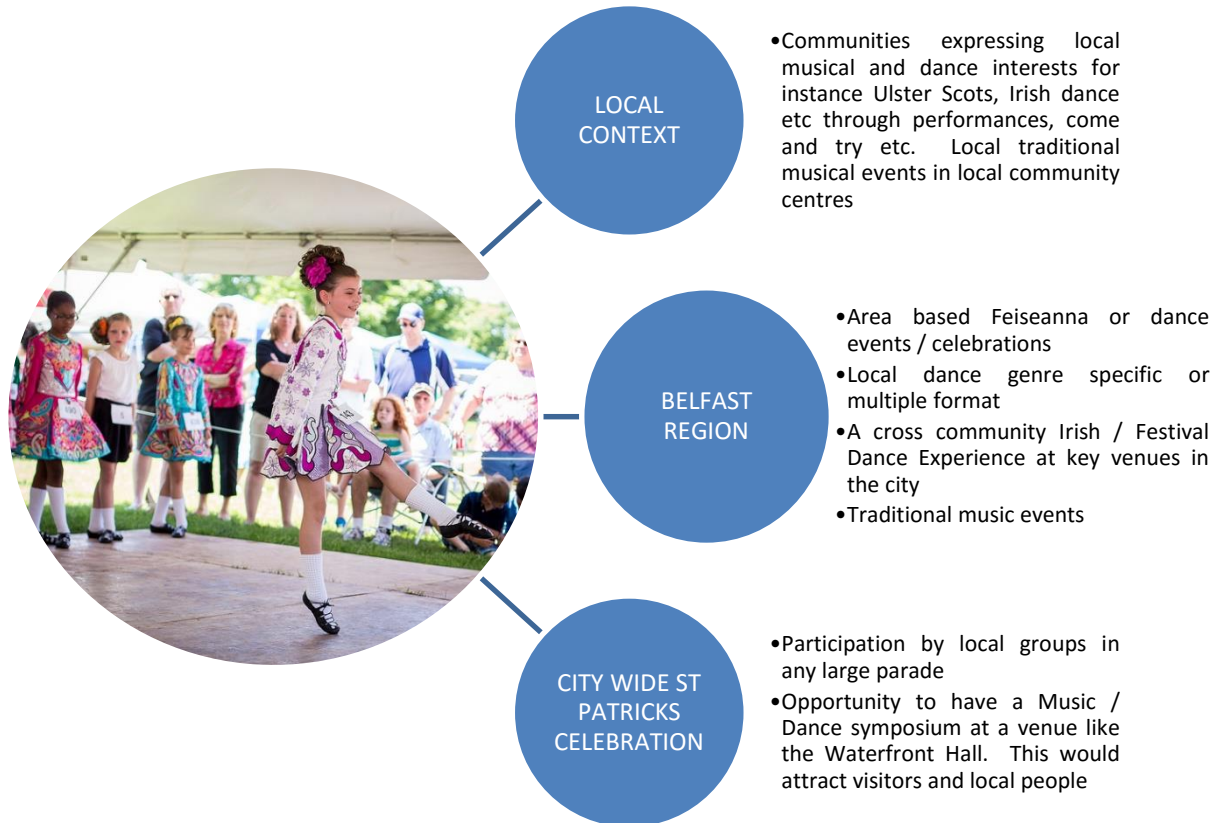


Why Include Sport?

- Sport is something that has traditionally been absent from St Patricks Day Celebrations in the city, yet has the largest potential to engage participants from across the City
- Through Sport, Belfast has the opportunity to develop something unique to the City, and deliver / develop something that no one else in the world can lend claim to.
- A good example of using sport as a means of engaging citizens of Belfast, is the Spar 10K which is delivered by Aisling Events. It engages a cross section of the population, attracts positive media coverage and yet has so much more potential to become a flagship event across the City

SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – MUSIC AND DANCE

The graphic below seeks to provide a suggested overview of a specimen programme of events and occasions of any St Patrick's festival that can be delivered using Music and Dance as a theme. The programme may be deliverable on the basis of micro community / local, escalating to the regional areas of Belfast before culminating in more City Centre or strategic City wide initiatives as part of a festival of Music and Dance as part of St Patrick's celebrations in the City.



Why Include Music and Dance?

- Music and Dance are two very important ways of celebrating culture and history.
- Belfast has an array of music and dance talent that can be showcased in community centres, and larger stages / venues in the City on St Patrick's Day
- Visitors and Tourists would appreciate the opportunity of seeing young and fresh music and dance talent in Belfast and could help to broaden the appeal of the event in the City
- Many young people are actively involved in Music and Dance activities across the city, and St Patrick's Day could give them a welcome platform to showcase their work and talent to both local and international audiences.
- The opportunity for a City Wide Symposium on local Music and Dance Performers has the potential to become a flagship event for Belfast.

SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The City of Belfast is awash with Heritage and Culture. The physical and built heritage is well documented, particularly in the City Centre, however many of the landmarks can be found within communities of Belfast, where social, cultural, ecclesiastical and other built heritage abounds. The expansion of the St Patricks Celebrations to a more festival feel offers opportunity for a more strategic approach to audience development and engagement. A festival will create the opportunities for more localised events, programmes, heritage open days using St Patrick as the theme, an opportunity for local community infrastructure to interact and embrace those visitors to Belfast, from within and beyond the City.

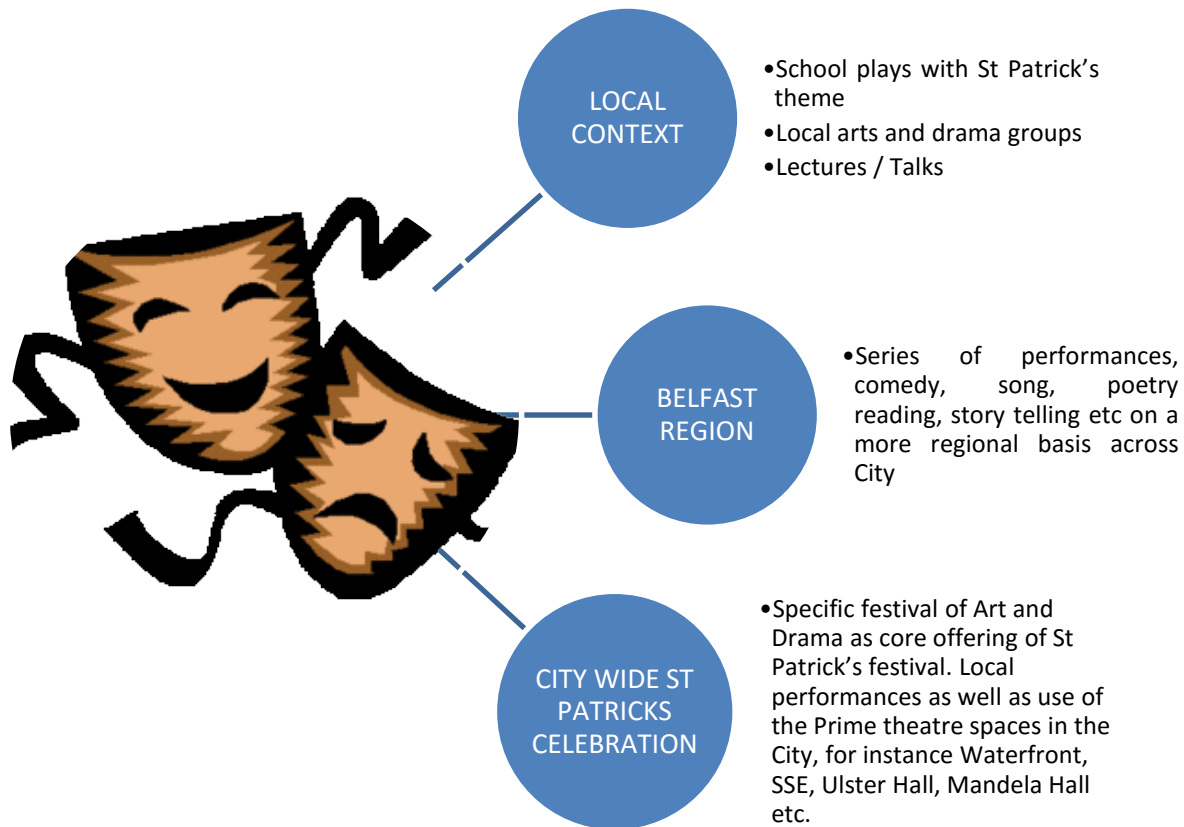


Why Include Heritage and Cultural Tours?

- With the growing Tourism product in Belfast, it would be prudent to consider the development of a number of bespoke tours and dining activities for out of state visitors.
- Through the St Patricks Day Festival, Tour Operators or organisations such as Fáilte Feirste Thiar could develop a number of bespoke ‘Belfast St Patricks Day Themed Tours’ where tourists maybe get the opportunity to visit Slemish, Downpatrick but that they return for a Tour to Belfast and ensure any additional expenditure is carried out in Belfast (Bars, Restaurants, etc..). There could be 2-3 different Tour Options, but it is something that has yet to be done in Belfast and could prove to be profitable but also one that would add to the overall St Patricks Day Experience in Belfast
- A Tour like that proposed may be one of the reasons for out of state visitors choose to come to the City and we should b doing all we can to ensure that that is the case.

SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – ART AND DRAMA

Belfast has produced a plethora of World renowned and famous musicians, artists, performers, writers and actors over the generations. The talent that lies in the City is immense and in many cases, the Board of Feile and Phobail feel this is untapped resource. The expansion of St Patrick's Celebrations to a festival feel, of whatever length of programme, offers a broad range of new opportunities for local people to become more aware of, appreciative of, and engaged with the Arts scene.



Why Include Art and Drama?

- Belfast has a growing reputation for developing original theatrical content and showcasing it in unique ways – ie Culture Night, and Festival of Fools are two very useful examples.
- By encouraging local organisations (schools, community groups, youth clubs and churches) to actively get involved through 'performance' it could lead to a spectacular showcasing of local talent on St Patricks Day
- Art Galleries and Art projects throughout the City could consider a joined up production / exhibition (s), involving Irish Artists, and by delivering them in multiple sites, it will ensure that those visiting will move across various parts of Belfast.
- There is so much potential to create a specific St Patricks Day themed art / drama production that could be of similar size and scale to that of Culture Night. It requires imagination, leadership and resources but could quickly become the back bone of St Patricks Day Celebrations in Belfast in the future.

SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – FOOD AND DRINK

The City enjoys immense success with the season Continental Marketplaces in the City Centre, as well as the acclaimed St George's Market. Ireland, as a whole, and indeed the current celebration of St Patrick's is awash with food and drink. This theme would offer an opportunity for a tailored and bespoke Food and Drink festival. This may consider the traditional associated fayre of Guinness and Irish Stew but also explore our increasingly multi cultural society through local explorations and celebrations of food and drink. This would all corners of Belfast to be engaged in a 'festival feeling' with the opportunity for local people to showcase their skills and wares, from Bread and Cakes, to savouries, to home brewed tipples.

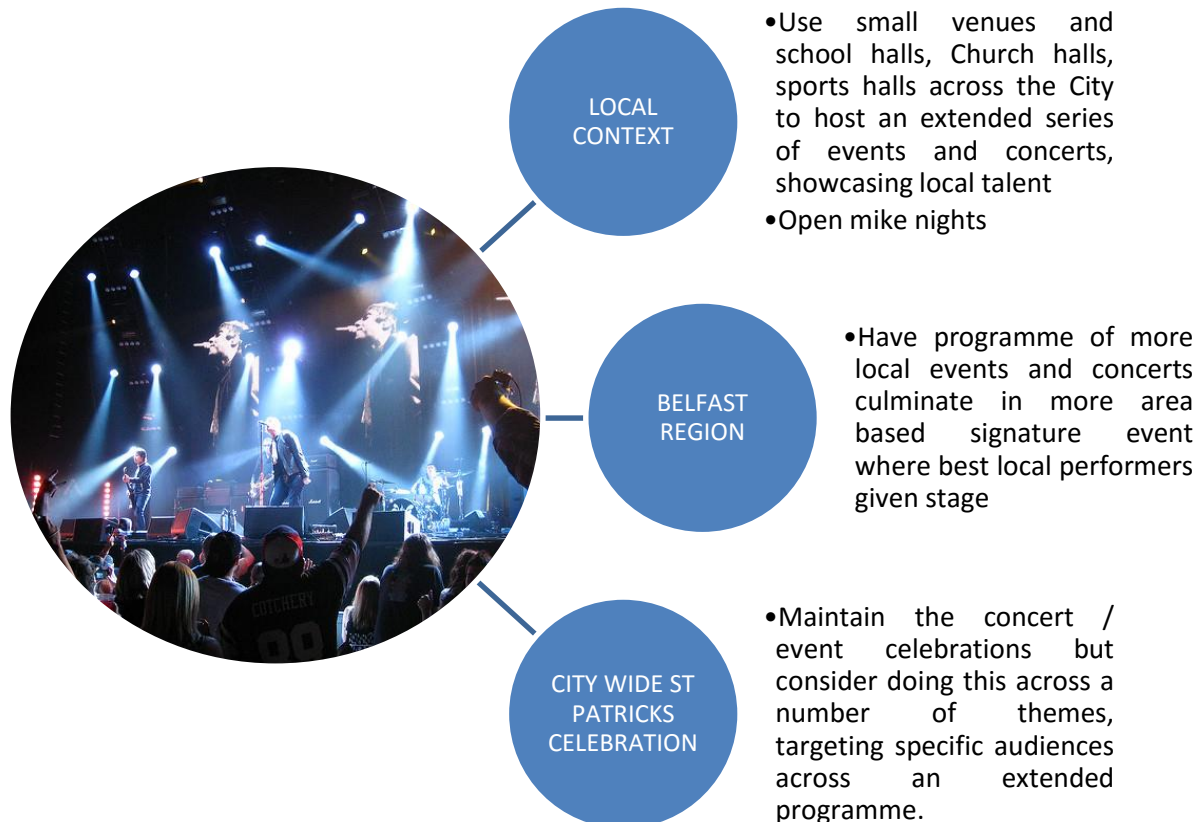


Why Include Food and Drink?

- Belfast has a large selection of foods that are synonymous with being from the City, and this is something that can be built upon
- The re-emergence of St Georges market as a destination for events and activities lends itself to hosting an Irish Food Festival and one that would add considerably to a St Patricks Day Festival.
- There are good examples of other food festivals or beer festivals that have become world famous. Belfast should aspire to develop a food and drink event that allows local produce makers to showcase their work to a wider audience
- The event could be used to help raise the profile of local produce makers, and the event would be valued by both local visitors and those from out of state. A range of competitions could be delivered at the event in a bid to raise the profile of our culinary experts.
- Strict entry criteria will be required to ensure that all foods / drinks have an Irish theme, are made locally and are unique

SPECIMEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMME – CONCERTS AND EVENTS

Belfast is renowned as a great night out. The concert and events programme now available across the year is of the highest quality and for the fortunate numbers who secure tickets can form memories that are held for many years to come. The potential of a St Patrick's festival as opposed to a singular concert held annually in custom house square will enable many more people to enjoy events and concerts but also for the volume of these events to be greatly enhanced, ensuring a prolonged feeling of celebration of our patron saint.



Why Include Concerts and Events?

- The St Patricks Day Celebrations in the City have always been delivered through concerts and parades
- There is a feeling however that more can be done to make the experience authentic, especially the concert at Customs House Square. There is a preference for current Irish Bands such as Picture This, Snow Patrol, etc... (we understand the budget restrictions), but this type of act would be more authentic than the X Factor performers that come across to perform.
- The parade could possibly be themed and participants could be challenged to come up with their interpretation of that theme on an annual basis

INCLUSIVITY AND PROVIDING PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

In recent times there has been a growing concern that St Patrick’s Day does not attract participation from one of the two main communities locally. There may be many varied reasons for this, some of which may be outside the control of organizer’s and key stakeholders that have a responsibility to deliver a high quality St Patrick’s Day event. It is clear however, that this issue must be addressed to create a festival that can truly claim to be reflective and representative of indigenous offer.

This aspiration to increase the inclusivity of the festival and attract participation from all sections of the local population requires significant consideration. This is particularly true amongst those who currently have a direct involvement in its delivery (i.e. Belfast City Council officials and elected members). To help inform this process a number of options to improve the festivals inclusivity have been presented below and across:

Consideration	Description
Connection with other event and activities	There are numerous events and activities happening across the city on St Patrick’s Day that have no centrally coordinated role in a wider St Patrick’s Day offer for visitors or participants (i.e. GAA, Rugby and Soccer Schools Cup Finals). It should be noted that rather than taking control or responsibility for these events it is suggested their promotion and advertising falls under the banner of a wider St Patrick’s Day provision offering visitors a menu of participation options that they can pick and choose from depending on their tastes and preferences.
Provision of Irish Indigenous Concert	This could be a concert on St Patrick’s night in an appropriate venue (i.e. Titanic Slipway, SSE Arena, custom House Square etc...) which is not funded through main St Patrick’s Day provision but links with it. A key theme must be indigenous Irish music, not in a traditional sense, but more aligned to acts, bands and performers originating from Belfast, Northern Ireland, Ireland etc... (i.e. Ash, Picture This, Snow Patrol etc...). Its links to the wider community led approach to St Patrick’s Day could be the provision of free tickets for community groups across the city who played a role in the St Patrick’s Day events.
Festival Timing	Consultation indicated if the event fell on a normal working day this could deter participation as it is not viewed as a public holiday and thus some people may be working / don’t receive time off work to attend. To encourage more people from across Belfast diverse communities it is suggested the festival reverts to the weekend nearest to 17 th March annually, however this will require further consultation with the local business community. Whilst not addressing the issue for those who typically work weekends it does minimise the issue for those who work weekdays.
Provision of small grants to support local community led projects and activities	The provision of funding for St Patrick’s Day events is nothing new and has happened in Belfast City Council for a number of years. There is some criticism of the disproportionate access of funding for those groups from a Catholic, Nationalist or Republican background. It is thus suggested the administration of this funding could mirror the Area Working Group model used by Council for LIF projects with each Working Group receiving an allocation to be spent in that location. If not expended it is re-integrated back into a central pot that can be bid for by the other areas.

INCLUSIVITY AND PROVIDING PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

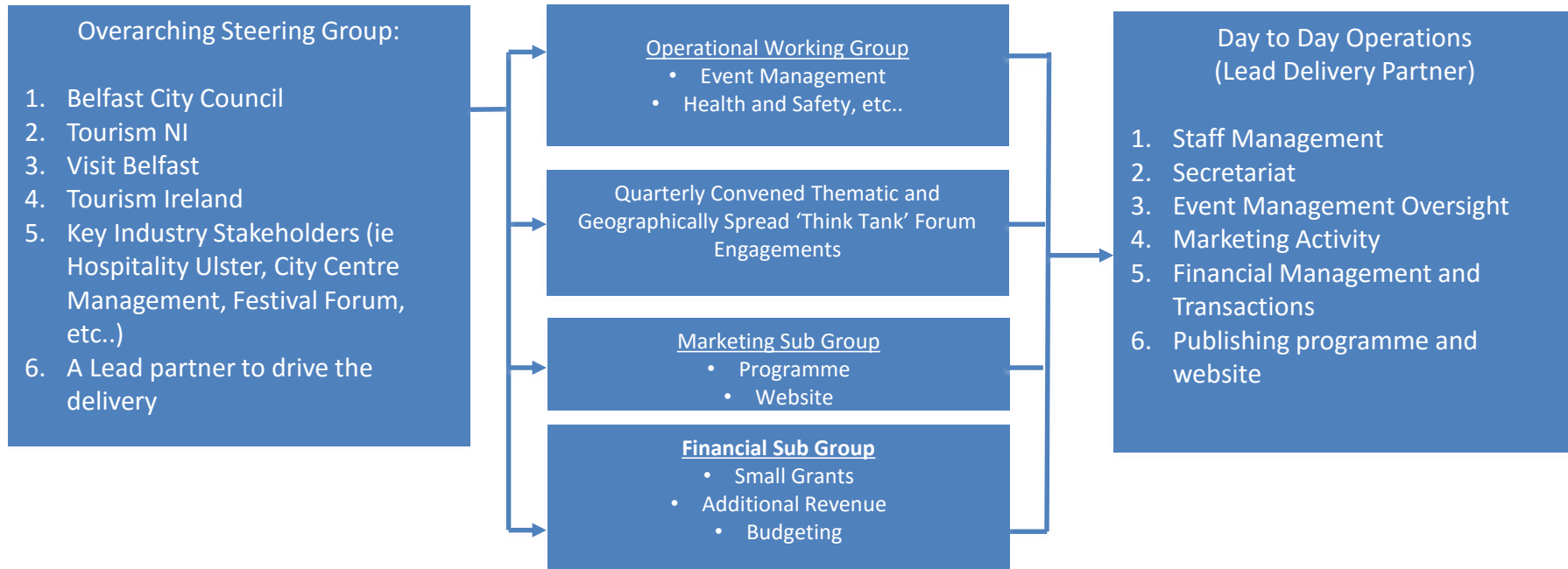
Consideration	Description
Production of a city wide St Patrick's Day publication and website for the proposed festival	This publication will aim to promote and profile all relevant events and activities happening across the City on St Patrick's Day, not just the parade, concert and associated city centre based activities. This will also include the programme of events and activities happening at a community level across the city (i.e. informed by the small grants recipients / projects) and will include all those activities that have been identified as potentials in the earlier part of the audience development section.
Private sector engagement	As a means of engaging the private sector, it is proposed a voucher booklet could be developed providing offers and discounts across restaurants, bars, accommodation, retail etc... with the aim of not only securing the involvement of private sector businesses but also providing another offer / attraction for visitors and participants alike when coming to Belfast. This would also ensure that the economic benefits for the St Patricks Day Festival can be increased and measured.
Development of festivals charter for Belfast	The city hosts over 80 annual festivals, which is tremendous. A charter, developed by Belfast City Council and adopted by festival organisers across the city could provide guidance, principles and an ethos through which festivals could be channelled ensuring they meet minimum standards and expectations.

ISSUES THAT WILL NEED TO BE ADDRESSED AS PART OF A ST PATRICKS DAY FESTIVAL

Like most festivals and events in the City, Féile an Phobail recognize the need to address some underlying issues or continuing incidents that tend to bring about negative public relations for Belfast on St Patrick's Day. Some of these have been outlined below;

- Part of the consultation and research noted that the behavior of a minority of young people (due to Anti Social Behaviour and Under Age Drinking) can call in to question to safety and inclusivity of the proposed event. Féile an Phobail would encourage working with the Belfast PCSP and Local Youth Outreach Teams on St Patrick's Day to ensure that young people are encouraged to participate in a positive manner at the event. Any incidents of under age drinking should be dealt with quickly by the PSNI or the contracted Outreach Youth Teams. This ASB can also have a negative impact on public transport on those days, so developing some clever youth led transport arrangements on the day of the event and festival should be considered and explored for future years.
- University Quarter. In 2017, there were considerable disturbances in the Holylands area of the City, with students celebrating St Patrick's Day in their own imaginative way throughout this area. Some of the images have damaged the reputation of the City on St Patrick's Day. Féile an Phobail would propose working proactively with the students unions (UU and QUB) and the students living in the area to come up with a series of events and activities that would meet their expectations, but move them away from the streets that continue to be damaged on an annual basis .

A ST PATRICKS DAY FESTIVAL PARTNERSHIP



Feile an Phobail recognise that the future success of any St Patrick's Festival in Belfast will be influenced and shaped by the strength and depth of the partnership tasked with bringing the event to life. As part of the consultation and research phase we believe that a future delivery partnership should be developed in line with the structure outlined above.

It would be delivered across 3 key levels.

1. The overarching steering group would lead the strategic direction of the Festival and be responsible for agreeing the annual theme of the concert, along with securing resources and appointing a lead partner to deliver the concert through a contractual relationship. This will help to maximise and share resources, and support strategic links with other Festivals and Events (such as the 2023 Collaboration with Derry and Strabane Council).
2. The sub groups will allow for specialist areas of the festival to be developed in more detail. This may include securing funding, event management, marketing and branding, etc... This will allow for more organisations to get involved in the development and delivery of the event and ensure that it is representative of all interests across Belfast.
3. Day to Day operations – this will likely be put out to tender, in a bid to contract an appropriate organisation or consortium that can deliver and take responsibility for the development of the St Patrick's Day Festival across Belfast. Its likely to be a year round contract given the ambition of that being proposed by Feile an Phobail.

EARLY FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Feile an Phobail understand that to deliver the event / festival like that proposed will require a significant increase in financial resources. Its important to note however that our best practice research into other cities shows that the economic dividend and return on investment is proportionally higher for those that spend more. Feile an Phobail are not prepared to say what the budget should be for an event or festival of this nature, but we will present key headings and outline where investments and new budgets will be required.

Needless to say it is Feile an Phobail's recommendation that additional resources are found to support the delivery of a St Patricks Day Festival. However given the sensitivity around budgeting, events, we have chosen to highlight areas of financial investment required to deliver this Festival. Accordingly, should Belfast City Council embrace this concept of a St Patricks Day Festival, the partnership could 'cut its cloth' according to available resources. Some financial considerations are outlined in the table below;

Budget Heading	Financial Considerations	Existing or Additional Resources	Budget Heading	Financial Considerations	Existing or Additional Resources
Appointment of a Lead Delivery Partner	A company or agency will need to be appointed to deliver this project on behalf of the St Patricks Day Festival Partnership	BCC currently resource this internally but could be used to contribute to a Lead Delivery Partner	Marketing and Promotions	A budget will be required to support the joint marketing and promotions of the Festival. A new website will be required to support the promotion of the Festival throughout the year	BCC currently have a marketing budget for the event but this will need be increased Additional budget
St Patricks Day Concert's	A budget will be required to deliver the St Patricks Day Concert in Belfast. In addition a separate concert run by a private promotions company will be required for a night time concert at SSE arena or CHS. In addition a range of community concerts will be delivered through this Festival Experience.	Existing Budget but will likely require more to support the Festival Experience No additional Budget will be required for this work with Private sector promoter	St Patricks Day Parade	A budget will be required to deliver the St Patricks Day Parade in the City and the planned community parades that may join up with the main parade in Belfast.	Existing Budget but will likely require more to support the Festival Experience
			Greening of Civic Buildings and Landmarks	Belfast City Hall already turns Green for St Patricks Day Plans for other landmark buildings to do the same.	Existing budget Additional budget required

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EARLY FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (Cont'd)

Budget Heading	Financial Considerations	Existing or Additional Resources
Small Grants Programme	A small grants programme already exists, but it will need to be increased if a St Patricks Day Festival is to be taken forward. There may be a range of sub categories for the small grants programme	Existing Budget but will likely require more to support the Festival Experience
Youth Outreach Initiative	Some consideration must be given to proactively engaging the scores of young people that engage in under age drinking and anti social behaviour. This should also cover a creative transport process to bring young people to and from the event.	Additional budget
Heritage and St Patricks Day Tours	Consideration should be given to working with the private sector to deliver a range of St Patricks Day themed tours, but bringing the visitors back to Belfast for their food, drink and to enjoy the rest of the St Patricks Day Festivities in the City.	No additional budget required, likely to be provided by the Private Sector.
Voucher Booklet	This booklet will encourage the private sector to engage with the St Patricks Day Festival by providing visitors and participants with a wide range of discounts of food, drink, merchandise and experience. The focus and rationale for the voucher booklet is to ensure that visitors continue to spend their money within the City and bring about a greater Economic Return.	Small additional budget made up of graphic design and printing.

Budget Heading	Financial Considerations	Existing or Additional Resources
Sport	<p>Within the audience development plan, it notes engaging with the School Sports Day Finals organiser and ensuring that their events are covered in the St Patricks Day Festival</p> <p>In addition a range of community and city wide sports events will be developed as part of the Festival</p>	<p>No additional budget required as these events happen anyhow.</p> <p>Additional budget required and will be determined depending on size and type of events.</p>
Dance and Music	A range of traditional music and dance events at both community and city wide level should be delivered in the City. There was a suggestion about delivering a City Wide Symposium of Irish themed dance and music in a venue such as the Waterfront Hall.	Additional budget will be required.
Food and Drink	To deliver a Food and Drink Festival in St Georges Market	Additional Budget Required
Arts and Drama	<p>To develop a coordinated Irish Artist Exhibition across the city</p> <p>To consider developing a St Patricks Day Street Theatre initiative similar to Festival of Fools and Culture Night</p>	Additional Budget will be required.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES AND KEY FINDINGS

As part of this research and consultation exercise, Féile an Phobail believe that there is a chance for Belfast to re-position and enhance the St Patricks Day experience in Belfast. Some of our key findings linked to the development of a St Patricks day Festival are as follows;

1. The survey findings noted that whilst the St Patricks Day event in Belfast City Centre was popular, there was a general lack of ambition around the event. Respondents liked the concert and city centre parade, but the 'X Factor' content has no association with St Patricks Day. Some of the other key findings noted the need for more indigenous content and a need to widen the event beyond the City Centre. With growing numbers of tourists coming to the City, there appears a thirst for more traditional music, local bands, inclusive events and a concerted effort to develop an showcase original, locally produced material should become a core priority for the St Patricks Day Festival in Belfast.
2. Additional survey findings noted the ongoing issue's of young people drinking and becoming an Anti Social problem on the day of the event as being very negative, but the challenge for organisers is how to engage these same young people in activities and programmes on the day as an alternative to under age drinking and general loutish behaviour
3. There is a need to widen the event beyond the City Centre. Consultation has noted the positivity and commitment from local community organisations that would like to celebrate St Patricks Day in their own communities. The challenge for organisers is how best to do that whilst still maintaining a linkage to the City Centre based high profile events
4. In comparison to other Cities and Towns in Ireland and beyond, there is much to learn from the ambition shown at these events. In Cities like Dublin and Birmingham, there is a sense of 'the more you invest, the more the City gets back in return'. Other key learning is that many of the Cities that were researched tended to hold their events and activities at the nearest weekend to St Patricks Day to maximise the participation base and the economic dividend accrued from the event / festival
5. The concept of a 'St Patricks Day Festival' may broaden the scope of the celebration beyond a city centre parade and concert. Féile an Phobail have developed positive ideas around community and city centre events that will promote local, original themes and content whilst balancing that against some wider Internationally recognised activities like a parade and 'greening' of major civic buildings and locations in the City. The key findings however is the suggested St Patricks Day Festival that has participation and events across a range of themes (sport, art, dance, drama, music, parades, concerts, food festival, street theatre, etc..) and that each would have a community component and a city centre component.
6. To deliver a festival of that being proposed by Féile an Phobail, a partnership of key agencies will be required to maximise the resources available and to avoid duplication. This will need to be made up of funding from Statutory agencies and there will be a requirement to raise additional revenue from advertising, partners and private sector.

SUMMARY CASE FOR A ST PATRICKS DAY FESTIVAL IN BELFAST

This research conducted by Féile an Phobail has found the following;

- **Time for an ‘Enhanced Experience’** – The research would suggest that Belfast currently lacks ambition with its St Patrick’s Day Celebrations, and through partnership work, and increased investment, Belfast could go on to rival some of the largest cities in the World with a new, ambitious and an economically driven St Patricks Day Festival.
- **Multi Day Event** – The research and proposals from Féile an Phobail recommend that the event multiplies from a ½ day concert and parade into a multi day experience (over 3 days) that would be known in the future as the Belfast St Patricks Day Festival. The Festival should be arranged and delivered over the nearest weekend to St Patricks Day to ensure that as many people as possible get the opportunity to attend and participate and to maximise the economic dividend for Belfast
- **Additional and Authentic Content** – The proposals being suggested by Féile an Phobail include a larger parade and a bigger concert with local Irish Talent / Bands. However the proposals suggest that there is an opportunity to deliver a range of sports activities, community events, civic greening programme, a music and dance symposium, a new Irish Food and Drink Festival at St Georges Market and promotes better a more focussed engagement with the private sector (Promoter Led Concert, Voucher Booklet), etc.. The events and activities would have both a community aspect and a City Wide showcase.
- **Partnership Approach** – Belfast City Council currently lead the St Patricks Day Festivities in the City, however the delivery of an enhanced St Patricks Day Festival will require input from a wide range of agencies including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, the Private Sector, the community and voluntary sector (Féile an Phobail, community organisations, youth clubs, Carnival Organisers, etc.)
- **Additional Investment Required** – to deliver a world class and ambitious St Patricks Day Festival, the City and its Stakeholders will need to consider how best to increase the funding and investment into this Festival. The current levels of funding are not adequate to deliver a wider St Patricks Day Festival. Future Investment will need to be increased and imaginative relationships between the Public and Private Sectors may make this more affordable to the City.
- **Coordinated Marketing and Branding** – the current marketing and branding strategy for St Patricks Day Events is limited and lacks ambition. A St Patricks Day Festival will require Branding considerations and will require a coordinated website (with E-Commerce Potential) and production of a programme of activities similar to that which is completed by Féile an Phobail for its August Festival.
- **Learning from Best Practice** – considerable learning and best practice opportunities from Cities like New York, Dublin and Birmingham should help Belfast re-examine its ambition for St Patricks Day celebrations in the city.
- **Could Support the 2023 Joint European Capital of Culture Bid** – the St Patricks Day Festival proposed for Belfast could support the upcoming bid between Belfast City Council and Derry / Strabane Council.
- **Challenges Ahead** – the research noted that there are still challenges with the perceived inclusivity of the event, anti social behaviour amongst young people and other isolated incidents such as the ongoing issues in the Holylands amongst students. All of these should be tackled head on by the proposed partnership tasked with delivering an enhanced St Patricks Day event / festival across Belfast.

■ List of Stakeholders

The research team carried out 5 detailed stakeholder engagements with key bodies involved in delivering / developing tourism in the City during the project. The 5 stakeholders were as follows

1. Tourism Ireland
2. Visit Belfast
3. Belfast City Council
4. Tourism NI
5. Fáilte Feirste Thiar