



Subject:	NI Science Festival 2019
Date:	7th November, 2018
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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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on a request for sponsorship for the 2019 Northern Ireland Science Festival based on the success of the 2018 event. This will be the Science Festival's 5 th annual event, with activities running from the 14 th – 24 th February 2019 in venues and locations across Belfast and NI.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• note the contents of this report; and• agree to provide sponsorship of £35,000 from existing budgets for the Northern Ireland Science Festival 2019.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Northern Ireland Science Festival has been taking place annually since 2015. The 2018 Festival which ran for 11 days in February offered a wide range of events focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. During the day, the Festival presented workshops, talks and interactive activities for young people, schools and parents. In the evening, the Festival programme presented an eclectic range of science debates, talks, theatre, comedy, film and music for adult audiences. Overall, the programme held 183 events with local and international input, held across 92 different venues in NI demonstrating a significant increase in outreach from the previous year and exceeding 2018 targets.</p>
3.2	<p>The Science Festival is organised by Science Festivals NI and a unique collaboration of major STEM outreach organisations in Northern Ireland. Funding for the event was provided by a number of organisations including the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI, Queen’s University, Ulster University, the MCS Group, the Matrix Panel, the British Council, and Belfast City Council.</p>
3.3	<p>As cited in previous reports, Science Festivals are a relatively new type of event with global appeal and increasing audience popularity worldwide. New York, Edinburgh, San Francisco and Dubai all host large-scale science 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 with its increasing reputation allowing it to secure globally significant guests such as the astronaut Chris Hadfield and to host the annual internationally acclaimed Turing Lecture.</p>
3.4	<p>The 2018 Festival was considered to be a major success, exceeding agreed targets and competing with other established science festivals. Points of note included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 183 events spread across 92 different venues across NI, with the majority of activity taking place in Belfast - An increase in audience figures from 63,000 people attending in 2017, to 69,000 people attending in 2018 - 55% of the audience consisted of children and young people under the age of 18, including participating schools - 95% satisfaction rate was recorded from Festival attendees, with 73% stating that participation had increased their interest in STEM - Development of a strategic partnership with Libraries NI which resulted in a dedicated ‘Science Books’ area in all 98 libraries across the region

- The BBC ran a NI Science Festival Arts Show specially dedicated to examining the links between arts and science
- According to media monitoring company Nimms, the total PR coverage generated by the Festival was estimated to be in excess of £200,000. Inclusion of the astronaut Chris Hadfield in the programme also received significant media attention from journalists generating over 100 print articles in newspapers alone. The Festival's growing international reputation has allowed it to secure some of the top names in science, attracting global media attention on the city

Proposed 2019 Programme

3.5 The 2019 Festival will take place from 14th – 24th February 2019. 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 to build cultural vibrancy. This will once again be achieved through a series of events and partnerships that link science into different areas of interest. Some key details from the programme which is due to be launched in January 2019 include:

- Professor Brian Cox's Universal World Tour in the SSE Arena
- An international exhibition and VR experience from the Science Museum featuring the Soyuz Capsule which carried Tim Peake in to space
- A specific focus on women in STEM
- The annual Turing Lecture
- An '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
- Events with key Belfast City Council initiatives including the Tropical Ravine, parks and Belfast Zoo
- Titanic Belfast STEM Quest Final which is aimed at school children throughout Northern Ireland at Key Stage 3 Level.

3.6 There will be additional 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, 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

	<p>of many of the events – alongside the flagship events already lined up – will act as an attraction for people coming from outside of the city into Belfast, for the purpose of attending some of these specific events or associated activities.</p>
3.7	<p>A postcode analysis for the Festival continues to indicate that a large proportion of the previous Festivals’ audiences come from outside Belfast. This is reflected in the support from organisations including Tourism NI. It is also in keeping with emerging Council thinking on how events can celebrate the areas for which the city is renowned (engineering, innovation, cyber technology) while, at the same time, driving footfall and spend in the city.</p>
	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.8	<p>The overall budget for the event is in the region of £270,000. This is made up by commitments from a range of public and private supporters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £83,000 - from the Department for the Economy - £5,000 from the British Council - £20,000 from Queen’s University - £20,000 from Ulster University - £25,000 from Tourism NI - £10,000 from the Matrix Panel - £10,000 from Innovate UK - £17,500 from Derry and Strabane District Council - £10,000 from Corporate sponsors - The Festival anticipates ticket sales to generate around £35,000.
3.9	<p>The allocation requested from Belfast City Council is £35,000, in line with the funding allocations made since 2015. This funding is has been set aside within existing Departmental budget estimates.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.10	<p>There are no specific equality or good relations considerations attached to this report. Activities will take place all across NI, focusing on Belfast.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None