



Subject:	Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021 and 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz
Date:	19 th February 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager, Sandra Robinson, Protocol and Public Affairs Manager, Eimear Henry, Senior Manager (Culture and Tourism)

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"/>
Sometime 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
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide an update on progress concerning the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021/22, in light of the recent Council decision regarding live events and the need to revise the format of agreed events from February – June 2021 to meet requirements of Covid-19 restrictions; and- outline proposals on how Council can mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021, in the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – note the update on the Decade of Centenaries Programme and provide feedback on the approach to the revised format of events occurring between February – June 2021; and – approve the proposals contained in the report to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 and contribute £1,000 towards the Northern Ireland War Memorial Programme.
3.0	Main Report
	<p><u>Decade of Centenaries Programme</u></p> <p>3.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 23rd October 2020, Members agreed the programme for the remainder of the Decade of Centenaries until March 2022.</p> <p>3.2 Officers have progressed a number of actions in relation to the programme as agreed including a submission of an application requesting £87,700 to the Shared History Fund which is being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This application is seeking funding for four of the projects listed in Appendix I; namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drama and animation programme in mid June 2021 - The restoration of the chairs in the Council Chamber, used by the King and Queen on the occasion of the inauguration of the NI Parliament in 1921 - A digitised artefacts and stories project related to 1921 and; - A time capsule project <p>3.3 It is anticipated that notification of the outcome will be given at the end of February 2021.</p> <p>3.4 Further to a query from officers, the HLF has advised in writing, without prejudice, that there is no issue should Council commence a procurement process for these 4 projects prior to being notified of the outcome of the application. Therefore, Officers intend to start the process in mid February but will not appoint until Council has received formal written confirmation from HLF as to the result. The specifications have already been drawn up and BCC will advise organisations wishing to bid, that any award will be dependent upon funding. This will allow a maximised timeframe for successful delivery agents to develop quality programmes in advance of May and June as well as minimising the financial risk to Council.</p> <p>3.5 In parallel with this process, as a result of the ongoing restrictions set by The Executive, the Council at its meeting on 1st February, agreed to suspend live events from January 2021 until August 2021. In addition, Council also agreed to develop an alternative option to deliver an event or exhibition to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland, to include the use of online</p>

platforms, and noted that other more public events were being planned for the second half of the year, Covid-19 restrictions permitting.

3.6 To this end, Members may wish to note the proposed revised format of activities at Appendix I which can take place as part of the Centenary Programme during February – June 2021 while allowing for the decision of Council regarding live events and taking the Covid-19 restrictions into account.

3.7 Members have previously asked that the labour movement and the development of the women's movement be covered as part of the programme and may wish to note the following:

- Event on 26 March: Panel Discussion on Northern Ireland 100 Years – How has it Gone? – a balanced panel and the issues of the development of the women's movement and labour issues are specific elements that will be covered by panelists
- Drama: this has been designed to include the key themes of the whole of the final phase of the Decade, particularly on the women's movement between 1918 – 1922.
- The digital trail of artefacts, stories and personalities from 1921 will include the stories of local women and trade union issues
- These issues will also form the cornerstone of the final Decade of Centenaries conference in March 2022

Launch of NIO Programme – 14th December 2020

3.8 The Secretary of State launched the NIO plans for the Centenary along with the branding programme – “Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100”. He advised there will be a programme of events that seek to showcase Northern Ireland on the world stage as an attractive place to live, visit and do business, and to celebrate Northern Ireland's people, businesses, culture, arts, and young talent, reflecting on our past while looking forward to a positive future. A commitment of £3m has been made from the NIO for this purpose though further details are still to be made public.

Further information can be found at <https://ourstoryinthemaking.com/>

External Engagement

3.9 Officers will continue to engage with NIO regarding the development of the programme. Officers have also met with officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss respective plans.

80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz

Background

3.10 In 2016, Council supported a number of events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Blitz, many of which were undertaken in partnership with the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum given their expertise and contacts in this area. As part of the Council programme, a talk by the historian Brian Barton was arranged in the Bobbin, and on the same night the names of those who died were scrolled on the big screen in City Hall grounds along with an air siren sounding. A number of plaques marking significant sites impacted by the Blitz were also erected across the City.

Key Issues

3.11 Given the Council decision to suspend live events from January 2021 until August 2021 in light of ongoing restrictions due to the pandemic, the Council will not be able to arrange a suitable live event to mark the anniversary.

3.12 In light of the above approach, officers have sought to explore how the Council could support online engagement and have discussed the possibilities with the NI War Memorial given its expertise, resources and we partnered with the group in 2016.

3.13 The NI War Memorial has advised that it will be undertaking the majority of engagement through virtual means and only if restrictions permit, will the wreath laying at City and Milltown Cemeteries take place with a small number of people in attendance to maintain social distancing.

3.14 It is organising a significant programme for the 80th anniversary year including:

- Laying of wreath at NIWM and on mass graves in Milltown and City Cemeteries. Commemorations recorded on video on 15th April and released on Social Media on 16th April.
- Launch of new memorial page on new NIWM website which will include updated list of casualties based on recent research and photographs of victims
- Online lecture series throughout April
- Promotion of *The War and Me* oral history project to encourage air raid memories.
- Blitz 80 reminiscence pack for care homes

Further contents of the Programme can be found at Appendix 2.

Council Support

3.15 Given that the NIWM are organising such a range of creative activities including online lectures, work with schools, reminiscence projects which will reach a wider audience , Council could take the approach of supporting and promoting the programme in the following ways:

- Pending restrictions, there will be a laying of wreaths at City Cemetery and Milltown Cemeteries on 15th April which is organised by the NI War Museum annually. The Lord Mayor could take part in this ceremony on behalf of Council if small gatherings are permitted.
- Lord Mayor could launch and/or promote the activities being planned around the anniversary.
- The Council's Communications Team could liaise with the NIWM to ensure we promote the events and Lord Mayor could record an appropriate message as part of this promotion.
- The NI War Memorial is planning to deliver reminiscence resource packs to care homes to mark the 80th anniversary. The Council could liaise with the Museum to publicise the activity packs and the Lord Mayor could be involved in some capacity to be determined.
- Officers will explore the possibility of including an air raid siren/searchlight within the programme with the NIWM.

Finance

3.16 The NIWM has indicated that it would be content for the Council to be associated/ involved with the relevant activities. It has advised that it is able to cover the costs of the outlined programme. However, it did indicate that as the organisation is printing all of the resources internally such as the packs for schools and care homes, the costs are significant. Officers would, therefore, suggest that the Council may wish to consider contributing up to £1,000 towards these costs to assist with this as part of the anniversary commemorations which can be covered through existing budgets.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

3.17 The proposed programme of events are open to all and as such have the potential to promote good relations and equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds. The Decade of Centenary Programme has been considered as part of the District Council Good Relations Action Plan screening process.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.18 An application has been made to the HLF Shared History Fund for £87,700 and other elements of the programme are being funded through existing budgets. This includes £31k from the Decade of Centenaries specified Reserve, approx. £40k from the Events budget and £40,500 from the Good Relations Action Plan budget, 75% of which is funded through The Executive Office.

4.0	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Revised Format of Events for Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021 Appendix 2: NIWM Programme to Mark the 80 th Anniversary of the Blitz – RESTRICTED