



# visit Belfast REBUILDING CITY TOURISM

Visit Belfast Business Plan



# VISIT BELFAST

## Public-Private Partnership

Kathryn Thomson	National Museums NI
Julia Corkey	ICC Belfast
Judith Owens	Titanic Belfast
Howard Hastings	Hastings Hotels
Caroline Young	QUB
Kevin Gamble	Féile an Phobail
Caroline Wilson	Taste & Tour NI
Uel Hoey	Belfast International Airport
Raymond Robinson	Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Michael Robinson	Belfast Harbour

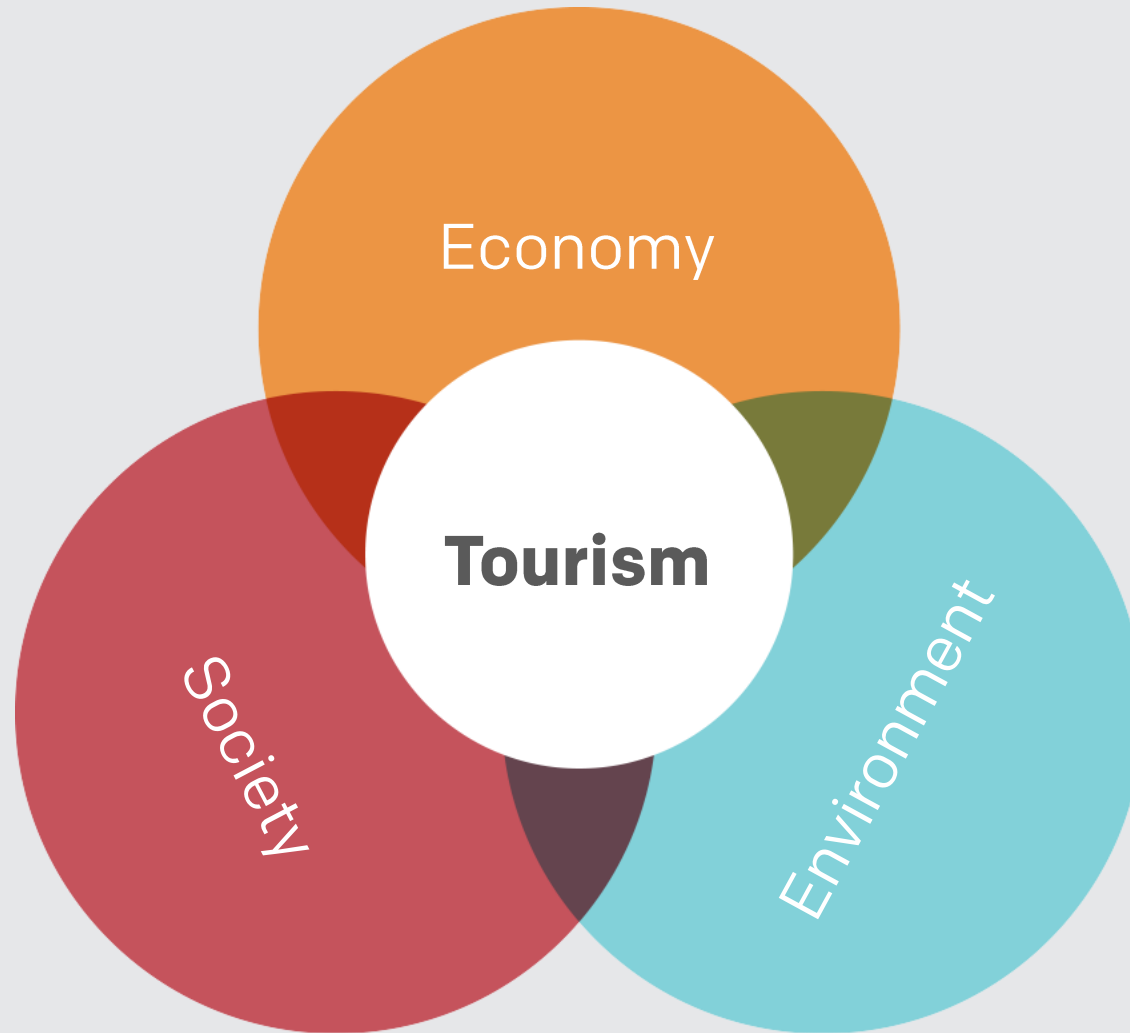
Peter Harbinson	Invest NI
Michael Stewart	BCTC
David Cowan	Translink
Chris Armstrong	Eastside Partnership
Marie-Thérèse McGivern	Maritime Belfast

Cllr Fred Cobain	Cllr Eric Hanvey
Cllr Paul McCusker	Cllr Séanna Walsh

**Observers:**  
 John Greer, BCC  
 Eimear Henry, BCC  
 John McGrillen, Tourism NI

# NEW REGENERATIVE MODEL FOR TOURISM

Tourism is a force for good



**Tourism is central to:**

**Building**

a resilient economy

**Delivering**

Inclusive growth

**Protecting**

the environment

# TOURISM KEY TO THE CITY'S WELLBEING

● **£417m**  
Tourism Spend in 2019

● **21,863**  
Tourism related jobs



**+50%**

Biggest increase in visitor economy in NI (2015-19)

**52%**

NI hotel sales are in Belfast

**96%**

of cruise visitors to NI arrive into Belfast

**90%**

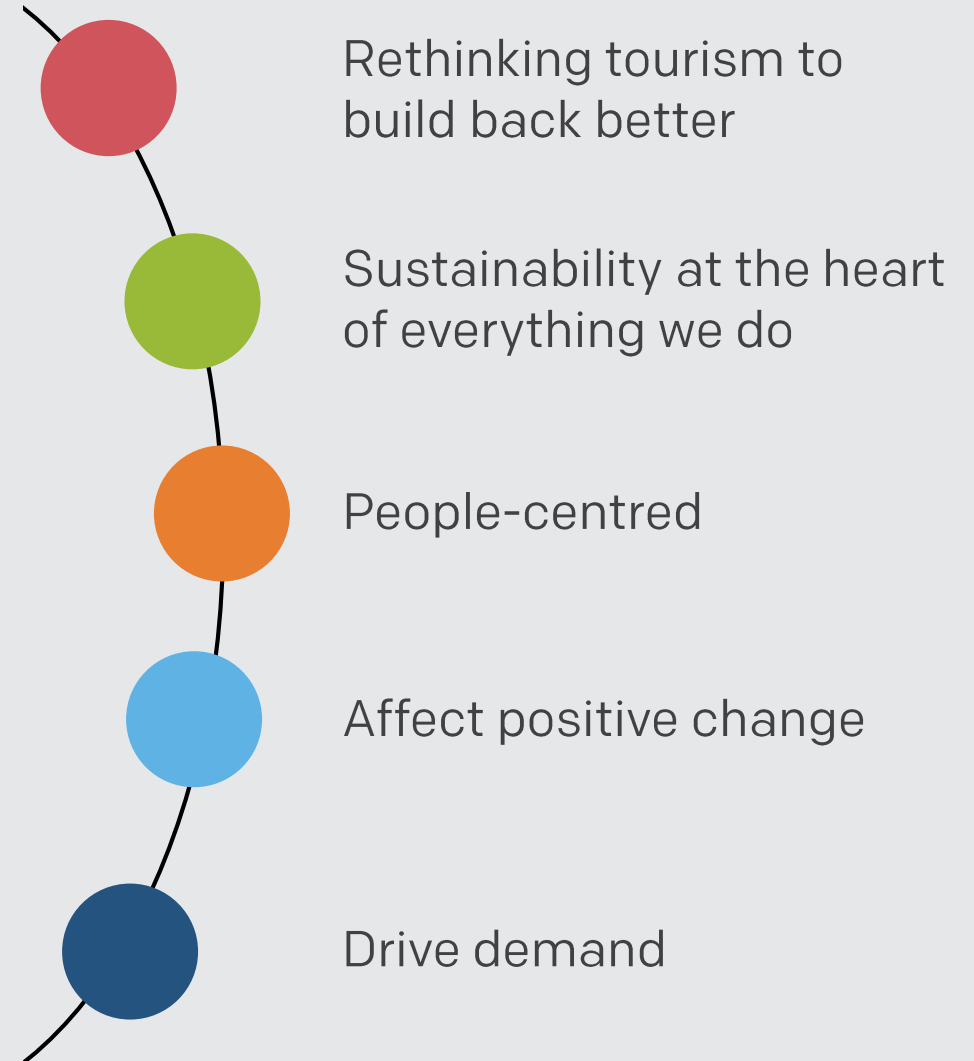
Business events in NI are in Belfast

**1/3<sup>rd</sup>**

NI tourism jobs are in Belfast

Belfast has a critical role for NI visitor economic recovery

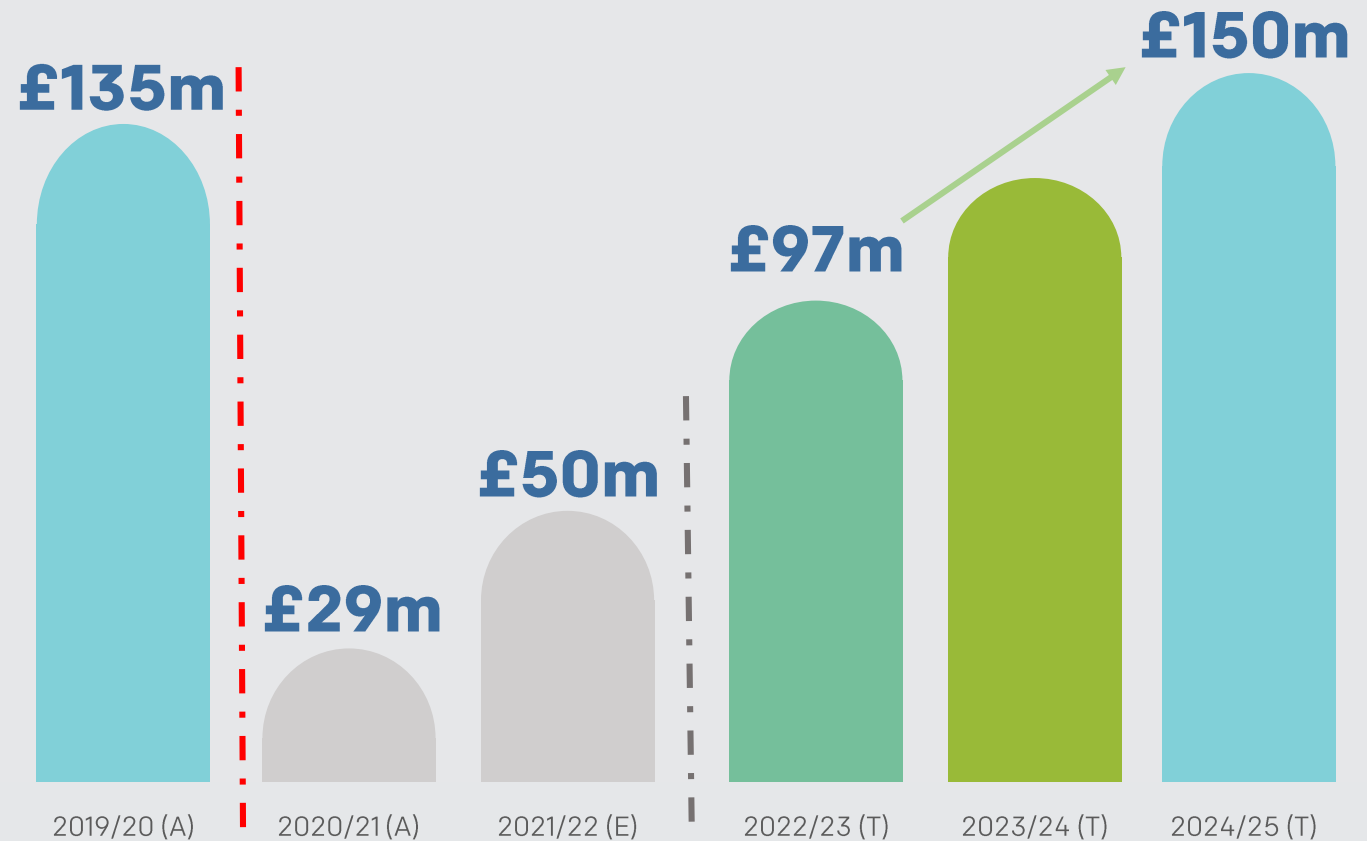
# NEXT GENERATION DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION



# VISIT BELFAST

Rebuilding City Tourism

- Demand Generation Projects
- Sustainability and transformational change
- Adapting to changing visitor behaviours and preferences
- Sustaining local businesses, communities
- Showcasing and supporting local producers, performers and cultural assets



## Demand Generation

- 6 campaigns promoting city reopening, city assets and neighbourhoods (78.8m impact to date)
- Year-end hotel room occupancy 51% (above forecasted 29%), with peak occupancy levels in July (73.3%) and August (79.2%)
- £1m enhanced conference support scheme launched with TNI, BCC, D&SDC & Visit Derry
- NI Ambassador Circle launched with TNI, Invest NI, QUB, UU & Visit Derry

## Assurance

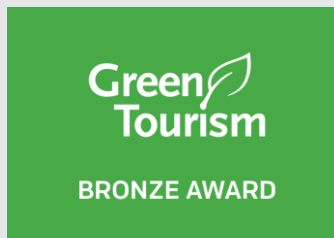
- Welcoming visitors safely back to Belfast: 230,000 enquiries
- Successful safe return of cruise in June: 72 ships safely welcomed
- 84% of industry partners retained
- 118 conferences booked between 2022 and 2029

## Sustainable

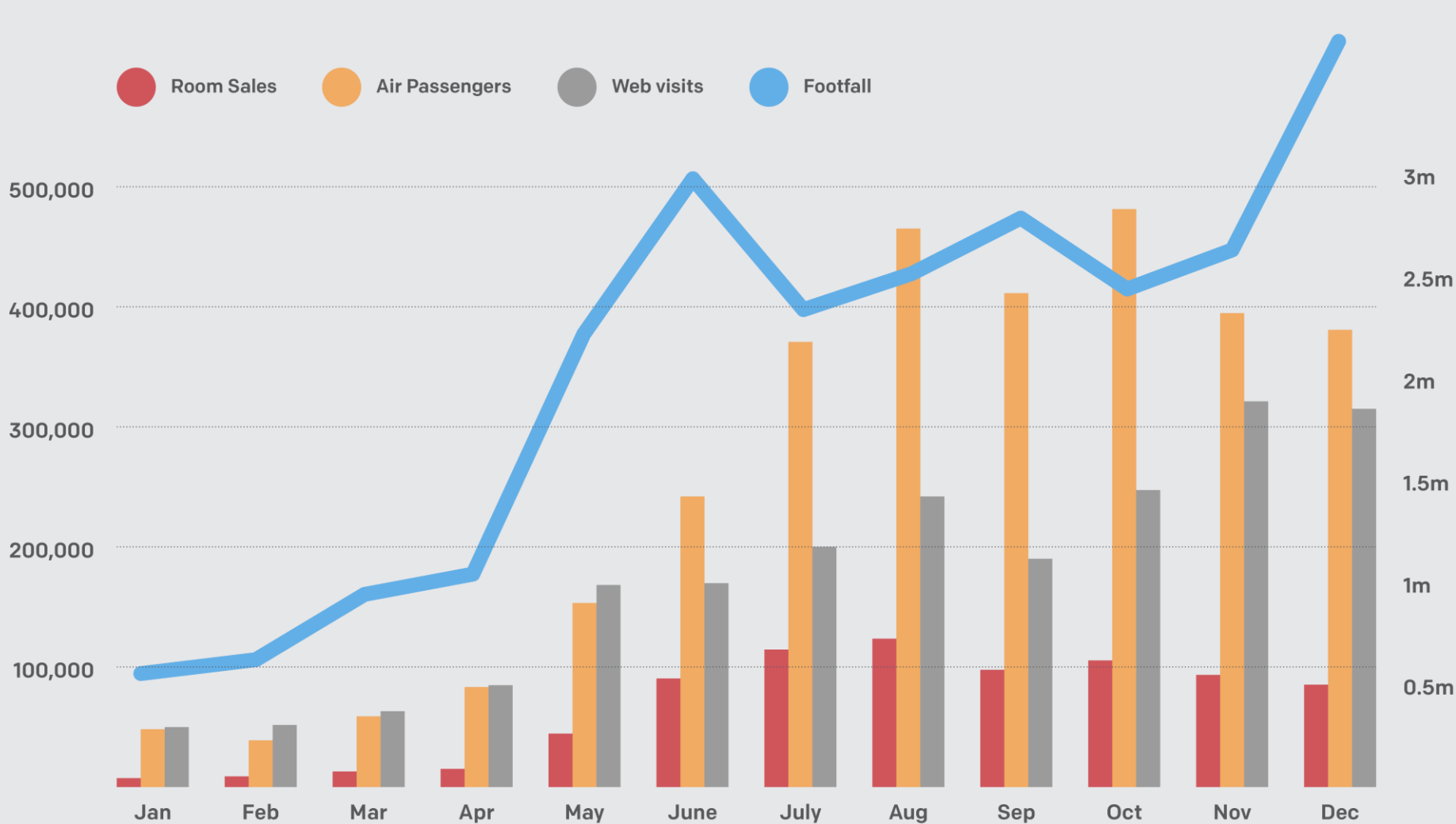
- Visit Belfast achieved Green Tourism Bronze certification
- 63 partners recruited for Green Tourism Scheme to date - on track for 100+ businesses
- Belfast 19<sup>th</sup> (out of 73) in Global Destinations Sustainability Index 2021 - 5th most transformed destination in 2021
- Sustainable Business Events Framework launched
- 30% of 2022 business events have a sustainability plan in place

## Digital

- Web traffic restored to pre-pandemic levels
- New VBWC interactive screen upgrade
- Migration to MS365 facilitating cloud computing and secure working



# 2021: GREEN SHOOTS OF RECOVERY



2019	2021
Hotel room occupancy	
72.5%	51.0%
Hotel room sales	
1.4m	802k
City centre footfall	
38.8m	24.6m
No of cruise ships	
146	72
Air passenger transits	
8.7m	3.1m



## 2022: LOOKING BRIGHTER

### 75 Conferences

- 30,000 delegates
- 105,650 bed nights
- £38.1m spend

### 144 Cruise Calls

- 3280,000 pax/ crew
- £14.8m spend

Domestic and staycation trend set to continue  
Capitalising on neighbourhood tourism,  
Belfast stories and cultural destination

Belfast's primary markets  
(GB/ROI) are growth markets  
International access beginning  
to reopen

- UNESCO City of Music
- Our Space in Place/ wider  
Festival UK 2022 programme

### Cultural Events & Milestones

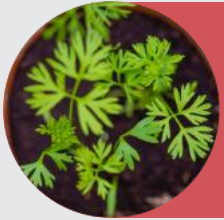
- Building momentum to year-long  
celebration of culture 2024 & Belfast  
Stories 2027 e.g. the Fleadh

# POLICY FRAMEWORK

Informing Visit Belfast Plans



# THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT



Responsible &  
sustainable tourism



Brexit



Restoring access  
and connectivity



Changing consumer  
values/consumption



Accessible  
City



Digitalisation



City  
& regional spread

# VISIT BELFAST FOCUS

## Scale of Ambition

- Visit Belfast targets in line with City and National ambition
- 2019 levels by 2024... doubling tourism revenue by 2030
- Visit Belfast activity will deliver on city wide and national strategies

## Grow

- Short breaks, Conference and Cruise
- NI Business Tourism Strategy
- Ambassador Circle – collaboration across tourism, education, and economic development
- Collaboration: city and region brand synergy

## Sustain

- Accelerate to regenerative tourism model - evidencing the positive impact of tourism in the community and environment

## Position

- Strengthen Belfast's position in national/international leisure and business tourism markets
- Establish Belfast as an anchor destination on the island of Ireland
- Embrace gateway role to rest of NI
- Integrate and incorporate culture, events and stories
- Provide better data analysis

## Enhancing Experience

- Connecting iconic visitor attractions with neighbourhood initiatives
- Love local to support city and community tourism
- BRCD: transforming our local economy with £1bn investment



# SUSTAINABILITY & IMPACT

Accelerating toward a regenerative model for tourism

## Building

a resilient economy

## Delivering

inclusive growth

## Protecting

the environment

### Phase One: 2021-22 Progress

Successfully embarked on our ambitious journey towards sustainability

- Visit Belfast Green Tourism certified and sustainability policy developed
- Green Tourism Programme launched with BCC (ICC Belfast, Belfast Zoo awards)
- Sustainability events framework/toolkit implemented

### Phase Two: Key Priorities for 2022-23

Embedding sustainability right across the industry and visitor touchpoints:

- Improving Visit Belfast's Green Tourism accreditation from Bronze to Silver
- Maintain Belfast's Top 20 ranking in GDS Index and improve overall scores
- Achieve 90% of hotel partners Green Tourism certified
- Develop Impact Measurement Strategy and Plan to include social, environmental and economic indicators
- Pilot and develop Sustainability and Impact Plans for 2022 events

### City-wide Partnership

Providing leadership and advocacy:

- Work with BCC to establish and launch the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board: tourism taskforce
- Present industry contribution toward net zero city aspiration / food waste and CSR projects

# SUSTAINABILITY & IMPACT ACTION PLAN



## Increasing Handprint

- Enhanced volunteering scheme
- Exploring fundraising and CSR opportunities for events and visitors to support local charities and community projects
- Love Local promotion: encourage visitors to support local communities, neighbourhoods, talent, business
- Explore food donation process from conferences and hospitality sector to support those in need – BCC and industry
- Champion inclusivity, accessibility and diversity
- Develop impact and legacy plans for business events



## Decreasing Footprint

- Development of cruise sustainability plan
- Exploration of carbon measurement, reduction and offsetting schemes
- Food waste reduction schemes – BCC & Industry
- 90% of hotel bedrooms to be Green Tourism certified through BCC scheme
- Online and F2F surveys to monitor sustainability choices of visitors
- Promote sustainable choices – active travel, soft mobility etc.
- Tourism & Industry support for Belfast Climate Plan & Net Zero

visit  
Belfast

# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

**150,000**  
BED NIGHTS

**100,000**  
DAY TRIPS

**£30m**  
VISITOR SPEND



# PRIORITY MARKETS/SEGMENTS

RESTORE

RECOVER

REIMAGINE

NI

Aspiring Families  
Social Instagrammers  
Natural Quality Seekers

GB

Culturally Curious  
Social Energisers

Scotland

Midlands

Wales

London

RoI

Active Maximisers  
Open-minded explorers  
Indulgent Relaxers (short term)

International

Culturally Curious  
Social Energisers

Love Local - Hyper Local

Staycations  
Be A Tourist at Home

Last Minute  
City Breaks

Business Plus  
Workcations

Travel Later



# TOUCH POINTS & THEMES

A compass for marketing & communications



**A City Imagining:**  
culture, art & UNESCO  
city of music



**Homespun Pioneers:** local  
people, culture & curated stories,  
neighbourhood tourism



**Natural Gateway to City  
Region:** seascapes, hills,  
landscapes all around



**Food & Drink:** uniquely  
local, restaurants, markets,  
distilleries & tastings



**LGBTQI+:** a welcoming  
city that's accessible,  
diverse & inclusive



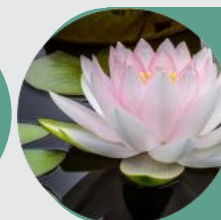
**Maritime Powerhouse:**  
Titanic history, iconic  
waterfront, Maritime Mile



**Events & Festivals:** Festival  
UK 2022 / cultural milestones  
to international events in 2024



**City Plus:** outdoor, nature city  
plus activities, experiences &  
family adventures



**Health & Wellness:**  
retreats, remedies &  
spa experiences



**Sustainability:** conscious  
travel and meetings



**Business Events:** Life & Health Sciences,  
Business & Professional Services, Tech,  
Advanced Manufacturing, Food & Drink

# MARKETING FOCUS & FRAMEWORK

2021-22

'Back to Belfast' campaign series showcasing the city's resilience, welcome, access and innovation – agile response with phased approach to marketing

Targeted web and digital marketing-communications activity that highlighted authentic and uniquely Belfast experiences and attractions

Marketing activity that supports city businesses, assets and communities

Promoting at home travel experiences to maximise staycation and day trip market

'Uncover Belfast' Spring 2022 cultural (events & festivals) campaign in NI and ROI – building momentum towards Belfast's landmark events & celebration of culture



visitBelfast.com

## Uncover Belfast Arts & Culture

Time to experience something new, right here, right now

#ComeOnIn

# UNCOVER BELFAST CAMPAIGN

## Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

#ComeOnIn

visitBelfast.com

## Uncover Belfast Music

#ComeOnIn

visitBelfast.com

Belfast Telegraph

Subscribe

Great news for those who love live music. The 2022 Belfast International Music Festival returns this Thursday 17 Feb with an incredible line up of over 100 artists.



It's time to get the city up and singing again.

Visit Belfast

@visitBelfast · Feb 17

The 2022 Belfast International Music Festival returns this Thursday 17 Feb with an incredible line up of over 100 artists.

Celebrate the science of you, the science and everything in between. Bring your kids to our science and technology festival.



visitBelfast



## Spring in Belfast

With longer and brighter days ahead, there's even more time to enjoy Belfast. Step into Spring with the beginning of Belfast's festivals and events in music, theatre, art or science! There is something for the whole family to enjoy!

[Read More](#)



## Festivals & Events

Have a look at our Spring Festivals & Events taking place across the city

[Read More](#)



**4 Corners Festival**  
20 January - 19 February  
DanceDrama Arts Programming & Consultancy has brought together the very best local, national and international talent from film, politics, academia, visual arts and music to give a uniquely modern twist to those from the Enlightenment.

[Read More](#)



**Northern Ireland Science Festival**  
17 - 27 February  
From laboratory to physics, ecology to geology, discover how you, the universe and everything in between behaves as the Science Festival returns with an interactive programme of over 120 public events.

[Read More](#)

**Belfast's Children's Festival**  
4-13 March  
A festival full to the brim with exceptional creative experiences for children, young people and the adults in their lives. Events take place both in and out of school time for schools, groups, and families to attend.

[Read More](#)

Féile an Earraigh  
1 - 17 Mar 2022

## Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

Celebrate local Irish culture and diversity this St Patrick's season, with an array of music sessions, gigs, illuminations, workshops and more taking place over 10 festival days in the city!

visitBelfast.com

#ComeOnIn

Belfast Children's Festival  
4 - 13 Mar 2022

## Uncover Belfast Events & Festivals

Belfast will be full to the brim with exceptional creative experiences for children, young people and the adults in their lives, inspiring giant imaginations at the Belfast Children's Festival!

visitBelfast.com

#ComeOnIn

## All Spring Festivals & Events

Discover the top local festivals happening in Belfast and beyond. Find the whole family to enjoy. Read More

[Read More](#)



**Brilliant Corners - A Festival of Jazz in Belfast**  
18 - 20 March

Brilliant Corners is a festival of jazz in Belfast, featuring a line up of over 100 artists.



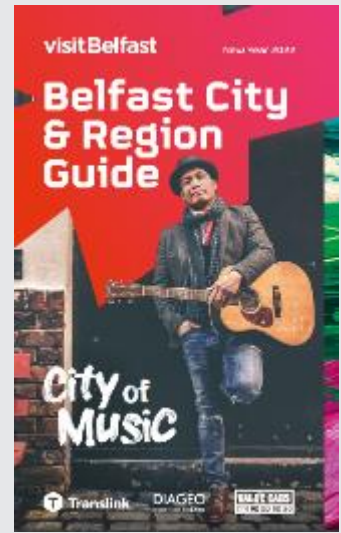
**161 The North Street Art Festival**  
18 - 20 March

The 161 The North Street Art Festival will showcase a line up of over 100 artists.

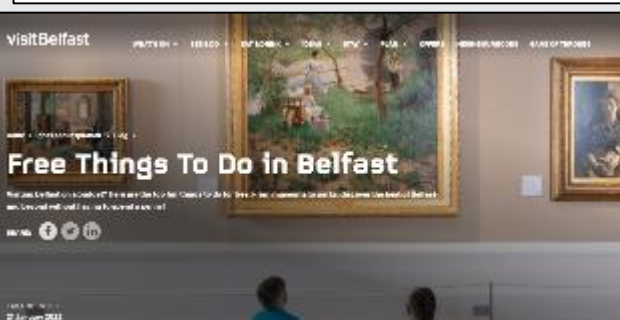
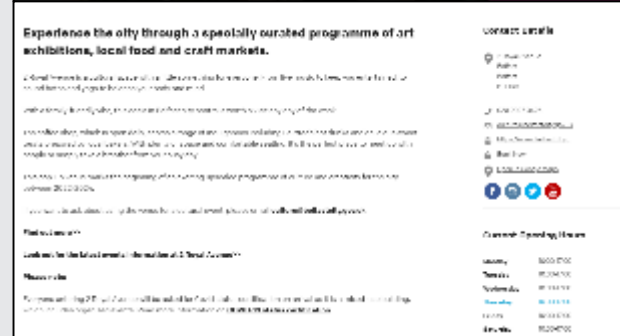
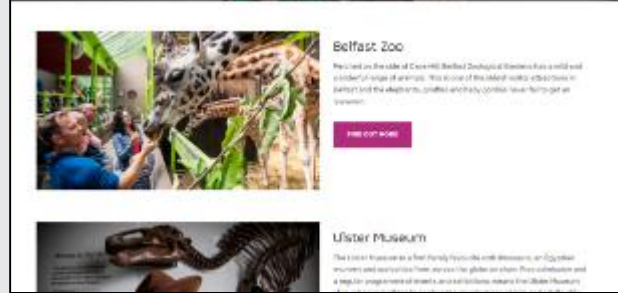


**Belfast Children's Festival 2022**  
4 - 13 March

Belfast Children's Festival returns with an interactive programme of over 120 public events.











# 2022-23 CAMPAIGN APPROACH

Delivering integrated city marketing activity to restore, recover and 're' imagine Belfast

Supporting four  
strategic themes:

**Grow  
Experience  
Position  
Sustain**

## **Prioritisation of Domestic UK and Ireland Markets**

Partnership effort, investment in consistent marketing and focus on ease of conversion are key.

UNESCO city of music, events and festivals, authentic food and drink, retail hub and world class attractions.

## **Belfast Brand / EAGS**

Positioning Belfast as a cultural tourism destination on the island of Ireland and the **gateway to NI**, confounding expectations and rewarding curiosity. City and Region brand alignment.

## **Supporting Business Tourism**

Marketing of Belfast as a leading destination for hosting business events.

## **Build, Nurture and Inspire**

Creative and on-brand photography and videography, enhanced digital channel activity, authentic, local & cultural tourism experiences and events that motivate short break visits and day trips to the city.

Working with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and BCC to develop shared assets.

## **Always On Marketing**

Off and on-line targeted and segmented communications activity: telling our stories, utilising themes, promoting city assets and neighbourhood areas as an integral part of our welcoming and inclusive city.



# DIGITAL, COMMUNICATIONS & PR

Create authentic & credible visitor content across communications platforms

## Investing in Digital

Keeping Belfast accessible and at the forefront of digital communications:

- website content
- visitor experience blogs
- apps and maps
- social media
- email marketing
- paid digital advertising
- VBWC islands

## Stories & Themes

Recruit, collate and curate interesting stories that showcase Belfast through our people and our neighbourhood communities.

Development of user generated content so visitors can build and share their own Belfast and gateway experiences.

## Live Content

Curated authentic content, delivering immersive moments, personalised experiences, authentic and trusted information that engages with all visitors at various stages of the purchase funnel.

## Press & Media

Positioning Belfast as a welcoming cultural and tourism destination, promoting authentic urban and unique community experiences to our leisure and business tourism markets.

Generate media coverage through targeted press, media and influencer activity, locally, nationally and internationally.

## Know Before You Go

Enhanced digital and PR strategies to keep Belfast on ***must do*** lists of international visitors given the slower return of these inbound markets. Further development of multilingual provision for online web and screen channels

# DIGITAL CONTENT PLAN



## Current objectives

- Utilise the strength of the city brand and EAGS
- Support domestic / UK and Ireland staycation and day trip markets
- Keep Belfast front of mind in International markets
- Amplify hyper-local experiences and community engagement
- Support tourism business, new initiatives and stimulate demand
- Promote inspiration, motivation consumer confidence
- Extend stays and repeat visits



## Content themes

- Maritime Powerhouse
- A City Reimagining
- Food & Drink
- Homespun Pioneers
- LGBTQI+
- Events and Festivals
- Natural Gateway to City Region
- City Plus



## Market focus

- Belfast and NI
- Island of Ireland and GB
- Direct Access International



## Live content

- Spring Festivals and Events: culture/events programme e.g. Féile, 2 Royal Avenue, NI Science Festival
- Belfast Uncovered
- Beat of Belfast / City of Music
- Explore the Great Outdoors
- Urban Arts and Crafts
- St Patrick's Day
- Accessible Belfast



## Planned content

- Enjoy our culture, music city
- Events e.g. Fleadh, CQAF, Our Place in Space
- The ultimate Belfast Staycation Guide
- Love Local e.g. Belfast Hills, City Cemetery, Belfast Castle, Connswater Greenway
- Green attractions for eco-friendly visitors
- Family fun: e.g. Belfast Zoo, Tropical Ravine, outdoors spaces
- Belfast on a budget, shopping, food and attractions



visit  
Belfast

# BUSINESS TOURISM

**82,000**  
BED NIGHTS

**£40m**  
ECONOMIC BENEFIT

# FORWARD BOOKED CONFERENCES

(at 1 February 2022)

Year	Conferences	Delegates	Bed nights	Economic Impact
2022	75	30,414	105,650	£38.1m
2023	28	17,395	56,274	£24.0m
2024	8	5,908	17,499	£8.0m
2025	4	2,030	7,591	£3.3m
2026	1	1,100	3,300	£1.6m
2028	1	750	3,000	£1.4m
2029	1	1,300	5,200	£2.5m
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>51,568</b>	<b>198,524</b>	<b>£79.2m</b>

# BUSINESS TOURISM

## Driving Growth

### **Increasing spend and length of stay**

- 2022 ahead of 2019 (£38.1m v £33.2m)
- 30,000 delegates generating 105,650 bed nights
- Campaign targeting business visitors to extend stay / return for leisure

### **Leverage the Ambassador Circle**

- 79% of events to the city via Ambassadors
- Diaspora launch: invitation to bring their events home
- 5 sector advisory panels aligned to 10X Economic Vision for NI

### **Sales Acceleration plan**

- £538m leads in city pipeline – conversion
- Leverage BCC/TNI Conference Support Scheme
- Corporate and Agency Strategy GB
- Corporate Scheme roll-out: £50 per delegate (TNI/DFE approval)

## Maximising the Opportunity

### **Showcasing Belfast – live, work, study and invest**

- Attracting events in key sectors to the city (10X)
- Global eco-system of a sector together in one place: **Belfast**
- More than tourism... economic development, research, education benefits

### **Business events as a force for good**

- 118 forward booked conferences (£79.2m)
- CSR, Sustainability and Legacy plans
- Increase the handprint & reduce footprint

### **One Young World 2023**

- Opportunity to position Belfast globally
- Opportunity of a lifetime for our young people
- Support BCC – industry engagement, volunteering, destination marketing and management

# Ambassador Circle

## Five Advisory panels – Aligned to 10X





visit  
Belfast

**516,000**  
ENQUIRIES

**£11m**  
ECONOMIC SPEND

# VISITOR SERVICING & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

by  
**DEBORAH NEILL**  
NATURAL IRISH SOAP THERAPY  
*Handmade in Donaghadee*

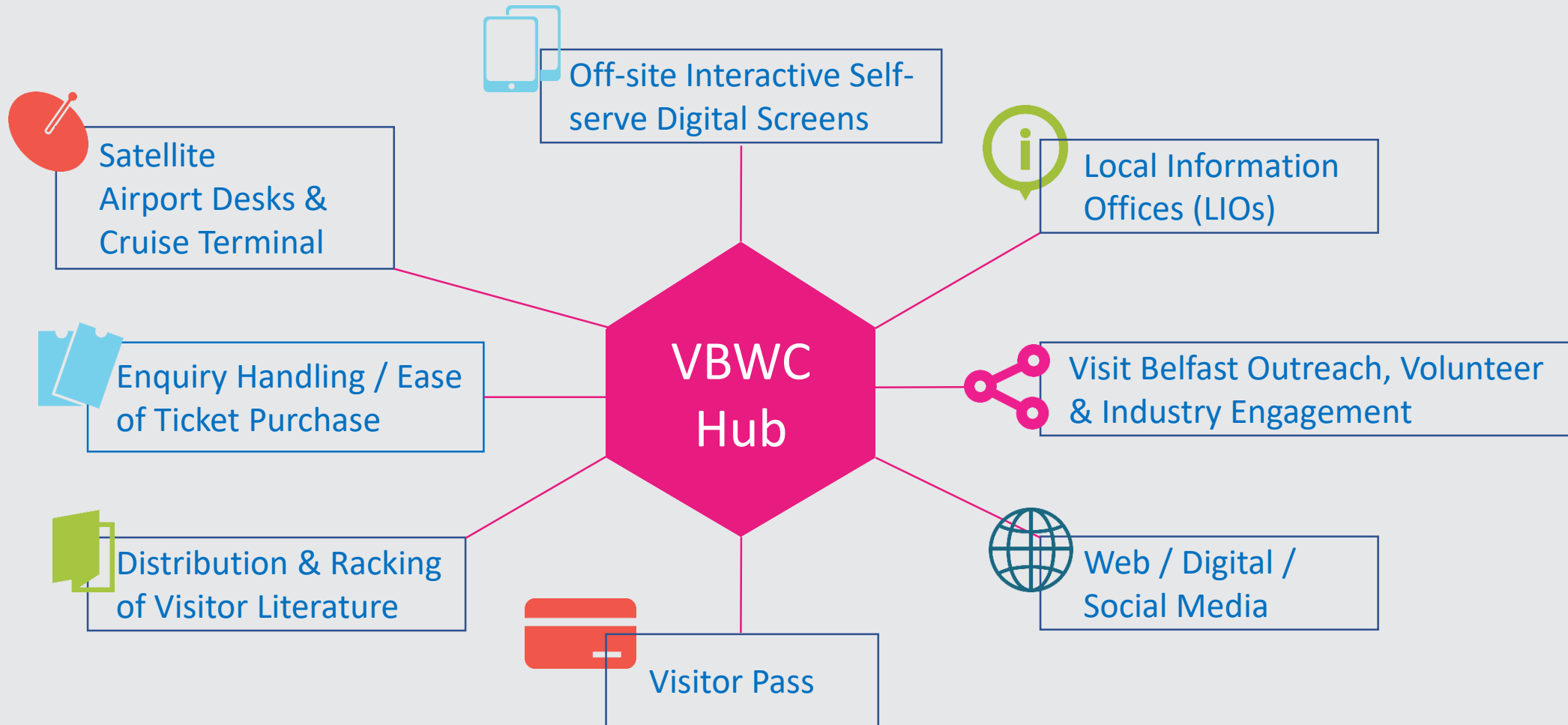
visitBel

ME  
FU



# ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

And spreading the benefit of tourism



# DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

## Grow

Drive sales to local operators

Extend visitor stay/spend

Encourage repeat business

- 79% of visitors to Visit Belfast VIC's said that their visit would make them more likely to spend more in Belfast/NI
- 56% said that their visit would encourage them to stay longer
- 74% said that it would make them more likely to visit somewhere they had not thought of before
- 90% said their visit would encourage them to come back to Belfast/NI

## Enhancing the Experience

Provide a focal point to inform and engage visitors

Connecting hero anchor attractions and connecting smaller lesser known experiences

Promoting sustainable ways to explore the city

Develop new digital city pass

## Accessibility

Helping make the city a safer inclusive area for all

All VICs to meet Access NI guidelines

JAM, BSL and Welcome All staff training

## Capacity Building

Enhanced industry training programme *Get the Knowledge*

Invigorated Volunteer Programme

Citywide Box Office (festival, events, tours)

## Position

City & City Region connectivity and gateway role

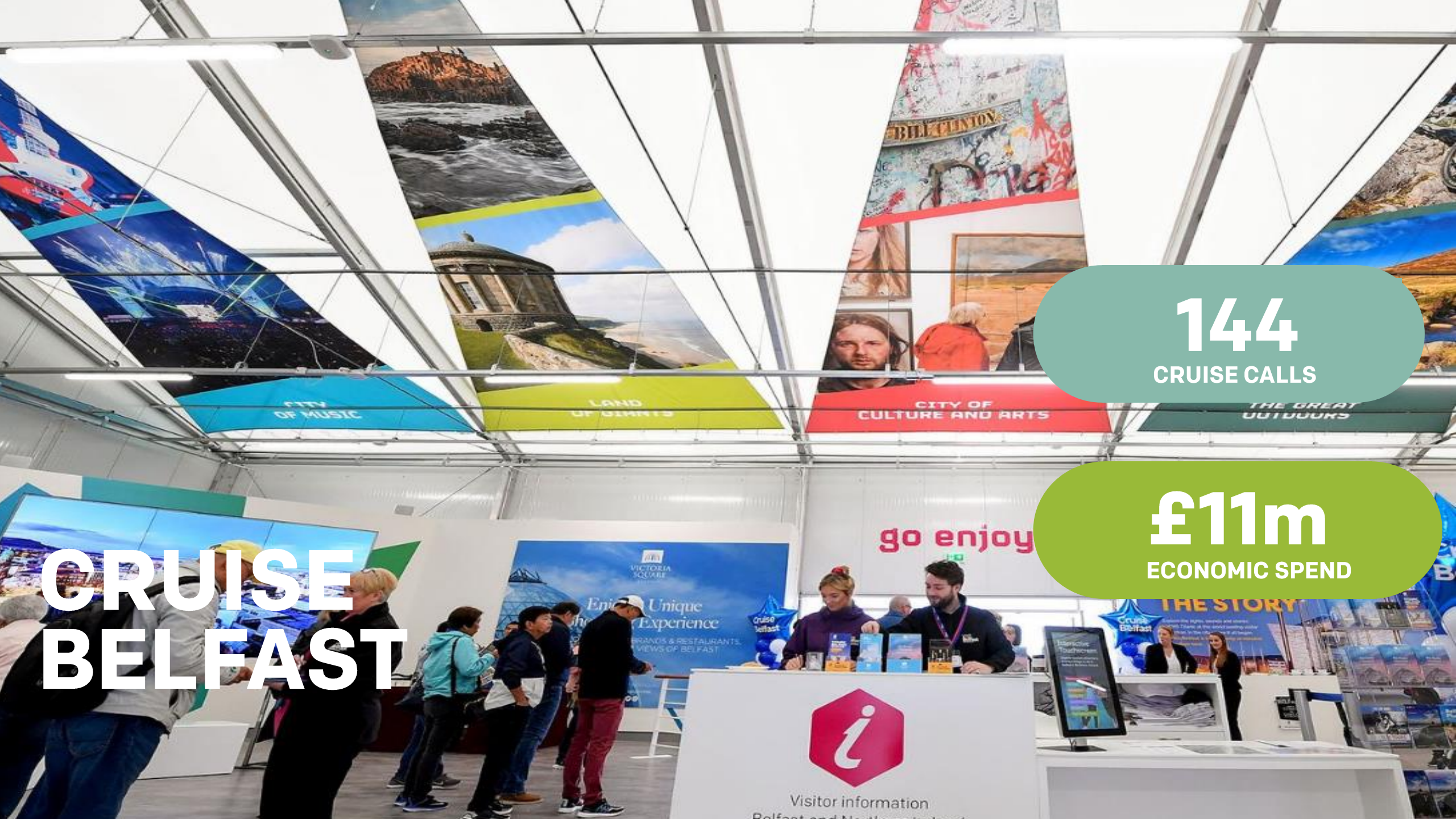
Showcasing culture, events and stories

Driving business to local tourism providers

# CRUISE BELFAST

**144**  
CRUISE CALLS

**£11m**  
ECONOMIC SPEND





# CRUISE BELFAST

destination management: delivering a world-class welcome

## Safe Return of Cruise Tourism

### Only port on the island of Ireland to welcome cruise

- Close collaboration with PHA, Port Health, BCC Emergency Preparedness Group to implement a robust Covid-19 Port Management Plan
- 72 ships welcomed in 2021
- Strengthened already strong relationships with cruise lines/operators

## Benefits

- 85% first time visitors to Belfast/NI (84% international visitors)
- 76% said they would return
- 95% of cruise passengers disembark
  - 40% go on pre-booked excursion (of which 55% go into Belfast)
  - 55% independent (90% take shuttle/taxi into the city)
- Delivers footfall/spend to a wide range of attractions & experiences
- Supports and sustains tourism jobs: visitor servicing, guiding, transport, retail and hospitality
- Shore-side welcome showcases Belfast's vibrant music, dance and cultural scene found across the city

## 2022 Cruise Season

### Potential to be the most successful cruise season ever

- 144 cruise calls – 328,000 cruise visitors
- 22 will visit on a Sunday, and 3 on a bank holiday
- 26 days with more than one ship in a day
- Ave. 5 ships per week
- 40% will stay in the city after 8pm

## Key Activity:

- Maximise footfall/spend to tourism partners across Belfast and NI (optimise the economic benefit from the 144 calls)
- Ensure high visitor satisfaction levels as measured by the cruise lines
- Deliver targeted sales to increase future calls and attract new lines
- Develop suggested itineraries for shore-ex and itinerary planners
- Develop a cruise sustainability plan with Belfast Harbour

# VISIT BELFAST



## BCC 10-Year Tourism Plan

- 100% growth
- Grow, Position, Enhance and Sustain
- Deliver 3 catalyst legacy projects

**visitBelfast**

**REBUILDING CITY TOURISM**

**Business & Operational Plan 2022-23**

## Visit Belfast Business and Operational Plan

- Key delivery partner and vehicle for BCC
- Aligned to city ambition and themes
- Delivering £97m to the local economy; a ROI £27:1
- BCC ROI £49:1 and leveraging £1:0.55
- Return tourism to pre-pandemic levels by 2024
- Supporting tourism businesses
- Sustaining local communities
- Creating social wellbeing