

BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY REPORT

CONCEPT DESIGN STAGE (MARCH 2022 TO JUNE 2023)

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INTRODUCTION

WHY WE ARE ENGAGING

Belfast City Council's **Consultation and Engagement Framework** describes a broad spectrum of two-way communication (from consultation to engagement to involvement) between the council and its residents and stakeholders. It recognises that effective dialogue helps make decisions, policies and services that are better suited to the people they are intended to benefit.

Belfast Stories **Equality Framework** recognises that the Belfast Stories vision can only be achieved if equality, diversity and inclusion are at its core, supported by a co-designed and inclusive process throughout all aspects of the project. This should seek to build long-term relationships while using a variety of tactics to engage people on the terms they want to be engaged.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Belfast City Council to actively seek ways to encourage:

- greater equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without, and
- good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and **Disability Discriminations Order 2006** require the council to protect disabled people from discrimination, promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

One of the key tools for doing this is an equality impact assessment (EQIA) as set down in the council's **Equality Scheme**. An EQIA can help determine the extent and nature of any impact upon the Section 75 categories and find ways to promote equality of opportunity and good relations more effectively. An EQIA should be carried out in line with **Equality Commission** guidance, which requires a 12-week public consultation period.

Rural Needs Act 2016 requires Belfast City Council to have due regard to rural needs when developing policies and initiatives. One of the key tools for doing this is a rural needs impact assessment (RNIA). An RNIA can help determine the extent and nature of any impact on a policy or initiative on rural needs and find ways to support the social and economic needs of people more effectively in rural areas.

Belfast's residents and stakeholders have been consulted on a wide range of council policies and initiatives and likely will also have **legitimate expectation** of being consulted about Belfast Stories.

Belfast City Council appointed Smith and Kent Consulting to provide specialist guidance and support to plan and assist with Belfast Stories consultation.

This Belfast Stories **Engagement Plan** brings together a range of consultation, engagement and involvement approaches to build on best practice, statutory requirement and stakeholder expectation.

VISION AND MISSION

The purpose of the engagement plan is

To help make Belfast Stories a destination that resonates with local people, captivates visitors and is welcoming of all

Our mission is

To bring Belfast Stories to life through the knowledge, insight and ideas of its people and stakeholders

WHAT IS COVERED IN THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

This engagement plan covers RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stage II, which runs from May 2022 and June 2023. During this stage, concept designs and plans are produced in line with the requirements of the project brief. This will include plans for:

- the layout of the building
- the design of the exhibition space
- the story collection framework

There will be two broad parts to our engagement between June 2022 and June 2023.

1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The public consultation will run for 14 weeks from [week commencing 6th June] to [14 September] 2022. The public consultation will focus on:

- i. raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development
- ii. making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and story collection framework

- iii. asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement (below)

2. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement will be structured around four work strands:

- i. Equity
- ii. Sustainability
- iii. Partnership
- iv. Experiences

These will set the foundations, building relationships and shaping further ongoing engagement up until (and possibly after) Belfast Stories opens in 2028.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION



BUILDING EXCITEMENT

If people are excited by Belfast Stories, then they will want to help shape it, including by sharing their stories.

To do this, we will:

- **Launch** the public consultation with a story-themed event
- Develop an **online consultation hub**
- Develop a **physical consultation hub** in a central location

- Create **pop-up consultation hubs** throughout the city, particularly in areas that might be most affected by the development (neighbouring businesses and communities) or are furthest away and less likely to see the city centre hoardings and consultation hub
- Keep the **Belfast Stories website** up to date with what is happening and ways to get involved
- Use Belfast City Council **social media channels** to keep people up to date with what is happening and ways to get involved
- Publish key information and ways to get involved in **City Matters** magazine
- Encourage **partner organisations** to promote what is happening and ways to get involved through their websites, social media and other communications channels
- Put **information boards** up around the building with key information, key dates and ways to find out more
- Partner with **Hit the North Arts Festival** to create a new mural at the site
- Offer **hard-hat tours** to potential partners and people and groups who may be less likely to be engaged through other methods

MAKING SURE BELFAST STORIES IS FOR EVERYONE

We want the building to be **welcoming and accessible** for everyone and for everyone to **see themselves reflected** in its stories. There are three main ways we will do this.

1. EQUALITY IMPACT AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

We will let people know how they can read the draft impact assessments and respond to questions about them through the methods listed above. We will also test our findings through **group and one-to-one meetings**, including with:

- Belfast City Council's **Equality Consultative Forum**
- the Belfast Stories **equity steering group**
- any other **key organisations** representing protected groups of people not engaged through any other method

2. THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

We will set up an equity steering group. The equity steering group exists to make sure that equality, inclusion and diversity is at the heart of Belfast Stories.

The steering group will be made up of staff from **Belfast City Council's Belfast Stories and equality teams** working alongside **people who are experts by experience** of being less heard or listened to due to their identity or circumstance.

During the public consultation, the steering group will help us **consult with a people and groups within their networks** including through **meetings, focus groups, surveys and other engagement tools** that we come up with together. This will include:

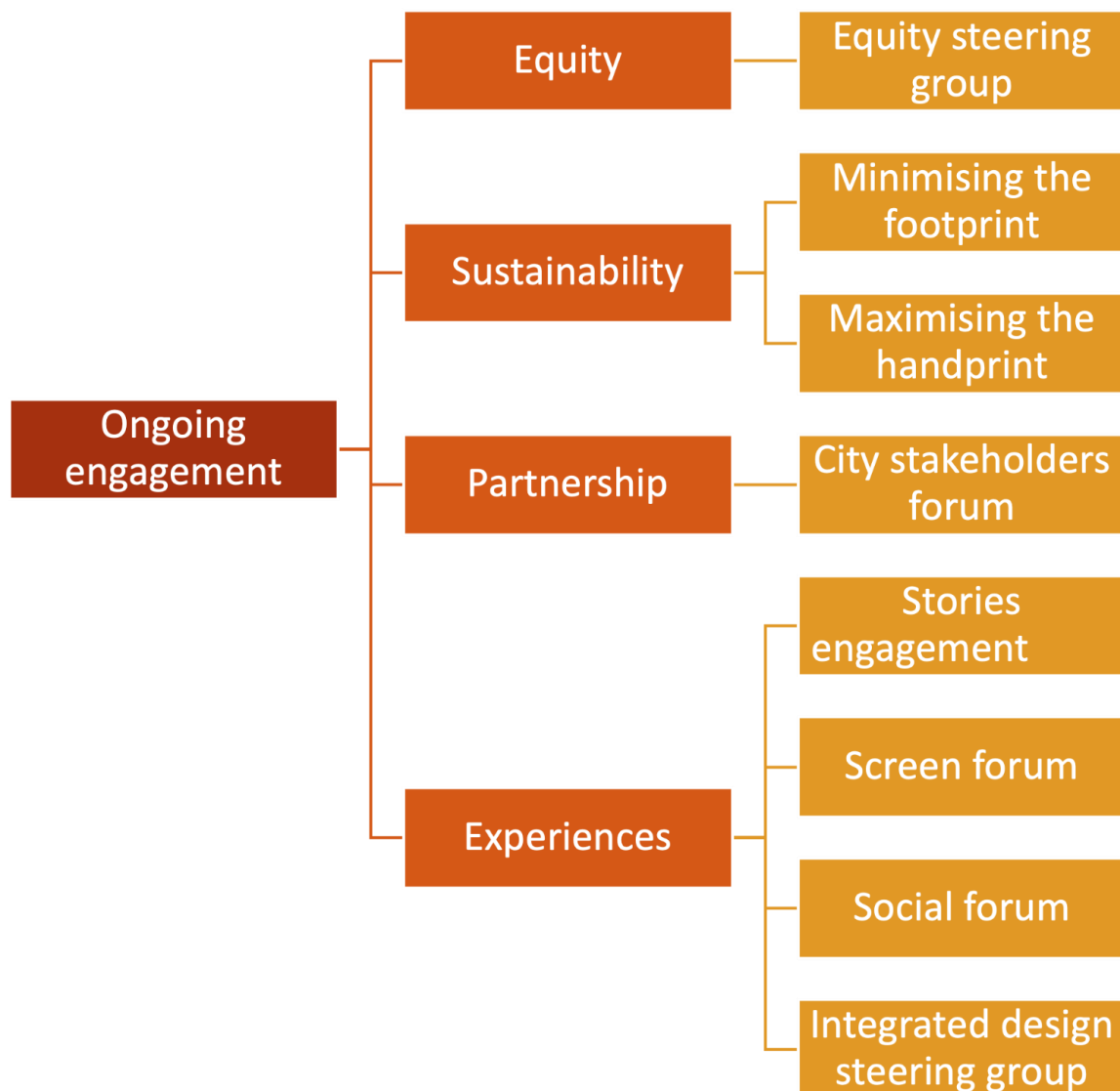
- People from different faith, political and cultural backgrounds
- People from minoritized ethnic communities
- Deaf/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people
- Older people
- Children and young people
- Women
- Carers and people with dependents
- LGBTQ+ people

3. TESTING THE DRAFT STORY COLLECTION PRINCIPLES AND THEMES

The **story collection framework** was developed by Lord Cultural Resources in consultation with over 50 stakeholders. It is essential that the framework is meaningful to the people and groups we want to share their stories. We will test the story collection principles and themes through:

- **Creative workshops** in consultation hubs and with community partners
- Other engagement opportunities designed with the **equity steering group** targeting missing voices
- **Workshops** with:
 - **stakeholders involved in the development** of the draft story collection framework
 - **existing story collections and collectors** (museums, archives, libraries, local history groups and so on)
 - **storytellers** (such as writers, photographers, artists, producers and so on)
- Online **quizzes and polls** targeted at the general public The equity storyline

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT



The following section outlines the how the ongoing engagement will be structured – we will structure it around four work strands: Equity; Sustainability; Partnership; and Experiences.

THE EQUITY STEERING GROUP

During the ongoing engagement phase, the **equity steering group** will:

- **identify and connect** to “missing voices” and groups of people most at risk of missing out
- co-design an **engagement programme** that will help ensure that everyone can have their stories heard and can access the building

- co-produce **engagement opportunities** throughout the public consultation and ongoing engagement, for example, by hosting or facilitating meetings or carrying out peer research
- check the **accessibility** of consultation materials
- act as a **critical friend**, helping to equity-proof and shape the design of the building and its experiences

THE SUSTAINABILITY STORYLINE

The purpose of this storyline is to make sure that Belfast Stories is green and sustainable. Being truly sustainable means thinking about the triple-bottom-line of planet, people and prosperity.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT

This is about caring for the environment, valuing precious resources and reducing the carbon footprint of Belfast Stories during its construction and operation.

Belfast City Council's climate team will facilitate a **working group** in partnership with key environmental stakeholders.

MAXIMISING THE HANDPRINT

This is about how **responsible tourism** can **regenerate communities** through investment in local people. For Belfast Stories this means looking at how to add value through

- **volunteering, job skills, employment and career development** for local people
- use of **social clauses** and **social value procurement**
- supporting **local suppliers** (food, craft, artists and so on) so visitors can have memorable, **meaningful cultural experiences**
- **signposting** visitors to other places where people can continue their experience

Belfast City Council's tourism, culture and economic development teams will develop **networks and programmes** to help local businesses and cultural and community organisations and local and regional tourist providers build on the Belfast Stories opportunity.

THE PARTNERSHIP STORYLINE

Belfast Stories is not Belfast City Council's story. There are already many organisations across the city collecting, storing, interpreting and celebrating the city's stories.

The **city stakeholders network** will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It will **meet quarterly** to share key information, discuss emerging issues and

opportunities and encourage collaboration. Partners will also be asked to share information and engagement opportunities with **their members, communities and networks**.

THE EXPERIENCES STORYLINE

1. STORIES

Our plans may change depending on the feedback we get on the story collection framework during the public consultation, but these are the types of tactics we might use to **gather, record, store, select and share stories**.

- A **social media campaign** encouraging people to share micro-stories in words, photographs or videos
- **Storytelling ambassadors**, including well-known and “ordinary” people from different backgrounds
- Support (such as training, toolkits, equipment, expertise or funding) for **community networks**, such as community organisations, schools, libraries and other public-facing services across the city, to test the story collection process, identifying barriers that might stop people from telling their story and coming up with ideas to overcome them
- Pop-up workshops during **festivals and events**
- An **onsite drop-in consultation hub**
- A **graffiti wall** coinciding with the 2023 Hit the North Festival

2. SCREEN

Made up of representatives of the film sector alongside Belfast City Council’s arts and creative industries teams, this **forum will be led by NI Screen**. It will work together to start to scope the broad parameters of the film and skills programmes.

3. SOCIAL

Made up of representatives of the arts, culture, events, festivals, food and retails sectors, this **forum will be led by Belfast City Council’s tourism and culture teams**. It will work together to scope the social offering and creative use of public space in the Belfast Stories building.

4. INTEGRATED DESIGN STEERING GROUP

The integrated design steering group will comprise:

- representatives from **the equity, sustainability and experience storylines**
- **key partners such as NI Screen** and

- **contractors appointed to design the exhibition space and the overall building**

It will be responsible for ensuring that the design of the building and exhibition reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.

WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE RESULTS

Because people are sharing their time, expertise and ideas, we want them to know that they have been heard.

We will summarise what we have heard and learned and what we plan to do about it at key points during the engagement. These findings will then be published in the consultation hub and shared through our groups, forums and networks.

No individuals will be named or identifiable in what we make public.

The findings will then be used to inform next steps including in relation to the Belfast Stories concept, design and engagement programme.