

BELFAST STORIES ENGAGEMENT PLAN – UPDATED MAY 2023

CONCEPT DESIGN STAGE (JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2024)

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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; 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.

The **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.

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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 requirements and stakeholder expectations.

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 the period July 2023 until September 2024 which will include the development and submission of outline business case to the Department for Economy and the completion of designs to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stage 2. This will include plans for the:

- Layout of the building
- Design of the exhibition space
- Story collection framework.

There will be two broad parts to our engagement between July 2023 and September 2024.

I. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement will be structured around feedback received as part of the public consultation taking on board specific recommendations as set out in the Public Consultation Report and summarised below in section 2. An action plan has been developed and is detailed in section 3.

In 2022, our initial engagement approach focussed on 4 strands:

- i. Equity
- ii. Sustainability

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- iii. Partnership
- iv. Experiences.

These strands continue to form the foundations for our engagement, helping to build relationships and shape further ongoing engagement up until (and possibly after) Belfast Stories opens in 2029.

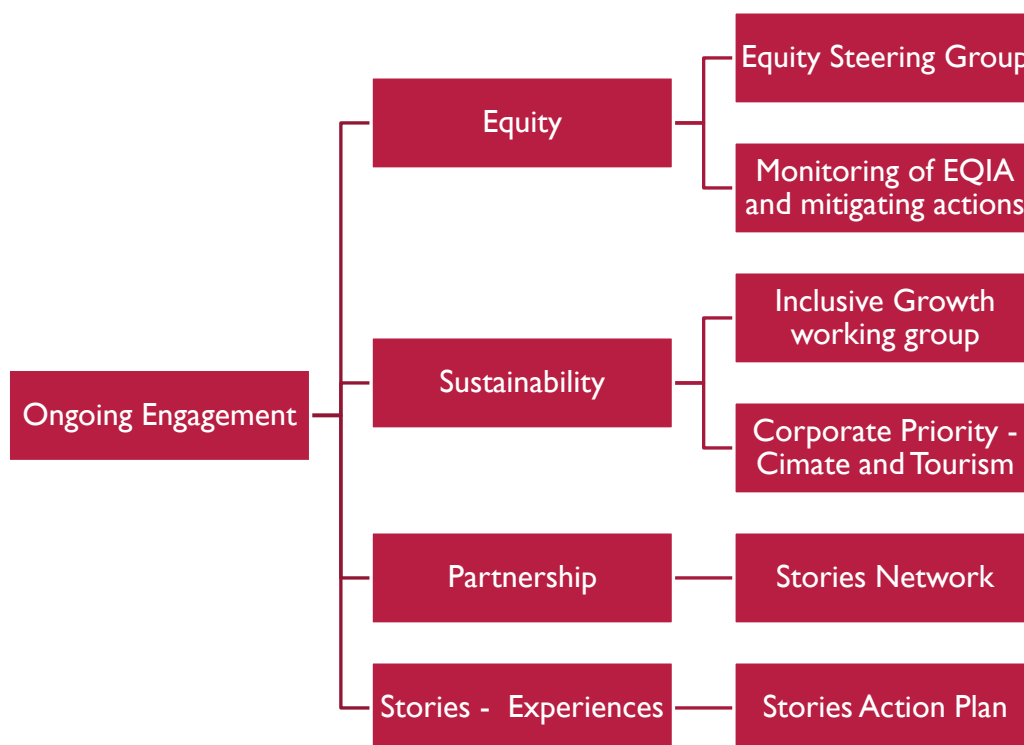
2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Building on the feedback from the first public consultation (August – November 2022), a second consultation is planned for early 2024. This public consultation will focus on:

- i. Presenting concept designs produced as part of RIBA stage 2
- ii. Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including further consultation on the EQIA and RNIA
- iii. Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement specifically around story gathering and content development.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

The initial engagement plan identified a number of strands or ‘storylines’ of engagement. These have been updated following feedback from the public consultation and allocation of internal resources.



THE EQUITY STORYLINE

During the ongoing engagement phase, the **equity steering storyline will be delivered through the work of equity steering group and ongoing monitoring of mitigating actions from the EQIA. 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 the sustainability storyline is to make sure that Belfast Stories is 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 design, construction and operation.

Action Plans will be agreed to reflect corporate interdependencies and priorities including shared objectives with BCC's Climate and Tourism teams. Sustainability will be identified as a cross-cutting priority with additional actions focussed on regenerative tourism.

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, cultural and community organisations and local and regional tourist providers build on the Belfast Stories opportunity. This will be supported by the inclusive growth working group set up to support Belfast Stories.

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 **Stories network** will be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It will **meet** 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 will continue to develop as we begin to gather stories. These are the types of tactics we might use to **gather, record, store, select and share stories**.

- **Social media campaigns** 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**
- **Onsite drop-in consultation hub** and activities.

2. SCREEN

Ongoing engagement with representatives of the screen sector alongside Belfast City Council’s arts and creative industries teams will focus on starting to scope the broad parameters of the screen, skills and creative learning programmes.

3. SOCIAL

Ongoing engagement with representatives of the arts, culture, events, festivals, food and retail sectors working with **Belfast City Council’s culture and tourism teams** will 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 of:

- **Representatives from the equity, sustainability and experience storylines**
- Key **partners** such as NI Screen
- **Contractors appointed to design** the exhibition space and the building.

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The group 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 develop engagement related Key Performance Indicators and publish an annual evaluation report. This will also summarise what we have heard and learned and what we plan to do with the information at key points during the engagement. These findings will then be published on the consultation hub and shared through our groups and networks.

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

ACTION PLAN

The following section outlines the how the ongoing engagement will respond to feedback received during the first consultation.

A number of **key recommendations** were presented in the final Public Consultation report. Below sets out specific actions to be taken forward against each of these recommendations.

Recommendation	Action	Timeframe
Engagement – reporting and accountability		
Publish findings and set out details of next stage of engagement informed by consultation.	The Public Consultation will be published online and promoted on social media and via Belfast Stories ezine.	Publish July 2023.
	A summary document will be issued setting out journey so far and key performance indicators (KPIs) for engagement over next 16 months.	Key performance indicators to be monitored via Delivery Board.

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Ensure that the project team continues to evaluate the effectiveness of its ongoing engagement by adhering to the evaluation framework and using appropriate tools.	Appointment of external evaluator. Scope to include engagement processes and outputs.	Appointed September 2023.
	Annual evaluation report published and presented to Committee.	August 2024.
Stakeholder engagement priorities		
Continue breadth of engagement with stakeholders however ensure specific activities are delivered that address priority areas as set out below.	Review and update stakeholder mapping with inputs from all programme strands including Stories Audit.	Updated July 2023 with ongoing review via Delivery Board dashboard.
Communities – build trust and relationships to reach geographic communities on the outskirts and in the immediate vicinity.	Audit of businesses and organisations in immediate vicinity of the building.	Phase 1 completed. Phase 2: November 2023.
	Site visits and briefings.	Ongoing and to be included in key performance indicators.
	Recruitment of volunteers to support story gathering in these areas.	November 2023.
Move beyond sectoral silos to engage on different terms that focus on specific expertise for example interest in or contribution to Belfast Stories –	Integration of this approach into a Stories Action Plan including: - Setting up of Stories Network.	Stories Action Plan agreed June 2023.

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story gathers, tellers, curators etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up of Stories Panel. - Delivery of stories focussed events. 	
Maintain engagement with tourism sector to ensure Belfast Stories can support overall visitor experience and enhance existing products and providers.	Building on engagement with tourism sector during Public Consultation facilitate roundtable discussion in partnership with Northern Ireland Tourism Association (NITA).	October 2023.
	Regular engagement sessions with key agencies including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast.	Ongoing.
	Work with BCC Culture and Tourism team to agree joined up engagement approach as part of development of neighbourhood tourism.	September 2023.
	Include industry considerations in market testing e.g. focus groups with tour operators.	January 2024.
Increase commitment to Irish Language and Ulster Scots engagement to explore Good Relations opportunities, story collection and themes, representation within the building with the option to consider a language policy for the project and specific EQIA if required.	Ensure representation from Irish Language and Ulster Scots on Stories Panel to be set up under Stories Action Plan.	Stories Action Plan agreed June 2023.
	Update Stories Audit with any additional collections/ archives that have been identified in relation to Irish Language and Ulster Scots.	September 2023.

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	Include minority language dimension as part of study visits/ benchmarking programme of best practice.	December 2023.
	Belfast Stories project team to attend meetings of Irish Language Forum and Ulster Scots Forum and provide regular updates.	Ongoing.
	Include language as part of briefings for the induction of design teams.	October 2023.
	Include Irish language and Ulster Scots activities and materials as part of the next public consultation.	March 2024.
Raising awareness		
Development of a strategic communications and engagement plan.	Appointment of necessary expertise via tender process to provide engagement and communications support up to end of RIBA 2.	Appointment by October 2023.
Develop key messages and a consistent identity with signposting to an updated Belfast Stories website and engaging social media.	Review of key messaging framework.	July 2023.
	Review of digital channels and website.	November 2023.
	Digital Audit Phase 2 completed and rolled out.	November 2023.

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<p>Potential to embed Belfast Stories activity in the calendar of events and festivals across the city.</p>	<p>Work with Belfast 2024 to identify opportunities for elements of creative programme to be delivered in partnership with Belfast Stories with focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Story based approaches - Audience development - New creative content - Activating the site 	<p>August 2023 – agree strategic partnerships.</p>
<p>Platforms</p>		
<p>A city stakeholders’ network should be open to any organisation with an interest in Belfast Stories. It should 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.</p>	<p>This has been renamed as a Stories Network to reflect feedback during the public consultation and access point for many stakeholders and focus for the project team being stories including stories development.</p> <p>Initially meetings will coincide with project milestones however this may increase to quarterly as project progresses to end of RIBA 2.</p>	<p>October 2023.</p>
<p>The equity steering group has provided vital insight into equality, diversity and inclusion including facilitating conversations with individuals and groups that would otherwise not be known to the Belfast Stories team. The membership of the equity steering group should be</p>	<p>Review membership of equity steering group and role during next stage of project up to end of RIBA 2.</p>	<p>August 2023.</p>

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reviewed and refreshed to ensure that we are hearing from voices that may otherwise go unheard.		
Stories expert panel with a remit to include ethical framework. This would ensure that the Council accesses the necessary expertise to integrate an ethics function into the story gathering processes and tools.	Set up stories panel with Terms of Reference to reflect recommendations set out in Public Consultation Report, Story Collection Framework and Stories Audit.	September 2023.
The public consultation report proposed some form of steering group should have a crucial role in ensuring that Belfast Stories reflects the needs and wants of its many stakeholders, while it remains authentic, relevant, inclusive and accessible for the people of Belfast.	It is proposed that this sits within the Stories Network to be reviewed with design teams as part of induction programme and agree specific design engagement actions and mechanisms.	November 2023.
The public consultation report recommended specific opportunities for more detailed engagement with ambassadors (organisations) and champions (individuals).	Formal programmes will not be taken forward at this stage however will be reviewed at the end of RIBA 2. The following actions will be completed:	-
	Continuation of quarterly ezine.	Ongoing.
	Development of partnership toolkit.	August 2023.
	Delivery of stakeholder events.	Ongoing

Story gathering		
<p>Story gathering should focus on active learning by testing processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories (because of their culture, identity or circumstances), in particular older people and the very elderly, whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost.</p> <p>It should also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on best practice that currently exists, in particular in relation to safeguarding and ethics • Uncover the stories and archives that already exist, including at community level • Bring different sectors and stakeholders together to share knowledge and experience and build a community of practice through a conference or event. 	<p>See Stories Action Plan for the integration of these recommendations.</p>	

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A detailed consultation plan will be drawn up by end of 2023, to support the delivery of the public consultation exercise in early 2024. Details will be presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee and published.