

**MAKE
YOURSELF
AT HOME**

Belfast

Tourism & Events Workplan 2024-25

Make Yourself At Home Year 3 Action Plan 2024–2025 – Tourism and Events

Project Name	Project Description	Actions/ Targets	Timeline	Budget
Experience Belfast				
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme	<p>Year two of the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme has brought to Belfast’s tourism industry a suite of assets to educate and motivate the industry to make their offer more accessible and inclusive. As well as the first Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Seminar which attracted over 100 delegates the session launched:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six on-line training videos for the tourism industry (accessed via Visit Belfast) • an inspirational and motivational video that will showcase the best practice • three Living Library events where staff meet people with disabilities to learn about the challenges they face • three ‘day in the life’ video itineraries to inspire disabled visitors to explore our city <p>The overall programme is supported via a partner advisory group including Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, BCC and the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. It attracted 33% funding from TNI as well as support from Visit Belfast and other partners.</p>	<p>Year 3 programme will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual seminar to bring the industry together and measure developments and growth. Seminar to attract up to 100 key decision makers in the industry as well as key stakeholders and policy makers. • Promotion of the free resources aiming to maximise completion of the courses by up to 200 businesses. • 20 new tourism venues featured on our partner site Access Able • Co-design with the industry further training and content for trade and consumers in partnership with TNI and Visit Belfast; number and content of workshops to be confirmed. 	April 2024 - March 2025	£45,000
Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme	<p>The draft ten-year tourism strategy identifies food and drink as a key part of the travel experience and contributes to some of the strongest memory triggers. Importantly, food & drink expenditure accounts for around a third of total overnight visitor spend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to facilitate the Belfast Food and Drink Tourism Network and programme with the appointment of Network facilitator. • Positioning Programme launched and rolled out to the industry 	April 2024 - March 2025	£45,000

	<p>MYAH identifies the need to support this important economic driver and market-led tourism experience for the city.</p> <p>Focus on year two supported the industry through the Food and Drink Tourism Network. The Belfast Food and Drink Programme 23-24 delivered a series of masterclasses including two learning journeys as well as a Food and Drink Tourism Connection Summit.</p> <p>The Summit attracted over 100 delegates from the industry and provided learning opportunities from experts in food tourism development. It facilitated business connections with restaurateurs and distributors to buy from local producers, supporting our journey to be recognised as a sustainable tourism destination.</p> <p>Over 200 businesses have benefited through participation in the programme, and the events delivered will support ambitions to achieve a quality mark.</p> <p>The programme attracted 40% funding support from DEARA via the NI Regional Food Programme as well as in kind support from the Network Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a strategic action plan to explore opportunities for 5-year period ahead. • Access funding via DAERA Regional Food Programme and seek other sources of funding and support • Scope the potential of a food and drink international accredited quality mark for Belfast / NI • Ensure events and festivals food and drink provisions adhere to Council criteria around food tourism and sustainability best practice 		
<p>Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing</p>	<p>To date, there has been an investment of over £3m in visitor interpretative signage and wayfinding in Belfast. In Year 2, an initial assessment of existing tourism signage to identify essential repairs and update of interpretation, including Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Cathedral Quarter and city centre, with interventions to review, update interpretation, maps and design for 11 interpretative blade signs with overlays. In addition, the review of 233 signage assets – building blades,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a detailed report with recommendations for future investment in visitor signage, wayfinding and street dressing across the city that will enhance the visitor welcome to and experience of Belfast; which can be used to attract investment and access funding as it becomes available. 	<p>April 2024 - March 2025</p>	<p>£26,000</p>

	<p>finger posts, navigation blades, primary hubs, secondary hubs, viewpoints and welcome signs which will be detailed in a final report soon to be completed.</p> <p>There is a now a requirement to undertake a study of visitor signage to examine a range of solutions, including digital options, that will ensure that the visitor signage is fit for purpose to provide wayfinding, interpretation and enhance the visitor experience in Belfast and reflects the changing landscape of the city including 2 Royal Avenue, City Cemetery, Cathedral Gardens and as Belfast Stories is established and other relevant visitor attractions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study will include detailed investment requirements to upgrade, update and future-proof our visitor signage, with particular consideration to be given to the use of appropriate digital mechanisms, as well as investment into city dressing; and will examine innovative case studies from other cities. • This will include future-proofing for Fleadh Cheoil and other large-scale international events. 		
Signage upkeep	Upkeep, cleaning and repair of tourism signage network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of contract and delivery of services 	April 2024 - March 2025	£50,000
Christmas lights	Christmas Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of current contractor to deliver final year of Christmas lights programme • Development of new tender for 2025 onwards <p>Delivery, management and programme integration for switch on event</p>	April 2024 - March 2025	£300,000
Enhancing the Visitor Experience Priority Actions	A Visitor Experience Action Plan has been developed mapping out actions and priorities for enhancing the visitor experience across the city for the next 4 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of prioritised strands of work identified in the plan, as per approved recommendations based on report to be submitted to Council Officers in March / April 2024 	April 2024 - March 2025	£36,000
Tourism General Management	Sharing of content with key partners to embed cultural vibrancy messaging into tourism, investment and education positioning, to include the establishment of a Tourism Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree terms of reference, scope, governance and membership of the Tourism Panel to facilitate sectoral collaboration and identify opportunities 	April 2024- March 2025	£15,800

	with city-wide commitment, as identified in <i>Make Yourself At Home</i> .	<p>for development and delivery of Tourism projects, investment and <i>MYAH</i> ambitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene Tourism Panel to facilitate discussion of sectoral-specific issues and challenges arising and enhance communications between Council and key external stakeholders. • Preparation for key tourism milestones – e.g. Fleadh, Euros, Belfast Stories • Host Belfast Tourism, Culture and arts networking event with the aim to make new connections, inspire new experiential development and packaging of new products as well as track progress 		
POSITIONING OF BELFAST				
Business Tourism – Conference Subvention	<p>Members will be aware that in January 2021 CGR agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast can compete internationally to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace.</p> <p>This fund is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by our partner Tourism NI. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that Belfast, including ICC remains competitive as a business tourism destination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Conference Support Scheme in partnership with TNI and Visit Belfast to ensure that Belfast can compete internationally in winning conferences for Belfast. • Through the level of conference support deliver a minimum of 4,000 out of state conference delegates for Belfast which will result in significant economic impact for Belfast • Continue to review the Scheme to ensure it is “fit for purpose’ in an everchanging market and competitive environment. 	April 2024- March 2025	£200,000

Neighbourhood Tourism Investment programme	<p>The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme aims to: Provide short term support (over a period of 2 years) to develop authentic and financially sustainable new cultural tourism products, or enhancements to existing offers, which will bring vitality to local neighbourhoods, local residents and visitors.</p> <p>Encourage the development of plans which build capacity for city neighbourhoods to connect to the broader tourism offer, enabling local communities to become part of the Belfast visitor experience.</p> <p>Promote enhanced visitor dwell time in the city and extend the economic benefits beyond the city centre.</p> <p>Extend the journey of visitors to <i>Belfast Stories</i>, encouraging further exploration of its narratives across wider city neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme will, in the long-term, support the delivery of the Visitor Experience Framework through the development of financially sustainable tourism products which draw visitors into local neighbourhoods, immersing them actively in the locale, promoting increased dwell time and spend in the area and uplifting skill, capacity and confidence in local communities. • Provide continued support to EastSide Partnership and Fáilte Feirste Thiar, in recognition of their current capacity to deliver on objectives relating to neighbourhood tourism. (Agreed at CGR April 2024) • Develop and deliver new Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme • Communicate and deliver alignment opportunities available within the existing Go Succeed programme. 	April 2024 - March 2025	
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT				
Tourism baselines and measurement of tourism in Belfast and contribution to the NI Economy	<p>Belfast's <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>, Tourism Plan recognises both the challenges to increase tourism and to maximise the positive impact that it can have on the city; whilst the updated Belfast Agenda has set a target to double the value of tourism from £400m to £800m per year by 2030.</p> <p>The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local level continues to be impacted by the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Research baselines and examine digital opportunities for data capture. • Undertake an audit with detailed investment recommendation and action plan for a dashboard of measurement. 	April 2024 - March 2025	£70,000

	<p>delayed resumption of surveys and statistics by our national statistics agency NISRA. While tourism related surveys including passenger and household travel surveys have resumed, it remains unclear when we will see a full return of annual government tourism statistics particularly at a local level so it is important that Belfast can establish its own baselines and measure the social and economic impact of tourism to ensure that the contribution of Belfast to the NI economy is recognised and that ongoing investment in Belfast is secured.</p> <p>The most recent local government statistics available for Belfast are 2019 - 52% of all visitors to Northern Ireland came to Belfast. Overall, the city accounts for 32% of all overnight stays in NI and the city generates 40% of the region's tourism spend.</p> <p>Council is currently engaging with key agencies around the establishment of Tourism baselines for the City and new ways of measuring tourism around traditional economic indicators – dedicated financial resource is essential to enable this to be undertaken. Additional data and robust benchmarking must be developed and supported to gather trend data and inform planning and business case development. Data from benchmarking, in market consumer data and future trends is central to understand where investments should be made going forward. Robust more localised data would give confidence to tourism businesses regarding the 'risk' in the step towards starting, developing or growing a business.</p> <p>The use of quantitative measures also needs to be reflected to measure all aspects of tourism impact (social/economic/environmental) as we implement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with NISRA, NITA, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to share insights and establish a dashboard of measurement of social, economic, environmental impact of tourism in Belfast – quantitative and qualitative. Explore opportunities to partner with TNI on a Belfast pilot • KPIs and next steps to be agreed for period Q1 and Q2 in year ahead. • Utilise data led insights to inform positioning of Belfast 		
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	regenerative and sustainable tourism plans and strategies. CSO in RoI provide monthly updates on inbound tourism – there are no plans for this in NI currently.			
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM				
Sustainable Tourism: Global Destination Sustainability Index & Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including Green Tourism certification	<p>Belfast completed its index benchmarking and application in 2022 and an application was made for 2023 which placed Belfast 11th out of 100 cities as a sustainable tourism destination under the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index).</p> <p>In 2023 the continued implementation of the Green Tourism Accreditation Programme which provides access to the GreenChecktool, enabling tourism businesses including accommodation, hospitality, events and attractions to complete assessments and take steps to achieve accreditation. 100 businesses signed up to the Green Tourism programme supported by Council and 59 are accredited to date, including some of our own assets such as Belfast Castle and ICC Belfast.</p> <p>Currently 75% of hotel bedrooms in Belfast have achieved Green Tourism accreditation. Ongoing work with the supply chain to incentivise change programmes, raise awareness and pilot projects that ensure Belfast is a sustainable tourism destination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward Planning for Climate Change: Update to GDS Index and application for 2024 including Environmental Impact Audit and Action Plan with the aim to maintain at a minimum 11th place in the world as a sustainable tourism destination. • Provide support in partnership with Green Tourism UK and Visit Belfast, to the tourism sector to increase those achieving accreditation for the first time and to encourage others to move from bronze status to silver. • Further work with the industry to raise awareness and pilot initiatives that ensure Belfast strengthens its position as a sustainable tourism destination, including green meetings accreditation • Collaboratively deliver sustainable tourism initiatives including set up a Belfast Sustainable Giants group to share knowledge and continue to position Belfast at the forefront of green and sustainable practices. 	April 2024- March 2025	£30,000

VISIT BELFAST				
Visit Belfast	<p>Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities and targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It is a membership organisation with more than 460 partner businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works on behalf of its funders and partners and with a range of public and private partners including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Belfast Chamber to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage visit Belfast contract as per CGR committee approval March 2024 • Visit Belfast’s new three-year strategy (2024-2027) and one-year business plan (2024-2025) are aligned to the four themes of Belfast’s Tourism Plan: <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>, focused on delivering for the city. • Delivery as per year one of Visit Belfast business plan 	April 2024- March 2025	£2,076,424

City Events				
	<p>On an annual/biannual basis, the Council’s City Events Unit delivers a series of large - scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council.</p> <p>The Tourism, Culture & Events also support a number of annual programmes and activities. Our cultural and tourism strategic priorities sets out long term recommendations for events in the city including better alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 large - scale city events attracting local audiences and out – of - state visitors (for St. Patrick’s Day and Maritime) measuring socio economic impact. • Lord Mayors Day - Civic Event will now be aligned to a key event within the 2024 Programme. 	April 2024 – March 2025	As detailed below.
Maritime / Made in Belfast	<p>Following a strategic review the rebranded ‘Maritime’ Festival is now delivered on a biennial basis in order to grow ambition, budget and impact of the Festival. Last delivered in 2023, the next edition is now due to take place in 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and development for commissioning a large-scale creative piece for the Festival – ideally home grown. • Potential codesigns or programme pieces will be carried forward to the Programme Board for recommendations. Any large- 	April 2024 – March 2025	£217,000

	<p>However, the planning of the 2025 event has now commenced. Recommendations from a recent review will be implemented. There is a new approach to governance. The festival will be delivered in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners & Maritime Belfast Trust. The festival will be delivered with an additional creative piece.</p>	<p>scale creative options should be reviewed in 2024. Updates will be provided to CG&R</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing TNI funding • Planning session early 2024 with partners to establish the date, footprint and wider governance structure for the event going forward. Options to be put forward on different models. 		
Christmas	<p>This will be a continuation of the agreed 'traditional' switch on format of the 2023 Christmas event - friendly activity on a focal stage at City Hall. This will be supplemented by further animation on subsequent weekends throughout November and December.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research & Development initiatives with local creatives to enhance co-design of on-stage creative offering • 	April 2024 – December 2024	£152,864
St Patricks Day	<p>The new model of commissioning the creative sector to deliver projects over this period continued in March 2024. Over the week of citywide celebrations, Belfast hosted a St Patrick's eve concert, a parade, traditional cross City music trail, music and traditional dance in St George's Market, Cathedral, 2 Royal Ave and many other venues. An evaluation of 2024 and the next steps detailing the proposed approach for 2025 will be presented at a future committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations by expanding the programme beyond the traditional elements e.g. parade, music • Work with Good Relations to enhance budget and provide an inclusive cross community programme 	April 2024 – March 2025	£300,000
Lord Mayors Day	<p>This event will celebrate Belfast, and the groups that the Lord Mayor was engaged with throughout her year in office. This event focuses on a day of family - friendly activity and animation around City Hall. This will involve live music, dance, circus, street theatre, arts and craft, sports. In 2023, satellite activity took place at 2 Royal Ave and the two sites will be linked by animation in Donegall Place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop the offering by engaging the Lord Mayor's networks. Probable alignment to 2024 programme activity. 	April 2024 – June 2024	£42,000

Events Development				
International Events	<p>Working with city partners to plan ahead for & developing/submitting bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.</p> <p>Ongoing review of Council delivered events and collaboration with extensive range of events and festival funded by Council across the city and across the year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per committee agreement, Belfast continues to participate in the Bid process to host the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil na Eireann. Working in partnership with Ards C.C.E, the bid is continually refined and Belfast is being profiled at a series of Comhaltas events. In addition to this bid development and liaison with the wider stakeholders, officers continue to scope the delivery requirements of the event. UEFA European Football Championships 2028 – The year 2024 sees a significant period of transition; from the successful bid phase to the delivery of the football championships and Host City obligations in Belfast. Officers are now engaging with wider NI stakeholders via interim governance arrangements. Furthermore, there is considerable engagement with the Central Transition Team / UK Sport in preparation of meeting UEFA set milestones, and scoping delivery requirements. 	April 2024 - March 2025	£40,000
Small Grants				
Project Funding	Support for Sport grants to ensure development and delivery of community-based sporting events.	Support for local organisations with up to 10-12 projects supported	April 2024 - March 2025	£80,000