

An Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast - Culture at the heart of our city's development

Executive Summary Report

Published June 2007

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Contact us at the above address for further information on the strategy and for details of the consultation process already carried out.

The Executive Summary of the Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast is available in alternative formats. Just call Freephone 0800 0855412 or Text phone 028 9027 0405. You can also download it from our website www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culture

A full text of the Integrated Cultural Strategy is available from the Culture and Arts Unit at Belfast City Council.

An Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast

This Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast is the continuation of a journey which Belfast City Council embarked upon when it developed the first Culture and Arts Plan for the city in 2003. In that time, the Council has achieved much in terms of the development of the city, and in particular, has influenced the shift of culture and arts to a more central position on the urban regeneration agenda. It is now time to take this a stage further, by aligning and integrating this work with the other main players to ensure that culture and arts can make an optimum impact on the further development of this city.

A word from Cllr Bernie Kelly, Chair of Belfast City Council Development (Arts) Sub-Committee

Our cities are hugely important assets to the modern economy and social wellbeing. They are the powerhouses of their regions and generate much of the wealth of the nations. It is only in the heart of our cities that the physical, intellectual and cultural assets are gathered together in a critical mass that provide the conditions for successful growth and it is therefore clear that those engaged in urban development need to embrace the opportunities offered by cultural activity alongside more traditional economic and infrastructure development.

This Cultural Strategy promotes a strong individual identity for the city and strengthens our ability to achieve a wide range of social and economic goals. It requires us to aspire to the best practice approaches we have seen in other cities, but also to be aware of the very specific context here in Belfast. Realising the true potential of culture and arts to the development of Belfast will require a joining up of the plans and activities of the main players in this sector.

I believe that this strategy sets an ambitious programme for strong, sustainable and joined-up cultural development. It is not an end in itself, it is another important step on a journey which we are pleased to be taking alongside so many committed partners.

Introduction

Belfast City Council's Culture and Arts Plan 2003-2006 was developed as part of the Council's 'Belfast: Capital City' development strategy. The Plan was a milestone in developing a cohesive strategy for the Council's support of cultural organisations. One of the key undertakings for the Plan was to create a single vision for the development of the cultural sectors in Belfast.

Our aim, therefore, is to create an Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast from now until 2010, which is owned by all the organisations that play an active role in cultural development, and which ensures they work together towards agreed goals, to maximise effectiveness and sustainability.

Belfast has much to gain from strengthening its cultural provision. There is an opportunity for enhancement and development of the cultural product to respond to both individual needs and to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the City. Belfast has the creative capacity to take full advantage of the opportunities as both a cultural gateway and a regional driver.

The Council is in a key position to provide civic leadership for a collective approach that will realise the potential for cultural development in Belfast. The Integrated Cultural Strategy is designed to mesh with the broader regeneration agenda for Belfast. It therefore reflects and builds on the process undertaken to co-ordinate the development agenda for the City through the 'Belfast: State of the City' process and is framed within the Council's

new four year development agenda, Belfast: Capital City II. The Strategy has been developed in close partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, as the two key agencies focused on culture and arts development and delivery. It also builds on partnerships formed with the culture and arts sector and the various public, private, community and voluntary organisations involved in the cultural arena.

Vision

Our shared vision for cultural development in the city of Belfast is:

To create a vibrant, cultural capital where arts and culture are placed firmly at the centre of economic, social and environmental regeneration in a way which inspires, empowers and elevates those who live, work in and visit the city.

Strategic Leadership

High quality local leadership within the governance structures and as part of a creative and cultural environment is essential to a successful city. Belfast City Council has a pivotal role in galvanising leadership for the City, and, in creating this Cultural Strategy, is establishing a framework in which good leadership can flourish.

Aim 1.1

Develop and support Belfast as a creative and cultural centre

Objectives

- A. Explore and communicate a strong city identity
 - B. Foster strategic leadership within the cultural sector
 - C. Promote sustainability and work towards security of funding for the cultural sector
 - D. Commit to engagement between public bodies and the Sector through existing forums, networking and umbrella organisations
 - E. Develop Belfast Champions as ambassadors for culture and arts
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Aim 1.2

Provide and support creative responses to the social and political challenges in the city

Objectives

- F. Champion Good Relations and support cultural diversity
 - G. Integrate cultural development with the Community Planning and regeneration processes
 - H. Enhance opportunities for cultural and artistic engagement to enable greater levels of social inclusion, community development and inter-community contact
-

Aim 1.3

Develop partnerships with public agencies to promote a holistic approach to cultural development

Objectives

- I. Influence policy agendas for the delivery of public services eg. transport, housing and health

Creating Wealth

Belfast is a regional centre for cultural products and services but it has the potential to gain much more from developing and promoting its key cultural assets. The creative and cultural industries are playing an increasingly important part in the Belfast economy through a significant direct contribution to turnover, GDP, employment and growth. They also make an indirect contribution through supporting creativity and innovation, which are the life blood of the new successful cities.

Aim 2.1

Develop the range and quality of the creative, artistic, cultural and heritage offer to attract local, national and international audiences

Objectives

- A. Maximise economic return through development of key cultural assets
 - B. Develop new and existing cultural products with particular focus on summer, evening and outdoor programming
 - C. Increase private sector partnership and investment in our cultural offer
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Aim 2.2

Provide enhanced pathways for skills development, training and employment

Objectives

- D. Enhance employability through work within both formal and informal education
 - E. Build capacity through work with arts and heritage organisations and practitioners
-

Aim 2.3

Provide creative and entrepreneurial springboards for individual and collective economic benefit

Objectives

- F. Grow the creative economy
 - G. Develop creative talent
-

Aim 2.4

Promote the economic potential of creative clusters in the city

Objectives

- H. Develop the potential of cultural quarters such as Cathedral Quarter, Queen's Quarter, Titanic Quarter and Gaeltacht Quarter
- I. Support creative clusters as drivers for creative industries

Quality of Life

Cities that are vibrant places with a diversity of social and recreational activities are places where people want to live, work and play. By supporting excellence and diversity of cultural offer, they provide an avenue for self improvement and fulfilment.

Aim 3.1

Enhance the cultural and artistic experience in the City

Objectives

- A. Build quality and sustainability in the cultural offer
 - B. Make culture more accessible and grow audiences
 - C. Showcase talent and good practice
 - D. Maximise the effectiveness of culture and arts funding
-

Aim 3.2

Invigorate public spaces

Objectives

- E. Enhance and promote cultural use of public spaces
 - F. Advocate the inclusion of cultural elements in new developments
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Aim 3.3

Protect and promote the built heritage

Objectives

- G. Promote development sympathetic to Belfast's built heritage
 - H. Develop the historical resource in the City
 - I. Promote heritage led regeneration in the City
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Aim 3.4

Develop creative and cultural means to promote physical regeneration in the City

Objectives

J. Promote creativity in architecture and the built environment

K. Support sustainable development of cultural venues in the City

L. Develop public art in the City

Aim 3.5

Promote community and individual development and expression through cultural activity

Objectives

M. Widen access and remove barriers to arts and heritage participation

N. Diversify audiences for the arts.

Next Steps

It is essential that the framework is sufficiently dynamic to respond to the changing political environment in which the culture and arts sectors currently practice, while allowing the most effective use to be made of opportunities and resources. Belfast City Council will continue to work with our key partners to provide a mechanism by which the objectives can be developed and achieved.

Annual Action Plan

Throughout the first year of the strategy we will continue to define and agree actions and targets for cultural development and at the end of the first year an Annual Action Plan will be set out with a timetable for the implementation of the objectives of the Integrated Cultural Strategy. Belfast City Council will also publish a Belfast City Council Cultural Action Plan which will detail the work the Council will undertake to support the Integrated Cultural Strategy.

Developing Partnerships

Throughout the first year of the strategy we will continue to work with our partners at the Arts Council and DCAL to define and agree actions and targets for cultural development.

An Integrated Cultural Strategy Steering Group will be formed to assist Belfast City Council in coordinating implementation of the objectives of the Integrated Cultural Strategy. The group will meet regularly to review progress of already established processes and to develop and instigate processes for delivery of the shared areas of work. The Integrated Cultural Strategy Steering Group, will have representation from our partners in the key statutory organisations, supplemented by cultural sector representatives from umbrella groups.

Outcomes and development of an evaluative process

These outcomes identify key areas for review of the success of the Strategy. They form the basis for a system of monitoring and evaluation which will take place as part of an annual review process. The review process will be an important aspect of integrating leadership and creating high quality planning for cultural development in Belfast. We will know we are achieving our vision when we have:

Strategic Leadership

- Achieved international recognition of Belfast as a cultural capital and regional recognition as a cultural driver for Northern Ireland.
- Increased public sector investment in the cultural sector.
- Positioned culture and arts as a key mechanism for social and political change in Belfast and have a widespread appreciation of the value of arts and heritage for fostering trust and understanding.
- Increased integration of public services which address cultural needs as a key element to improve quality of life.

Creating Wealth

- Improved strength and quality in culture and creative activity and develop capacity to engage significant audiences from beyond the city boundaries.
- Expanded the pool of skilled practitioners and developed demonstrable strengths in good governance, audience development and key sectoral skills.
- Increased the value of creative industries within the Belfast and Northern Ireland economies and increased the number of new creative enterprises established in Belfast.
- Developed clearly defined creative and cultural hubs as a focus for vibrant creative enterprises, tourism and cultural endeavour.

Quality of Life

- An expanded and enhanced quality cultural offer for those who live, work and visit in Belfast.
- Increased the use and vibrancy of key public spaces in the city.
- Enabled sympathetic development of the city which makes the best use of the built heritage and enhanced appreciation of the historic environment as a cultural asset.
- Increased the number of high-profile cultural landmarks to provide creative environments for regeneration and a distinctive city centre including clearly developed plans for a creative visual arts centre.
- Enhanced opportunities for cultural engagement and participation, and developed greater and more diverse audiences for cultural attractions.

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