

Outline Response to DCAL

Overall, Belfast City Council does not believe that Belfast's unique position is addressed in this proposal.

Belfast City Council plays a unique role in Northern Ireland's culture and arts infrastructure as many of the regional and national arts are based in the city and are currently supported by both Belfast City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Belfast City Council invests £1.3 million per annum into approximately 73 culture and arts organisations through the following programmes:

Development and Outreach Programme – this fund aims to increase community participation and access to culture and arts activity in Belfast. Grants range from £2,000 to £20,000 and culture and arts applicants must demonstrate a partnership approach with community organisations. Approximately 13 applicants are funded.

Annual/Multi Annual Funding Scheme – This scheme helps arts, culture and heritage organisations in Belfast carry out their work and to create programmes which benefit people that live in and visit Belfast. Grants range from £3,000 to £30,000.

16 organisations receive annual funding on a multi annual basis. These organisations are selected on the basis of their strategic role within the culture and arts sector in Belfast.

Rolling Programme – This fund provides small grants to support innovation in arts and heritage. Grants range from £500 to £3,000.

These funding programmes sustain 295 full-time jobs; 134 part-time jobs; 1278 freelance; and 553 voluntary posts. The Council's subvention represents a return of investment of 1:7. The total audience and participation figure for funded organisations is 6,184,305.

A list of organisations that we support is attached. This highlights which organisations are local, regional or national based on the definitions provided. These definitions do not capture the complexity of Belfast's situation.

We welcome the move to assign the responsibility of local arts to Belfast City Council as this complements our current investment into Culture & Arts and in particular our Development and Outreach Programme. We strongly agree that any allocation of funding should be weighted to take account of Belfast's strategic position. This should ensure that the level of funding remains consistent with, if not increased upon, that previously given to the local arts sector in Belfast, i.e. £628,024, not £322,372. Any review of the funding against outputs should take place within an agreed timescale that allows the new funding processes, monitoring and evaluation systems to be firmly established.

We agree that the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the preferred funding transfer mechanism, and we have developed a good working relationship with ACNI over the last number of years. In 2007 we launched the *Belfast Integrated Cultural Strategy*, a partnership approach between both organisations. We are now in the process of discussing the development of a new strategy with the Arts Council, to be developed during the course of this year. This fits well with the proposed local arts and cultural plans.

Appendix 3

Given the considerable investment that Belfast City Council makes already, we would have no additional funding to address any reductions in support to local arts unless the Arts Council increases its investment in regional/national arts (e.g. Ulster Orchestra), allowing the Council to redirect its funding.

Strategically, Belfast City Council recognises the significant contribution that local, regional and national Belfast based culture and arts organisations make to the social and economic fabric of the city. Any proposal for local arts delivery and funding in Belfast must be developed within the context of, and not in isolation of, a wider Belfast cultural strategy and its impact on the success of the city.