



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Culture Night
Date:	9 March 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459
Contact Officer:	Kerrie Sweeney, Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager, ext 3586

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at a Development Committee meeting held on 13 May 2009, approval was given to provide match funding of £25,000 to support a pilot Belfast Culture Night in 2009. The aim was to provide a free, city centre based, family focused, arts and cultural event that bringing together arts and cultural providers, the hospitality industry and local businesses.

It was hoped that over 50 organisations would take part on 25 September 2009, coinciding with a series of Culture Nights taking place in other European Cities. If the pilot was successful, it was agreed to expand in 2010 to include other cultural institutions and quarters across Belfast.

Culture Night far surpassed expectations with galleries, artists studios, venues, cultural organisations, historic buildings, churches and creative businesses offered over 100 performances, talks, tours, presentations, films, exhibitions and workshops for audiences of all ages, highlighting the Cathedral Quarter as a thriving cultural hub and giving the public the opportunity to meet the artists and learn about what they have to offer throughout the year.

To complement the core activities programmed by participating organisations and businesses and to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere, the Culture Night organisers animated the streets and public spaces of Cathedral Quarter with live music, walk about performers, exhibitions, circus performances, giant puppets and more. An estimated 15,000 people attended. Please see attached a full evaluation in Appendix 2.

The overall concept of Culture Night fits well within Belfast City Council's current strategies. Under the theme of Good Relations, the one night event promotes a unique opportunity of shared cultural space within the city centre, attracting a broad mix of audiences (in 2009, it is worth noting that the event attracted a large number of families

with young children). The final draft Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast 2010 – 2014 identifies culture and arts as the 'essence of Belfast' and one of the main priorities is to explore ways in which to engage with the sector and develop greater visitor access to culture and arts activities. Culture Night provides a unique opportunities to showcase Belfast's culture and arts product to not only local citizens but visitors. The current Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast, produced in partnership with the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, identifies that the culture and arts sector can often be fragmented, however key events such as Culture Night develops partnerships across the sector, promotes cross selling and strengthens their overall capacity to deliver. Culture Night also contributes to the general development of the City's Evening Economy.

Key Issues

The Belfast Culture Night Committee (BCNC) comprising of Sean Kelly (Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival), Kieran Gilmore (Open House Festival) and Patricia Freedman (CQSG) is seeking support to develop a second Belfast Culture Night in 2010. Based on last year's success this event could support the Council to fulfil the following objectives:

- Promote shared space agenda
- Drive footfall into the city centre
- Attract positive media coverage for Belfast
- Promote greater partnership across the Culture and Arts sector
- Attract visitors to the city

Culture Night has mainly been focused in Cathedral Quarter although also included the Waterfront Hall. This focus on a concentrated area worked well in 2009, as it provided a focus for participants and audiences. There have been initial discussions with the organisers on how this could be extended across the City to include a broader area. Whilst organisers are keen to keep Cathedral Quarter at the heart of the physical location, they have recognised that more organisations from across the city could be invited to participate and are willing to explore satellite events across the city. This would be a further objective of Belfast City Council.

Should the Development Committee agree to the request from Belfast Culture Night Committee to support the event in 2010, the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit will work with the organisers to ensure that the above objectives will be met as conditions of funding.

As in 2009 the Arts Council NI has been approached to match the request to BCC.

Resource Implications

Match funding of £25,000 to be allocated in 2010/2011 from within the existing Departmental budgets

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members agree to provide support for Culture Night 2010 of match funding of no more than £25,000. This has been included and approved within the Departmental estimates 2010/2011.

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Decision Tracking

Further to ratification payment of no more than £25,000 be made towards the Belfast Culture Night 2010.

Time line: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Kerrie Sweeney

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Letter to the Development Committee
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Appendix 2 - Evaluation of Culture Night 2009

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