

### **City Dressing – Cow Parade**

Members agreed to bring the CowParade Public Art Event to Belfast in 2012 Development Committee of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011. This will be part of the City Dressing Project 2012-2013 and is an effort to enhance the visitor experience in the city, increase visitor expenditure and enhance the attractiveness of the environment for both local communities and visitors. Belfast will host 17 cows that have been inspired by community groups across the city. CowParade Belfast will be formally launched on 19 July 2012 at St Anne's Square and then cows will go on location in all of the tourism place destinations including Ormeau Park, Queen's Quarter, Waterworks Park, Lisburn Road, Belfast Hills, Cathedral Quarter, Gaeltacht Quarter, Titanic Quarter, St George's Market, Belfast City Hall, Holywood Arches.

### **Artists interest in using empty units**

ACNI have undertaken an expression of interest among their clients which will be shared with City Centre Management in an effort to link landlords and artists up and agree projects to take forward in the empty spaces.

### **Public Art Lisburn Road**

Members should be aware that the Development Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011 agreed to spend £6000 from the Tourism Art and Culture budget on existing street artwork on hoarding erected by building control as a proactive response to screen off and protect the public from the increasing number of dilapidated properties across the city.



### **Belfast City Centre Management – Temporary Window Dressing**

Currently BCCM has awarded a contract to dress 6 windows of vacant premises in the city centre in an imaginative and vibrant way. A budget of £10,000 will be allocated to the contractor and it is anticipated that the outcome of this initiative will secure private sector match funding to roll out the scheme, improve public perception, drive footfall and ultimately secure future occupancy of the premises. With additional support from Belfast City Council additional units will be dressed to support the Literary Belfast project.

### **Shop Window Initiative**

Improving the appearance of vacant units can be delivered in a variety of formats, cultural organisations and charities involved with dance and art groups could be encouraged to become temporary occupiers of vacant space and through delivery of their active programmes bring people into the city centre and provide a use for space which would otherwise remain unused.

In July 2011 a number of properties located in St Anne's Square, Cornmarket, Wellington Place, Upper Queen Street, Castle Lane and Obel Tower were decorated with banners and displays, community quotes from some of Belfast's leading actors and poets. The 'shop window' initiative was delivered on the Council's behalf by Arts and Business NI who have established strong partnership with Belfast City Centre Management property owners and local businesses to identify potential sites across the city. The initiative was part financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern

## Appendix 2 Vacant Units Activity Update

Ireland administered by NITB. The amount allocated to Arts & Business for the entire initiative was £10,000, £7500 paid by NITB, £2500 BCC.



### Out of Place

In September 2009 Arts & Business Northern Ireland in conjunction with Belfast City Council held a consultation with a number of business and arts partners regarding the possible use of empty retail spaces in Belfast City Centre.

The consultation indicated that there was overwhelming support from the property sector in moving forward on a project which would address this issue.

Arts and Business, PLACE and BCCM worked in partnership with Deramore Properties. The aim was to utilise the learning from the pilot project to encourage businesses in the property sector to use the arts community and their skills to fill these empty spaces, to re-animate the city centre and in turn bring new viable tenants to them.

The pilot was a success with a 3 month occupancy period which converted the retail unit into a public space including workshops, exhibitions and talks. The occupying organisation were subject to zero rateable value which in turn allowed the business to contribute financially to the fit out and running costs of the building for the duration that it was occupied.

Most crucially, the unit was re-animated and shown as a commercially viable space which allowed the landlords to successfully let the unit during the project.

The project also was fortunate in that there was a financial contribution from both the business partner and Arts & Business Northern Ireland which meant that the content and usage of the space was innovative and meaningful.

Arts and Business work with empty retail spaces precedes the pilot with their work with Robinson McIlwaine in converting the ground floor of their premises into gallery space. Since the pilot Arts and Business have worked on a number of other initiatives listed below:

1. Robinson McIlwaine & The Golden Thread Gallery (2007) – conversion of unused ground floor space of RMI architects to a fully functioning gallery

Appendix 2  
Vacant Units Activity Update

2. The Outlet/ W5 – utilisation of empty space at The Outlet Banbridge as a mini-W5
3. The Outlet / Ulster Orchestra- creation of the Music Room – a fully interactive music space within an empty unit
4. Victoria Square/ Belfast Print Workshop – empty unit utilised as exhibition space
5. Victoria Square / Cinemagic – children’s workshops taking place in un-let space.
6. Cahoots Ni / Northern Bank - long standing lease of former Northern Bank building for rehearsal and storage space and activity in the shop frontage.

**THE OPEN SOURCE**

Time: 12.00-7.00pm daily  
Sinclair House, 89/101 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FE

The Open Source took place during the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival and turned the vacant Art Deco Sinclair House, Royal Avenue into a performance space, music venue, workshop hub, tea room and tuck shop. The Open Source was a hub to harness creative energy, a platform for talent and great ideas, and a drop-in venue to provide great atmosphere and delicious food for visitors to the festival.

Workshops were programmed on an open source basis, with slots filled by those who want to share their skills or spread their ideas.

The venue was run by volunteers.

This was a somewhere to \_ project managed by Seedhead Arts in partnership with PLACE and supported by McConnell Properties.