



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: City Events Action Plan

Date: 15 April 2014

Reporting Officer: Mr John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3509

Contact Officers: Mr Gerry Copeland, City Events Manager, ext 3412

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	This report is to seek approval from Members to implement the attached draft Action Plan (Appendix 1) in regard to major events in the city. Previously Members were presented with details of the initial plan, which was then consulted with various stakeholders. However, the new document is produced as 'holding' plan to allow for the imminent Local Government Reform process to establish itself and to allow for an alignment with the Council's planned new tourism strategy.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Members are aware that events have an important role to play in Belfast. They provide entertainment for residents, attract visitors and help to cement the city's position as a top cultural and tourism destination. Events also play a role in the economic development of the city and help boost the city's economy through employment, investment and visitor spend. They also deliver many social and cultural benefits for residents and can deliver a legacy that extends well beyond the event.
2.2	There are thousands of events in Belfast every year, ranging from local community events and celebrations, to large festivals and international cultural and sporting events. A number of high profile events have been held in the city, most recently the World Police and Fire Games, the Tall Ships Festival and the MTV Europe Music Awards. The city also hosts over 70 plus festivals throughout the year including cultural festivals (such as St Patrick's Day, 12 th July/Orangefest and Belfast Mela), arts festivals (such as the Belfast Festival at Queens and Feile Phobail) and food festivals (Belfast Restaurant Week) to name but a few. We also have a variety of events in our parks and gardens and sporting events such as the Belfast Marathon, Giro d'Italia in 2014 and Tall Ships 2015.
2.3	Events in Belfast also attract audiences not just from the city but from across

	<p>Northern Ireland and internationally. However, visitors are increasingly looking for fresh, exciting and authentic experiences from events. Therefore, there is a need to motivate visitors to come to Belfast by developing unique events that are distinctive to Belfast.</p>
2.4	<p>Events, like many activities in the city, involve a wide range of organisations. These include Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland, event promoters, cultural groups and organisers, local communities, retailers and businesses, transport providers, police and emergency services and the wider events industry. Belfast also has a growing profile as an event location and has been described as one of the top cities to hold a conference or a major event. It has also been described as one of the world's top destinations and one of the top 10 cities "on the rise"¹.</p>
2.5	<p>Therefore, the city needs to capitalise on Belfast's growing reputation as a leading venue for world-class events and recognise the benefits that investment in events can bring to the city. However, we also must acknowledge that the growing number and size of events means there is a need to consider the future direction of events in Belfast and for a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to attracting, supporting, delivering and marketing events.</p>
2.6	<p>It is not possible, or appropriate, to encompass all events in a plan like this. This document therefore focuses on large scale events. These are events that provide high quality and often unique cultural experiences for attendees, while at the same time showcasing the best of Belfast and enhancing its profile and reputation. They attract significant numbers of residents and also visitors from the rest of Northern Ireland and internationally. They also attract substantial media coverage both at home and abroad. Typically they are events that Belfast City Council and others have a role in attracting, supporting or delivering.</p>
2.7	<p>In this document, the definition of large scale events broadly aligns with NITB's definition of major, signature experience, international and national events² and typically they include those that have the potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a high quality and unique experience for attendees; - Attract at least 4,000 visitors per day; - Attract at least 45% of their attendees from the rest of Northern Ireland and 15% internationally; and - Deliver a return on investment of 3:1 or greater.
2.8	<p>There are a broad range of events that meet these criteria or have the potential to do so. Events such as:</p> <p>Belfast Festival at Queens; Festival of Fools; Twelfth of July; Belsonic; Vital; Rose Week; Christmas Lights; Autumn Fair; Cinemagic; Belfast Titanic Maritime; Tall Ships; Belfast Pride; Belfast Music Week; MTV EMAs; Belfast Marathon; Cathedral Quarter Festival; WPF; Belfast Film Festival; Feile an Phobail; Belfast Mela; St Patrick's Day; Halloween, etc.</p>
2.9	<p>This action plan serves both to examine what the Council will do to support and grow events in Belfast and actions that can be undertaken collectively by the</p>

¹ Sources: National Geographic Traveller Magazine, Lonely Planet, The Financial Times

² Northern Ireland Home of Great Events: Northern Ireland Events (draft) Plan 2014 – 2020

	<p>Council with key partners and the events industry. In developing this plan, it is envisaged that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide focus and direction for events; - Facilitate a more cohesive and co-ordinated approach to events in the city; - Enhance the portfolio of Belfast events by attracting events to the city, developing new events and re-invigorating existing events; in particular, it will help to identify potential signature events for the city - Maximise Belfast's profile and reputation as an events location and improve its competitiveness and ability to attract major events to the city; - Contribute to Belfast's economy by generating significant economic impact through events; and - Contribute further to Belfast's tourism and cultural offering and providing a range of events to encourage visitors to come to Belfast at all times of the year.
2.10	<p>The document will also assist the Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the quality of events in the city for residents and visitors; - Improve the marketing and promotion of events; - Develop and strengthen relationships with our partners; and - Assist other event organisers in the city through a potential reallocation of resources, advice and skills development opportunities.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> There would be no additional cost to implement the draft action plan. There would be no additional costs incurred due to the implementation of the plan, as all costs would be consumed within the current annual City Events Unit budget.</p>
3.2	<p>One element of the plan would be to review the events delivered by the Council. This in turn may see a re-allocation of finances from within the Council managed events to opportunities via the Department's Central Grants funding system. If this were to happen a further report would be brought back to Members for consideration.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Human Resources</u> There are currently no additional staff requirements.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	<p>The draft City Events Action Plan has been verified and agreed via the Council's equality and good relations processes.</p>
4.2	<p>As with all major civic events, public events like this have the potential to bring together people from a wide range of backgrounds and therefore promote good relations in the city.</p>

5	Recommendations
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5.1	Members are requested to approve that the City Events Unit implement the interim event action plan.
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6	Decision Tracking
If agreed Officers will monitor the action plan and update Members accordingly.	
Timeline: April 2014	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft Events Action Plan	