



**Belfast District Council (Shadow)**

<b>Report to</b>	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Festivals and Event Funding
<b>Date:</b>	20 March 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which is currently out to public consultation, highlights the importance of world class events and the animation of the city centre as important elements of creating a vibrancy within the city centre, attracting overnight visitors and enhancing the international reputation of the city in the global market place.
1.2	The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is also out to consultation similarly identifies “ <b>improving the quality and international appeal of the events and festivals on offer</b> ” as one of the main improvements required in terms of developing tourism in the city.
1.3	The strategy highlights the need to develop a series of 6 “Signature Events” that have the potential to attract out of state bed-nights and positive international publicity for the city.
1.4	This issue was picked up by the Development Committee when considering the issue of competing for international events and it was suggested that the Council develop a citywide Events and Festivals Strategy to inform the types of events and festivals that the Council should allocate resources to in the future. At its January meeting the Shadow SP&R Committee agreed to commission such a strategy.
1.5	The events which the council will want to consider fall into four broad categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Large Scale International Events such as Giro d'Italia, MTV EMAs, Tall Ships and World Police and Fire Games;</li> <li>2) City Festivals which have the potential to attract tourists and have a positive economic benefit e.g. Belfast festival at Queens, Culture Night,</li> </ul>

	<p>Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, Feile, Titanic Maritime Festival;</p> <p>3) Community based festivals which engage local communities, enhance civic pride and engender good relations and community engagement;</p> <p>4) Ad hoc requests for local business events such as Women in Business, Beltech, New York –New Belfast, Digital DNA etc.</p>
1.6	<p>With the exception of the annual events programme delivered by the Council’s own City Events Unit which is almost solely financed by the Council, almost every other event is funded through a cocktail of funding from various sources including Tourism NI, The Arts Council, DCAL and DSD. The sustainability of many of these events is now under threat due to the cuts in the Executive’s budget and the subsequent reductions in the budgets for events within various agencies moving forward. The announcement on 19<sup>th</sup> March by Queens University withdrawing its funding from the Belfast Festival at Queens this year is an example of this and announcements from the Arts Council are also imminent.</p>
1.7	<p>The Director of Development is currently in the process of appointing a consultant to support the development of a Citywide Events and Festivals Strategy. This strategy will take into account the resources which will be available from other sources to support events in the city once those budgets become known. It is likely that the strategy will not be complete until the Summer and therefore will be used to guide policy from the 2016/17 financial year onwards. <b>This is therefore an interim report highlighting some decisions which need to be made at this point in time.</b></p>

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>The Development Department’s core budget is used to fund a number of recurrent and one off events annually and this will continue during the 2015/16 year. There are a number of events in the pipeline which require approval from this Committee rather than the Development Committee as they relate to expenditure in 15/16, but will utilise the budget already agreed. There is a need for these decisions to be made at this point to enable effective planning to be put in place.</p> <p>These include the following:</p>
2.4	<p><u>Business Related Events</u></p> <p>A number of requests have been made for funding for a number for business related events which traditionally have been supported by the Development Committee. The requests received to date relate to the TechExplore Conference 2015 (£10K), Women in Business (£2.5K), New York-New Belfast Conference (£5k), Belfast Homecoming Conference 2015 (£5K).</p>

	<p>As the Development Committee has previously funded these events provision has been made within existing departmental budgets.</p> <p>2.5 <u>NCAA Festival of Ice Hockey 2015</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that in April 2014 the Council agreed that the City of Belfast should enter into a Sister Cities Agreement with Boston, USA. Since the signing of the agreement a range of city stakeholders have become engaged in developing relationships with counterparts in the city of Boston, including the Belfast Youth Orchestra, the Health Sector, PSNI and the Odyssey Trust.</p> <p>The Odyssey Trust intends to host an ice hockey tournament involving four of Boston's and the USA's top college teams in partnership with the National Collegiate Athletic Association at the Odyssey Arena over thanksgiving weekend (27 -29 November 2015). It is planned that the tickets for the event will be distributed free of charge to 12,000 young people across the city.</p> <p>Over \$200k has already been raised by the Boston Lord Mayor's Office to cover the cost of bring the teams to Belfast. The Odyssey Arena estimate the cost of staging the event in Belfast to be £227k over and above the cost of the rental of the Arena which the Trust will forgo as an in-kind contribution to the Festival.</p> <p>The Odyssey Trust is seeking a contribution of £40K towards the cost of staging the event from Belfast City Council alongside contributions from Tourism NI, DCAL and Invest NI.</p> <p>Should the Council agree to sponsor the event it is proposed that the Lord Mayor could travel to Boston form 10 -12 April to jointly launch the event with the Mayor of Boston at Boston Garden in front of 18,500 people at the Frozen Four event which gets national coverage on both US and Canadian television.</p> <p>The cost of this event and the Lord Mayor's visit to Boston would be met from the International Relations Budget..</p>
2.6	<p><u>International Brian Friel Festival – August 2015</u></p> <p>As noted in Paragraph 1.1 above the Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is currently out to consultation, sets out one of the main priorities for enhancing visitor numbers and visitor spend within the city is the development of a series of "Signature Events" which have the potential to attract out of state tourists and positive international media coverage.</p> <p>As part of the quick wins programme for the implementation of the strategy for the summer of 2015, the stakeholder group has been considering a proposal to create a Destination Festival for Belfast. The proposal has come from Sean Doran, a leading international artistic director who has worked extensively across Europe and Australia. In 2012 he set up the Happy Days Festival in Enniskillen. This 'Destination Festival' has proved particularly successful in creating a programme that is unique to the area presenting the highest quality international acts that appeal to out of state visitors as well as local audiences. Independently verified research has shown that this event now annually attracts £1.25m worth of international PR coverage and 31% out of state visitors.</p>

2.6	<p>Sean Doran proposes to create a distinct Belfast festival drawing on the reputation and work of leading playwright Brian Friel. The proposal is to create a unique cultural event within the city..</p> <p>Friel is considered one of the greatest living English language dramatists. Examples of his internationally acclaimed work include plays such as ‘Philadelphia Here I Come’ and ‘Dancing at Lughnasa’. The festival will be created around the themes of ‘Dancing at Lughnasa’ to deliver a programme that will have high visibility within the city and a strong international interest helping to position Belfast as a cultural capital and destination.</p> <p>The proposed festival would be a multi-art form festival and would be delivered across the city. It would build on the existing reputation of Belfast by creating an event that is destination driven.</p> <p>The programme currently has 5 key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theatre: including a major production of ‘Dancing at Lughnasa’ in partnership with the Lyric Theatre and a site specific piece performed in 4 key locations across the city.</li> <li>• Dance: placing up to 6 large outdoor dance stages across Belfast at iconic sites with a co-ordinator working with local communities to create a large-scale dance event.</li> <li>• Kiting – this element of the programme would take place in Titanic Quarter to complement existing visitor attractions.</li> <li>• Music – celebrating traditional and contemporary music from Ireland Scotland, Scandinavia and Russia.</li> <li>• Food– celebrating Belfast’s culinary reputation in partnership with local restaurants and food producers.</li> </ul> <p>The event is due to take place in Belfast from 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015. This proposal estimates that the programme will attract total audience of 24,200 including 30% out of state visitors made up primarily with overnight stays. An additional 3245 people across the city will participate in the programme through a series of free events. The PR value is estimated at £1.5m.</p> <p>The total cost of the Festival is estimated at £600,000. An application has been made to Arts Council of Northern Ireland for up to £65,000 and to Northern Ireland Tourist Board for £70,000. The Lyric Theatre has confirmed its financial commitment to the festival with an overall budget contribution of £157,289. The remaining income will be secured from box office (£74,170), private investment (£40,000), sponsorship (£35,000), other statutory sources (£25,000) and in kind support. The required amount from Belfast City Council would be £100,000 via the Development Departments 15/16 Tourism, Culture and Arts Programme in the current financial year.</p> <p>Such a festival could sit well within a longer term programme of literary events and festivals such as the CS Lewis Festival.</p> <p><u>Issues for further consideration</u></p>
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	<p>Members will be aware of the announcement by Queens’s University that it is no longer in a position to support the Belfast Festival going forward which will result in the Council having to give consideration, along with other funders how it might wish to deal with this issue pending the outcome of the strategic review of Festivals and Events.</p> <p>A request for additional funding for the Belfast Festival along with a number of other requests relating to Pride, BBC Proms in the Park, Belfast Tattoo were discussed at a meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel on 13 March with some consideration given as to how these events might be supported with a view to bringing a report to this committee at the appropriate time.</p> <p>It is quite possible that further requests may also be made over the course of the forthcoming year as it is probable that some events will face potential reductions in their programming due to budget cuts at ACNI, Tourism NI and DSD.</p> <p>In light of the need to consider the consequences of the decision by QUB and the need to collate further details on the other event funding issues, a more comprehensive report will now be brought to Committee in April for further consideration..</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	If members were to agree to fund each of the events set out in Section 2 above the costs would be met via the Development Department’s Revenue Estimates.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	There are no equality or good relations implications in this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Call In</b>
5.1	This decision is subject to call-in.

<b>6</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
6.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider the contents of this report;</li> <li>• consider the proposals for funding as set out in Sections 2.4 -2.5;</li> <li>• if approved consider the attendance of the Lord Mayor and an officer at the launch of the NCAA Festival of Ice Hockey in Boston</li> <li>• if approved consider the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and an officer at the New York –New Belfast Event</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	April 2015 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

<b>7</b>	<b>Abbreviations</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
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