



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Belfast Zoo, NI Opera, and the Cultural Olympiad</b>
<b>Date:</b>	10 May 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mark Challis, Zoo Manager

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>Belfast Zoo runs a number of events each year, which are used to increase visitor numbers to the site, as opportunities to provide new experiences to visitors, and as unique marketing opportunities.</p> <p>The Zoo has been approached by NI Opera, following the success of its sell-out, site-specific <i>Tosca</i> (Derry, 2011), and in partnership we intend to produce the opera 'Noye's Fludde' in the Zoo, a natural fit and unique venue for this opera in which animals play a crucial part.</p> <p>'Noye's Fludde', originally written in 1958, is a much-loved, 50-minute long children's opera by Benjamin Britten. The piece is based on the well-known Biblical Flood story.</p> <p>The opera features three professional singers, eight child solo singers, and around 70-80 child chorus. As well as this, the score demands nine professional players and 50 child instrumentalists, who play instruments ranging from recorders to violins. Britten specified that all the children should be amateurs in order to maximise the opportunities for young people, and was also keen that the children should design and make the colourful animal costumes which they wear, another unique way in which the children's creativity is fostered in the piece.</p> <p>There will be eight performances spread across two weekends in August 2012, at 18:00 hrs on two Fridays, at 14:30 and 18:00 hrs on two Saturdays, and at 14:30 hrs on two Sundays. The production will</p>

	<p>incorporate dozens of local school-children from all parts of the community, including the Chinese community. These children will have been rehearsed in a series of workshops in the months preceding the performances.</p> <p>The event will form part of the Cultural Olympiad celebrations and Festival of Summer 2012, and it will be one of the main featured events in the Festival in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The KT Wong Foundation is supporting this production by facilitating NI Opera's first appearance beyond the British Isles. The production will take part in the UK Now Festival and in the Beijing Music Festival, China's oldest and most prestigious music festival. Plans are also being put in place to perform at Beijing Zoo.</p> <p>The show will be revived using the same design produced in Belfast, but on a larger scale (reflective of the much greater size of the Beijing venues), with the designer, director and cast travelling to China to re-mount the work. While the amateur chorus and players will be made up of Chinese children, the production will therefore retain the original flavour of the Northern Ireland production.</p> <p>Discussions are also beginning to foster not only musical and operatic links between the two countries, but also scientific and zoological ones. Queens University Belfast and Beijing University already have contacts in relation to animal psychology studies, and we will also investigate the opportunities to enhance relationships between the two zoos.</p>
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<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>As part of its events programme for 2012, the Zoo intends to partner with NI Opera and stage eight performances of Benjamin Britten's 'Noye's Fludde' in August.</p> <p>Subsequently, the production will transfer to China, and Beijing Zoo.</p> <p>We believe this will be one of the very few times that a live opera has been staged within a zoo.</p> <p>We believe there are significant marketing opportunities in the partnership with NI Opera.</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>It is proposed that NI Opera will fund the production (cost c. £160,000), while the Zoo will provide security, box office facilities and stewarding.</p> <p>Tickets will be on sale at £12 for an adult and £8 for a concession, which</p>

	<p>allows for normal zoo entrance and admission to a performance.</p> <p>Income from ticket sales will be split 50/50 between the Zoo and NI Opera. It is estimated that with an attendance of up to 600 people for eight performances the income to the Council will be £6000.</p> <p><u>Resource</u> Each performance will require five additional event management and security staff to be present, the Friday and Sunday performances requiring half day cover, the Saturday performances requiring full day cover.</p> <p>Costs estimated for the event are in the region of:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>• Event Management</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1550</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Security</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Toilet Facilities</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1500</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Total</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>£3250</u></td> </tr> </table> <p>Other security needs will be covered by those resources already on the zoo site during the summer period. First aid will be provided on site a no cost. Box office facilities (ie ticket sales) will be managed by zoo front of house staff already on site. Additional human resources needed on site will be provided by volunteers from NI Opera and Friends of the Zoo.</p> <p>Human resources needed for the successful marketing of the opera will be split between the Zoo and NI Opera.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> We consider that the event will generate significant marketing opportunities for the Zoo, and effectively provide considerable additional value to the Zoo's small advertising budget during 2012.</p>	• Event Management	£1550	• Security	£200	• Toilet Facilities	£1500	<u>Total</u>	<u>£3250</u>
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<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
	The staging of the opera in the Zoo will be available to a wide range of ages and abilities, and will encourage cross community young people's interest in the Zoo and music. It has the potential to generate significant new relationships between Belfast and Beijing, both between the cities, universities and other cultural organisations, including zoos.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	It is recommended that the Committee agree to the staging of the opera 'Noye's Fludde' in Belfast Zoo during August 2012.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Zoo Manager to implement the decision by end of August 2012.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	None

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None