



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Events in Belfast's Parks
Date:	13 March 2014
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager Maria McAleer, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At its meeting in August 2013, the Committee was provided with information on the number and location of events which had been held in Council park over the past five years.
1.2	Members noted that large-scale commercial operators tended to favour a small number of locations, namely Boucher Road Playing Fields and Botanic Gardens.
1.3	At that meeting, Committee agreed that a proposal be developed to establish a number of strategic arts partnerships, in order to build a commercial market for alternative locations across the city.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Following analysis, there are a number of perceived barriers deterring commercial operators from holding events in parks and open spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity is a primary determinant in deciding where a promoter will stage an event. For example, events such as Tenants Vital require capacity in excess of 45,000 – only available at the Boucher Road Playing Fields. Capacity operates on multiple levels; audience capacity; car parking for audience and participants; accessible /egress capacity;• Neighbourhood: the prospect of having to deal with potential complaints about noise or event disruption issues can be off putting for

commercial operators;

- **Facilities:** These can be within the park itself in terms of toilet provision but this can be addressed with additional temporary facilities being provided. Car parking can be more difficult to address at times;
- **Security:** This in relation to perceived safety of audience members arriving/leaving events and potential vandalism to property such as cars;
- **Financial cost** coupled with misconceptions about public accountability i.e. 'bureaucracy' can deter commercial operators from using a council facility.

2.3 It is acknowledged that the issues listed above also relate to hosting city centre-based events and that working with the community, the relevant parks/outreach managers have delivered many successful events in neighbourhoods across the city.

2.4 Examining best practice from other local authorities (Appendix One), the issues are not insurmountable and the promotion of commercial events in parks across the city may could be supported by the following:

- The development and targeted distribution of a **commercial prospectus** for distribution to a range of event promoters and organisers positively promoting the use of Belfast Parks for events e.g. corporate prospectus containing details on capacity of all parks and support available.
- **Delivering large-scale (5,000+) demonstration arts/cultural events** as high-quality, family-orientated cultural events across the city (N, S, E and W), showcasing the range of opens spaces to attract commercial operators.
- Engagement with **Translink** to encouraging sustainable modes of transport such as the provision of park and ride facilities
- Incentivisation/promotion of particular parks outside of city centre e.g. reduced hire rates or grant-aid to commercial operators. Potential for **joint promotion with the City Events Unit** of the availability/suitability of parks and open spaces for events that move between major cities.
- Develop the **criteria for the park grants funds** to enable events to be sustainable year on year and more evenly spread across the city e.g. a

	higher score for working with partners; using under-used parks.
2.5	In line with the commitments outlined within the Investment Programme 2012-2015, it is proposed that further discussions are undertaken with the City Events Unit, Development Department to develop a corporate prospectus to bring forward some of these proposals.
2.6	In advance of this, it is suggested that Committee considers the potential to financially support a number of strategic arts demonstration events for the delivery of high-quality, large-scale (5,000+), family-orientated cultural events across the city. The purpose of this would be to build capacity across a diverse range of sites for these large-scale events, as well as demonstrate to commercial operators the viability of these locations.
2.7	The Council established successful arrangements with the Belfast Festival at Queen's and Mela in 2013. These operate at minimal cost to the public. Both events were well-received by audiences and significantly add to the attractiveness of the Council's parks and open spaces.
2.8	To enable Members' ambition to spread large-scale events across the city, and as a condition of financial support, it is proposed that Mela 2014 is requested to develop a programme of outreach events whereby they deliver 'taster' events in 3 other parts of the city. Transport would be made available to these parts of the city to allow people to travel to Botanic Gardens for the main event in August at no cost. Similarly, it is proposed that officers engage with the Belfast Festival at Queen's to encourage them to consider using an alternative venue to Botanic Gardens.
2.9	As part of an agreement with the two groups, a series of targets for participation, outreach and sponsorship would be set. The evaluation of these events will be used to inform the development of a corporate prospectus for commercial operators. It is anticipated that both of these initiatives will contribute to build a commercial market for alternative locations across the city.

3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> A fund of £40,000 has been provided for large-scale cultural events within revenue budgets for 2014/15</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There may be overtime required by staff to assist with the management of the proposed events which would be met by the Council.</p>

	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>The Legal Agreement will include a Bond Of Reinstatement (£1000) to ensure minimal impact on Council property, provided by the partner organisations</p>
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4.	Equality Implications
	The Parks Events policy was previously screened and no differential equality impacts were identified.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise officers to initiate discussions with Mela 2014 (Artsekta) and the Belfast Festival at Queen's to agree the conditions of financial support for 2014, as outlined above • Agree to support Mela 2014 (Artsekta) and the Belfast Festival at Queen's up to £20,000 each, subject to conditions agreed • Agree to receive a future report on a 'corporate prospectus' for parks and opens spaces.

6.	Decision Tracking
	None

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Research summary

Appendix 1

Local Authority Parks Events Policy and Practice – Research Summary Table

Local authority	Parks events policy – key points
Hackney Council	<p>Hackney Council based acknowledges the value and benefit which a diverse and well-designed events programme in Parks and Green Spaces can bring to the Hackney community. This policy is provided to assist the decision making process behind building a sustainable and varied programme of events for Hackney residents.</p> <p>The policy aims to guide the number, size and nature of events which happen in each green space in the council area. It also takes into consideration the Council aiming to balance the interest of residents and businesses and allow it to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a number of events are sustainable and feature as annual events, thus contributing to the post- Olympic Games legacy. • Develop events that support strategic priorities and minimise disruption to residents through best practice events management. • Encourage a diverse range of community and commercial events which have wide appeal for the community as well as tourists and visitors.
Dublin City Council	<p>Dublin City Council want events to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animate the city. • Bring economic benefits to the city. • Grow tourist and local visitor numbers. <p>They have a dedicated events and tourism promotion unit responsible for granting approval for events and/or activities taking place in the public realm. They also facilitate and partner events, provide an advisory role and liaison service for events and initiate events. This unit deal with events that except an audience of less than 5,000 people.</p>
Haringey Council	<p>Haringey council have a proposed a new policy for 2014 on the use of Finsbury Park, London that policy include consideration of limited use of that park for commercial concerts/events. It highlights that in a large park it may be possible to ensure all other usage of the park when an event is taking place.</p> <p>Furthermore, it recommends that income from events can fund investment in the borough's parks. Supporting the principles of encouragement of community led events alongside the approval of commercial /concert events in local parks.</p>

Westminster Council	<p>Westminster Council have special events team who provide detailed information and advisory search for those interested in holding events in a range of their parks. They also provide a significant amount of information on line which supports and informs those commercial operators who want to hold events including;</p> <ul data-bbox="464 405 1401 750" style="list-style-type: none">• Events planning and management information.• Local parking and transport arrangements.• A detailed map of each park and the locality.• An events location meeting with a council officer who helps those considering events and management.• Regulatory information including information on planning and health and safety.• Support and advice with regards to the capacity at each park.
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