



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: **Belfast Mela 2015**

Date: 24 February 2015

Reporting Officer: Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure

Contact Officer: Brian McKinley, Events Officer

1. **Relevant Background Information**

The Mela is a multicultural festival that has attracted 20,000 people annually from all communities across Belfast and beyond. The Mela has been successful in raising cultural awareness, encouraging civic identity and promoting a positive image for Belfast. In March 2014, the Committee agreed to support Mela 2014 (Artsekta) up to £20,000, subject to a number of conditions.

2. **Key Issues**

Evaluation of 2014

The Council established a successful arrangement with the Belfast Mela in 2013 and 2014. It operates at minimal cost to the public and in 2014 attracted over 230,000 spectators. In their evaluation for 2014, Belfast Mela estimate that the return on Council's investment is approximately a ratio of £8.90 spend per visitor to every £1 Council support. Visitors rated the event programming at 8 out of a possible 10 and an affordable, family-focussed day out.

As a condition of the financial support, Belfast Mela was requested to facilitate 3 taster events across the city in advance of the main event. These were facilitated at Falls Park, Knocknagoney and New Lodge with over 5,000 participants attending. Other more in-depth outreach activities were facilitated with about 100 participants from An Droichead, Annadale Haywood Residents

	<p>Association, Glenbyrn Women’s Group and participants recruited through the NIHE East Belfast office.</p> <p>Overall, at the Mela event itself, 93% of participants felt they had learnt something about another culture through the programme and 79% of participants felt that events such as the Mela enhance civic identity and participation.</p> <p>Proposal for 2015</p> <p>The Committee is asked to note that the Council has received a request from the Director of ArtsEkta to use Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 30th August 2015.</p> <p>It is proposed that Council continues to provide financial support to the event (up to £20,000), given the positive economic impact it has for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.</p> <p>Similar to 2014, as a condition to funding, it is recommended that ArtsEkta is requested to facilitate community engagement and taster events in other local neighbourhoods, to build the audience from across the city. Specific locations could be identified in conjunction with the Community Parks Outreach team, ensuring a spread across the city, and potentially include re-developed assets such as Victoria Park and newly developed such as Girdwood Park.</p> <p>In relation to facilitating the event itself, the key issues are :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this particular instance the Council has received a request for use for Upper and Lower Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 30th August 2015 from midday to 6.00pm; 2. The proposed timescale from set up to take down of the event is eight days 25th August to 1st September 2015 inclusive in Botanic Gardens; 3. ArtsEkta has requested permission to collect an entrance fee in the region of £5 per adult; 4. The event shall be subject to the preparation of an event management plan which shall cover all aspects of management including health and safety, access and will comply with the current events policy; 5. A legal agreement will be provided by Legal Services; 6. Consultation by ArtsEkta will be undertaken with other local stakeholders such as Queens University, Lyric Theatre, local residents groups and the Friends of Botanic Gardens.
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3.	Resource Implications
	<u>Financial</u>

	<p>The Bond of Intent shall be waived but the Bond of reinstatement of £1000 shall be provided by ArtsEkta as in previous year's per event. An allocation of £20,000 can be made from within the departmental revenue budgets to support the event.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> Community Park Manager to be in attendance for 8 Hours during event.</p> <p><u>Asset and other implications</u> ArtsEkta shall ensure all minimal impact on Council property and will provide a Bond of reinstatement prior to the event.</p>
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4.	Equality Implications
	<p>The Events Policy for Parks and Leisure facilities and venues was previously screened as part of its consideration at Committee. The application of the policy is deemed to have no differential impact on any one group, given the diversity of applicant groups and range of events organised across the Council's properties.</p>

5.	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Committee is asked to grant permission to ArtsEkta to provide the Belfast Mela in Botanic Gardens subject to the development of an Event Management Plan and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction; • An appropriate legal agreement, to be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor is completed; • The event organisers meet all statutory requirements including Health and Safety and Licensing; • The organisers be permitted to charge an admission fee in the region of £5 to access the Botanic Gardens for the event; • Permit Closure of Botanic Gardens on the 30th August 2015 to permit admittance by Mela tickets holders only.
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6.	<p>Decision Tracking</p> <p>All actions to be completed by City Park Manager (East) and Brian McKinley, Events Officer.</p>
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7.	Key to Abbreviations
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8.	Documents Attached
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