



Subject:	Cultural Hub – update and next steps
Date:	13 January 2016
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Assistant Tourism, Culture & Arts Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members will recall that they were updated in August 2015 that the potential for the development of a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction has been highlighted in a number of recent internal strategies including the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan and the Integrated Tourism Strategy for Belfast 2015-2020 and that in addition a range of other cultural infrastructure proposals were under development by a number of organisations including the Arts Council, Royal Ulster Academy, the National Museums Northern Ireland and the BBC’s digital archive. Given this Members agreed that Council officers should continue to engage with key stakeholders regarding the potential for collaboration and how the proposals under development could be best aligned towards developing one further major attraction for the city.
1.2	In addition, the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy suggests that an Innovation/Creative District or area should be created around the new University of Ulster Campus and that the planned new premises for the BBC might help anchor such a creative/innovation district in that part of the city. Recent and proposed trading of land and property in this area also has the potential to facilitate a much more substantial proposal to link the Cultural Hub with an Innovation/Creative District. The potential for such a significant regeneration scheme also presents substantial opportunities for social entrepreneurship, employability schemes, outreach to communities, etc.

1.3	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update Members on the ongoing engagement with stakeholders regarding the development of a major attraction in the city centre – Agree that a business case is undertaken in relation to the next steps in the development of a Cultural Hub (linked to the Innovation/Creative district proposal) to test its feasibility, affordability, deliverability and sustainability
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note the content of this report and -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – note that ongoing discussions with partners have highlighted that there is an in-principle agreement to explore complementary proposals for the development of a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction – in light of this, agree that a business case is undertaken into the next steps in relation to the development of a Cultural Hub linked to an Innovation / creative district which will test its affordability, deliverability, feasibility and sustainability. The study will be funded from the City Centre Regeneration budget and will be taken forward by officers from the City Centre Team, the Development Department and the Property & Projects Department. A number of partner organisations have indicated that they are willing to support the costs of the development of the business case and officers will continue discussions to secure match funding – note that the Cultural Hub will require a significant capital investment. Council officers are therefore also exploring other potential avenues for funding for the proposed project including private investment, EU funding, philanthropic contribution and public sector support. The Cultural Hub has also been proposed as a potential project for funding under Peace IV. Officers are currently assessing this proposal, together with the other emerging proposals, to test their alignment with the Peace IV objectives. Members are asked to note that an update on the Peace IV projects is being taken to the SP&R Committee on 22nd January

3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that there have been references to a major city centre museum or gallery attraction in a number of recent Council strategies. The City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan highlights that: “...serious thought should be given to the opportunity to create a second star attraction, preferably by making use of a piece of Belfast’s built heritage. One promising opportunity that should be explored is a contemporary visual art museum with both local and global programming. Modern art has proved a strong draw in other cities – local content could give it a special edge.” Similarly the Integrated Tourism Strategy for Belfast 2015-2020 identifies the theme of Contemporary Art and Design and points to the need for a city centre-based attraction of international quality. Subsequent to this, there have also been informal conversations about a more unique attraction telling the Belfast Story through a wide range of media, including art, digital media, news archives and music and that the hub could potentially consist of a number of different venues and buildings.</p>
3.2	<p>It should be noted that in parallel to BCC’s thinking, a number of organisations and partnerships have been working on proposals to develop a range of visual arts and other cultural infrastructure proposals including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Visual Arts Hub proposal – Regional Art Gallery proposal – Future developments in film exhibition and cinema – Development proposals at National Museums Northern Ireland including the Ulster Museum site – The extension of the Central Library
3.3	<p>At a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2015 it was agreed that officers should continue to engage with key stakeholders involved with these various proposals and provide further updates to Council as required. In particular work to date has focused on how these proposals could align with a number of wider strategic objectives to support city centre regeneration, cultural development and tourism growth in the city.</p>
3.4	<p>A number of meetings have now taken place with a range of stakeholders including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arts Council of Northern Ireland – Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National Museums Northern Ireland – Northern Ireland Screen – Tourism NI – BBC Northern Ireland
3.5	<p>These stakeholders have agreed in principle to examine the potential to bring together a number of complementary propositions, and make the case to further develop the concept of a cultural hub as a major transformational project that plays to the aspirations of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan. A main element of the cultural hub would be to tell a number of distinctly Belfast stories through archives, artefacts and art.</p>
3.6	<p>Further work is now required to examine the potential for a new city centre destination that would help to further establish Belfast as a creative city whilst stimulating cultural output that includes significant civic engagement and social impact as well as creating a visitor attraction with tourism spend and economic impact. It is therefore proposed that a business case for the proposal be worked up. This will test the feasibility, affordability, sustainability and deliverability of the proposal. It is proposed that this is taken forward by officers from the City Centre Team, the Development Department and the Property and Projects Department to ensure alignment with strategic initiatives internally and externally. The City & Growth Committee will be kept up to date in relation to the development of the business case and its findings as this progresses.</p>
3.7	<p>Members will recognise that the potential development of a Cultural Hub will require a significant capital investment. Council officers are therefore also exploring other potential avenues for funding for the proposed project including private investment, EU funding, philanthropic contribution and public sector support. The Hub has also been proposed as a potential project for funding under Peace IV. Officers are currently assessing this proposal, together with the other emerging proposals, to test their alignment with the Peace IV objectives. Members are asked to note that an update on the Peace IV projects is being taken to the SP&R Committee on 22nd January. Other potential funding sources will also be examined as part of the business case.</p>

3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Financial – Up to £30,000 from the City Centre Regeneration budget towards the costs of the development of the business case. A number of partner organisations have already indicated that they will also be willing to support the costs of the development of the business case and Council officers will continue discussions to see if match funding can be secured or savings realised from previous studies.</p> <p>Resources – Staff from the City Centre Regeneration Team, Development Department and the Property & Projects Department will take forward the development of the business case to ensure a co-ordinated approach. Officers will also work with partner organisations</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relations implications at this stage. Equality and Good Relations implications will be examined as the project develops</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>