



Subject:	Application for Extended Hours - Belfast City Blues Festival, Custom House Square
Date:	19th April, 2017
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager, ext. 2435
Contact Officer:	Patrick Cunningham, Assistant Building Control Manager, ext. 6446

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a request from the organisers of the Belfast City Blues Festival to operate their annual festival over three nights within a marquee at Custom House Square, running from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th June 2017, and to permit the entertainment to 12.00 am on each of those nights.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Taking into account the information presented and, any representations received you are required to consider the request to extend the hours of entertainment and, subject to all technical requirements being met, either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. agree if any or all of the three proposed nights should be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence or;2. refuse to extend any or all of the hours as requested.

3.0	Main Report
	<p data-bbox="272 248 427 277"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 309 1474 405">3.1 Custom House Square is the responsibility of the Department for Communities and it currently holds both a Seven-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence and a Seven-Day Annual Marquee Entertainments Licence for the Square.</p> <p data-bbox="165 434 1474 495">3.2 The standard days and hours during which the marquee is currently licensed to provide entertainment are:</p> <ul data-bbox="284 533 906 566" style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday to Sunday: 11.30 am to 11.00 pm. <p data-bbox="165 595 1310 629">3.3 In addition, the following conditions are attached to the Entertainments Licence:</p> <ol data-bbox="284 667 1390 1104" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. maximum numbers will be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control Service and will vary depending upon individual concert set up proposals; 2. prior to any event taking place the promoters are required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation and have in place a robust system of dealing with any complaints, which has been agreed in advance with the Council; 3. any requests to provide entertainment later than 23:00hrs must be considered by the Licensing Committee and therefore must be made at least 3 months in advance of the proposed event; and 4. should the Council receive a significant number of noise complaints for any event which has successive nights of entertainment permitted beyond 23:00hrs or if a complaint about an event beyond 23:00hrs is of major concern, then those successive nights with later hours may be subject to reduction and the promoter should have appropriate arrangements in place should this occur. <p data-bbox="165 1133 1474 1193">3.4 This is the ninth year of the festival, which is now established as one of the main blues festivals in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1223 1474 1328">3.5 It is a standard condition of the Marquee Entertainments Licence that all requests to operate beyond the permitted hours of entertainment must be considered by the Licensing Committee.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1357 1474 1529">3.6 Members will recall that, last year, the Committee granted an extension beyond the standard hours of 11.00 pm for the Belfast City Blues Festival at Writers Square. On that occasion, the event operated from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th June and the organisers requested that entertainment be permitted beyond 11.00 pm to 12.00 am on each of those three nights of the event and, after consideration, you agreed to grant the request to extend the hours.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1559 1474 1664">3.7 Members will also be aware that the Committee has previously granted extensions beyond the standard hours of 11.00 pm for other events and festivals at the venue, most recently for the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival and the Belfast Beer Festival.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1693 1474 1776">3.8 Whilst recognising that such music events contribute to the overall ‘vibrancy’ of the City, it is also the case that noise from these events has the potential to cause widespread disturbance to those living and working in the vicinity.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1805 1474 1977">3.9 Before granting any extension, the Committee has always carefully considered the financial and commercial benefits of such events against the interests of residents within the area and has, on occasions, agreed with respective promoters to reduce the number of nights they had originally intended to go beyond the standard hours of 11.00 pm in order to reduce the impact the event may have upon them.</p>

Rationale for Additional Hours

- 3.10 The organisers are still in the process of finalising the programme of entertainments for this year's festival but they have confirmed that the purpose of the festival is to celebrate the musical heritage of the City and that, through the event, they will promote this message with over 45 live performances by local and international blues artists taking place. The event will also consist of screenings of archive film of local musical greats and music workshops.
- 3.11 They aim to deliver a great festival experience and one of the main reasons they wish to run the live performances at the marquee to 12.00am is to allow patrons a greater opportunity to attend the event whilst also availing of the great local restaurants and other establishments within Belfast before and after the festival.
- 3.12 As this is not an application to vary the terms of the Marquee Entertainments Licence but a request for Council's permission to extend the hours under an existing licence condition, there is no requirement to advertise the application.
- 3.13 Officers are currently working with the organisers to develop their event documentation, namely the Event Management Plan and layout plan for the site, and to agree a suitable occupancy and other provisions in order to manage the event safely.
- 3.14 Officers will also ensure the organiser produces a suitable resident's notification letter and ensure that it is distributed to the correct addresses prior to the event taking place.
- 3.15 Representatives of the Belfast City Blues Festival will be available at your meeting should you wish to seek further information about the festival.
- 3.16 A copy of the letter from the organisers outlining the background to the festival and reasons for requesting the extended hours to 12.00 am is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.17 A location map is attached at Appendix 2.

PSNI

- 3.18 The PSNI has been consulted regarding the festival and their request to operate all three nights of the event to 12.00 am. It has confirmed that it has no objections to this proposal. A copy of their correspondence is attached at Appendix 3.

NIFRS

- 3.19 The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has also been consulted about the application and has confirmed that it has no concerns about the event and has requested to be kept involved with the planning for the event.
- 3.20 Members are advised that, as with all such events, planning meetings will be held in due course, and attended by officers of the PSNI and NIFRS to look at public safety, traffic management, transport and any wider operational issues.

Health, safety and welfare issues

- 3.21 Officers from the Service have carried out inspections for previous Belfast City Blues Festivals and have found the organisers to be professional in their approach and have had no issues with the health, safety and welfare management of the event during that time.

3.22	<p>A pre-event planning meeting has already been held with the organisers, the Department for Communities and the PSNI and they are co-operating fully to ensure that everything is being done to protect public safety and to reduce the potential for noise disturbance and general nuisance from the event.</p>
<p><u>Noise Issues</u></p>	
3.23	<p>The Environmental Protection Unit has been consulted in relation to the request for late night entertainment to run beyond 11.00 pm to 12.00 am on each of the three nights at the venue.</p>
3.24	<p>Due to the cumulative impact of the consecutive nights proposed and potential sleep disturbance to nearby residents, officers are concerned that there is a greater potential for complaints after 11.00 pm. Members are reminded that the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gives councils additional powers in relation to entertainment noise after 11.00 pm.</p>
3.25	<p>However, considerable work has been done with organisers of various events and festivals at the venue and as a result, the level of complaints and noise issues has been reduced. Last year's festival, which took place at Writers Square did not generate any complaints.</p>
3.26	<p>Nevertheless, officers are currently working with the organisers and their representatives on a noise management plan and procedure for the festival. As per all events at the venue, the noise management plan must demonstrate that noise from the event will not cause unreasonable disturbance to both the commercial and residential premises of the area.</p>
3.27	<p>Officers will consider all reports and supporting information to ensure the technical requirements are in accordance with all the relevant legislation and guidance.</p>
<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>	
3.28	<p>Officers will be required to carry out inspections at the event but this is catered for within existing Service budgets.</p>
<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p>	
3.29	<p>There are no equality or good relations issues associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 1 – Applicant's Rationale for requesting the extended hours • Appendix 2 – Location Map • Appendix 3 – PSNI Comments