

Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast



Integrated Cultural Strategy

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Integrated Cultural Strategy is to create a shared approach for the development of the cultural sectors in Belfast. Its aim will be to gain an active commitment from the major organisations and key stakeholders to work towards a shared vision for the development of the cultural offer in the city. It will also serve to gain a consensus on how this shared vision can best be achieved within the available structures and resources.

The foundation of the strategy should be rooted in the current structures and provisions and identification of the key priorities for action, however there is also a need for the Strategy to put forward a vision that can engage other development bodies and can assist in developing an appreciation of the role that culture can play in the regeneration of a city.

Mainstreaming culture and arts

Belfast City Council's Culture and Arts Plan aimed to shift culture to a more central position on the urban regeneration agenda. There is widespread support for a Cultural Strategy for Belfast that continues to mainstream culture and arts across the City's development strategies. The Council-led State of the City Initiative has identified the need for more strategic governance and for Belfast to be more competitive in relation to our European peers. The initiative has identified a To Do List, endorsed by more than 40 key stakeholder organisations, focusing on the three main themes of "Leadership," "Economy" and "Quality of Life."

It is therefore appropriate that the Integrated Cultural Strategy should build on the themes which have been developed through the State of the City initiative and focus on building Belfast as a cultural capital for the region.

A strategy developed through partnership

In Belfast there are a multitude of public sector bodies and cultural organisations, each with their own frameworks and strategies and each with their own resources and schedules. The Council is in a key position to provide civic leadership and the development of an integrated cultural strategy reflects the process undertaken to coordinate the development agenda for Belfast through the State of the City process.

The Cultural Strategy for Belfast is the beginning of a process rather than an end in itself and it must be based on building greater partnership within the key agencies and the cultural sectors. It must also create a greater awareness of the role that culture and arts can play in regenerating the City.

Over the past year Belfast City Council has developed highly productive relationships with local groups and organisations spanning the entire spectrum of arts and cultural activity. The City's cultural organisations and key stakeholders must continue working closely in partnership to harness and develop our rich and varied cultural heritage, address the specific cultural needs of local people and to help achieve our shared vision of Belfast as a thriving local, national and international arts and culture centre of excellence.

In all of our dialogue, it has been emphasised that the Strategy must be founded on the principles of partnership, participation and best practice processes; that it must have aspirations and statements which are manageable and relevant and that it needs to be functional, action oriented and time-bound.

What Belfast has to offer

Performance spaces

Waterfront Hall Auditorium	2,000
Ulster Hall	1,510
Grand Opera House	1,001
Elmwood Hall	518
Crescent Arts Centre	400
Waterfront Hall Studio	360
Lyric Theatre	304
Stranmillis University College Theatre	250
An Cultúrlann	120
Assembly Buildings, Cathedral Quarter	100
Old Museum Arts Centre	91
Linen Hall Library	80

Museums and heritage

Belfast Castle exhibition
Fernhill House, the People's Museum
Lagan Lookout Centre
War Memorial Building
Royal Ulster Rifles Museum
RUC Museum
Ulster Museum
W5

Visual arts galleries

Belfast Exposed Photography
Belfast Print Workshop
Flax Art Studios
Golden Thread Gallery
Naughton Gallery at Queen's
Ormeau Baths Gallery
Art Tank
Catalyst Arts
Fenderesky Gallery
The Engine Room Gallery
The Townhouse Gallery
Paragon Gallery
Artability Gallery

Belfast can offer a very distinctive culture and arts experience. The city has unique arts and heritage assets and a wide cultural offer for all ages and interests. Culture and the arts also make a very real difference to all our lives by facilitating social inclusion, employment, learning, group interaction & creativity and reconciliation.

Investment in the arts



Supporting the local economy

Culture and arts is a growth industry in Belfast. Their continuing development is playing an increasingly important role in supporting our local economy. Organisations in Belfast supported through public funding streams recorded the following achievements:

Audiences and participants

During the financial year 2004 / 05, 1.8 million people attended culture and arts events run by Belfast based cultural organisations - a rise of 400,000 on the previous year. The proportionate increase in the level of people taking part in culture and arts activities is even more marked: the 80,000 participants in 2004 / 05 representing a massive 100% increase on the previous year.

Job creation

In 2004 / 05 culture and arts initiatives created the equivalent of 413 full time jobs - an increase of 37% on the previous year.

Cultural tourism

Culture and arts also has a prominent role to play in attracting tourism to our city. In 2004/05 Belfast welcomed 5.9 million visitors - up by more than 10% on the previous year - while a total visitor spend of £262.5 million represented an increase of £300,000.

Integrated Cultural Strategy:

Key objectives

Strategic Leadership

1. To develop and support Belfast as a creative and cultural centre

Building an identity for Belfast as a regional driver for cultural activity

Example: through supporting Belfast-based organisations which have a national and international profile.

2. To provide and support creative responses to the social and political challenges in the city

Providing creative means to enable greater levels of social inclusion and community development

Example: via schemes like Belfast City Council's Development and Outreach Initiative.

Creating Wealth

1. To develop the creative, artistic, culture and heritage offer to attract local, national and international audiences

Developing culture and arts as Unique Selling Points for the City

Example: through promotion of Belfast's unique identity via development of key initiatives such as festivals

2. To provide enhanced pathways for skills development, training and employment.

Providing sectoral skills development

Example: through training initiatives for organisational development and bursaries.

3. Providing creative and entrepreneurial springboards for individual and collective economic benefit

Developing partnerships between arts and business communities

Example: through enhanced opportunities for business engagement and sponsorship.

4. To promote the economic potential of creative clusters in the city

Developing the potential of cultural quarters such as Cathedral Quarter, Queen's Quarter and Titanic Quarter and other emergent cultural quarters

Example: through collective engagement to stimulate and sustain cultural development.

Key objectives

Quality Of Life

1. To enhance the cultural and artistic experience in the City

Developing quality in the cultural offer

Example: through improved funding structures

2. To invigorate Public Spaces

Developing the role of festivals in making areas attractive

Example: through festivals funding and development

3. To protect and promote the built heritage

Promoting the sympathetic development of Belfast's built heritage

Example: through the promotion of Best Practice

4. To develop creative and cultural means to promote physical regeneration in the City

Developing public art in the City

Example: through supporting a programme of artist commissions

5. To promote community and individual development and expression through cultural activity

Widening access to cultural activities

Example: through developing a programme for reducing barriers to access in the arts

6. To develop partnerships with public agencies to facilitate enjoyment and participation in cultural activities

Engaging with key partners on issues such as transport, development, planning and education

Timetable for implementation

Date	Activity
December 2005	Revised draft strategy
December 2005	Draft Strategy circulated for consultation - Minimum 8 week consultation period
February 2006	Feedback on consultation
March 2006	Integrated Cultural Strategy agreed
April/May 2006	Launch of Integrated Cultural Strategy

Thank you for attending today's event and for your support.

If you would like further information about the Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast, please contact Belfast City Council's Culture and Arts Unit, Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BP.

Tel: (0044) 2890 270461 Fax: (0044) 2890 27032

Email: cultureandartsadmin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Belfast City Council is committed to ensuring that its services are available to all sections of the community.

Consideration will be given to providing this document in alternative formats if requested.