



Draft Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014

Consultation Response

(Please note that the deadline for consultation responses is Friday 2nd April 2010)

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Question	Response
<p>Do you agree with the vision set out for the Tourism Framework?</p> <p><i>Belfast, working in partnership, will deliver the authentic Capital City experience by developing and co-ordinating our cultural, natural and commercial assets to attract a greater number of visitors to the city and maximise the economic benefits for Belfast and Northern Ireland.</i></p>	<p>Yes, the Historic Monuments Council agrees with the partnership approach and the recognition that culture in all its many aspects must lie at the heart of the tourism framework (Draft BISTF 2010-4, 2). Council welcomes the stated and strong commitment to sustainability and sustainable tourism (Draft BISTF 2010-4,3).</p>
<p>Do you agree with the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats re: the current visitor experience?</p>	<p>Council thought the SWOT analysis was accurate. However it would suggest that the Ulster Museum/National Museums Northern Ireland should be added to the Strengths Category. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and its potential for promoting genealogical tourism could usefully be added to the Opportunities Category – especially considering the forthcoming</p>

	<p>move of PRONI to new facilities in the Titanic Quarter.</p>
<p>What are your thoughts on the Tourism Place Destinations which have been selected?</p>	<p>Council thought that this was one of the strongest and most innovative parts of the draft framework.</p> <p>It re-imagines the city away from the old socio-political geography of the past (east, west, north, south Belfast, etc), without denying the conflicted past and divided nature of Belfast.</p> <p>Although several of the 'destinations' have been identified for some time now (e.g. Cathedral Quarter), the emphasis on 'corridors' is new and a great idea. It was good to see the Lagan-Maritime Corridor and the Belfast Hills identified as these are areas which have a great deal of potential for developing cultural tourism. They are also key foils to the city's urban life.</p> <p>The archaeology of the Belfast Hills is poorly understood and there is a need to address this, if the full tourist potential of the area is to be realised. In relation to the Lagan corridor place names could be used in an active way to promote the corridor and the history of the river, for example Stranmillis is where the water becomes fresh.</p> <p>Council suggests that understanding and presentation of the particular history and growth of Belfast needs to be emphasised through the Place Destinations. Again place names could be used to show the growth of the city over the original townland framework. Buildings (for example Belfast's inventive red-brick buildings with blue brick decoration) should be presented as the physical expression of that history.</p>
<p>What are your thoughts on the six visionary drivers (and associated outputs / actions required) which have been identified?</p>	<p>Council welcomes the range of visionary drivers and would suggest it is important, whatever the overall number adopted in the final form of the framework, that they are developed in tandem to achieve maximum benefit and to enhance Belfast.</p> <p>In relation to the Titanic Signature Project and Maritime Heritage, Council would suggest that a greater focus on the wider theme of the maritime heritage of the city is a more sustainable approach, in terms for example of repeat visits to Belfast,</p>

	<p>rather than an approach which focuses primarily on one aspect of that heritage. The visitor attraction will need to be very carefully designed if it does not have the 'pull' of actual material from and about the Titanic and Belfast's Maritime Heritage.</p> <p>There were different views on Council about the National Art Gallery as a Visionary Driver:</p> <p><i>One view was that the Ulster Museum already curates and exhibits a national collection of art, which is free to access, within a mile of the city centre and within one of the Place Destinations (i.e. Queen's Quarter). Given financial constraints on the public purse at the moment it seems unjustifiable to propose developing a national gallery for Belfast when it already has one.</i></p> <p><i>Another view is that we need a National Gallery of Art to exhibit both our own collections and temporary exhibitions of international significance. The Ulster Museum space for art can only show 5% of the collection, hence it cannot show the range of material people should be able to access. A gallery is important as a tourism offering and as a resource for the city's inhabitants.</i></p> <p>Regarding the need for an integrated conference and exhibition centre Council would suggest that there is a need to demonstrate that this is really a priority for Belfast, given that the city already has good conference facilities.</p>
<p>What are your thoughts on the Development Levers and actions which have been identified?</p>	<p>Council thought that the Tourism in the Community is an important lever and a significant and very relevant corollary to the identification of the diverse and geographical widespread range of Tourism Place Destinations.</p> <p>In tandem with this City Presentation and Design initiatives will be important in conveying the distinctive character of places in the city and in encouraging the visitor to move from and between those places.</p>

	<p>Council would like to raise the question of the emphasis on retailing. The framework's wide definition of tourist to include shoppers confuses the question of tourism development with retail development. Of course retail is important to the development of Belfast as a city, but should retail and tourism be considered in such an integrated way?</p> <p>Given the phrasing in the Draft BISTF itself, page 24, the case for a new National Stadium is not obvious and it would appear that a balanced assessment of need is required.</p>
<p>What do you think of the Marketing Objectives and best prospect markets / segments which have been identified?</p>	<p>The objectives identified are well and clearly articulated.</p> <p>In relation to the links with the ROI/all island travel that have been identified would it be useful to have a clearer sense of the relationship – both competitive and complementary with Dublin? An important issue here is the upgrading of the Belfast-Dublin rail link.</p>
<p>What do you think of the Visitor Servicing and Management objectives which have been identified?</p>	<p>Council would agree with the need and value of a central, easily accessible Belfast Welcome Centre.</p>
<p>What do you think of the focus on Quality Strategy?</p>	<p>Council welcomes this focus.</p>
<p>Do you have any comments on the Monitoring and Research section of the framework?</p>	<p>Baseline data reviewed on a regular basis is crucial.</p>
<p>Do you have any comments on Management and Co-ordination section of the framework?</p>	<p>Council welcomes the High Level Co-Ordination recommendation. Recognising the importance of Belfast's built heritage to the uniqueness and value of the city's tourism, and the potential for this asset to be compromised, damaged or not fully realised during the implementation of the strategy, Council would strongly recommend that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage Directorate should be represented on the Tourism Co-ordinating Group.</p>
<p>General comments:</p>	<p>Council would suggest that it would be both useful and strategic for the framework to identify how the various 'visionary drivers' and 'development levers' it identifies tie in with the priorities identified in the Northern</p>

	<p>Ireland Executive's Programme for Government. This would facilitate the development of partnerships with bodies whose work is informed by the Programme for Government, such as the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.</p> <p>Council would like to see a more specific focus on the historic built environment as THE vital material and cultural asset that Belfast has. In a global and European context urban tourism is increasingly focusing on the attractiveness of the historic fabric of cities as places to visit; the authentic and the distinctive. This perspective is also critical in thinking about sustaining the historic fabric into the future of the city, as demonstrated in the work of the Forum for Alternative Belfast and its vision for the city.</p> <p>To work well the Integrated Tourism Framework should be placed in the context of a formal plan by Belfast City Council for the sustainable future of the city.</p> <p>To be truly 'integrated' Council would argue that the framework needs to identify where the successful achievement of its aims will be good for the local population, as well as the visitor to the city. In order to work for tourism, the various proposed initiatives also need to work for the local population. This will enable the people of Belfast to develop the necessary sense of ownership and pride in the facilities of the Tourist Place Destinations, and thereby provide the warm, generous and genuine welcome which is (correctly) identified as part of the Belfast Brand.</p>
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Please return to culture@belfastcity.gov.uk or post to the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, Development Department, Belfast City Council, 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP by the deadline Friday 2 April 2010.

Thank you, we look forward to receiving your comments.