



10 October 2017

Dear Colleague

As you will be aware, Belfast City Council in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council are progressing a bid for the title of European Capital of Culture for 2023.

The European Capital of Culture is a much coveted award and we believe that participating in and securing the title for 2023 presents the Northern Ireland region with a wonderful opportunity to promote and showcase the cultural and creative aspects of our region as well as delivering many wider social and economic benefits to all our citizens.

What are the Benefits?

Previous experience shows that securing the European Capital of Culture title can act as a catalyst to supporting the social, economic and physical regeneration of the wider region.

A successful Northern Ireland based bid would help grow our economy by:

- generating a direct economic return
- raising the international profile of Northern Ireland Plc
- significantly boosting tourism
- supporting investment and job creation
- supporting skills development and enhancing entrepreneurship
- improving connectivity
- breathing new life into Northern Ireland's culture sector
- enhancing European linkages in context of Brexit

There are also benefits for our people living not just in both cities but across Northern Ireland. A successful bid would help connect people to opportunities; create positive changes in attitudes and perceptions; enhance civic engagement and participation; improve social inclusion and promote the richness and diversity of cultures across Europe.

Our aim is to develop a programme which will help us realise long lasting economic and social benefits for the wider NI region. We want to promote Northern Ireland as a vibrant place, positioned on the edge of the European Union but which displays a rich and diverse European cultural heritage. As a region, we are emerging away from our difficult past towards a shared place with an outward facing vision and hopeful ambitions for our future.

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Supporting the bid

We hope that your Council will join with us in recognising the significant benefits to be gained from participating in the European Capital of Culture Bid for 2023 and we feel that it would be hugely beneficial if we can demonstrate that the bid has the unanimous support of all 11 councils in the region.

The first key milestone in the process is the submission of Phase 1 of the bid to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport by 27 October 2017. We would therefore be grateful if your council would consider providing a statement of your support for Phase 1 of the European Capital of Culture bid before we make our formal submission in October 2017 or shortly thereafter if possible. Draft wording is attached for your consideration but please feel free to word your letter of support as you feel appropriate.

We would particularly wish to work in partnership with your council during Phase 2 of the bid to help in the development of the detailed programme of projects and events which will take place not only in the years leading up to 2023, but during the award year and beyond - ensuring that the positive impacts from the programme are felt across the region and into the future. There will also be opportunities to contribute financially to elements of the programme.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Wylie

Chief Executive, Belfast City Council

John Kelpie

Chief Executive, Derry City & Strabane District Council

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