



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

UK City of Culture 2013:
Derry City Council/Culture Company Briefing

6 June 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley
Mr David Hilditch
Mr William Humphrey
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Ms Shona McCarthy	Culture Company 2013 Ltd
Ms Sharon O'Connor	Derry City Council

The Chairperson: I welcome Sharon O'Connor, the chief executive of Derry City Council; and Shona McCarthy, the chief executive of the Culture Company 2013 Ltd. I apologise for the delay. I ask you to make an opening statement.

Ms Sharon O'Connor (Derry City Council): Thanks very much, indeed. It is very nice to get the opportunity to come along and bring members up to date on the progress of the project. I am not going to go through the preamble; I assume that you all know the relationship between the City of Culture and the council, the designation and all those relationships.

In my opening remarks, it is important to establish the project within the bigger project for the city: the One Plan. That is our long-term economic strategy, and the City of Culture project is a device or vehicle within that strategy to advance the economic and social well-being of the city and region. That is the objective behind it and that is a much longer-term plan. The plan is about raising the ambition of the city, the morale of the city and, most importantly, the social and economic output and forward prosperity of the city. It probably does not need to be said, but we are dealing with wards that are among the most socially disadvantaged in western Europe, so our particular circumstances are fairly unusual and, in many regards, might be deemed to be unique.

We are almost midway through our year, so I am sure that a lot of your questions will be around the return on the investment that has made by the Executive. I am very happy to report that the city has had the best May that we have ever had in tourism terms. We had 81% occupancy in the hotel sector in May, which is quite a dramatic lead on other cities.

This coming weekend, we are looking forward to the Return of Colmcille event. Occupancy rates are between 91% and 95%, and it looks likely that we will exceed capacity. The build-up is working very well in that regard and we are seeing very positive returns from the hotel sector. Shona will talk more about the social benefits of the programme. The Londonderry Chamber of Commerce has told us that about 39 new businesses have started. We reckon that about £120 million worth of capital investment has accrued from the City of Culture project, and the psychological boost to the city and the region is, I think, beyond price. It has been really exceptional. So, you find a city transformed by the project.

Hopefully, the "heads and beds" as they are called in the tourism sector is a positive indicator of the success of the marketing effort. The tourism industry locally is quite happy with progress on that front.

The other issue and challenge that there has been for Derry City Council is the very enthusiastic participation that we have had beyond the formal programme. We have all manner of events happening in the city. We have had charitable events like the world record of Annes in Ebrington Square, the brides on the bridge and other events that have not been formally on the programme but that have had a consequence for the city in providing support to allow them to happen and to happen successfully.

We are planning the legacy programme as we speak. That is very much an active piece of work and we are out consulting on that programme. The evidence from other capitals and cities of culture is that the economic benefits do not accrue during the year but in successive years. So, you are building for the future and making an investment for tomorrow. The evidence is that all the other cities have accrued such benefits. Our situation suggests that we are accruing very significant benefits, as I outlined.

As far as we are concerned, the project has been extremely successful to date. We are all still coming down from the excitement of Radio 1's Big Weekend that we enjoyed last weekend, and the business morale in the city could not be higher. I do not believe that the social outlook of the city has ever been as positive. We are working on more robust data, so that the anecdotal evidence that I have given can be referenced and supported by the statistical data that we will accrue.

Shona will want to tell you more about the exciting content of the cultural programme, and I will be very happy to take any questions that arise from anything that I said.

Ms Shona McCarthy (Culture Company 2013 Ltd): Thank you very much, Committee. It is great to be back with you all again to give you an update. The paper has been circulated, so I am not going to talk directly to it.

Through the media and everything else, I think that we are all pretty aware of things like Radio 1's Big Weekend, the Sons and Daughters concert, Other Voices and all those kind of big events. I think that the story that is probably less told, but that is equally important, is the programme of community and educational work that has been ongoing throughout the year. That is probably going to form the serious basis of the legacy of social inclusion and engagement going forward. I want to talk a little bit about that specifically.

We have been working with neighbourhood renewal partnerships across the city and, through partnership with them, have managed to distribute some £300,000 to community projects. We are also working with the Rural Area Partnership in Derry (RAPID) so that we are also covering the rural areas.

The Portrait of a City project is, I think, a very exciting and new model for targeting social need in the city. It is probably the most ambitious and biggest community participation project in an effort to create a collective audio visual heritage that has ever been attempted in one place. The main digital hub for that project is in the Ráth Mór shopping centre in the Creggan, and the idea is to outsource directly into a community area where a digital hub was placed as the result of infrastructural funding from the Department for Social Development earlier in the year. That strikes me as a real partnership way of working. We are also based in Clooney Terrace, Eglinton, Learmount and Shantallow for that project, so it is a real way of devolving responsibility to deliver one of the major elements of the programme in communities.

This is a kind of anecdote, but it is an example of some of the real tangible things that are emerging. There was a photograph on the BT Portrait of a City website of a homeless woman who had been on the streets in Derry for many years but had died a few years back. The photograph was reproduced in

the 'Derry Journal' and, within two days, it had received 19,000 hits. It created a whole Facebook discussion about street drinking and homeless people. It is that kind of impact that just one visual artistic image can have and the conversation that it can create in a city about a subject that is vital to all of us. That is just one anecdote about that huge project.

We have worked with the Big Lottery Fund, which has given out some 50 grants to different community groups. This is where the project shows that it has a real regional benefit as well as a specific benefit for the city. The Big Lottery programme has been open to organisations across Northern Ireland but is tied into the themes of the City of Culture. There is some £1.53 million in that Big Lottery funding. As I understand it — please spread the word — that is still open and there are still opportunities for community groups to avail themselves of that source of support; the programme is called Culture for All.

We have been working with the Public Health Association on a range of projects and initiatives. The Extraordinary People Project works with alcoholics, homeless people and people with mental health issues, and delivers all kinds of arts and crafts programmes across the city.

The Music Promise is probably one of our biggest success stories. At the end of the year, there will be a lot of audio-visual capture to evidence projects such as this. One quarter of that project has been focused on young people at greatest disadvantage and those who are hardest to reach. Again, through a partnership approach, we have worked with different groups across the city that are already engaged in music provision. We have worked with Link Music, the neighbourhood partnerships and the Nerve Centre, and that project is now reaching 450 young people a week. Last week, we saw a performance from a young band comprising young people who, until six weeks ago, had never lifted a musical instrument but were able to stand up in public and perform. So, that is, again, a model for partnership. We have been working very closely with the education and library board to make sure that there is a tangible legacy base for that project going forward. It is a really interesting and vibrant model and it is something that we should be looking at, not only for the city but, after 2013, as a model that can be replicated in other towns and villages across Northern Ireland, because it has been such a phenomenal success.

Over 500 people have now registered for the volunteering effort. To be quite honest: we could not do the City of Culture project without them. The volunteer effort has been significant and massive in everything, from last weekend's marathon to the Walled City Tattoo and the upcoming fleadh.

One of the things that we sometimes forget about is the sporting programme, because our concentration, given the programming team's background, is usually on the arts. However, some 20 projects have been supported across the sporting programme. There has been training for 2,000 people in WorldHost, which has been delivered by the council team. Over 560 of those people were young people who were at risk of becoming NEETs.

Through the funding for the community projects and ideas that we deliver through the What's the Big Idea? programme, we have managed to give out over £600,000 for community-based initiatives for community organisations to deliver their own bespoke City of Culture projects.

We now, effectively, have partnerships right across the city and the whole of the county that are delivering this City of Culture year. I call it a democratisation of the cultural programming, because that is really what has happened. That is what has given that sense of buzz, energy and participation that is absolutely tangible, as Sharon said, when you go into the city.

We have stuck to the big core themes of joyous celebration and purposeful enquiry, but most of all the one that we have found most challenging and most rewarding is the challenge of the edge to the centre — working with people who are most disenfranchised in the community.

I am not going to go over the visitor and hotel occupancy numbers; Sharon covered that really well. One of the things that I did want to highlight is the big media partnerships, which have been a phenomenal success. That is the partnership with the BBC to co-produce with us Sons and Daughters and Radio 1's Big Weekend, and not only that but the absolute commitment of its team in Radio Foyle in particular and of Peter Johnston and Mike Edgar and the team in Belfast. We could not have had the reach and the magnitude of media coverage without such partnerships. Joe Mahon's 'Lesser Spotted Culture' series on UTV is really getting under the skin of the City of Culture project and telling the stories that you might not otherwise hear. Locally, Johnson Press, with the 'Derry Journal' and the 'Londonderry Sentinel' have also been hugely successful for us. The list of output that we have had already and the interest in the city and the interest in this first ever UK City of Culture and

how it sets a benchmark in learning for the future has been phenomenal. We have another 40 journalists in the city from across the nation this weekend to cover the Return of Colmcille. We have had national broadcasters, and Sharon and I have both had to do interviews with everything from Australian to Norwegian media. We have done all kinds of different television shows. 'The One Show' is doing a specific series, and that is a second one as a follow-up to the one that it did last year in the build-up to the City of Culture year.

I encourage you all to join us this weekend, because you will feel that story and the change in perception of the city. It is tangible, and this weekend is hugely exciting. The Return of Colmcille the Peacemaker is probably one of the most definitive projects of the entire year. It is a journey from Friday evening to right through all day Saturday. We are promised that there will be gloriously sunny weather, so there is no better weekend for it. I know that you have questions about ticket sales, sponsorship, etc, and I am more than happy to address those specifically as they arise. From our point of view, the City of Culture is working and is delivering, and it is a pure joy to be in the city right now and to experience being part of it.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. Obviously, you touched on the issue of the relationships that you have had with the media, but, unfortunately, not all of the media coverage has been positive, particularly that around personnel and finance. Can you comment on that?

Ms O'Connor: Cities of Culture are huge, complex activities. No one in the region has undertaken anything on this scale before. It is a year-long programme with literally hundreds of activities in it and thousands of people engaged. They are very difficult to deliver, and, for that reason, when you look at the history of these types of activities, you will find that they are extremely difficult and extremely ambitious. Liverpool's experience was that it was in a very poor state at the beginning of its City of Culture year, and it will be the first to admit that. So, in comparison with other places, we have had a relatively uneventful time. On our financial situation, we have a deficit, but the council is underwriting that deficit, so, at this stage, the programme is secure, and I do not think that anyone need have any concerns in that regard. Much of the actual operational detail of the finances is Shona's territory, so, if there are details that you want on that, perhaps she can pick up on them.

Ms McCarthy: I reiterate what Sharon said. Of course, there was an issue around the shortfall in funding for the programme, but that has now been addressed, and, although the council is underwriting it, the Culture Company continues to make every possible effort to generate further income. I am relieved, I suppose, to be at the point where we are already at over 60% of our targets on ticket sales, still only five months into the year. So, the signs are positive. I am not saying that everything is rosy, but we know that the programme will now be delivered and that there is no threat whatsoever to the delivery of the full programme and the full benefits for the city and the region.

The Chairperson: So, the £598,000 programming shortfall at the end of April is now covered in its entirety by the council?

Ms O'Connor: A council underwrite is in place, and, as Shona said, the Culture Company is continuing to raise funds. It is a steady situation, because the programme is copper-fastened and will happen.

The Chairperson: In your paper, Sharon, you said that, more recently, the council has committed a further £500,000 to the company and a further £500,000 to underwrite the deficit in the cultural programme. What does that mean?

Ms O'Connor: It means that we are underwriting it, but, at the same time, the Culture Company is confident of its fundraising. So, it is raising funds against that. The council will underwrite the existing deficit, but we are confident that that deficit and that liability to the council will reduce.

The Chairperson: Does that cover unforeseen circumstances, or will you still be relying on the DCAL optimism bias moneys?

Ms O'Connor: In the optimism bias, there is money to cover the unforeseeable. In a programme of this scale, there are many unforeseeables. That application of the optimism bias is something that we are working out with DCAL. The contingencies will be managed, and we are pretty confident that we have the cost programme bottomed out and that the optimism bias requests that are under active consideration by DCAL will be supported.

The Chairperson: A request for optimism bias to meet unforeseen costs has been put to the Department in relation to the all-Ireland fleadh. What unforeseen circumstances are there in relation to that project, given that it is something that would have taken place regardless of whether it was in Londonderry or any other part of Northern Ireland or the Irish Republic?

Ms O'Connor: The difficulty is that this is the first time that it has ever been north of the border. It is highly prized and the subject of much competition between towns in the Republic. When it is won, there is an understanding of the financial benefits that accrue from hosting the all-Ireland fleadh. That is not necessarily understood here, so there is a huge challenge with fundraising.

There are also complexities and challenges in managing an event of that scale in a city of our size. In terms of the health and safety requirements, the particular circumstances of our city are different to those that apply in the Republic. Some of those circumstances were not fully understood at the beginning, and clearly the council had to become directly involved in the costs of managing public safety in the city. The operation is quite different to anything that has been done before. Last year, the fleadh was held in Cavan, which is a medium-sized provincial town. Running that event is quite different to running an event of this scale in a city of our size, particularly when our city is, unfortunately, still subject to security challenges. So, the costs of managing that event in the city are much higher and are more complex than they were for previous events.

The Chairperson: What are the costs and the unforeseen costs of that event?

Ms O'Connor: The bulk of the requests to DCAL that are being considered are connected to the management of people in the city. They are for things such as security, campsites, CCTV, toilet provision and all of those logistical requirements of managing the fleadh in the city. For example, in Cavan, there was an expectation that the private sector would provide temporary campsites. That has not happened in the north-west, so we have had to make available council grounds to facilitate campsites. The costs come from that type of thing, which would have been done differently had the event been running in the Republic.

The Chairperson: How much are you talking about?

Ms O'Connor: The majority of the bid for optimism bias moneys comes from logistical costs. I can give you chapter and verse on them. I did not bring the details with me today, but we can follow up with the details. You will find, when you look at it, that it is substantially for unforeseeable costs. For example, the health trust has told us that it wants us to have something that will virtually be an accident and emergency unit in the centre of Derry. So, it will cost upwards of £100,000 to provide that for 10 days. There are costs like that, and we did not foresee them because we simply assumed that, as we have an accident and emergency department, it would be sufficient.

The Chairperson: That is just one aspect, and it will cost around £100,000. So, more moneys need to be asked for in addition to that?

Ms O'Connor: No, those are the types of costs that are contained in the request for the optimism bias figure. So, the costs come from all of those kinds of things: fencing, security, CCTV, and health and safety requirements.

The Chairperson: So, how much have you asked the Department for in relation to unforeseen costs associated with the fleadh?

Ms O'Connor: I may be wrong, but, off the top of my head, it is less than £500,000. It is between £400,000 and £500,000, and it is in the upper reaches of that.

The Chairperson: Do you consider that that and other aspects of the project offer value for money?

Ms O'Connor: We visited Cavan, and a lot of the businesses there told us that they made a year's takings in that 10-day period. We brought the business community down; the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce brought a whole team of business people to Cavan, and they spoke to hotels and pubs and shops. They were very satisfied about the financial returns that would be accrued from the fleadh. Various numbers are quoted for the output, but it is certainly in the many tens of thousands — upwards of €30 million in revenues is derived from the hosting of the all-Ireland fleadh. In that context,

something less than £500,000 is a good investment to accrue that sort of commercial benefit for the city as a whole.

The Chairperson: I speak for the whole Committee, but I am sure that we would appreciate the details in relation to that particular project.

Ms O'Connor: Absolutely.

The Chairperson: One of the challenges you mentioned around sponsorship was the fact that there was no branding centrally provided from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Can you expand on that?

Ms O'Connor: I will have to defer on this, because I came in later and was not party to the formation of that.

Ms S McCarthy: I am more than happy to answer that. I have re-read recently the Bob Palmer report into European cities of culture over the past 30 years. It is probably the most definitive document that goes into detailed analysis of the successes, failures and challenges of cities of culture. One point that he makes is that it took the European Capital of Culture 30 years to develop a brand that was strong enough to attract sponsorship up to 13%, which is the highest level that any city as a European City of Culture has attained.

I was simply making the point that this is the first year of the UK City of Culture title. There has not been time for that brand to be established. Most sponsors who come in on big initiatives, such as the Olympics, for example, are coming in on the basis of the global established brand of the Olympics, and they come in for a number of years. We have had the additional challenge of this not being a recognised brand as it is something completely new. That is one of the lessons that I would like to see us passing on to DCMS; that any other city would really need its help in firmly establishing this brand as a UK brand. Any city that holds the title is representing the UK and, therefore, it should be able to attract sponsorship from the major companies that operate across the UK, rather than, as we have done, simply trying to generate sponsorship from companies that may operate only here in Northern Ireland. The fact that this is not an established brand to work with was just an additional challenge to us, so we were really starting at zero point.

The Chairperson: You will understand, and no doubt you will have heard the comments from members at the previous Committee when the Department was here about the non-use, I suppose, of the UK City of Culture as the branding title. That raised concerns across the Committee. The note that we received from the Department stated that eight different logos are used in promotional material as part of the marketing effort to promote the City of Culture project, some of which include reference to the UK City of Culture. Given the fact that you already had the challenge of trying to promote the UK City of Culture and Londonderry as its first destination, would it not have made more sense to have had one single logo that people could have bought into at a much earlier stage?

Ms S McCarthy: It is no secret, Michelle, that we live in a community where it is not comfortable for every single community to be so directly associated with the UK brand. We have to live with the reality and the sensitivities of that, particularly if you are trying to encourage 100% participation. The ambition that we inherited from the bid was that there would be 100% participation from across the city. Every single presentation and press release issued from the Culture Company itself refers to it as the first ever UK City of Culture; that is always in our materials. We left enough flexibility for the different communities around the city to be able to use a brand that fitted, worked for and would encourage participation from their particular communities. That was just us living with the reality and the sensitivities of the community that we are in. I am sure that you have seen the brand all over the place. It is on the 48 sheets, the billboards, the back of buses and the TV ads. It is the UK City of Culture.

The Chairperson: Are you content that there is and has been a sense of inclusivity from everyone in the city?

Ms S McCarthy: That is probably going to be hard to assess until the end. We have been consistently conscious of trying to work with the partnerships across the city. The feedback that we have had from the politicians in the city, across the board, is that the cultural programme is absolutely representative. That there is a programme that people can stand over as representative of all the

community is one of the things that we are most proud of as a team. Even this week, it is brilliant to see the Orange Order running a programme in the Playhouse Theatre. It is the beginning of its programme, and it is about the craft and art behind banner-making. The GAA Ulster Championship match just happened at the weekend, along with the Walled City Marathon and two major exhibition openings. We have got participation from every community and every neighbourhood in the city across various aspects of the programme. Every school in the city is also participating, if not in the Music Promise then in the digital schools project.

I am confident that there has been a sustained effort of engagement and that we have really robustly attempted to have maximum engagement across the city.

Ms O'Connor: Part of the city's ambition was not just to have an orange and green programme but a shared programme. So, when you think about where it started last June with our Peace One Day events and our Clipper events, we very much had events in which everyone participated and came together. Radio 1's Big Weekend was yet another example, and this weekend will hopefully be another example when the city comes together as one. It is not about orange or green ownership of the activity but shared activity for the whole of the city and all the citizens.

Ms S McCarthy: In fact, that was the response when the programme was launched. People did not want to be boxed into those kind of places. So, when a local journalist interviewed people and asked whether the unionist community was involved enough, the response was, "I don't care, the Primal Scream concert is on". As Sharon said, it has challenged those notions of orange and green, and that really seems to be working.

Mr McGimpsey: Thanks for the presentation. You have answered most of my queries.

As the Chair said, a meeting or two ago, we were concerned when we received information that you were not getting the participation levels and the ticket sales. As a result, the cash flow was down and that was going to affect future programmes. We should bear in mind that it is in everybody's interest that this works well. At the end of the year, we want to be able to say that we did the UK City of Culture really well and be proud of that.

I was concerned that, at this stage of the game, for the sake of a small amount of money, there were going to be shortfalls in the programme that were going to affect things. These things have a habit of rolling up. You told us that you have overcome that. You said that there is no threat to the delivery of the full programme, that the council has underwritten the shortfall and that the money is secure. You went on to say that it is working and delivering and that it is a "pure joy". Happy days.

Listening to that — you are getting the right sort of numbers on occupancy and so on — it seems that it is, so far, so good. It is a work in progress and there is maybe not the threat to the whole thing that I was concerned there was. If we were short of a few pounds, it was important that someone, whether the Department, the council or somebody else, came forward to make sure that you were not challenged in that way. I take comfort from that.

(The Deputy Chairperson [Mr Irwin] in the Chair)

The other issue is inclusivity, and you are quite confident that the entire city feels part of this and that nobody feels excluded. It is nothing to do with you guys, but the city council proposed to drop the UK from the title, and I thought that that was absolutely negative and counterproductive to the aim of inclusivity. You appear to be saying that the inclusivity is being delivered.

Ms O'Connor: I do not think that we would say that everyone in the city is absolutely happy. We have our critics —

Mr McGimpsey: Of course you do.

Ms O'Connor: Of course we have. However, I think that anyone who has spent any time in the city recently cannot help but be carried along with the spirit of enthusiasm. Just the other night, I was walking to the Guild Hall, and a woman who I had never met before stopped me and asked me whether I was Shona — she obviously confused us. I told her that I was Sharon, and she said that she wanted to tell me that the city values everything that is happening, that it is wonderful and that

they are so delighted with it. That is my experience, and I am sure that Shona would say the same: everyone we meet is delighted with the outcome.

I think that we are starting to get great benefit from our neighbouring council areas and from cross-border areas. People are starting to participate. I think that the hotel occupancy rates demonstrate that; we are getting people to come and stay. We are also getting significant numbers of visitors to the city who have never been before. I think that that really is a very positive story.

Of course there will be the naysayers; there always are. However, overall, I think that we have a very positive story to tell.

Mr McGimpsey: On the inclusivity, if you see a problem, you have to deal with it.

Ms O'Connor: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr McGimpsey: You have got to deal with it quickly. If you see an issue you have to decide how you are going to deal with it. You appear to be saying, "So far, so good".

Ms S McCarthy: The thing is that we never stopped listening, Michael. With every month that goes past, it is absolutely noticeable that the public are responding better and better. They see that the city is delivering and that it has not let them down. It is happening, and it is a success. However, that is not to say that we do not constantly have our ear to the ground. As recently as last week, a community worker from the Waterside said to me that people who live in the Top of the Hill were feeling disengaged from the project, and I asked what we could do about that. Next week, we are meeting with her and the council community engagement officer, and we will look at what we can do specifically in that part of the city if the people there do not feel involved.

There is a constant listening ear. If there are gaps, we try to address them as we go along.

Mr D Bradley: Good morning. I would like to congratulate the council, the Culture Company and everybody who has been involved in the project. It has been tremendous for your city, the north-west and all of this region. People are very proud of the effort that Derry has put into this and of the success that it has made of it. I just want to put that on the record.

In your briefing paper, it states:

"To date, ticket sales have reached ?%"

Will you give us an up-to-date picture of the ticket sales?

Ms S McCarthy: The ticket sales for events that are on sale at the moment are at 74% of our target.

I explained that the original projections on ticket sales took in the entire box office of the whole city, including all the third-party organisations and venues. That is why it looked very large in the original projections. However, once we made the decision to give out grants and allow organisations to keep their own box office receipts, the amount of ticket sales the Culture Company was responsible for was, obviously, reduced. We are now 74% to target on those, which I am delighted about, as we are only five months in.

Mr D Bradley: That sounds very positive, indeed. Do you have any idea of the origin of visitors? Are they mostly from within the city, the immediate area or from a wider base?

Ms S McCarthy: As Sharon said earlier, it is not a big place and we could probably give you the anecdotal evidence of the different accents that you hear when walking around the city. However, the Tourist Board and Ilex are taking the lead on a very rigorous monitoring and assessment programme of who is coming and where they are from. By the end of the year, I think that we should be able to provide pretty robust evidence.

Ms O'Connor: With some of the big events, like Clipper last year, the pure visitor number was about 20%, which we needed to grow. That provided a baseline for us. It depends on the nature of the event. Some will obviously have greater appeal and reach than others, but all the indications from the early research is very good.

We are just starting to do that analysis, and the stuff that I have seen so far is very encouraging as regards the penetration into the most disadvantaged groups in the city. For example, we have had good take-up of participation from people who would not naturally be heavy attendees of arts and cultural events. We think that we are making significant inroads in the economic and social side of things.

Mr D Bradley: Have there been any cases of culture fatigue?

Ms O'Connor: Only among us. *[Laughter.]*

Mr D Bradley: I want to move on to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. I congratulate you on bringing it to the city. It is a tremendous international, as well as local, event. Sharon, you said that there were challenges in bringing an event of this scale to a city the size of yours. Surely towns such as Listowel, Cavan and Clonmel, which are much smaller than Derry, have hosted the fleadh successfully. If they can do it, why should it be such a big challenge for Derry?

Ms O'Connor: The main reason is that it is unfamiliar to the city. Towns such as Listowel and Cavan know how the fleadh works and they know how to organise themselves for it. They have a huge volunteer effort and a huge community and business effort, so they know how to make that work, and there is less need for the council to get directly involved in making sure that the event happens in the way that it needs to happen.

The other issue, for all the events in the city, is that we have a significant investment in managing events safely. I do not want to overplay it, but we have a significant security challenge in the city. We have all sorts of geography that is a challenge, and we have busy roads, a river, and all manner of public safety concerns. We have also not had a history of bringing the type of event into the city where there is a tradition of people camping, for example. This is a completely new departure for the city in hosting an event. There are costs in putting all that together and that is where those costs are grounded.

Mr D Bradley: Have you had to set up a campsite?

Ms O'Connor: Yes. The council is a supporter of the activity. A separate committee is managing the fleadh, and we are simply supporters, as is the Culture Company. We have had to make some of our football pitches available, which are associated with our leisure facilities. We are making some of our civic buildings available for hosting events throughout the fleadh. It is a 10-day event with hundreds of thousands of participants, and there will be traffic management issues. I could go on and on about the complexities of making it a great, safe fleadh in a city that has never hosted it before.

Mr D Bradley: It is just that the parent body of the fleadh, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, tells any potential host location that it should provide £100,000 to host the event. You are saying that it is going to cost you five times that amount.

Ms O'Connor: I do not know what the £100,000 covers. I saw the fleadh in Cavan last year. You could spend £100,000 on temporary toilet facilities before you even start thinking about cleaning the streets. Imagine the volume of litter generated by 300,000 visitors and what that adds to overtime and council costs for waste management alone.

I do not know what the population of Cavan is, but I imagine that it is a reasonably-sized town. We are talking about the town being swamped by a deluge of visitors. There is no way that £100,000 comes anywhere near the cost of running the fleadh. It might cover some of the initial support and setup, but I can absolutely assure you that it certainly will not run a fleadh. We can provide you with the breakdown of the master budget just to give you a feel for how the costs are configured.

Ms S McCarthy: The £100,000 is the basic fee from Comhaltas itself for all the support, framework, history and learning of the fleadh that you pay for and all the support from the bun coiste and the board of Comhaltas. Some of our figures were based on what Cavan had to pay. Cavan County Council had to put in £500,000 from the get-go to deliver the fleadh. We are not exceptional and I would not want the Committee to go away thinking that we are spending five times the amount that any other place has done: that is absolutely not the case.

Mr D Bradley: I think that you have clarified that. There were some references to inclusivity in the City of Culture events. I see from the briefings that a number of bands and organisations from the Protestant/unionist community are participating. Have any efforts been made to ensure that the Protestant/unionist community is engaged in activities around the fleadh?

Ms S McCarthy: At the last count, there were about 25 subcommittees to help develop the project, and one is specifically focused on the engagement of the unionist community in the fleadh. That is made up of people from the unionist community. I think that that is looking at everything, from the young people who come for Scoil Éigse, the big educational component through which young people come from across the island to join in the fleadh, to ensuring that some of the homes that house them are in the Waterside as well as in the city side. There has been a huge effort. As I understand it, some of the major pipe bands will be leading the procession at the opening of the fleadh.

To be honest, and I think that Sharon would say this too, this has been one of the successes of the programme, not only for the fleadh but for something such as Hofesh Shechter — one of the world's top international contemporary dance companies. Instead of merely coming to the city and doing an event, Hofesh Shechter came a year before and auditioned for musicians to be part of the musical component of its final performance piece. Of the 47 musicians on stage, 30 were recruited locally and had been rehearsing and practising with Hofesh Shechter for a year. About five were from the pipe bands and drumming communities. There were two drummers from Nelson Drive. They were phenomenal in that performance, and we would never have had that kind of fusion otherwise.

That approach has been taken not only in the fleadh and in the more localised projects, but across the board. One Big Weekend did the academy for young people in the Nerve Centre for two weeks before One Big Weekend. That tied into the Music Promise, which is the programme that we have been running for the past year, and gave young people an opportunity to work with the top professionals in the industry. Having The Script in the Nerve Centre, working with young people, created a bit of buzz and excitement. That approach has been taken, not only for the fleadh, but across the entire programme.

Mr D Bradley: Thank you very much for your presentation and answers. Congratulations on the success so far; I wish you the best of luck for the rest of the year.

Ms S McCarthy: Thank you, and will we see you at the weekend?

Mr D Bradley: Not this weekend, but you will see me several times before the end of the year.

Mr Ó hOisín: Thank you very much, Shona and Sharon. As a Derry man, even though I do not pay my rates to Derry City Council, I have enjoyed the City of Culture events that I have attended very much. I recognise that Derry has changed dramatically and, perhaps, to a certain extent, unbelievably, this year. I remember going to university in Derry 30 years ago. It was a very different place. This year, there has been a sea change in the way that people look at the city and interact with it. That has been done alongside dealing with the realities and sensitivities that you talked about, Shona.

I very much look forward to the fleadh coming in August, as Dominic said. There is some speculation, which I do not know if you can confirm or deny, that it might happen for a second year. Is there potential for that to happen next year? Given that potential, would the economic benefits that would accrue —

Ms O'Connor: I do not think we will have it the following year; I think it will go elsewhere then. Having established the principle of it coming north of the border, we hope that we are creating a platform for it to come here in the future, be it to our city or any other part of the North. Certainly, we have established that starting point.

Mr Ó hOisín: That might have been wishful thinking on my part.

Ms O'Connor: Having said that, I am not that close to it, but it is my understanding that it might not come next year.

Mr Ó hOisín: Shona, you talked about reaching 74% of ticket sale targets. That is over the entire year?

Ms S McCarthy: Yes.

Mr Ó hOisín: We are five months into it. You are very confident of that going up?

Ms S McCarthy: Yes, definitely.

Mr Ó hOisín: You talked about the 81% occupancy.

Ms O'Connor: That was May.

Mr Ó hOisín: I saw a figure recently, and it might have been only in the local press, saying that that will actually manifest itself only as a 15% increase over the entire year. Is there anything to that?

Ms O'Connor: The 15% would have been based on initial figures during the first couple of months, the January to March period, when we did not have an awful lot of major events that would have attracted international visitors. Obviously it was also the off-season for tourism. It is too early to predict how we will come out at the end of the year. Certainly we have had a series of weekends in which we have been 100% sold out in the city. I have to say that all the benefits are not just accruing to the city itself. The visitor population is being distributed more widely than the city, so the figure is probably higher. We are counting just what we are accruing in the city centre.

Mr Ó hOisín: You talked about the legacy issues and the One Plan. How has that panned out in delivery and timescale? Where are we at?

Ms O'Connor: At the moment, we are looking at which parts of the programme will have a life beyond 2013. The council is looking actively at projects that we would like to agree now as part of the legacy programme. Consultation is ongoing. The council is leading that part of the project, and we are consulting stakeholder groups, such as the economic and community sectors, across the piece.

Mr Ó hOisín: This far into the year, it is difficult for anybody who attended to highlight the best moment; there has been so much. From an observer's viewpoint, I would say that it has gone hitch free. Sometimes we get accused of being whiners, but there has been very little in the way of whining. By way of signing off on this, I have to say that my high point was when I attended a world-famous production and the producer and writer sat either side of me. That was 'Translations' in the Millennium Forum.

Ms S McCarthy: It was a great production.

Mr Ó hOisín: It was absolutely brilliant. Congratulations. I look forward to the rest of the year.

Mr McMullan: Thank you for your presentation. I will be very brief. When it might come back here again, although not next year or the year after, how much do you think your experiences in your year will be cost effective and helpful the next time it is on?

Ms O'Connor: Are you talking about the fleadh, Oliver?

Mr McMullan: Anything at all like that.

Ms O'Connor: It is hard to say. I think that we will be sharing all the learning from the entire year with other cities that follow us in holding the title. As for the fleadh, gosh, it would be inconceivable that if another town in the North were to get an opportunity to host it that we would not share our learning and experience. We would share it in exactly the same way that Cavan very generously shared it with us.

Mr D Bradley: There has been a pattern. It was two years in Cavan and two years in Clonmel.

Ms S McCarthy: Actually, Cavan got it for three years. In fairness, there was huge expectation that it was going to go to Sligo this year. Due to the incredibly collective and convincing argument presented by Derry, we got it, probably by default.

Mr Ó hOisín: And by a lot of hard work.

Ms S McCarthy: That is right. There was a huge amount of hard work by the Cultúrlann and Comhaltas people in the city. In all likelihood, as Sharon said, it will definitely come back to the North in the future. I think that they may owe one to another city next year, and so it would be in the years following that.

Ms O'Connor: One thing that helped win it for us was the fact that we have the One Plan. We had one team that went, and that included all the community. People from organisations such as the PSNI really contributed to that, because there is still anxiety for visitors about this part of the world. Having that joint and unified team made us look as though we are a city coming together, and that was the thing that really got us the goodwill that landed it for the city and the region.

Mr McMullan: I will just finish by saying that I do not think you could have pulled this off unless you had the co-operation of all the city of Derry; every part of it. Can I say that the glens will be participating in one of your events very shortly.

Ms S McCarthy: I have recognised people from the glens participating in loads of stuff already.

Mr Ó hOisín: You have been warned. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McMullan: Congratulations on what you are doing.

Mr Hilditch: The Committee has been to Liverpool in recent times during its work programme and has had a look at the improvements in a city that has come on a lot in recent decades.

I know that you are developing your legacy programme, but one of the legacies that appeared to have been left in Liverpool was a confident community. Do you see things developing along those lines at the minute? No matter whether you were checking into a hotel, were in a taxi, or were ordering a beer at the bar, everybody who noticed that you were an outsider would try to interact with you and were selling the city. I do not just mean the welcome host-type training thing, there was a special sort of interaction with people and a confidence, and that appeared to be a legacy of their time as UK City of Culture. In these early stages, do you see that?

Ms O'Connor: We had some very encouraging research done recently by Ilex that we would be happy to share with you. It did not ask specifically about the City of Culture but about how citizens felt about the city and their experience of being in the city. It shows very positive indications that people have a more confident outlook; they like where they live and they take pride in where they live.

I have no doubt that when we come to revisit that research at the other side of this process, we will have a hugely encouraging story to tell. I am a Belfast woman, and to be fair they let me off with that, but when you walk through the city and talk to people every day about the pride they have in the place, it is tangible and palpable. People are emotional about the huge transformation. Physically, the city has been transformed, largely due to the very significant investment that we have enjoyed from the Assembly and the Executive, and we are extremely grateful for it. You can see the physical transformation, but the transformation in people's psyche is more difficult to measure. However, it is real; there is no doubt about it and I am sure we will see the sort of benefit that Liverpool has accrued.

Ms S McCarthy: I think that anybody who watched the highlights of the Big Weekend last Sunday evening and saw how the city looks when it is presented on screen like that, with the river and the refurbished Guildhall, would agree that it looked stunning. People are feeling that in their bones. Not only is their city looking like a city to be proud of and a place in which to love to live and work, but then they have the cultural programme on top of that and the high levels of participation and engagement. With the combination of those factors, it would take a really bitter cynic in the city not to feel that there is a real, genuine positive change going on.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you for your presentation. You are very welcome here. I heard you say earlier that bed nights in May were at 81%, and that for this weekend they are at 91%. I appreciate you said that the Tourist Board and so on are compiling figures that I presume will be available at the end of the year, but do you have any indication at this stage of the level of overnight stays by out-of-state visitors?

Ms O'Connor: We do not have the data on that at this point but we will be happy to provide it to you when we get it. We have had a series of events in which we are monitoring that. Out-of-state visitors are a more difficult nut to crack. We are very much at base camp in selling the region, not least in selling the city. We have had healthy returns. I sat in a restaurant last night surrounded by people from New Zealand and France at the next table, so you can see that we are getting international visitors. We do not have the hard data to support what that quantum is, but as soon as we have it we will be very happy to share that with you.

We are constantly evaluating events. The summer events will be the big ones that will demonstrate that benefit. As Shona said earlier, a lot of our programme in the earlier stages of the year was of more local than international appeal, but we are ramping that up now into those major events. I would say that by the end of the summer we will be in a better place to give you data to support that information and I am happy to commit to come back and provide that to you.

Ms S McCarthy: One of the success stories has been the range of conferences that have come to the city because of the City of Culture title: we have had the NORIBIC conference and the Rotary International conference. This week — and it was not even on our Richter scale — the British Film Institute brought its Screening Literacy programme at which it had 50 European film representatives, all of whom stayed in the city for three nights.

Ms O'Connor: The Presbyterian Assembly is there this week.

Ms S McCarthy: The GAA world congress brought people from all over the world who are involved in the GAA. All these things contribute to the number of international overnight stays, but as Sharon said, we do not have specific data just yet.

Mr Humphrey: That is good. Practically everyone has mentioned inclusivity, so it is obviously important. I raised this issue with departmental officials a few weeks ago, so I have to raise it with you as well. The paper presented by the Department to this Committee, in what was clearly a political decision, made no reference to the UK City of Culture, and the civil servants made no reference to it.

I have spoken to party colleagues in Londonderry who have had meetings with you and are happier than they were. Inclusivity is the key to this. I welcome what Mr Bradley said earlier. If we want to get everyone participating, then everyone has to feel part of it or want to be part of it.

I am looking at a flyer that makes no reference to it. I want to ask you a question about that because some flyers were put out for the Return of Colmcille in the two local papers. They list events that are going to be held from 14 June to 31 August. I know that the Return of Colmcille is happening, but there is also the return of King William to Londonderry this year on the Twelfth. There is no mention of that in this flyer, nor is there any mention of the Maiden City Festival or the Apprentice Boys parade. Why is that?

Ms S McCarthy: On the Colmcille brochure?

Mr Humphrey: Yes. I have it in front of me.

Ms S McCarthy: Aye, but that is the Colmcille brochure.

Mr Humphrey: Yes, but it lists all the events that are taking place.

Ms O'Connor: I do not know what brochure it is. You need to understand that there are tiers of the cultural programme. There are some events that the Culture Company is delivering directly. We are responsible for the marketing of the Culture Company's official programme. Where we have given money to third parties, such as Maiden City Festival, the GAA and the Walled City Tattoo, as examples of what might be seen as orange and green, they are doing their own marketing. In fact, the Walled City Tattoo organisers have done a fabulous job because their marketing has been spectacular.

Mr Humphrey: The Tattoo is the last one listed, but the three events that I mentioned are not.

Ms O'Connor: I do not know whether they are formally in the programme or not.

Ms S McCarthy: The Apprentice Boys parade is not part of the official programme.

Mr Humphrey: The Maiden City Festival and 12 July —

Ms S McCarthy: If the Maiden City Festival is not included that would be an error.

Mr Humphrey: That is the point that I am making. That is the significant festival in that city —

Ms S McCarthy: Absolutely, and the Culture Company is significantly supporting it.

Mr Humphrey: — for the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community and it is omitted from this.

Ms O'Connor: May I say that if there are any omissions, then they are errors of omission rather than commission. We have not set out to exclude anyone from the marketing. Not every event will be featured in every piece of marketing literature. We will take that example back and look at it, but I stress that there has definitely not been a decision to exclude any project.

Mr Humphrey: I make the point not to score points but to say that to maximise what you have both talked about, you need to have the maximum number of people participating from across the city and the communities in that city and across the region. Apart from anything else, if you are looking at that brochure, people are not going to see that.

Ms S McCarthy: That is really important, and that is why I said that we are listening all the time. We do not always get it 100% right. We have had complaints from the other side of the community about omissions because we forgot to put in this or that, but it is never deliberate. When people give us that feedback we take it on board and we address it.

The Deputy Chairperson: It remains for me to thank you for your presentation and for answering the questions. I wish you well for the remainder of the year.