



Development

Titanic Quarter

The largest planning application ever handled in Northern Ireland has been lodged for part two of a regeneration programme which aims to inject new life into Belfast's waterfront. Innovative plans for the Titanic Quarter show clusters of 'villages' built around a green space and linked by tree-lined boulevards. Boating ponds, playing fields and orchards will sit alongside commercial and residential spaces. The iconic central building will include an interactive Titanic museum, community space, art galleries and a large banqueting area. The project will be developed over 15 to 20 years but its backers expect some of the building work to be completed by 2012, in time for the Titanic's centenary celebration. The site is also home to the Northern Ireland Science Park and a new multi-million pound campus will also be built to house the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education.

Funding for Crumlin Jail

The long-awaited transformation of one of Northern Ireland's most infamous Victorian landmarks has received a major funding boost. The façade of the Crumlin Road jail has just secured £1m for a much-needed facelift. The restoration projected is expected to be completed by June this year. The jail was designed by Charles Lanyon and was built between 1843-1845. Heavy security fencing was removed from both the jail and the courtyard in 2002 as part of a £10m project aimed at developing a tourist attraction to rival Alcatraz. Plans are underway to develop the courthouse into a 161-bedroom luxury hotel.

Renewing Communities

BVCB has been appointed to manage a Visitor Servicing Project under the Renewing Communities Initiative. Renewing Communities is a government funded programme to address and tackle disadvantage in protestant working class areas of Belfast. The key aim of the project is to help raise the profile of tourism and the economic benefits that it can bring to the Shankill and North Belfast, through the provision of visitor servicing infrastructure and training.

The project is being delivered by Jayne O'Neile, who joins the BVCB team for 18 months. Jayne has a strong track record in both tourism and community training having managed an Open Learning Centre for seven years in East Belfast, and four years as Sales and Marketing Manager with Chieftain and Maple Leaf Tours. Jayne will be working closely with community representatives and councillors to develop product and implement a series of visitor servicing tools. This will include the development of cultural trails, the production of visitor information literature, signage, and training for local people in the Shankill and North Belfast.

Marketing

Belfast Food Outlets to be Rated Online

Eating establishments in Belfast are soon to be rated on a new website to be set up by Belfast City Council. The website, which will be known as 'Scores on the Doors', will provide a facility for consumers to be able check whether the standard of the food served at the premises is up to scratch. A number of Councils across the UK have already signed up to the pilot initiative and this month, Belfast City Council voted to follow suit. The majority of food outlets, including restaurants, cafés and takeaways in Belfast are already believed to be of a high standard and the City Council wants this information to be readily available at the click of a mouse. A rating structure is expected to be introduced with premises awarded stars on a scale of 0-5, with five being for the highest possible.

Belfast Outsells Britain

Figures released by Belfast City Centre Management show retailers in the city outperformed their counterparts in Britain in the run-up to Christmas. The Belfast Retail Tracker shows year-on-year sales increase of 3.2% in comparison to a UK average of 2.5%. Figures for January also show strong performance for Belfast, with year-on-year sales growth of 2% and individual stores reporting individual increases in double digit figures.

Deanes gets (another) Michelin Star

Michael Deane, Northern Ireland's most successful restaurateur has been awarded a Michelin Star for the 11th year, making it the longest consecutive run in Northern Ireland. Deanes Brasserie has also maintained the coveted Bib Gourmand as one of just three restaurants in Northern Ireland to hold this award. Both restaurants are currently in the process of a major refurbishment and will re-open in February 2007. Deanes Restaurant Group has expanded already this year with the very successful launch of Deanes at Queen's, a unique joint venture with Queen's University and follows on from last year's expansion of Deanes Deli in Bedford Street with Deanes Vin Cafe.

New Marketing Director at BVCB

BVCB are pleased to announce the appointment of our new Director of Marketing, Susie McCullough.

Belfast Logo to Undergo £125,000 makeover

Belfast will get a £125,000 image makeover with the 'smiley face' that has been its signature trademark for the past decade to set to be a thing of the past. Belfast City Council is investing in a development and redesign project as part of its rebranding. The new image should represent 'collective pride in our past and ambition for our future'. It is intended to promote the city on a local level and to tourists.

Access

Rail Fare spends up 25%

Money spent on fares on Northern Ireland's rail network increased by almost 25% in just three months, a survey revealed this month. Weekly passenger receipts over the holiday period between July and September last year rose by £80,000 to £420,000 compared to the previous quarter, according to Government statistics.

Rapid Transit Study for Belfast

Feasibility studies on rapid transit proposals for Belfast have just been commissioned. The studies will prepare public transport appraisals to assess the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) proposals for the EWAY rapid transit scheme which would run between Dundonald and Belfast city centre and a CITI (City Airport Titanic Quarter Route) rapid transit service. It would link the city centre with the Titanic Quarter development, George Best Belfast City Airport and new retail development in the Belfast Harbour Estate. It is envisaged that WS Atkins will present a report of its findings to the Department around mid 2007.

Events in February

Music

Event	Venue	Date	Info
Van Morrison	Waterfront Hall	9th Feb	Click Here
Belfast Nashville Songwriter's Festival	Various	Until 25th Feb	Click Here
The 4 of Us	Empire Music Hall	22nd Feb	Click here

Arts

Event	Venue	Date	Info
Much Ado About Nothing	Lyric Theatre	Until 24th Feb	Click Here
Handel Birthday Concert	St Peter's Cathedral	23rd Feb	Click here
No Mean City Exhibition	Belfast City Hall	Until 30th June	Click here

Tickets Currently on sale in BWC

3rd Annual Belfast/Nashville Songwriters Festival 21st-25th Feb feat Nanci Griffith, Paul Brady, Colin Hay

Féile an Earraigh presents Mary Black in concert in Clonard Monastery Church Fri 9th Feb @ 8PM tickets £10

An Culturlann present 'Oiche na mBan' Women's night in Culturlann on 1st Feb to celebrate St Bridget's day (men welcome too!) also Padraig Rynne renowned accordionist - 24th Feb

Opera Theatre Company Ireland present 'Hansel & Gretel' in Stranmillis College Theatre 16th Feb Tickets £15/£12conc

Ulster Orchestra range of Fri night concerts kicking off the month on 9th Feb with Weber Brahms & Sibelius

Moving on Music present 'Ingrid Laubrock' jazz quintet in SARC (Sonic Arts Research Centre) Chlorine Gdns 17th Feb

Ulster Orchestra plays Carl Davis' Oscar winning film music 3rd Mar @ the Waterfront

Cahoots NI present the world premiere of Cuchulain: The Hound of Ulster in Tower St Theatre (BIFHE Newtownards Rd) 30/31 Mar tickets available BWC only

Tickets available for this year's Titanic – Made in Belfast Festival – a range of Bus, Boat, Talks & walking tours plus an exhibition in City Hall from 7th – 14th Apr – contact BWC for further info

Tickets available now for the exhibition launch and lecture to mark the centenary of the Belfast Dockers Strike. This free event will take place on 30th Apr in City Hall @ 7PM

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

For further info contact maeve@belfastvisitor.com
or for a full list events visit www.gotobelfast.com