

**Birmingham**

**Festivals Strategy**

**2014 – 2017[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**July 2013**

**Context**

Birmingham’s Cultural Strategy, Big City Culture 2010-15, articulated a vision for

***“Birmingham to be a continually surprising city where the vibrancy and diversity of culture inspire the people who live, work in and visit the city, and bring economic success and international recognition*.”**

Birmingham City Council’s financial position continues to be very challenging and its investment needs to be strategically targeted against key outcomes to ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively. Festivals have a clear and demonstrable role in attracting cultural visitors to the city and thereby to the Council’s priority of inclusive economic growth.

They make a particularly strong contribution to the city’s reputation as a vibrant place to live, work and visit and provide a wide range of opportunities for residents, as artists and audiences. Outdoor free events improve accessibility of culture to local people and create a sense of excitement and community, supporting the Council’s priorities for social inclusion and cultural participation.

Birmingham’s festival sector is a relatively under-developed part of the city’s considerable cultural infrastructure and there is broad support for growing the sector, and driving maximum value from investment in it, through better co-ordination of funding sources and more effective promotion of events.

**Approach**

Birmingham City Council has consulted over 50 festival organisations in the city and held discussions with strategic partners. It has considered how three comparator cities, Edinburgh; Montreal; and Rotterdam, all of which have international reputations as “festival cities”, successfully support growth and development. The best practice from these has been assimilated and blended into a new strategic approach tailored specifically for Birmingham.

There are a number of different types of festivals and events in Birmingham, which can be categorised as follows:

* Large Scale Arts & Culture Festivals
* Small Scale Arts & Culture Festivals
* Commercial Music Festivals
* Community Festivals
* Civic Events
* Major Sports Events

This Festivals Strategy focuses on support for the larger arts and cultural festivals including commercial music festivals. At the same time, the approach taken will enable more effective co-ordination and promotion of other events and festivals in the city, creating a more coherent visitor offer with greater impact.

**Festivals Birmingham**

Birmingham City Council will establish *Festivals Birmingham,* a unit to support, develop and fund the arts and cultural festivals in the City. The Council will work in partnership with other key funders on the Board of this unit, commissioning activities against clear criteria relating to economic, social and cultural impact.

**Mission**

Birmingham aspires to be a leading UK and international destination for cultural festivals and events that both attract cultural tourists to visit and stay in the city, and provide a vibrant programme for residents to enjoy, thereby generating positive economic benefit for Birmingham, contributing to the cultural development of the city and providing amenity for its residents.

**Aims**

*Festivals Birmingham* aims to support this mission by:

* Ensuring a balanced festival programme for residents and tourists accross the year
* Encouraging a positive image for the City as a culturaly vibrant place to visit
* Creating a knowledge centre for festivals and providing Birmingham’s cultural community and festival organisers access to specialised expertise and services
* Establishing an investment programme, linked to clear criteria for support and based on independent and objective judgement of potential impact, and allows for forward planning.

**Investment Programme**

To establish the type and level of support provided festivals will be categorised into three groups:

**Signature Festivals**

These are established events that already have a national profile and visitors and have potential to generate more overnight stays in the City.

**Growth Festivals**

These are established or growing events that have potential and ambition to achieve national profile and attract visitors to the City.

**New Festivals**

These are new or recently established events that have the ambition to become Growth or Signature events, although some will simply be one-off, responding to specific situations.

*Festivals Birmingham* will make three yearcommitments to support Signature and Growth Festivals and one year commitments to New Festivals, starting in 2014-15.

**Functions**

Festivals Birmingham will

* Co-ordinate the Festival diary management for Birmingham
* Facilitate the success of events in the agreed programme, acting as a one-stop shop for navigating and brokerage of relationships between festivals and event organisations, the Council and other agencies
* Co-ordinate city dressing and promotional spaces controlled by the partners
* Co-ordinate marketing and press support
* Advise on and ensure the safe and orderly use of public spaces
* Build intelligence to create a database of suitable city spaces and broker access to them
* Provide professional advice and guidance and facilitate a festivals networking group
* Oversee the festivals investment process

It will explore

* New sources of investment to support the programme
* The potential for co-ordination of an intern scheme and volunteering programme
* Mentoring and capacity building for start-up festivals

**Next Steps**

1. To establish the Board of Festivals Birmingham and agree its Terms of Reference
2. To determine robust criteria on which to base investment decisions to ensure a balanced programme and to develop an evaluation framework
3. To administer an open access investment programme for 2014-17 in a transparent manner
4. To develop clear roles and responsibilities for staff
5. To develop a marketing strategy and a policy for the co-ordination of promotional resources
6. To bring forward proposals for policies and practices in relation to health and safety and development of a database of spaces
7. To establish a networking group for festivals
1. This document summarises the strategy produced by Festivals and Events International for Birmingham City Council in May 2013. The strategy will underpin a Green Paper on support of cultural events to be issued in July 2013 as a means to engaging local residents in a dialogue to inform the Council’s budget consultation for 2014+ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)