

# Overview

**Lesley Ann O'Donnell**  
Senior Manager,  
Culture, Tourism & Events



© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
**Belfast 2026**



# What is The Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (All-Ireland Fleadh)?

- ❖ Largest global celebration of Irish traditional music, dance & culture
- ❖ Second time hosted in NI – Derry~Londonderry hosted in 2013
- ❖ Concerts, sessions, awards, competitions & schools
- ❖ Runs Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2026
- ❖ 600,000 – 800,000 attendees across the week
- ❖ Ethos of inclusion, celebration and volunteerism



# Who are Comhaltas?

- ❖ **CCÉ is a volunteer-led, non-profit cultural movement founded in 1951, with over 450 branches in 22 countries.**
- ❖ **CCÉ plays a vital role in preserving Irish traditions through music classes, events, and the Fleadh series.**
- ❖ **In Northern Ireland, CCÉ has 47 branches engaging over 5,500 members and hosting thousands of events annually with over 70,000 direct engagements.**
- ❖ **Partnerships and collaborations are central to CCÉ's work, including Northwest Cultural Partnership and the Royal Society for Pipe Bands Association (NI), in recent years.**
- ❖ **Ards CCÉ are our host branch for Fleadh Belfast, it will be their 50-year anniversary in 2026, as well as the Fleadh Cheoil's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



# Why is Belfast hosting Fleadh Cheoil?

Belfast aspires to host an inclusive, sustainable Fleadh Cheoil, generating significant economic and social benefits such as:

- ❖ **Stimulating tourism economy & long-term inclusive growth**
- ❖ **Vibrancy that attracts visitors, investors and talent**
- ❖ **Promoting UNESCO City of Music status**
- ❖ **Positioning Belfast as an international events destination**
- ❖ **Create lasting benefits for local community**
- ❖ **Anticipated economic return in excess of £60 million**
- ❖ **Confirmed for 2027**



# What does the Fleadh involve?

- ❖ Core programme takes place in city centre during week 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> August 2026
- ❖ This involves schools, competitions, live music, instrument making, talks & awards. The city centre will also have a programme of music and cultural events
- ❖ There will be a city-wide fringe programme taking place in the lead up and during Fleadh
- ❖ There will be organic live sessions with musicians popping up across the city during that week in streets, public spaces and bars

**Road Closures will have to take place in the city centre to accommodate pedestrianisation of core area with considerations on:**

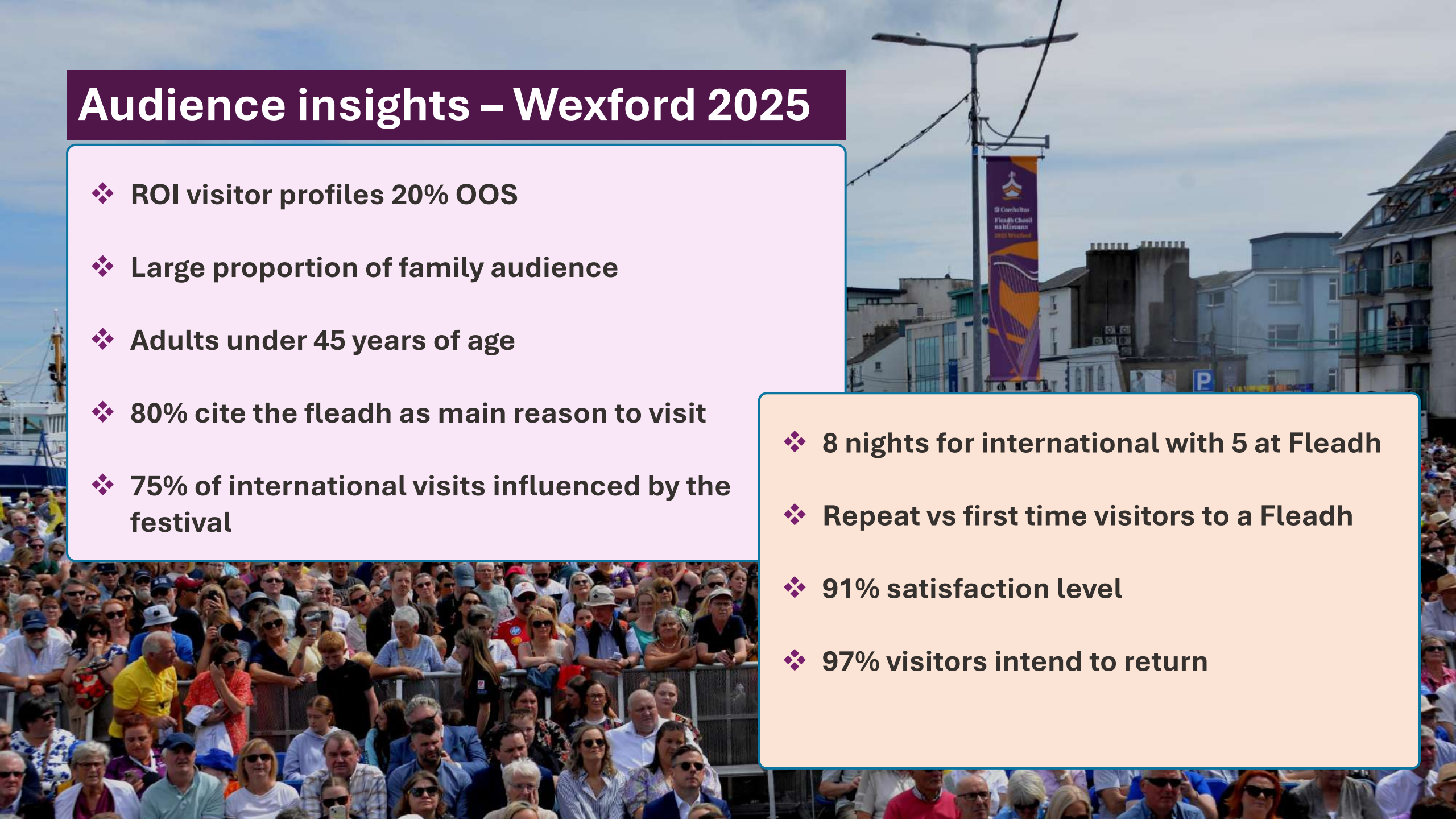
- ✓ Keeping public safe
- ✓ Enabling emergency service access
- ✓ Keeping as many car parks open as possible
- ✓ Keeping public transport functioning
- ✓ Enabling a method for deliveries



# Audience insights – Wexford 2025

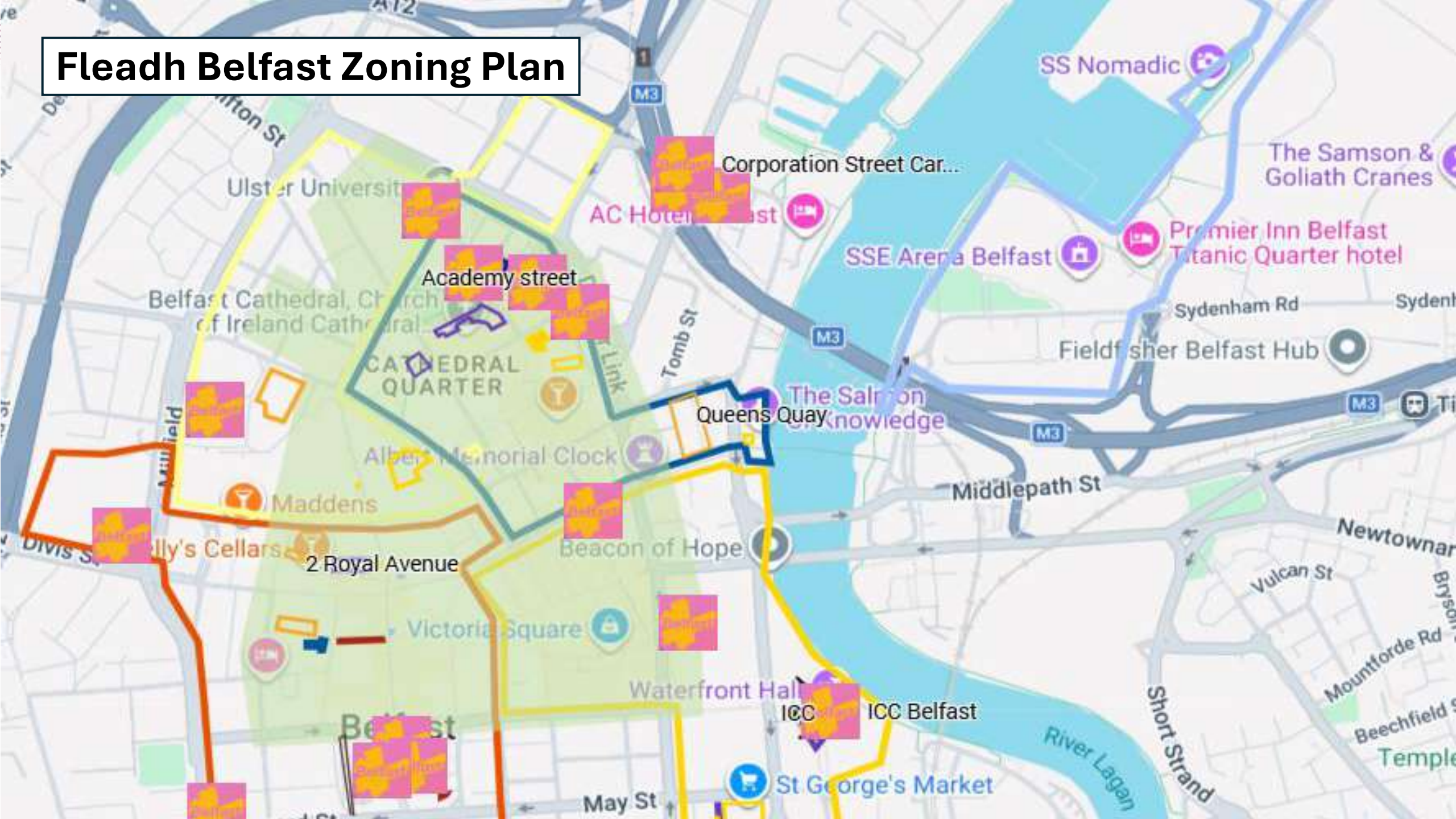
- ❖ ROI visitor profiles 20% OOS
- ❖ Large proportion of family audience
- ❖ Adults under 45 years of age
- ❖ 80% cite the fleadh as main reason to visit
- ❖ 75% of international visits influenced by the festival

- ❖ 8 nights for international with 5 at Fleadh
- ❖ Repeat vs first time visitors to a Fleadh
- ❖ 91% satisfaction level
- ❖ 97% visitors intend to return





# Fleadh Belfast Zoning Plan



# Comhaltas Core Programme

## Competitions and Scoil Eigse Ulster University

### Scoil Eigse Sunday–Friday

Sunday 2– Friday 7 August 2026

### Comhaltas Competitions Friday–Sunday

Friday 7–Sunday 9 August 2026

## Competition/Awards/ Events Venues

- ❖ ICC/Waterfront
- ❖ Ulster Hall
- ❖ City Hall
- ❖ Assembly Buildings
- ❖ 2 Royal Avenue
- ❖ St Anne’s Cathedral
- ❖ The MAC



# What else will be in the city centre?

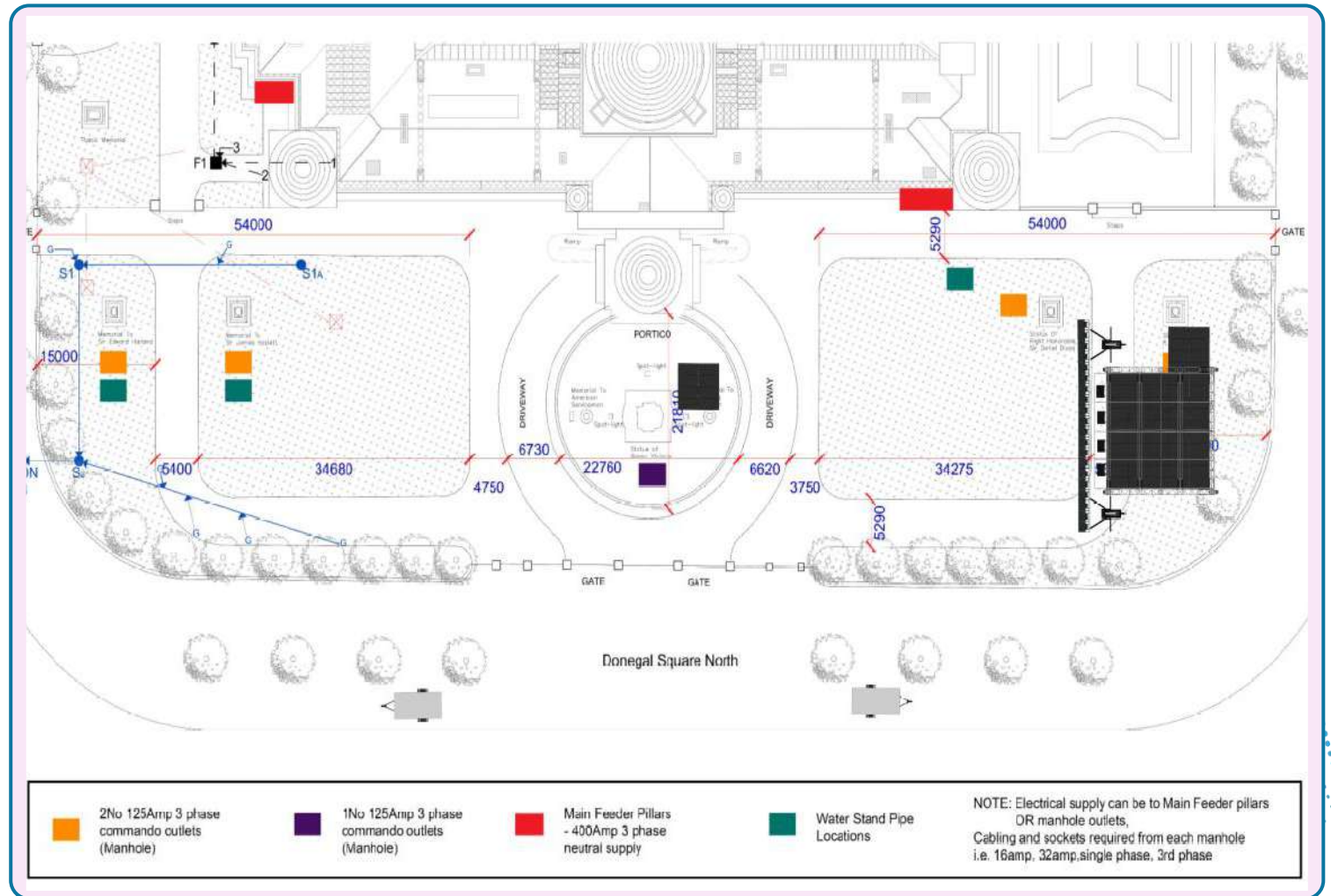
The team are currently mapping out sites and venues across the city for:

- ❖ **Event Control**
- ❖ **Strategic Command Centre**
- ❖ **Traffic Information and Control Centre**
- ❖ **Accessibility Hub**
- ❖ **Sustainability Hub**
- ❖ **International Hub**
- ❖ **Irish Language Hub**
- ❖ **Ulster Scots Hub**
- ❖ **Medical Hub**
- ❖ **Volunteer Hub**
- ❖ **Food Hub**
- ❖ **Corporate and VIP Hospitality**
- ❖ **Ticketing & Information Points**
- ❖ **Fleadh Shop and Merchandise Area**
- ❖ **Quiet Zones**
- ❖ **Exhibitions, Tours and Trails**
- ❖ **Instrument Making**



# Main Stage - Gig Rig - at City Hall

- Mostly amateur/voluntary performances from communities and Comhaltas branches, 30min slots
- Headliners in evenings 7-11pm
- Audiences of up to 4,000
- Free to access/ no tickets
- All week – 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Aug
- Music playing 11am – 11pm
- No alcohol



# Belfast Fringe Programming Approach

The Belfast Fleadh Fringe Programme will complement the Comhaltas competitions, concerts and the Scoil Éigse, animating the city with inclusive, creative & celebratory events.

- ❖ **Celebrate and complement the Fleadh Cheoil's core events**
- ❖ Ensuring representation of traditional, cross-genre, and community-driven content
- ❖ **Showcase Belfast's diversity — ethnically, culturally, and artistically.**
- ❖ Engage families, visitors and residents
- ❖ **Activate public spaces and cultural venues across the city**
- ❖ Support and showcase local artists, communities and cultural organisations
- ❖ **Ensure inclusivity & affordability, mix of free and low-cost ticketed events**
- ❖ Ensure capacity for spontaneous or pop-up performances in public spaces
- ❖ **Incorporate accessibility and sustainability measures**
- ❖ Work collaboratively with Comhaltas, and Ards CCE





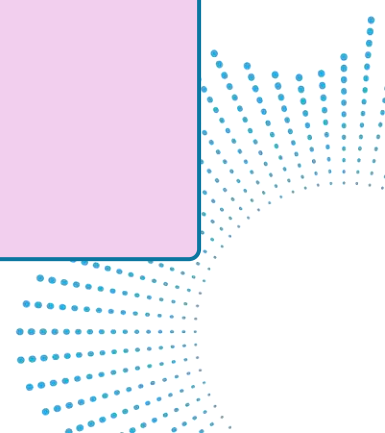
The Fleadh Fringe Programme will align with our strategic themes across Culture & Tourism including:

**A City of Stories - Heritage and Tradition** Focus on learning and experiencing traditional music, dance, and storytelling across all cultures.

**Made in Belfast - Innovation in Tradition** Highlight contemporary arts blending traditional Irish and world music with other genres, cultures and art forms to create a new, innovative offering.

**A City Exploring – Global Connections** Explore the links between traditional cultures and other world traditions. Celebrate our UNESCO City of Music international connections in Creative Cities Network.

**A City Belonging - Community Inclusion** Emphasise local talent and community involvement with inclusive opportunities for participation



## **City Centre Fringe Programme – animating the city centre**

**Programme curated across city centre venues, halls, public spaces, squares and streets showcasing and celebrating local talent and culture.**

## **City-wide Fringe Programme – events across our city**

**Programme curated across North, South, East, and West Belfast in the lead up to and during the Fleadh itself. Working closely with community venues and cultural organisations to co-design content.**

- 1. We would encourage pubs to consider not scheduling/programming musicians or performances throughout the week, we ask you make space for musicians to come to your venue to start sessions organically to align with The Fleadh tradition.**
- 2. Commercial venues are responsible for programming their own gigs/ events/ performances. If in alignment with traditional music and folk themes of Fleadh – we can include these in our promotional activity.**
- 3. Council have micro-grants available for events led by cultural and community sectors and venues on a not-for-profit basis, led by our Curators - City Centre/City Wide**

# Volunteer Programme

- **1500 volunteers (cc 2000 applications)**
- **1000 people expressed interest and registered**
- **Several talks taken place in Universities, Colleges, Government Depts, Over 50s health days and more are in the diary**
- **Primary focus has been on students through October- QUB, Belfast Met, NRC, UU, etc.**
- **Extensive list of employers contacted in November**

**VOLUNTEER** **NOW**  
*connect · build · change*

**“Join our volunteer team and  
become the heartbeat of the Fleadh!”**

A range of roles including:

- **Street Ambassadors**
- **Competition Support**
- **Venue Specific Volunteers**
- **Customer Service**
- **Accessibility Support**
- **Team Leaders**



# Accommodation Planning

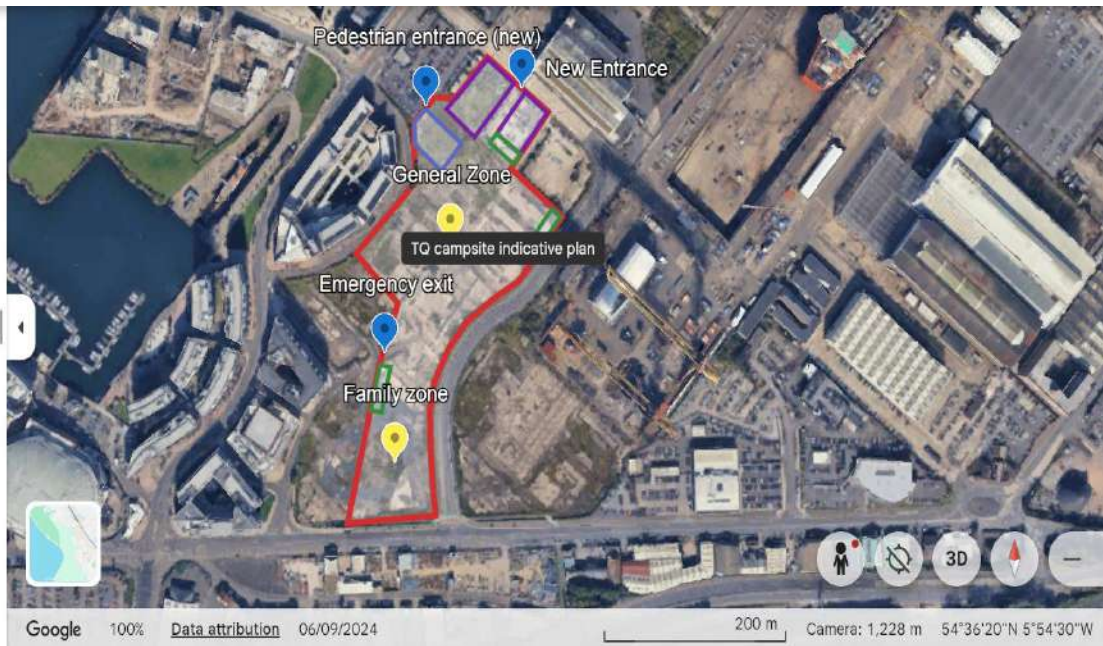


© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
Belfast 2026

# Camping Provision

## Titanic Quarter

- Map contents
- Campsite perimeter
  - Family zone
  - General Zone
  - Carpark
  - Carpark
  - food and communal area
  - toilet and shower block
  - toilet and shower block
  - toilet and shower block



## Ormeau Park



CAMPING ZONE  
Area: 34 000sqm  
OPTION 1  
8 x 6m Tents (with side paths)  
Quantity: 417

SITE ACCESS  
Entrance to site via Ormeau Embankment



## Falls Park



# Licensing



© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
Belfast 2026



# Entertainment Licensing

- Well-established regimes for grant, renewal, variation applications.
- Thinking of altering your premises? – contact us.
- Thinking about providing indoor or outdoor entertainment and no entertainments license? – contact us.
- Licensees – remember your responsibilities & license conditions
- Increased DPIs and engagement with licensees

**Applications for the Grant or Variation of an Entertainments License to be submitted by 30 April 2026.**

**Contact: [licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk)**





# Pavement Café Licensing

**Crowd mapping - to establish areas within road closure area where:**

- pavement cafés could extend their footprint if desired.
- we may need to suspend PCLs at times during the Fleadh for H&S reasons.

**We will be in touch with each Licensee to discuss the specific situation with their pavement café.**

- Want to expand your pavement café footprint? - make a variation application.
- Want to operate a pavement café but have no license? – make an application.
- We will be monitoring licensed pavement cafés to ensure the layout is as agreed and that there aren't unlicensed pavement cafés

**Contact: [licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk)**



# Temporary Street Trading Licensing

- Licensing and Fleadh team establishing suitable locations within the road closure/pedestrian area to accommodate street trading pitches.
- Proposed locations, commodities, license conditions or additional criteria to be considered by the Licensing Committee.
- Once approved applications for temporary street trading at those locations for the Fleadh period will open.

**Opening and Closing Dates for receiving applications any criteria will be widely communicated.**

- Outside the road closure area, we are accepting temporary street trading applications as normal for the period of the Fleadh.
- We will be carrying out street trading enforcement

**Contact:** [licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@belfastcity.gov.uk)

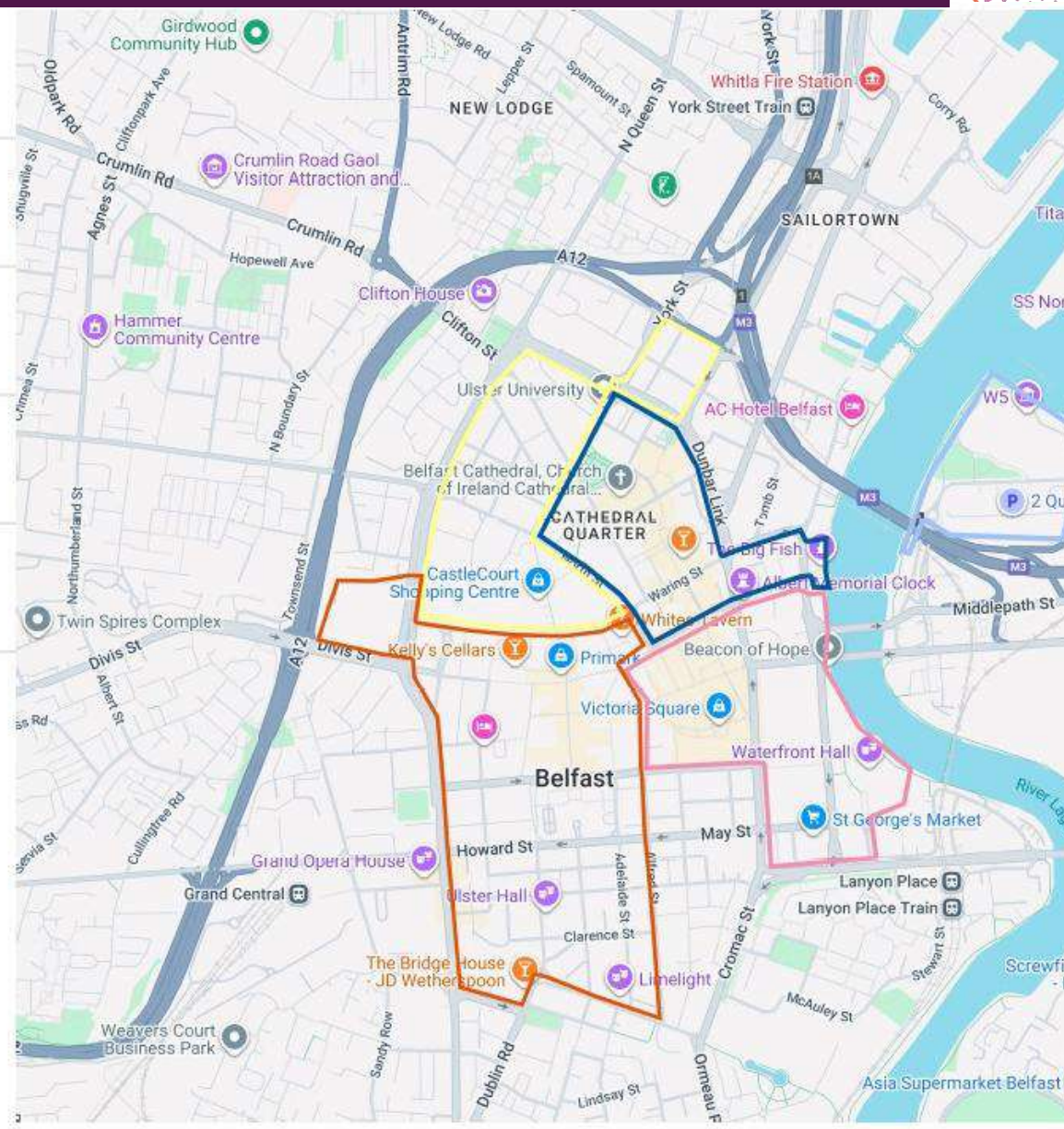
# Proposed Crowd Management



© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
**Belfast 2026**

# Crowd Planning Requirements

- Zone 1
- Zone 2
- Zone 3
- Zone 4
- Zone 5



All Zones

- Large numbers of visitors to Belfast during the Fleadh (Wexford 2024 750,000)
- Hospitality venues in central Belfast are already busy during this period
- Road Closure arrangements will be in place across the city centre

## Signposting

- Potential for maps of the city centre to be printed showing the hospitality offerings available
- Inform visitors unable to access a given area of alternative hospitality options

## **Fleadh Personnel**

- **Event Sec - Stewarding Provider**
- **St John Ambulance - Medical/ First Aid Provider**
- **The SoS Bus - Welfare Provider**
- **Volunteer Now - Signposting/customer servicing**
- **These organisations will be supported by the PSNI and the other Emergency Services**

## **Event Management Structure**

- **An Event Management Plan inc Safety Plan in development**
- **The Event Control Room will be operational during the Fleadh and will be a multi agency hub for the Event**
- **A communications strategy is being developed for the Fleadh using short-wave radios, CCTV (including drone footage) etc**

# Proposed Safety Management Strategy re: Overcrowding Issues

- **Venue operators will manage their premises in accordance with the T&Cs of their Entertainments Licence and/ or H&S Legislation, Fire Safety Legislation etc.**
- **There is however the potential for heavy congestion in some of the narrower streets in the city centre**
- **Increase the capacity of the hospitality sector during the Fleadh inc festival style bars should licensing arrangements allow**
- **Identify areas where there is a potential for overcrowding**
- **Develop a methodology for ‘bench marking’ densities and assessing potential issues (CCTV analysis in the Control Room, experienced ‘boots on the ground’ etc)**
- **Provide barriers, megaphones and signage proximate to areas where it is considered there is the potential for overcrowding**

# Proposed Safety Management Strategy re: Overcrowding Issues

- **Providing trained teams to respond to perceived issues**
- **Providing appropriate communication and event signage arrangements**
- **Liaising with venue operators prior to and during the Fleadh**
- **Close work with the Traffic and Transport provider on the deployment and use of HVM, as well as public / traffic interface plans**

## **Staged Approach:**

- **Stage No 1** - visitors are moving freely
- **Stage No 2** - densities are building – response team directed to area(s) of concern – barriers, megaphones and signage utilised to implement a ‘one – way’ system – may be relaxed if densities drop,
- **Stage No 3** - densities continue to build – barriers, megaphones and signage utilised to implement a ‘one in – one out’ system – will be relaxed in densities drop
- All ‘actions’ will be directed from the Control Room

# Road Closures & Deliveries



© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
**Belfast 2026**

# Road Closure Communication Plan

- **Public Communication Plan** will be developed with venue owners regarding crowd management arrangement in busier areas
- **We will be working with venues to develop a booklet of venue and capacity details to encourage dispersal and movement – protect / resilience of Zone 2 – will need sectoral support to develop**
- **We will be working with venues to develop an Event Signage Plan**
- **We will be looking at venues which are in close proximity to ‘live’ roads- pedestrian to ‘live’ traffic routes – including water filled barriers with signage**
- **We will work with Hospitality Venues on approach to event planning to ensure alignment with wider Fleadh delivery**

# Road Closure Details

## The Need

Due to the large amount of people attending, this will result in large crowds on roads and the need to close the roads to protect them.

## Red Area

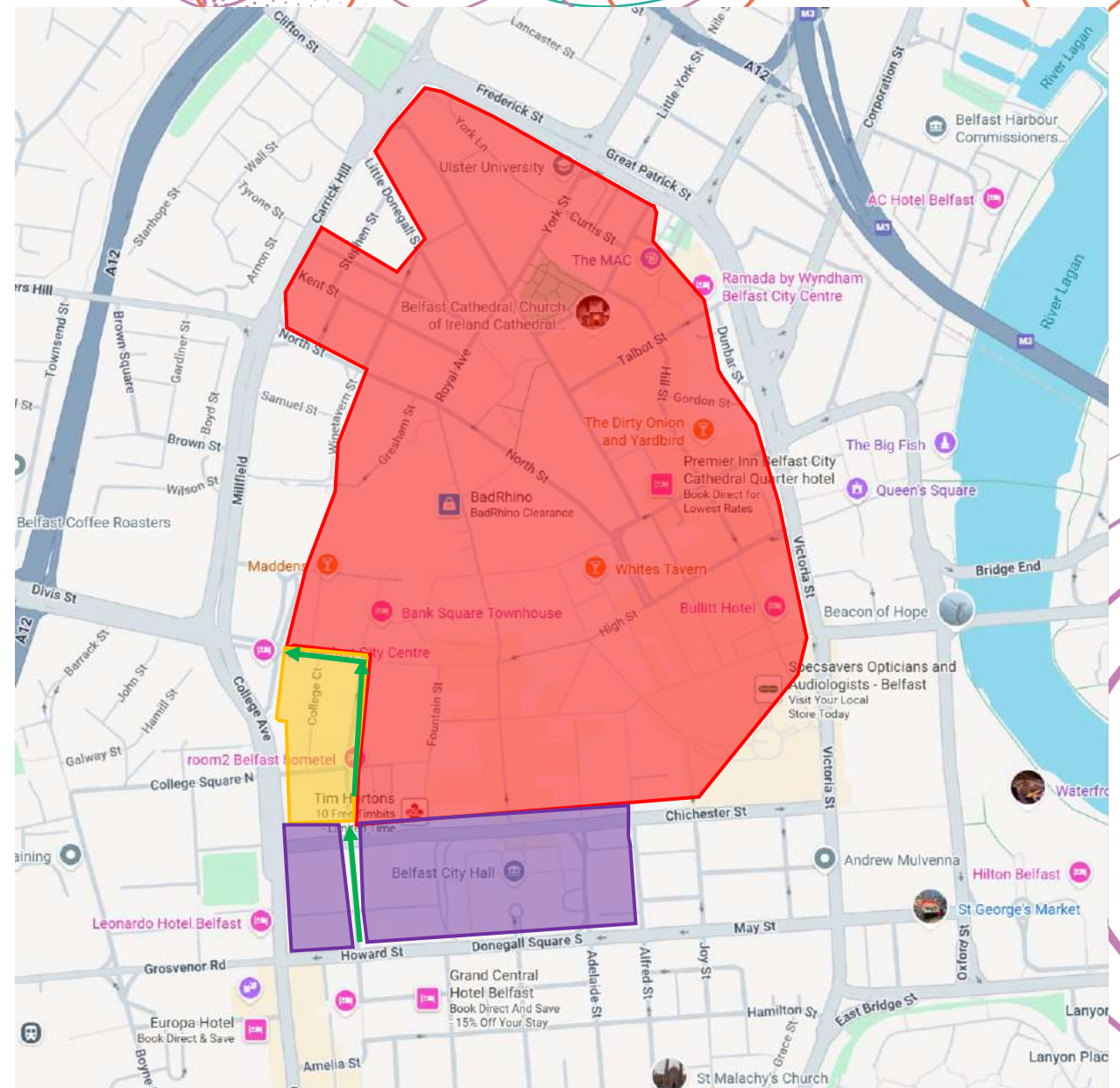
Closed from Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> at around 0600 to Monday 10<sup>th</sup> at around 0500.

## Purple Area

Closed all day on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August and from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> to around 0500 on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August.

## Amber Area

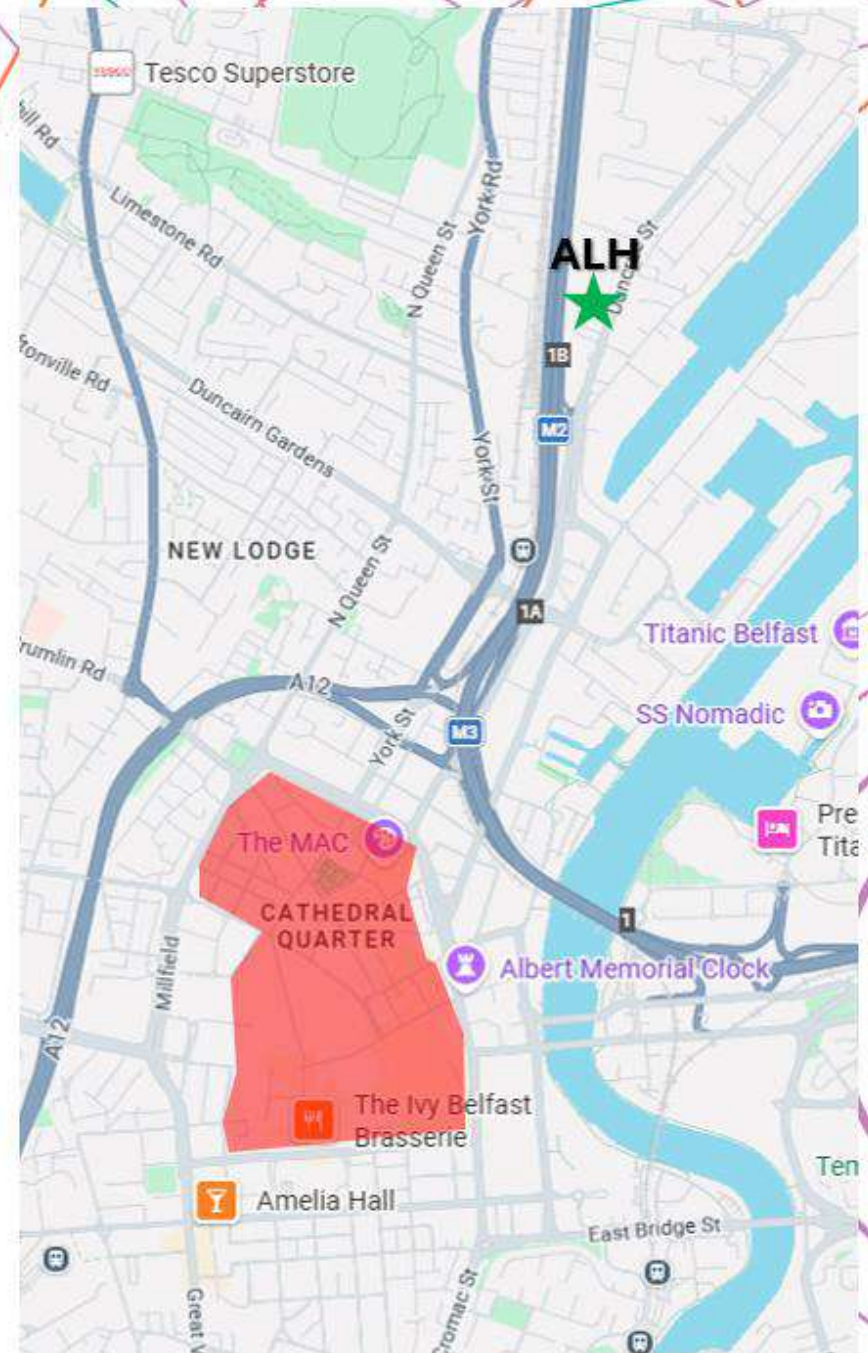
Queen St / Upper Queen St will be kept open as much as possible during the event and only closed if a public safety need arises.



# Taxi operators

Donegall Square North taxi rank relocated to Donegall Square East

Access for taxis will be via Upper Arthur Street and Pattersons Place



# Deliveries to Businesses

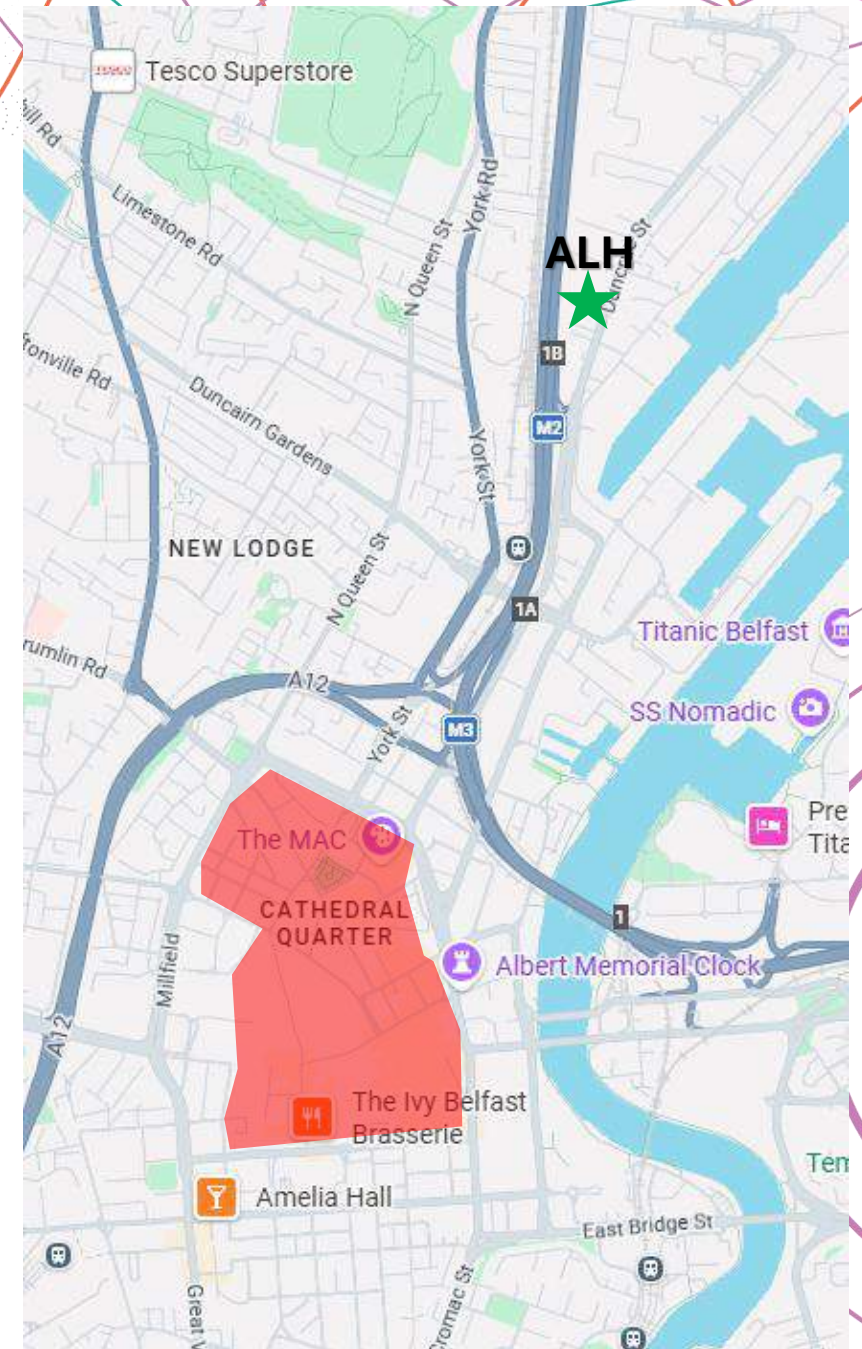
## Deliveries to Businesses

A delivery window of 0400-0800 daily will be open for deliveries (vehicles to be removed by 0900) with passes for access collected in advance or on the day from Accreditation & Logistics Hub.

## Ad hoc / Unplanned Deliveries

A vehicle can drive to the Accreditation & Logistics Hub on Duncrue Street and we will facilitate them as soon and as close as possible.

This will be open 24/7 throughout the road closure period.



# Delivery Window 0400-0800 Daily

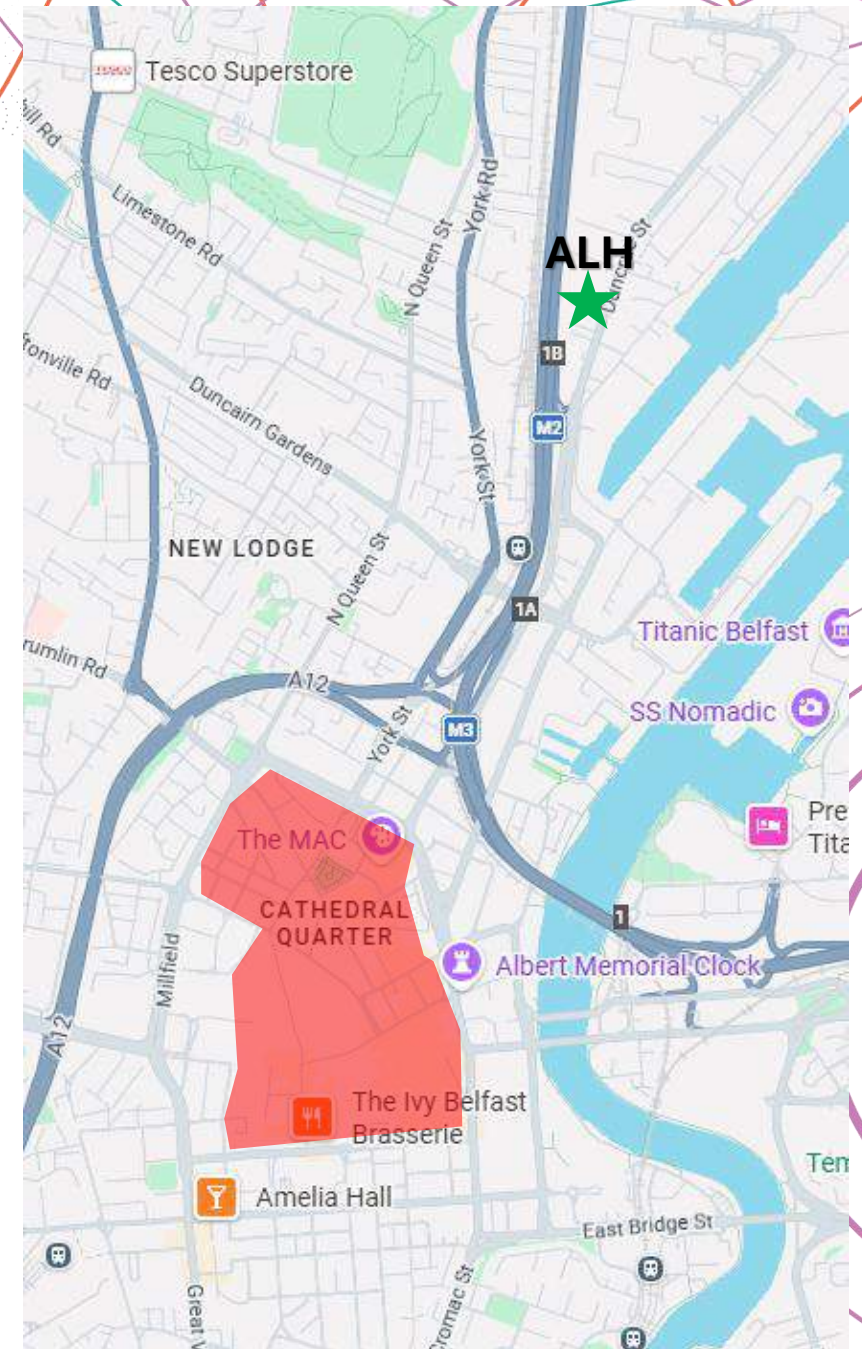
Vehicle / operator obtains “Delivery Pass” from Accreditation & Logistics Hub (ALH) up to a month before Fleadh

Vehicle can enter any zone of road closure from 0400 to 0800 daily without the need to go via ALH

Vehicle must leave the area by 0900

Deliveries at any other time of day have to go to ALH to be checked & accredited, with a check if safe to enter specific streets.

The smaller the vehicle, the easier & quicker access will be.



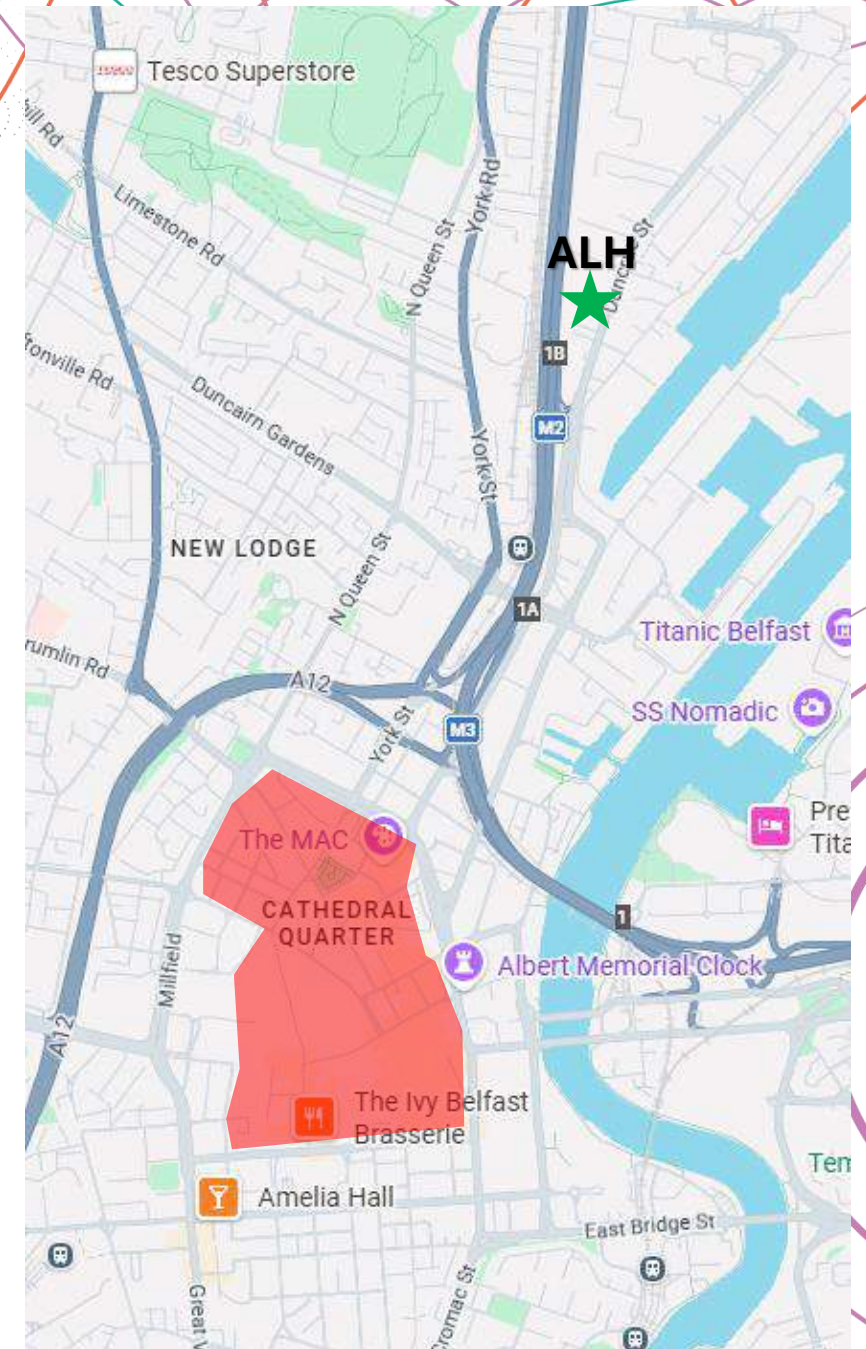
# Unscheduled Vehicle Access

Vehicle goes to Accreditation & Logistics Hub to be checked & accredited

Event Control Room (all safety agencies) will ensure safe to enter the street

Vehicle will be authorised to enter via a specific Road Closure point

Vehicle permitted into Belfast City Centre

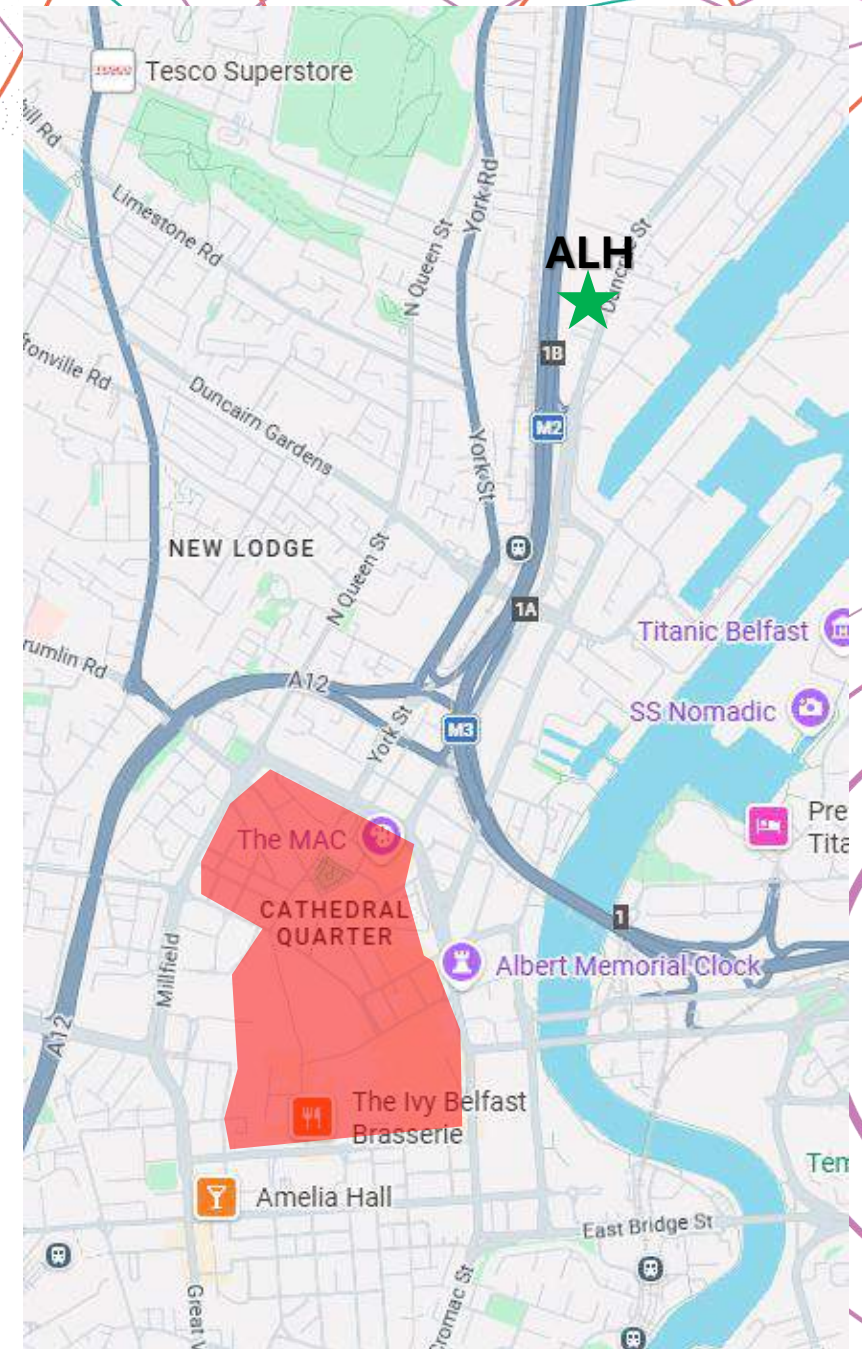


## Access inside Road Closures

The Accreditation & Logistics Hub will be open 24/7 during the road closure periods to help facilitate access.

We will have stewarding teams and a significant safety operation in place within the city centre ensure safety of all pedestrians within the road closures.

This may mean times when vehicles cannot access, but what will be possible is parking close and then using trolleys etc. to get into dense streets.



# Couriers & Delivery Partners

## Royal Mail / DPD / Fedex / UPS / DHL etc

We have already reached out to couriers and mail delivery to engage and will help support their operations.

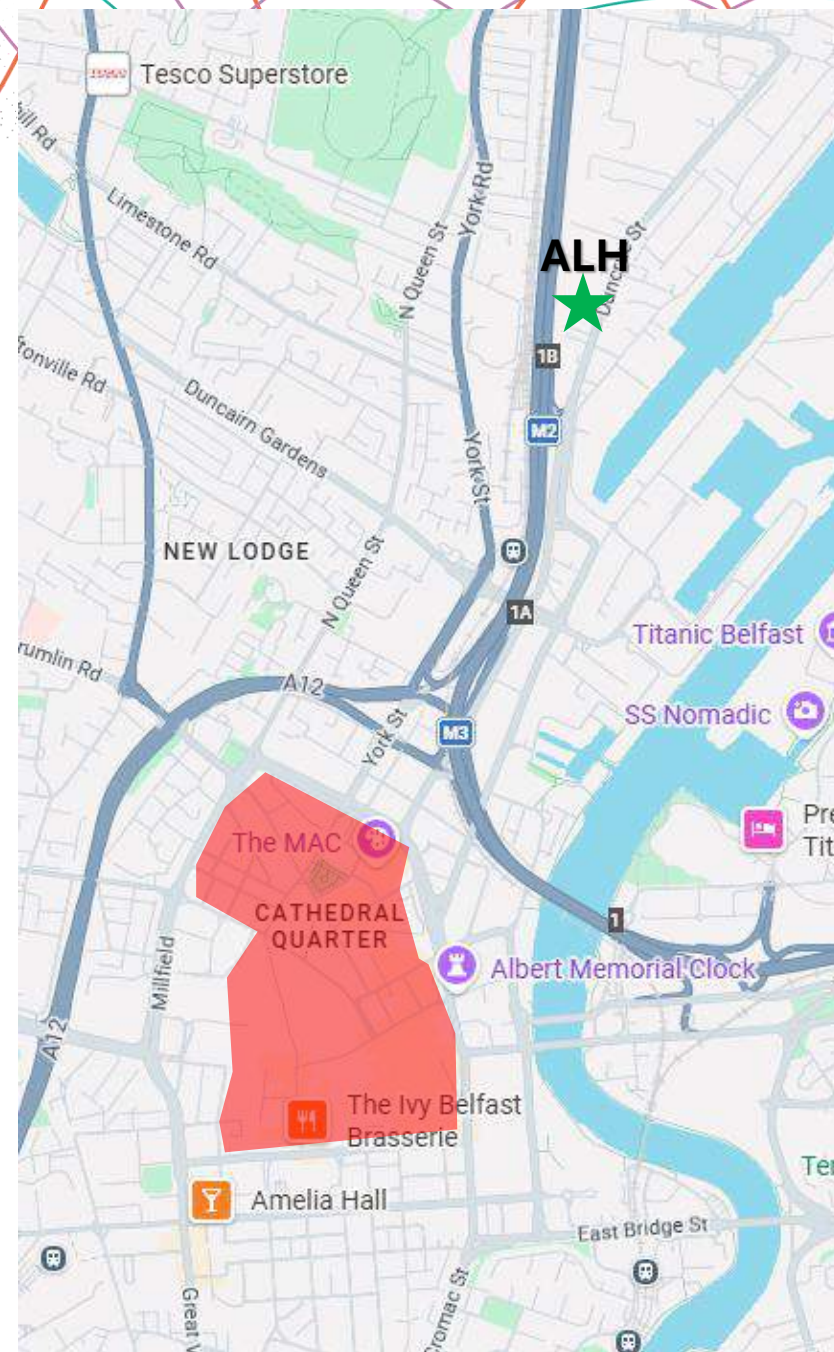
## App based Takeaways

Delivery partners for Uber Eats / Just Eat / Deliveroo etc will NOT be able to enter road closures. Business allowing pickups of food by drivers for this need to arrange to meet drivers at external road closures – where safety and legal to do so – for handing over of food.

Delivery partners on bicycles or foot will not be stopped but should exercise caution in crowds.

## Stenaline & P&O Irish Sea

We are working with both to capture one off GB deliveries to premises, with communications going out to anyone booking freight space in the month run up to the event. On the day such deliveries will be facilitated via the ALH.



# Food & Drink Suppliers

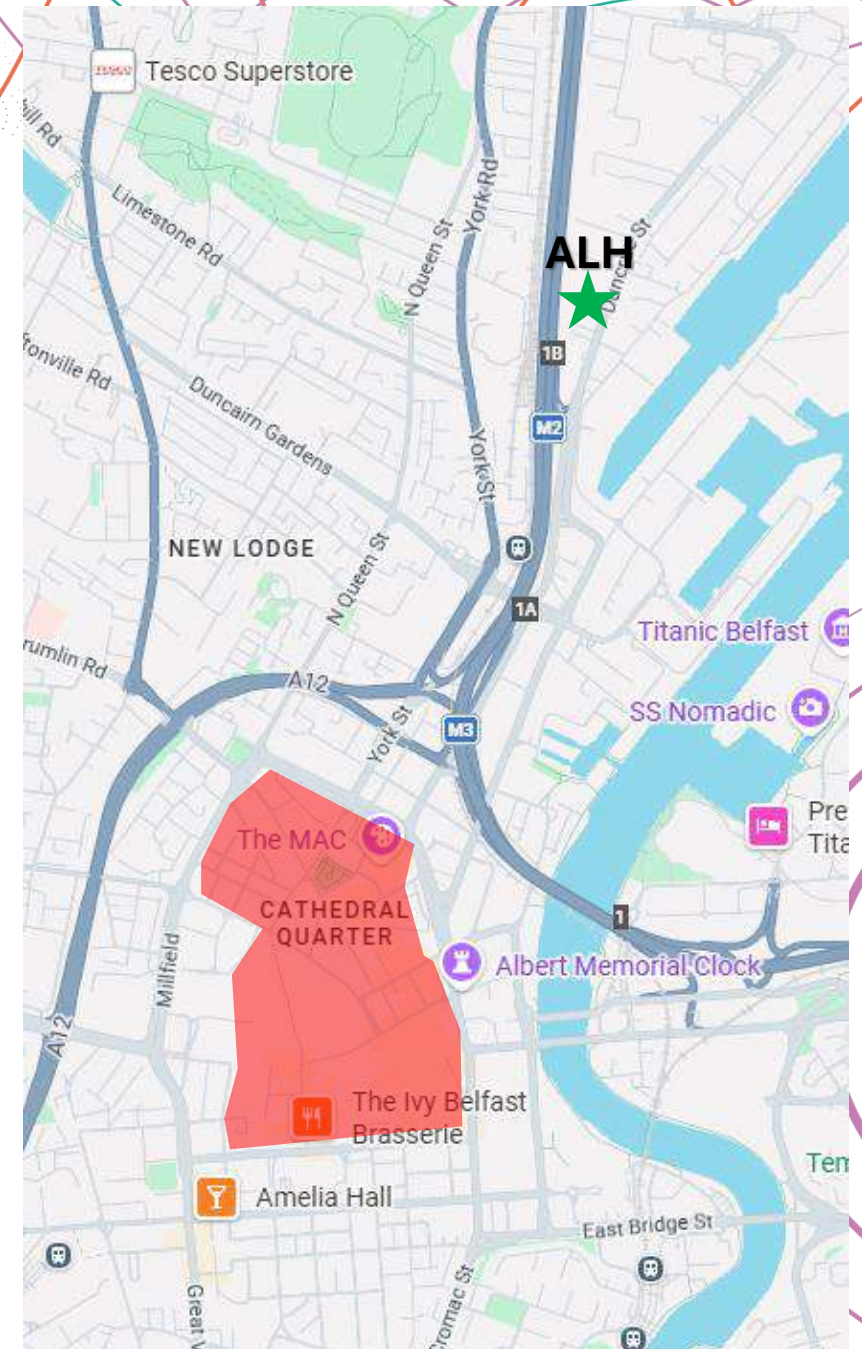
## Storage Space

For those without operational storage close to Belfast City Centre, we are offering space (+ power) for container storage (dry, refrigerated, frozen) or open storage at the Accreditation & Logistics Hub with 24/7 security & access. This is to help restock Belfast.

By basing a small vehicle (i.e. transit) there for restocking we can be efficient and arrange quick and easy on demand access within road closures.

Welfare facilities for your drivers will also be situated there for suppliers using storage onsite. There is also parking for staff working from there if needed.

This will be open the week before Fleadh for stock load in and the week after for stock load out.



## **Park and Rides**

- **There will be provision of Park & Ride services to East, South and North of the city accommodating up to 11,000 spaces throughout the week.**
- **These will operate during the week of the Fleadh to compensate for temporary closure of city-centre car parks.**

## **Emergency Access**

- **There is a full plan in place with all blue light emergency services, they will not have any delay or access issues during this event.**
- **They will join us in Event Control where we will facilitate them in full.**



## **BUSINESS REGISTRATION**

Please use this QR CODE to let us know about your business and suppliers / deliveries that normally happen so we can work with you to facilitate.

**Register  
for more  
information**

## **SUPPLIER REGISTRATION**

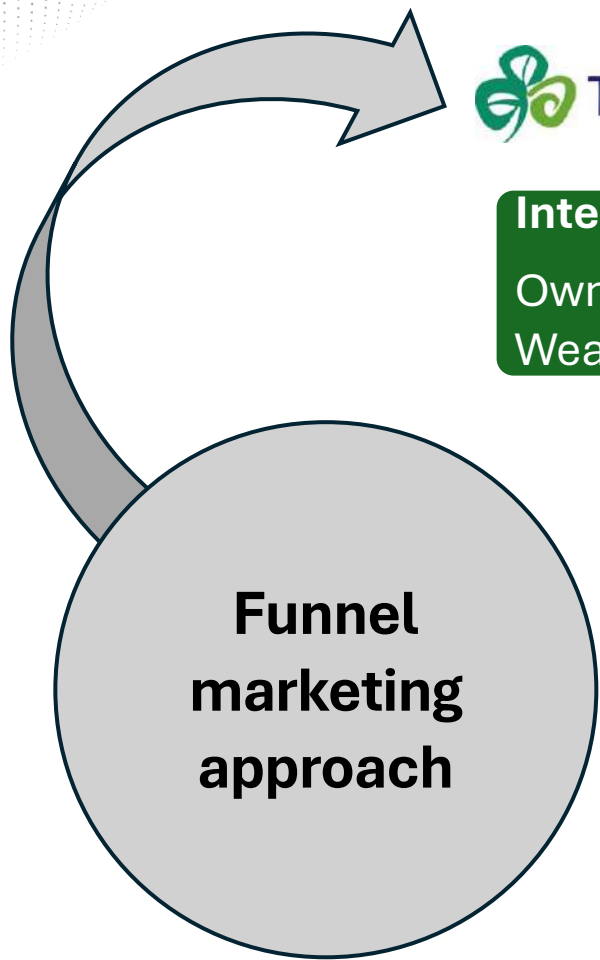
Please use this QR code to let us know about your business so we can communicate with you on access.



# Marketing & Communication



© Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
Belfast 2026



### International markets

Owens the cultural narrative at scale.  
Weaves Fleadh into Ireland's broader story.



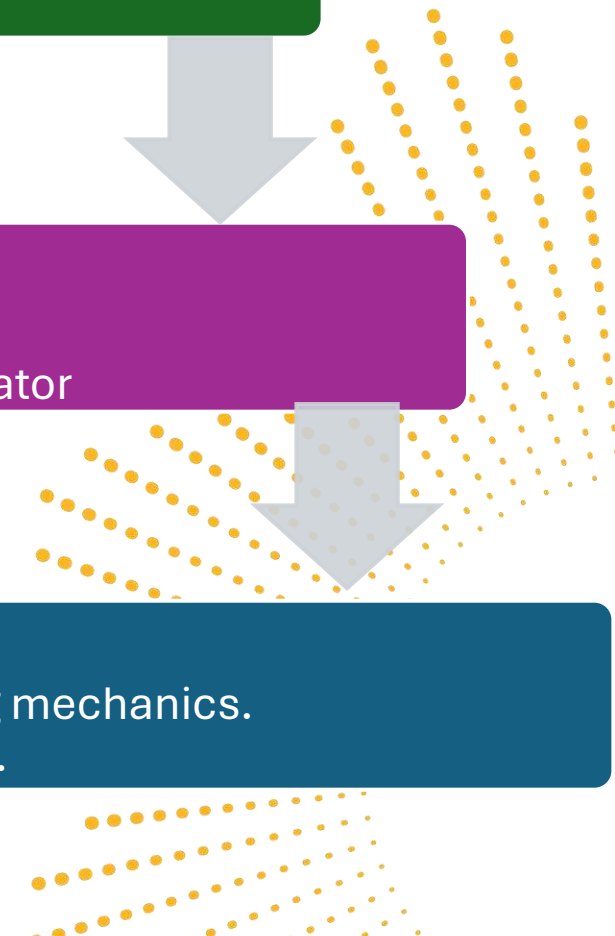
### ROI primary market and NI secondary market

Drives consideration of NI as a cultural destination.  
Features Fleadh as proof of NI's cultural depth and motivator



### NI primary market and ROI secondary market

Converts interest into action by providing planning mechanics.  
Retargets warm audiences from TI and TNI activity.





# Brand Pillars

Aligns tangible qualities of Belfast with Comhaltas and the Fleadh

Pinnacle of  
traditional  
Irish culture

City of Music  
and a city rich  
in culture and  
creativity

Experience  
of delivering  
family-friendly  
events

A compact  
and safe city  
with excellent  
facilities

Unique  
cultural  
experience

Belfast has  
always been  
a natural  
gateway

Inclusive  
cultural  
vibrancy

A city  
renowned  
for its  
hospitality

 **Comhaltas**  
**Fleadh Cheoil**  
**na hÉireann**  
**Belfast 2026**



## Key messages to amplify

- Milestone moment for city and region - **first time in Belfast** and only second time in Northern Ireland.
- Showcase of culture, inclusion and diversity. Unite communities through participation and shared celebration – **Celebrating Together**
- **Belfast-wide experience** with venues and events spanning city centre and neighbourhoods through fringe programme.
- Complements Belfast's status as a **UNESCO City of Music**.

Find out more...



Web:

[www.fleadhcheoil.ie](http://www.fleadhcheoil.ie)

Email:

[fleadhcheoil26@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:fleadhcheoil26@belfastcity.gov.uk)



**Comhaltas  
Fleadh Cheoil  
na hÉireann  
Belfast 2026**