

MARITIME BELFAST TRUST

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

2024-2025



maritimebelfast.com



MARITIME
BELFAST



A word from our Chair

It is with great pleasure that I present the annual highlights for Maritime Belfast Trust for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. As the incoming Chair, I would like to thank and pay tribute to our immediate past Chair, Marie Thérèse McGivern, who stepped down from the Board after nearly 14 years of service. Her leadership as chair, has been instrumental in Maritime Belfast's transformation over the last four years and I am proud to take up the helm of such a strong and focussed Board. I would like to thank all my Trustees and the Executive Team for their support since I joined in November 2024 and for their continued dedication, expertise and determination in advancing our charitable objectives. Together we are one team, focused on delivering an iconic heritage waterfront for everyone.

The last 12 months is once again a story of success. Titanic Belfast continues to perform strongly, welcoming 832,066 visitors through its world-class galleries and generating an income to the charity of £2,154,846, a 6.5% uplift on 2023/24. We would like to record our congratulations to our commercial operator, Titanic Belfast Limited, for this outstanding performance and acknowledge that this year has not been without its challenges. As our operator, they had to deal with the impact of storms Darragh and Eowyn including substantial building works following damage to Titanic Belfast's roof. They have dealt with these challenges swiftly and professionally, including measures to help mitigate future risks. They continue to demonstrate their strong commitment to social responsibility including the addition of a new state of the art Changing Place facility and delivering a Community Impact Fund, supporting Maritime Belfast's preservation work as well as six other local charities.

A year into the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework, we launched Queen's Quay Kiosk, part of the programme of quick wins, supporting place-shaping activations whilst encouraging locals to embrace and engage with the River Lagan. The Kiosk which includes a coffee outlet, large areas of outdoor planting and seating has transformed a previously unused area on the waterfront into a welcoming destination and community hub. A vibrant programme of events and activities delivered by our new start-up operator, Native, has also contributed to its success. Delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council and the Department for Communities the Queen's Quay Kiosk is an excellent example of how collaboration can drive creative, community-focused, meanwhile projects.



A word from our Chair contd.

The Belfast Waterfront Task Group has been further strengthened with the inclusion of community representatives from Eastside Partnership, LORAG and Sailortown, securing local input into Task Group initiatives. Furthermore, we invited 17 public, private and community Task Group representatives on a two day visit to Copenhagen's waterfront to understand their approach to public access to and on the river, community neighbourhoods and heritage led social enterprise projects. The Task Group is well positioned and will continue to play a critical role in shaping a seamless and vibrant waterfront for the benefit of the whole city. Maritime Belfast will continue to support this work, helping to push the Framework agenda forward and we thank all our partners for adopting the vision and committing to delivery.

Our 'Go The Extra Mile' Campaign kicked off in April 2024 and ran throughout the year, animating the Maritime Mile and encouraging local people and visitors to discover more of the city's historic waterfront. The campaign brought back our popular Sundays on the Mile music sessions, supported local home-grown events including the Titanic Ceili and Sailortown Festival and introduced the first after hours initiative 'Late Nights on the Maritime Mile'. Working with our destination partners, over 40 late-night events took place in August.

Building strong community connections remains a priority for Maritime Belfast, ensuring the Maritime Mile is a welcoming and vibrant part of the city. Over the past year, we have strengthened relationships with neighbourhoods, heritage groups and those who live, work and study along the waterfront, creating opportunities to enjoy and reshape our historic waterfront.

As we enter into 2025/26, As we enter 2025/26 period, I am looking forward to building on the success of the last 12 months working alongside my fellow Trustees, Executive Team and our key stakeholders, especially the Waterfront Task Group in preparing a new Business Plan for the future.



Paul Henry

Paul Henry
Chair Maritime Belfast Trust



Vision

To preserve and promote Belfast's waterfront and rich maritime heritage for the enjoyment of current and future generations and in doing so contribute to sustainable social and economic development.

Influence

- To influence the development of a common vision for Belfast's iconic heritage waterfront as a vibrant, accessible destination for everyone.

Connect

- To deliver a fully connected experience along the waterfront by linking our key heritage assets, cultural and tourism attractions through high quality public realm enhancements, digital interventions, walkways, cycle lanes and public transport.
- To connect neighbourhood communities physically and emotionally to Maritime Belfast.

Energise

- To develop, support and deliver an authentic cultural programme to inspire people to visit Belfast's iconic waterfront and its heritage assets.

Enrich

- To enrich Belfast's waterfront by preserving and promoting Belfast's maritime heritage through restoration, interpretation, and learning.
- To manage and protect our assets to underpin Maritime Belfast and deliver a world class, sustainable experience now and in the future.

Thrive

- To be a highly efficient and successful charity that delivers significant public benefit for the people of Belfast now and for the future.
- To lead, initiate and support collaboration and partnership to sustain local maritime heritage, attractions and businesses.





Public Benefit

The public benefits that flow from our purpose and activities include the preservation and access to Belfast's waterfront, which enhances knowledge and appreciation of Belfast's maritime heritage and increases local pride. The charity's beneficiaries are people that live in and visit Belfast and Northern Ireland, both present and future generations, including local communities that live on and nearby the Maritime Mile. Educating and engaging with local communities and visitors underpins all our activity.



Board of Trustees



Karen Cooksley
Trustee



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Chair



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Trustee



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Mary McIntyre
Trustee



Gerry Hughes
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Trustee



Kyle Black
Trustee



Judith Davis
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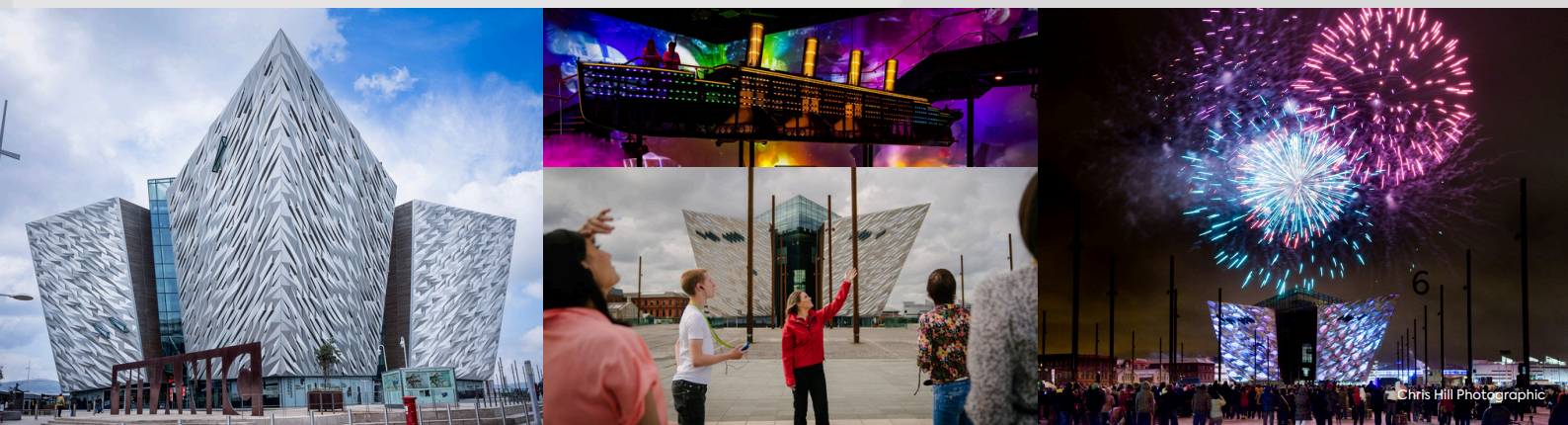
Titanic Belfast

Maritime Belfast was established in 2008 to develop and own Titanic Belfast, the city's largest tourist attraction, on behalf of its funders and donors. Prior to opening the attraction in 2012, the charity outsourced the management, maintenance and operations of Titanic Belfast to an independent commercial operator, Titanic Belfast Limited.

As of 31 March 2025, Titanic Belfast has welcomed more than 9 million visitors from 145 countries. During 2024/25, the attraction had 832,066 visitors through its world-class galleries, of which 822,336 were paying visitors. This performance generated the largest overage payment to Maritime Belfast to date of £1,083,210, alongside the annual base payment of £267,814. Together this provided £1,351,024 of unrestricted income for the charity. England remained the largest visitor market at 27%, followed by the Republic of Ireland at 19%, the United States at 16% and Northern Ireland and Scotland at 9% respectively.

The operator continues to invest in the Titanic Belfast visitor experience and social objectives including the introduction of a fully equipped Changing Places facility and resourcing a Community Impact Fund supporting our heritage preservation work alongside six other local charities. Free summer exhibitions provided another reason to visit including Terry Bradley's Dockers & Dolls, and the pre-auction display of Captain Rostron's gold pocket watch. Pop-up presentations were developed on board SS Nomadic, including events to mark the centenary of Lord Pirrie's death and to celebrate RMS Titanic connections to the Olympic Games. Maritime Belfast Trust was delighted to support the relocation of the Discovery Point within the ground floor atrium of Titanic Belfast, creating a new visitor information space with additional content, driving longer stays and increased spend across the Maritime Mile.

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding performance of the operator during this period, delivering exceptionally high visitor numbers and managing the roof repairs efficiently and safely while maintaining a high-quality visitor experience.





SS Nomadic

Maritime Belfast Trust took on the ownership of SS Nomadic in 2015, the last surviving White Star Line ship and tender to RMS Titanic. Built in 1911 by Harland & Wolff alongside Titanic and Olympic, the ship has been operated since 2015 by the Titanic Belfast Nomadic Company, a subsidiary of Titanic Belfast Limited. Visitor access is integrated into the overall Titanic Belfast visitor experience as part of the main admission ticket, with the exception of tour groups. During 2024/25, 269,964 Titanic Belfast ticket holders visited the ship, representing 33% of Titanic Belfast visitors.

The long-term decking replacement project remains a primary focus for our heritage investment. After significant review, including best practice on heritage ships across the UK, a methodology was agreed for the replacement of the deck including the use of hard wood, Iroko to ensure a longer life. A competitive tender exercise resulted in the appointment of John Kearney, a local shipwright from Kilkeel. The overall project will take 3-4 years to complete at a cost of £900,000.





Key to Maritime Belfast Trust's vision is the delivery of the Maritime Mile. An exciting Blueway for the city, representing one navigational mile of water and 10 kilometres of accessible, connected waterfront.

Connecting Sailortown to Titanic Quarter, City Centre to Harbour, neighbourhoods to waterfront, the award winning Maritime Mile is a place where local people and visitors can walk, cycle, run and play in the footsteps of giants as they explore Belfast historic waterfront, an outdoor museum of Titanic proportions.

The Maritime Mile continues to go from strength to strength, annually welcoming over 4 million and is now a leading visitor destination in Belfast. Through collaboration with key destination stakeholders, we are developing and promoting an expanding range of activities, initiatives and programmes that celebrate the area's rich industrial and maritime heritage and its vibrant, contemporary offer.

Go the Extra Mile Campaign

Our 'Go The Extra Mile' Campaign kicked off in April 2024 and ran throughout the year, animating the Maritime Mile and encouraging local people and visitors to discover more of the city's historic waterfront. The campaign brought back our popular Sundays on the Maritime Mile music sessions, supported local home-grown events including the Titanic Céilí and Sailortown Festival and introduced the first after hours initiative 'Late Nights on the Maritime Mile'. Working with our destination partners, over 40 late-night events took place in August. The campaign was extremely successful with a total audience reach of 2.5 million.





Events & Animation

The destination team continued to animate and activate the Maritime Mile, delivering an ambitious programme designed to attract visitors, support local communities and test new ways of working with partners across the waterfront.

A 12-month Events and Animation Plan was delivered, including Sundays on the Maritime Mile, Late Nights on the Maritime Mile, Netwalking events, participation in European Heritage Open Days and support for the Belfast 2024 cultural programme with projects such as Little Amal, Water Works and ShadowDock at Thompson Dock. We also provided funding support to Sailortown Regeneration and TradFest to encourage grassroots activity along the waterfront. In total, more than 77 events and activities took place across the year and attracted over 19,067 participants and visitors. These initiatives are helping us pilot ideas and build an evidence base for a longer-term five-year Events and Animation Strategy.

Since March 2024, electronic people counters have been in place across the Maritime Mile and as of 31st March 2024 have already recorded 4.3 million trips along the waterfront. This data is proving a valuable tool in understanding how people use and move through the area. It helps us monitor changes in footfall linked to events and activities, identify the most popular locations, and guide decisions on future programming, animation and investment.





HUB-IN Belfast

The EU Hub-In project concluded this year with significant outcomes for the Maritime Mile and its communities. Belfast, one of eight European partner cities, benefited from €630,000 of support for research, best practice exchange and live pilots.

Key to this was a £120,000 Challenge Call, enabling six creative companies to co-design innovative digital heritage experiences with local communities. These pilots introduced new ways to explore the Maritime Mile, including AI-powered storytelling, augmented public art, immersive 3D spaces and virtual treasure hunts. Earth Check completed a sustainability audit of the Maritime Mile, engaging destination partners and informing a new Sustainability Working Group to drive environmental improvements.

Additional funding supported ten Waterfront Neighbourhood Walks, connecting 130 participants with local heritage and strengthening community ties. Hub-In has positioned Maritime Belfast as a catalyst for creativity, sustainability and collaboration along Belfast's historic waterfront.





Community

Building strong community connections remains a priority for Maritime Belfast, ensuring the Maritime Mile is a welcoming and vibrant part of the city. Over the past year, we have strengthened relationships with neighbourhoods, heritage groups and those who live, work and study along the waterfront, creating opportunities to enjoy and reshape our historic waterfront. Local Community Day once again opened the doors of Titanic Belfast, welcoming more than 500 residents from nearby communities for a day of free access and discovery. We were pleased to host a group from RNIB for an accessible walking tour from Donegall Quays to Sailortown, gathering valuable feedback on how to make the waterfront more inclusive. Twenty-nine retired dockers from SHIP attended our Dockers Day Out, sharing memories that will inform future storytelling of Belfast's maritime heritage. The new Maritime Mile Blueway Trail and Waterfront Neighbourhood Walks encouraged more people to spend time by the river, learn about its past and enjoy this unique part of the city.



Volunteers

Over the past year, six Heritage Helpers supported MBT's public activity including Sundays on the Maritime Mile, Shadowdock, the NI Science Festival and A Night to Remember, giving 76 hours of their time during this period. Since the Heritage Helpers programme began in 2018, volunteers have now contributed a combined total of 856 hours to Maritime Belfast's objectives.





Queens Quay Kiosk

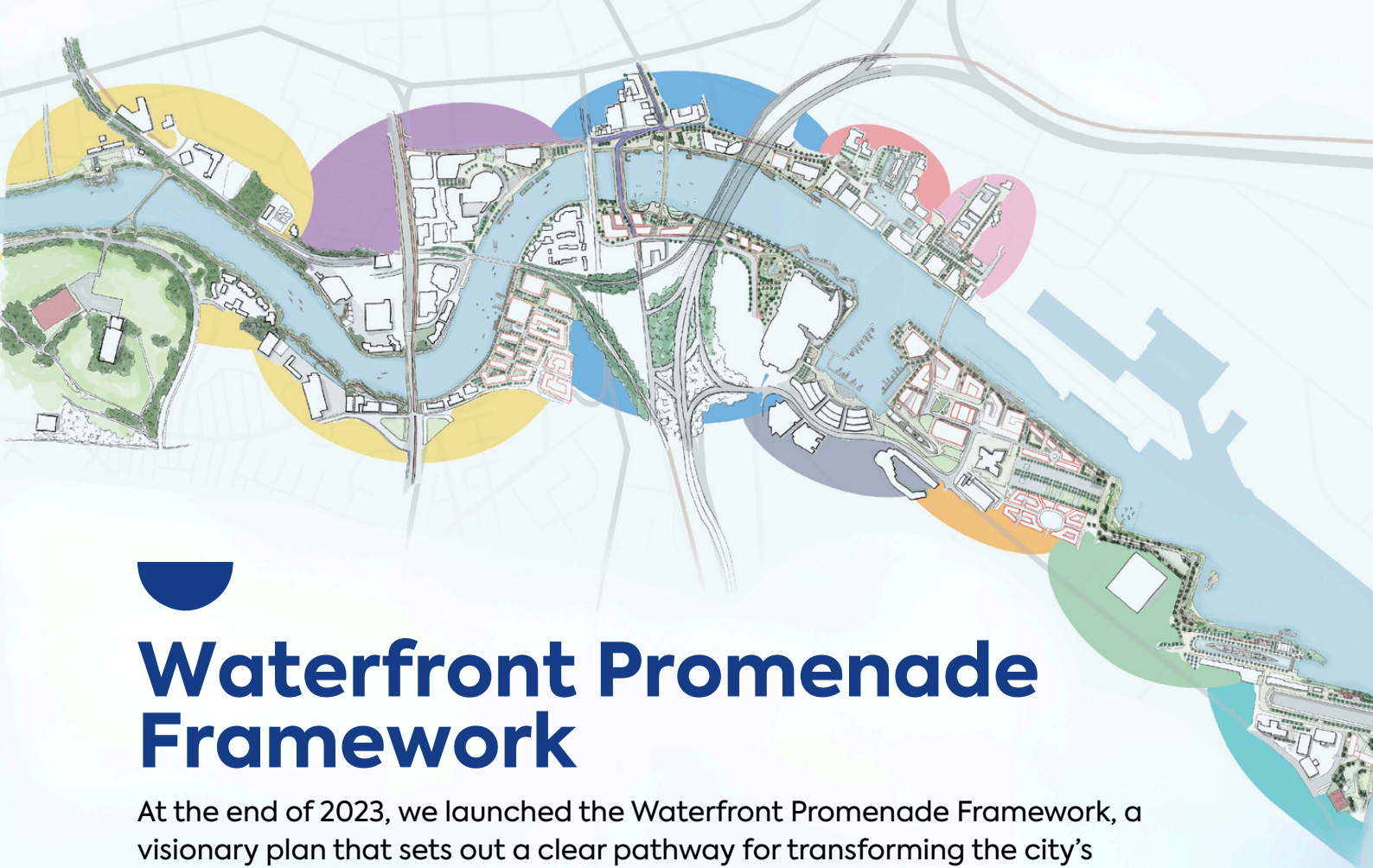
This year we worked in partnership with Belfast City Council to deliver the Queen's Quay Kiosk with funding from the Department of Infrastructure. Made of industrial corten steel with high yellow sails the structure is evocative of its harbour surroundings, substantial in scale and innovative in design.

We appointed a new start-up, Native, to operate the kiosk. We were very impressed with their application and fit with our values, particularly, in relation to sustainability, environment and community. Working closely with Native we are supporting our joint aspiration to develop the kiosk as a destination and community hub. Within a matter of months, the Kiosk has become a 'go to' destination on the waterfront for workers, local residents and visitors.

Local artist Terry Bradley agreed to exhibit work from his 'Dockers and Dolls' collection as part of the Kiosk Design. The portraits selected honour the hardworking men and women of Belfast. The panels are part of a bespoke design feature of the kiosk. At 3m tall and back lit they have high impact both day and night providing a unique visitor experience at all hours.

We have developed a good working relationship with the Department of Communities and secured additional funding to further establish Queen's Quay as an attractive and vibrant gateway to the waterfront. The fund is being used for additional planting, public artwork as well as bike stands and a public bike repair station.





Waterfront Promenade Framework

At the end of 2023, we launched the Waterfront Promenade Framework, a visionary plan that sets out a clear pathway for transforming the city's waterfront into a world-class destination. Developed in collaboration with the Waterfront Task Group, the framework is designed to maximise the sustainable development of 10km of world class waterfront promoting active travel, vibrant culture, nature, and heritage.

A year into the Framework we launched Queens Quay Kiosk, part of the programme of quick wins, supporting commercial activations whilst encouraging locals to embrace and engage with the River Lagan. The Kiosk has transformed a previously unused area on the waterfront into a welcoming destination and community hub. A vibrant programme of events and activities delivered by the operators, Native Coffee, has also contributed to its success. Delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council and the Department for Communities the kiosk is an excellent example of how collaboration can drive creative, community-focused, meanwhile projects.

The Task Group was further strengthened with the inclusion of senior representatives from Eastside Partnership, LORAG and Sailortown. It is well positioned and will continue to play a critical role in shaping a seamless, sustainable, accessible, and vibrant waterfront for the benefit of the whole city. Maritime Belfast will continue to support this work, helping to push the Framework agenda forward.



Looking Forward

Looking forward towards 2025/26, we have some exciting projects ahead.

Titanic Belfast's outlook is very promising and we hope that the Open Championship in Portrush will attract international visitors and create new platforms to promote the destination.

Maritime Festival will return and as with every year, our plan is to build on success and stage an even bigger and better event in September 2025.

The Waterfront Promenade Framework has already built momentum, and with support from the Waterfront Task Group, we will start to see real progress in respect of priority projects, in particular the new Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Bridge and Under the Bridges animation.

Early discussions with National Lottery Heritage Fund, are positive as we look at how we can protect, preserve and promote our maritime heritage and bring our Maritime Story Plan to life. To equip the charity to meet the challenges of the future, we have undertaken a structural review. This has identified opportunities to grow our team of six to potentially nine and also look at ways to strengthen the Board of Trustees.

We are well placed to build on recent successes and push forward on our journey to deliver an iconic heritage waterfront for everyone to enjoy.



A Year of Highlights

24
25

£500K

Capital investment
in Waterfront
Promenade
Public Realm



20K

Enjoying events on the
Maritime Mile

4.3 MILLION

Trips along the Waterfront

856

total
volunteer
hours

Blueway trail developed
in collaboration with
Belfast Harbour



go
the
extra
mile

2.5
MILLION

audience reach
from organic &
paid ad campaigns

£210K
maritime mile
HERITAGE
LAB

Entrepreneur
investment
attributed to
Hub In
challenge call
project by 5
innovators

40 LATE
NIGHTS

on the Maritime Mile

8

NEW
EXPERIENCES
DEVELOPED

1,800

locals
engaged with Maritime
Mile outreach initiatives