

**LGBT update**

**Intro**

Following a recommendation from Councillor Dudgeon, we contacted various organisations to explore opportunities to help promote Belfast as an LGBT friendly city to visitors. It is important to understand the role and remit of Visit Belfast as an organisation in order to ensure efficient and effective collaboration to help strengthen the LGBT offering to visitors before and during their stay.

**Visit Belfast Strategy & Partnership**

Visit Belfast is a public/private sector partnership funded and supported by Belfast City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland and the private sector – i.e. the commercial partners who work with us. We are dedicated to promoting Belfast as a city break, conference and cruise ship destination. Visit Belfast’s strategy is to effectively engage the tourism and hospitality industry in the marketing of the city. We are keen to partner with businesses that reflect the best of what the city has to offer visitors.

* **Potential commercial partnerships – to promote events and update information**
* OutburstArts
* Belfast Pride
* LGBT friendly restaurants, bars and clubs
* **Non Commercial – for idea and information sharing purposes**
* Out and about hikers
* Cara-friend
* Queer Space
* Rainbow project
* Here NI

Discussions revealed a lot of suggestions are already in place, however additional actions are

* **Website**
* A new version of visitbelfast.com website will go live in January 2018 and it will include a dedicated LGBT+ section featuring key products and information as well as events and festivals.
* A new LGBT Welcome Page has been introduced to the current site, which includes a generic blog – welcome page on the website / blog post. The blog post on visitbelfast.com lists key festivals, bars and entertainment venues as well as sources of further information. Can be seen here <http://blog.visitbelfast.com/things-to-do-in-belfast/posts/LGBT-belfast-gay-bars-and-gay-scene>
* Any LGBT events submitted by partners are promoted in the What’s On section, as well as other digital channels such as social media and email marketing. There is the potential to promote non-partner, LGBT events happening in partner venues such as The Mac etc.
* **Interactive Touchscreens in Visit Belfast Welcome Centre**
* The interactive self-serve screens in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre include hundreds of product profiles for key attractions, tours, accommodation, bars, restaurants and shops. This includes the Black Box, BOOMBOX & The Maverick and Cabaret Supperclub. The Kremlin and Union Street Bar were asked to contribute to product profiles when the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre first opened but these were not completed by the venues.
* The Events Island screens list key events and festivals throughout the year, including LGBT events submitted by our partners such as Belfast Pride activity.
* **Social Media Queries**
* The Digital Team manages a large number of visitor queries across Facebook and Twitter. Any queries regarding LGBT venues or activities are now directed to the LGBT+ blog post on visitbelfast.com or the individual venue/festival websites or social media accounts for full details.
* LGBT events submitted by our partners, such as Belfast Pride activity, exhibitions and shows, have been promoted across social media channels and Visit Belfast works with our partners to maximise promotion.
* **Visitor Servicing**
* The VBWC currently stock copies of the ‘Big List’ and GNI publication (when received) in the Welcome Centre. Both offer information on nightlife in the city. Staff are well versed in LGBT venues and are regularly asked for advice on where to socialise.
* The VBWC has also been offering tourists a printed list of LGBT venues in the city. Once the new website has been populated, the list will be updated also and this will be printable from visitbelfast.com
* The VBWC hold literature for any LGBT events, including (but not limited to) Belfast Pride an Outburst arts festival.
* Suggested the VBWC have a rainbow symbol in the front window/front doors. This has been agreed in principal and Visit Belfast are now exploring decal ideas.
* Partners and non-partners can rack literature of their tourism business in the Welcome Centre (subject to space – Visit Belfast partners take priority over non-partners).
* **Print**
* Students guide include an LGBT blog/section – this guide is distributed across various channels including Universities, online and at various student events. See <http://visitbelfast.com/assets/gallery/generic/VBCG_Students2017_18.pdf>
* Commercial businesses will have a good opportunity to feature in relevant printed literature.
* **Suggestions for moving forward**
* Organisations are encouraged to help support commercial partnership sign up in order to create a more inclusive and representative LGBT product. It would also help to increase visibility of the LGBT community in Belfast.
* Organisations are also encouraged to share information about events happening within the LGBT community – events happening in partner venues will appear on visitbelfast.com
* Visit Belfast and LGBT organistaions to meet twice per year to keep abreast of new developments
* **Action points from meeting on 18th October 2017**
* Clare to add Here NI to the website/blogs etc as part of the voluntary sector working with the LGBT community
* Clare to explore potential charity rate for organisations to become involved
* Clare to look at training on equality matters /use of language. How fresh is training with Welcome Centre?
* Cara/Colin/Michael to forward rainbow logo to be used for window decal
* Suggested to meet at Waring Street community space for next update (TBC – perhaps March 2018). It has been suggested that in order to create a product to promote, organisations could encourage attendance from commercial businesses.