

# King St Arts Center

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Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate  
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REF; Belfast City Realm Project.

Dear Ronan,

We are an Independent Arts Centre based in King St, Belfast City Center (*please refer Appendix 1 background information*). We have been closely following with interest your departments plans to regenerate this area under the **North West Quarter Part One**. We have received your public consultation documents, attended the Castle St area Open Evening, City Hall on the 11/12/06, had a series of meetings with local traders in the King St/Castle St zone and wish to bring to your attention to the following;

1. King Street runs from College Sq across Castle St to the top of Berry Street and we as stakeholders based in this building for the best part of 15 years feel strongly that this side of King Street should not be excluded from the designated zone for regeneration. (*Refer to appendix 2 map*).
2. Giving that this part of King St/Castle St has been historically, socially, culturally and economically neglected for decades and welcoming your plan to inclusively address these issues we feel that it is vitally important that the traders and arts groups based in this area be given the same opportunity to engage in the regeneration of this area
3. Successful regeneration projects in many major cities have used the arts and the creative industries as a successful tool in terms of regenerating inner city areas such Temple Bar in Dublin and arts zones in Galway, Cork, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Glasgow and also our own currently developing Cathedral Quarter. Many of these cities have achieved European City of Culture status as a mark of their achievements. We feel strongly that arts groups based in this area should be embraced as opposed to being excluded.

4. In fact the very first art project developed in this building 1991-2000 Belfast Exposed Photography Project was relocated to Donegal Street's Cathedral Quarter in 2001 primarily at the behest of our then funders the NI Arts Council & Belfast City Council. This extremely successful project now shares a Building with Northern Visions and the Belfast Film Festival and are recognized as the three of the principle arts groups in the Cathedral Quarter.
5. Given our commitment to this area some of the original Belfast Exposed staff (*inc. the projects founder and manager Sean McKernan 1983-2000*) and new artists decided to remain in the Building and develop an independent Arts center using our own creativity, limited financial resources and no public funding. Why? Because we believe that this area is entitled to have an Arts infrastructure as much as any other part of the city and the Cathedral Quarter can not meet all the cultural needs of the City Center.
6. We now collectively occupy all of the building. We pay an annual rent of £25,000 and in partnership with our Landlord we are currently undertaking £23,000 worth of work to meet all Public Access Regulations to the Building with our Planning Application approved by Belfast City Council. On completion we plan to run an annual programme of Arts events to include, photography, music, dance, drama, film, exhibition gallery show, a cafe, darkroom. Recording studio and rehearsal & performance space for bands. In addition we currently consulting traders and arts groups based in the designated zone to develop an inclusive arts festival in the area, to date we have received very supportive response and encouragement. (*refer to copy of our draft consultation document*)

We have met with the majority of traders in the currently excluded part of King St and can assure you that they support our concerns as outlined.

In conclusion we look forward to your response to our legitimate concerns and if useful we would be more than happy to meet with either yourself or a representative of your Dept to introduce you to our project. Hopefully this will provide you with a better appreciation of our commitment to developing the arts in this area and our aim to be included in your plans on a partnership basis.

Yours Sincerely

Joseph Fox  
Musician/Artist

Sean McKernan  
Photographer

Photography \* Music \* Film \* Dance \* Drama \* Art \* Cafe

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