

REPORT OF THE LEISURE, SPORT & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DESTINATION BIRMINGHAM: BIRMINGHAM, A MUSIC CITY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

- 1.1 On 13th July 2011, the Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review exploring:

What role can and does popular music play in improving perceptions of Birmingham, both in attracting visitors to the city and in enhancing the quality of life of residents? How can this role be strengthened in Birmingham?

- 1.2 We chose to focus on popular music as there is interest in Birmingham in making more of this cultural and economic asset that reflects the diversity of Birmingham's past and present.

- 1.3 We spoke to a range of people involved in music heritage projects and the current industry including a local band and local promoters, current venue owners/managers, festival organisers, relevant Council officers and Marketing Birmingham.

- 1.4 We found that there has been little work done to quantify the value of popular music to the city or the region. There have been evaluations of the impact and benefits of cultural activities in general and classical music in particular, but there has been no comparable study for other types of music. However, the figures that are available do suggest that there are considerable potential advantages in examining the impact and benefit of popular music. Some facts include:

- UK music industry revenues totalled £3.8bn in 2010. The UK strengthened its position as a net exporter of music and is growing its trade balance three times faster than the U.S.;
- More than 100,000 people in the UK derive their main source of income from the music industry; 7% of those are based in the West Midlands;
- The major concerts and music festivals that take place across the UK attract more than 7.7 million visitors, who spend £1.4 billion in total during the course of their trip. Music tourists in the West Midlands spend at least £138 million a year;
- Five independent festivals bring a combined total of more than £5 million into Birmingham's economy each year by earned income, visitor spend, column inches and the proportion of their budgets which is spent locally.

- 1.5 The other reason to focus on popular music is its diversity and appeal to a wide range of people, particularly in Birmingham:

Birmingham is a hub for British culture, birthplace of groups such as UB40, Duran Duran, The Beat, Steel Pulse, Judas Priest and Black Sabbath. A strong underground culture around drum and bass, punk, reggae and dub, hip hop, graffiti, jazz, folk music, cinema and visual arts exists within the city.

- 1.6 Our findings fall into two main areas: valuing popular music culture and music heritage.

2. FINDINGS

Valuing Popular Music Culture

- 2.1 We found that Birmingham has a varied, vibrant and independent music scene. This is backed up by a good live music scene, with the right mix of venues and a good collection of independent festivals. There is a range of industry professionals at all points of production; however these tend to be small and largely unrecognised. Collectively there is little recognition outside Birmingham of what the city has to offer (both to fans/visitors and promoters/professionals).
- 2.2 We also recognised the value of popular music to Birmingham's residents: particularly as Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in Europe. However the culture that they are most interested in is sometimes seen as undervalued.
- 2.3 We agreed that there is a need to promote an understanding of the role popular music plays in the perceptions of a city and to embed this understanding in the cultural offer of the city, both its cultural value and tourism value.
- 2.4 A clear statement of policy would clarify and strengthen the City Council's objectives, giving reassurance and encouragement to private investment as well as ensuring we attract and get the most value out of any public investment.
- 2.5 Having a strategy is only a first step, there then needs to be a mechanism to deliver the outcomes of that strategy. From our discussions, it was clear that the independent music sector is well represented in Birmingham but not presenting a coherent voice. Co-ordination and the ability to articulate the sector's needs are needed to help support new bands and retain talent in the city.
- 2.6 Where the City Council can clearly assist is in having a clear point of contact for those in the sector wishing to put on events or gigs, or develop their music business in Birmingham. We therefore propose that the City Council should install a single contact for the industry and venues, who could bring together different aspects of the City Council as necessary, and be a link into the Council for the industry. They would also act as the external face of the city in this area. In essence, they would take responsibility for providing support (advice, guidance, networks) to the music sector within Birmingham, as well as be a champion or ambassador figure to make connections across the sector and advocate for the sector.
- 2.7 It would of course require some funding: but this is an important industry – culturally and economically – and it receives very little attention/funding at the moment. UK Music's report (see Chapter 2) quantified spend by overseas and domestic music tourists and laid down a challenge to public bodies: "there is a role for policy-makers and tourism bodies to realise the potential of this considerable economic asset". We know from our discussions with UK Music that other cities are responding to this challenge.

Heritage

- 2.8 There is strong evidence that heritage attractions are a significant component of a tourism "offer" to visitors, and that this is equally true with regard to music heritage. The visitor and economic impact figures from national and international attractions and from the Home of Metal exhibition here in Birmingham demonstrate that this is an area that is worth serious investigation.
- 2.9 And whilst it is true Birmingham does not have a Beatles or Elvis equivalent, we should not underestimate the value of Birmingham's musical past – its role in the birth of heavy metal and British reggae and bhangra, the bands such as Black Sabbath and Duran Duran, and the diversity of Birmingham's "melting pot" music scene.
- 2.10 In Birmingham we have individuals committed to Birmingham's music heritage and plenty of ideas about how to celebrate it. The barriers seem to be prominence, strategy and infrastructure. There is no strategy in place, and little of the infrastructure needed to deliver a good visitor experience.

- 2.11 Some put that down to the inertia and indifference of the city's leading institutions; others to the fragmentation of the music sector in Birmingham. There's also no doubt that the diversity of Birmingham's musical heritage is both a strength and drawback.
- 2.12 We believe that Birmingham could and should do more to celebrate its diverse musical heritage. From our discussion, the benefits broadly fall into two interlinked categories:
- Tourism: to provide a focal point for visitors and celebrations and improve external perceptions of Birmingham and what the city has to offer;
 - Community education: so Birmingham residents (in particular young people) know what there is to celebrate here and improve internal perceptions and augment civic pride. The recommendations outlined above would contribute to that in providing a single contact for those organisations interested in working in Birmingham.
- 2.13 There is plenty to celebrate here in Birmingham and plenty of people who not only want to celebrate but would be willing to put in work to do so. One recent example is the Home of Metal exhibition, which garnered national and international attention. We recommend that the City Council should support efforts to find a permanent home for a part of the exhibition, and explore other options for a space to celebrate music heritage.
- 2.14 We also recommend that the City Council work with potential partners to develop a heritage plaque scheme for the city; and set out how this would be backed up with city wide marketing/events.

3. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration work together to ensure that the cultural and economic value of music heritage and popular music sector to the City is recognised and embedded in cultural and economic policy. This should include:</p> <p>a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the partners in the Cultural Partnership to ensure explicit reference is made in the Cultural Strategy; and • Better representation from independent music sector on the Cultural Partnership <p>b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the partners to ensure explicit reference is made in any future Creative Industries Strategy. 	<p>Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration</p>	September 2012
R02	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture work with Marketing Birmingham to set up a "Music Birmingham" contact/office for the independent popular music sector within Birmingham and outside. This role would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders in the popular music sector to implement a 'Music Charter' to progress actions to support the Cultural and Creative Industries Strategies; • Be the face of the City Council for the popular music sector; • Work across different areas of the City Council to progress actions. 	<p>Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration</p>	September 2012

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R03	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture (and partners) support efforts, over the next 6 months, to find a temporary exhibition space for a music heritage exhibition in Birmingham which focuses on the local roots of heavy metal music, following the recent success of the Capsule-curated Home of Metal exhibition at BMAG.</p> <p>Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using BMAG's Waterhall in summer 2012, subject to its availability and the exhibition's compatibility with the venue's essential income generating requirements; • Working with partners to assist in finding a commercial home. 	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	September 2012
R04	<p>Building on the experience in R03, that the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport & Culture explore other options for a space to celebrate music heritage. These include supporting the inclusion of displays about Birmingham's musical heritage in BMAG's plans for post-1945 Modern Birmingham History galleries, which form part of a later phase of its long term masterplan.</p> <p>As part of this, the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture should work with partners to celebrate the reunion of Black Sabbath in 2012.</p>	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	June 2012
R05	The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture should work with potential partners (e.g. PRS) to develop a heritage plaque scheme for the city; and set out how this would be backed up with city wide marketing/events.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	December 2012
R06	The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture should continue to explore opportunities to develop a music digital archive linked to the Library of Birmingham.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	June 2012
R07	That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration work with the International Trade Team at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to provide advice and support to enable Birmingham businesses, who meet the eligibility criteria, to have a presence at MIDEM.	<p>Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration</p>	December 2012
R08	That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture investigate bringing a high profile music event to the city, such as Heavy Metal Awards, IPSA or Womex.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	December 2012
R09	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture (and partners) explore opportunities to support smaller venues, festivals and promoters to market and promote live music in the city.</p> <p>This could include options for controlled advertising display areas.</p>	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	September 2012

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R10	That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture work with the Cultural Partnership and Marketing Birmingham to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a stocktake of local music industry; • Support re-development of visitbirmingham.com to include more user generated content. 	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	December 2012
R11	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2012. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	September 2012

MOTION

That the recommendations shown in section 3 above and summarised in the Summary of Recommendations (p. 08-10) of the attached report be approved, and that the Executive be requested to pursue their implementation.