



Title of Report:	Revised USA 250 Signature Event
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 June 2026
For Decision	For Decision
To be discussed in Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	Priority 2: Empowering and supporting our people
Outcome	A Council which reflects the diversity of our community and creates an inclusive culture where everyone can thrive
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture; Head of Tourism and Recreation

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	December 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£99,120
Included in Current Year Estimates	Special events reserve budget
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	tbc
Staffing Costs	Included within existing budgets.

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	No
Legal Opinion Obtained	No

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

This report seeks Council approval for an amended Signature Event programme of activity to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence (USA250), as developed by Council's USA250 Working Group.

2.0 Background

Following the decision of Council on 5th May 2026 *'that the Council's USA250 Working Group examine the feasibility of moving the whole 4th July day event and evening event to September and report to the Leisure and Development Committee with recommendations on how to proceed with the event later in the year'*, the Working Group met on the 1st June, and agreed a revised programme for consideration of the Leisure & Development Committee.

3.0 Amended Proposal

3.1 27 October 2026, **Halloween in Coleraine**

For the last number of years Council has worked in partnership with Ulster University at the Coleraine Campus to present the Coleraine Halloween festivities. This features traditional firework displays at the University grounds along with further animation including amusements, live music, themed Halloween performers and a 'spooky' family trail. Low noise fireworks are also included, in addition to the main display normally attracts over 5000 attendees.

3.2 An opportunity exists to expand on this event, and for 2026 provide a USA theme that celebrates the 250th anniversary. A key themed element of this event could be the Ulster Scots roots and that Halloween as a tradition has a deep connection with this part of the world. Emigration brought the culture and customs of Halloween to the USA, and it has evolved over the last 200+ years into the community festival celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic that includes trick or treat traditions, fairies, spirits, pumpkin/turnip carving, parades and haunted attractions etc.

3.3 Council's Halloween event could therefore evolve to include these strong shared traditions from the past that are continued today. In addition to the normal programme for Halloween, the following elements could be considered and should feature the heritage and influence of the Causeway Coast and Glens area on the USA, including our cultural connections (music, food, storytelling, diaspora). Halloween will be used as the link to illustrate historic and modern transatlantic ties.

3.4 **Main Stage/Council staging unit – "Sounds Across the Atlantic"** with an Appalachian/ bluegrass / country theme.

Blend local and American-inspired acts:

- Youth dance groups.
- Trad.
- Community choir performing transatlantic classics.

3.5 **Marquee Staged Event** (weather protected)

- Tribute act(s) – eg Johnny Cash.

3.6 **Food & Drink Village – 'Taste of Ulster & America'**

Mix local vendors with local themed options:

- Irish Stew.
- Bacon & Cabbage/Champ.
- Soda bread/Barnbrack etc.

- Salmon Wheaten Bread.
- BBQ (pulled pork, burgers, hot dogs – youth appeal).
- Waffles/toffee apples/apple & pumpkin pie.
- Ice cream & soda floats.
- Local NI produce stalls.
- Coffee vans.

3.7 **Performance Zone**

- Pipe band
- Line dancers

3.8 **American Themed Activity Zone**

Family-friendly, high-energy:

- Baseball batting cage.
- Mini American football toss.
- Bouncy castles.
- Amusements.

3.9 **Kids Zone – Stars, Stripes & Stories**

- Face painting (flags, eagles, etc.).
- Arts & crafts (decorate your own flag).
- Uncle Sam & pioneer photo props.
- Storytime sessions.

3.10 **Heritage & Storytelling Area (small marquee) – Journey to America**

It is proposed to work with the University and hold a number of indoor events during the afternoon of Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 October 2026, culminating with the Halloween festivities and fireworks. Some elements listed below, including the living history characters and carousel image etc may carry-over to the outdoor event.

- Celebrate emigration stories.
- Short talks on Ulster-Scots migration.
- Living history characters (18th-century emigrants).
- Interactive map: “Where did your ancestors go?”
- Local genealogy groups.
- Tie into the story of the American Revolution and Ulster’s role.
- Exhibition and talks with Sam Henry organisers.
- Carousel image display and showcase.

Total Cost - £25,000

3.11 **Unfinished Broadside Performance**

Subject to availability, it is proposed to avail of Bready and District Ulster Scots Development Association to deliver a condensed performance of the Unfinished Broadside (this area's connection with John Dunlop and the Declaration of Independence).

The preferred date is the 2 October 2026 (to be confirmed).

Venue - Roe Valley Arts Centre

Costs:(to be confirmed)

- £8,000 performance.
- £8,000 support fees including marketing, AV stage management and other ancillary costs.

4.0 Financial Summary

The estimated Council investment for the amended signature programme is approximately £41,000.

5.0 Recommendations

Council's USA 250 Working Group seek approval to proceed with the amended USA 250 Signature Event and associated funding requested of £41,00 as presented within the report.