



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>USA 250 Programme</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 April 2026
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Decision
<b>To be discussed In Committee</b>	<b>NO</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy. Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Cohesive and stable communities which work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to address issues and deliver on opportunities
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture

<b>Estimated Timescale for Completion</b>	
Date to be Completed	December 2026

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	£99,120
Included in Current Year Estimates	Strategic Events Reserve budget
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	tbc
Staffing Costs	Included within existing budgets.

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>NO</b>

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

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**This report seeks Council approval for a coordinated 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**

2.1 At its meeting on 26 June 2025, Council approved a Notice of Motion establishing a USA250 Working Group to explore opportunities to mark the 250th anniversary of American Independence. The group was established in recognition of the strong historic, cultural and diaspora links between the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough and the United States.

2.2 Since then, the Working Group has engaged with Council services, Ulster University and external partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This has resulted in a multi strand programme combining cultural celebration, heritage interpretation, economic development, arts programming and food heritage.

## **3.0 Programme Overview**

3.1 The USA250 programme is structured across five interlinked strands: a flagship civic celebration on 4 July 2026; an economic development export initiative; a museum and heritage programme; an arts and community engagement programme; and a food and drink heritage initiative.

3.2 Together, these strands aim to celebrate shared heritage, strengthen transatlantic connections, and deliver cultural, civic and economic benefit for the Borough. Estimated participants include over 11,000 individuals and 6-10 businesses across the various elements of the programme.

**4.0 Flagship Community Celebration on the 4 July 2026 - Participants estimated 5,900. Total estimated costs, £82,000.**

4.1 The centrepiece of the programme will take place at Ulster University, Coleraine, delivered in partnership with the University and stakeholders.

4.2 The afternoon festival will be a family focused event. It will feature live music combining Ulster Scots, traditional and American influences, youth performances, and a headline tribute band. A food village will showcase local produce alongside American inspired offerings, supported by heritage storytelling zones exploring migration, genealogy and Ulster's role in the American story.

4.3 The evening civic event will be a free ticketed, invited guest occasion including local residents/communities, representatives from the American Consulate, Ulster University, Elected members, NI Executive, civic leaders and stakeholders. Delivered in partnership with Ulster University, it will combine academic input, performance and storytelling, including a staged extract from The Unfinished Broadside telling the story of John Dunlap and the printing of the Declaration of Independence. The evening will conclude with a musical finale celebrating shared Atlantic traditions.

**5.0 Economic Development – USA250 Global Gateway Programme – Participants 6-10 local businesses.**

5.1 Delivered through the Local Economic Partnership, this programme supports export growth and transatlantic trade links. It is fully externally funded with no requirement for Council contribution. Total estimated costs, £170,000.

5.2 The programme will support 6-10 businesses through export readiness training, market intelligence, and a structured US trade visit involving buyer meetings, networking and institutional engagement. Post visit support will focus on export pipeline development, business growth and long-term trade relationships.

- 5.3 The programme is integrated into the LEP Action Plan and is progressing through governance arrangements.
- 6.0 Museums and Heritage Programme** - Participants estimated 3,250. Total estimated costs, £12,000.
- 6.1 The Museum and Heritage Programme provide the interpretative foundation for USA250, ensuring activity is underpinned by research, collections and accessible storytelling.
- 6.2 A flagship exhibition, “USA250: Showbusiness, Culture and the Causeway Coast”, will be hosted in Coleraine Town Hall from May to August 2026. The exhibition will explore migration, entertainment, cinema and Ulster-Scots influence on American cultural development. It will be professionally designed and draw on museum collections and archival material.
- 6.3 A supporting learning programme will include school workshops, public talks, film screenings and potential heritage visits linked to presidential sites. This will extend engagement across schools and community audiences.
- 6.4 A travelling exhibition will also be developed, focusing on individuals from the Borough who made significant contributions in the United States. This will include portable display panels and an accompanying booklet for use across libraries, schools and community venues.
- 6.5 Together, this strand strengthens heritage engagement, enhances access to collections, and provides a lasting interpretative legacy.
- 7.0 Thanksgiving at the Old Courthouse, Bushmills** - Participants estimated 80. Total estimated costs, £5,620.
- 7.1 This initiative is proposed in the Old Courthouse, Bushmills, in the form of a Thanksgiving themed dinner and civic gathering.
- 7.2 The event will bring together community representatives, local businesses, civic leaders and contributors to USA250 initiatives. It will explore themes of gratitude and community through the lens of food and shared cultural traditions.
- 7.3 While Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, it has parallels with Irish and Northern Irish harvest traditions and communal seasonal celebrations. The event will therefore use food heritage as a way to reflect on shared values of community, resilience and thanksgiving, as well as the influence of emigrants on American cultural identity.
- 7.4 Delivered using local produce in a historic civic setting, the event will include shared dining, and short reflections from invited contributors, reinforcing community connections.
- 8.0 Arts and Community Engagement Programme** - Participants estimated 2,000. Total estimated costs, £33,000.
- 8.1 The Arts and Community Engagement strand will deliver a diverse programme of cultural activity across Council venues and community settings, embedding USA250 themes within existing programming.
- 8.2 Programming will include American themed film, live music performances drawing on Americana traditions, and participatory workshops exploring heritage crafts such as quilting and textile work. Seasonal events, including Halloween and themed cultural weeks will incorporate transatlantic storytelling and performance elements, while schools’ engagement will support creative learning linked to film, design and heritage.

## **9.0 Financial Summary**

- 9.1 The estimated Council investment for the programme is approximately £99,120, covering the 4th of July afternoon and evening flagship events, a proportion of arts and museum activity and the food heritage event. This is supplemented by £170,000 external funding through the LEP Global Gateway Programme and an additional £4,500 of external funding towards arts activities.
- 9.2 In addition, a proportion of museums and arts activities have been themed to align to the USA250 theme and will be delivered through existing budgets, estimated at £29,000.
- 9.3 The overall costs to deliver the USA250 programme is therefore £302,620.
- 9.4 Additional details are provided in **Annex A**.

## **10.0 Benefits and Strategic Fit**

- 10.1 The programme supports Council priorities in community and culture, tourism, economic development and good relations. It enhances international profile, strengthens diaspora connections, supports business growth and increases community participation.

## **11.0 Recommendations**

Council's USA 250 Working Group seek approval to proceed with the USA 250 Programme and associated funding requested of £99,120 as presented within the report.

## ANNEX A Financial Breakdown

Project Title	Project Description	Proposed Date of Event	Proposed Location of Event	Total Projected Cost £	Contribution from Service Area budget	External Funding (non council)	Additional Net Cost to Council £
USA 250: Showbusiness, culture and the Causeway Coast	Temporary exhibition in Coleraine Town Hall	May - August 2026	Coleraine Town Hall	4,500.00	3,500.00		1,000.00
USA 250: Showbusiness, culture and the Causeway Coast	Organisation of trip/s to the Presidential Homesteads Educational Workshops Film Screening	TBC	TBC	5,000.00	0.00		5,000.00
Travelling exhibition	Exhibition and accompanying booklet exploring people from CCG with significant contributions to USA	TBC	TBC	2,500.00	0.00		2,500.00
TBC Film screenings	Film Screenings, Lunchtimes in the Park, Autumn season live music performances, Special events for Leid Week with focus of American/Irish/Ulster Scots links, Halloween Event and Creative workshops	May - December 2026	Flowerfield Arts Centre Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre Ballymoney Townhall	33,000.00	25,500.00	4,500.00	3,000.00
USA250 Celebration – Ulster–America Connections Daytime event	Daytime session will be aimed at families with children Evening session aims to feature live music from Irish American artists	4th July 2026	University of Ulster	25,000.00	0.00		25,000.00
USA250 Celebration – Ulster–America Connections Evening event	The programme will combine theatre, music, scholarship and community storytelling to create a celebratory yet informative event suitable for a broad public audience. Draft includes daytime and evening activities	4th July 2026	University of Ulster	57,000.00	0.00		57,000.00
USA 250 Global Gateway Programme	US Trade Visit - round-table event, site visits to US manufacturing facilities, networking reception, engagement meetings and business support & followup	November/ December - TBC	TBC	170,000.00	0.00	170,000.00	0.00
Thanksgiving at the Old Courthouse, Bushmills	Civic event to celebrate Thanksgiving - community representatives, local businesses, civic leaders and contributors to USA250 initiatives. It will explore themes of gratitude and community through the lens of food and shared cultural traditions.	End November/ start December	The Old Courthouse, Bushmills	5,620.00	0.00		5,620.00
<b>Total</b>				<b>302,620.00</b>	<b>29,000.00</b>	<b>174,500.00</b>	<b>99,120.00</b>