

International Ombudsman Institute | NI Public Services Ombudsman

Taking the Initiative:

Exploring best practice in the exercise of Own Initiative investigation powers

Own Initiative Event – Practical Information

**Monday 22nd & Tuesday 23rd October, 2018
(Parliament Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast)**

BELFAST: Location, Airports, and Accommodation

Lonely Planet names Belfast and Northern Ireland's Causeway Coast the world's best region to visit in 2018.

"Belfast's transformation over the past two decades has been remarkable. A city once patrolled by heavily armed troops and dogged by sectarian violence is now full of hip neighbourhoods that burst with bars, restaurants and venues to suit all tastes. The rusting old docklands are now the vibrant Titanic Quarter, home to fancy apartments and a sensational museum. Beyond lies the Causeway Coast, whose timeless beauty and high-grade distractions – golf, whiskey and some of the world's most famous rocks – are more popular now than ever."

Lonely Planet

The location of the Own Initiative event is Belfast, which is the capital city of Northern Ireland, one of the four parts of the **United Kingdom** and uses pounds sterling (£). The workshops will take place in Parliament Buildings, home of the [Northern Ireland Assembly](#). Parliament Buildings is on the Stormont Estate, which is located in East Belfast, **NOT** Belfast city centre. The Stormont Estate is approximately 6miles from Belfast city centre. [Guide to get to Parliament Buildings](#). Take a virtual tour of [Parliament Buildings](#).

The event dinner, on the Monday evening, will take place at [Belfast City Hall](#), which is right in the centre of Belfast.

Air Travel

Belfast is serviced by two airports:

1. [George Best Belfast City Airport \(BHD\)](#) is close to Belfast city centre and offers mostly short-haul routes to the rest of the UK and Europe. Taxis (£5-£10) and coach transport (£2.4) is available from the airport to the centre of Belfast.
2. [Belfast International Airport \(BFS\)](#) is approximately 20miles/40minutes drive from Belfast city centre. It offers short-haul routes to the rest of the UK and Europe and further afield. Taxis (around £25) and coach transport (£7.5) is available from the airport to the centre of Belfast. See Bus travel below.

N.B. both Belfast airports have regular connections to London airports.

[Dublin Airport \(DUB\)](#) is approximately 100miles/1hr 45minutes drive from Belfast city centre. This airport is in the Republic of Ireland (which uses Euros), and offers a wide range of short-haul and international flights. See Bus travel below.

Bus Travel

Bus services are operated by Translink Metro and Ulsterbus. Bus timetables are available [online](#) or by calling 028 90 66 66 30.

Check timetables, fare and other travel information on-line (www.translink.co.uk) nearer the event as timetables/routes can and do change.

The detailed information is given below:

[Belfast – Dublin airport X1/X2](#)

– coach timetable and fare information

[Belfast International airport 300](#)

– bus timetable to/from Belfast

[George Best City airport 600](#)

– bus timetable to/from Belfast

[Metro Belfast city centre map](#)

– where to get on and off buses in Belfast

[Belfast Metro map of all routes](#)

– to visit other parts of Belfast

[Belfast Visitors map](#)

– main map

[Belfast Visitors map](#)

– locations directory

[Belfast centre walking map](#)

– Walking map and rail stations

Entry and Visa Requirements

Delegates from outside of the European Union who may require visas for travel should note that they may require two visas, one for the United Kingdom and one for the Republic of Ireland, if they intend to visit the Republic of Ireland during their stay or to transit through the Republic of Ireland en route to Belfast. Citizens from Europe and most other western countries – visas not usually required.

Special Notes:

- 1) Chinese and Indian nationals can visit the UK and Ireland using a single visa when travelling on certain short stay and visitor visas. Read more at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-irish-visa-scheme/british-irish-visa-scheme>.
- 2) For delegates who arrive in Dublin, as long as they hold a UK Standard Visitor Visa, they will be allowed to travel up to Belfast for the conference. Details can be found on the [Irish Nationalisation and Immigration Service website](#).

Belfast International and Belfast City Airports are in the United Kingdom. For definitive information on visa requirements for entry to the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, please refer to the web site of the UK Borders Agency: [UK Borders Agency](#)

Dublin and Shannon Airports are situated in the Republic of Ireland. For definitive information on visa requirements for entry to the Republic of Ireland, please refer to the web site of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service: [Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service](#)

Further Information

Currency

Delegates should note that Northern Ireland, where the Own Initiative Event is located, is part of the United Kingdom and uses Sterling (£). The Republic of Ireland uses the Euro (€).

Local Weather

The weather in Northern Ireland is traditionally changeable. The temperature usually stays above freezing, so there is seldom snow or ice, but at any time of year it is advisable to be prepared for rain.

Tourist Information

Travellers unfamiliar with the region may find the [Discover Northern Ireland](#) website a useful source of information on a wide range of topics.

Accommodation

Belfast offers a range of hotels in the city centre, including international chains, such as:

Marriott	Hilton
Holiday Inn	Park Inn
Holiday Inn Express	Ibis
Radisson	

There are UK and Irish chains, such as:

Hastings	Clayton
Maldron	Premier Inn
Fitzwilliam	Jury's

Additionally, there are a number of boutique hotels, including:

The Merchant	Malmaison
Titanic Hotel	The Bullitt

There are also a range of Guest Houses and B&Bs in Belfast that can be located using booking sites or a general internet search.

For more information on other types of accommodation visit the following websites:

[Visit Belfast](#)
[Tripadvisor](#)
[Ireland](#)
[Booking](#)
[Discover Northern Ireland](#)

About Belfast - History

Belfast is a relatively young city, with few reminders of its pre-19th-century history. The city takes its name from the River Farset (from the Gaelic feirste, meaning sandbank, or sandy ford) which flows into the River Lagan at Donegall Quay (it is now channelled through a culvert). The old Gaelic name, Beál Feirste, means 'Mouth of the Farset'.

In 1177 the Norman lord John de Courcy built a castle here, and a small settlement grew up around it. Both were destroyed 20 years later, and the town did not begin to develop in earnest until 1611 when Baron Arthur Chichester built a castle and promoted the growth of the settlement.

The early-17th-century Plantation of Ulster brought in the first waves of Scottish and English settlers, followed in the late 17th century by an influx of Huguenots (French Protestants) fleeing persecution in France, who laid the foundations of a thriving linen industry. More Scottish and English settlers arrived, and other industries such as rope-making, tobacco, engineering and shipbuilding developed. With its textile mills and shipyards, Belfast was the one city in Ireland that felt the full force of the Industrial Revolution. Sturdy rows of brick terrace houses were built for the factory and shipyard workers, and a town of around 20,000 people in 1800 grew steadily into a city of 400,000 by the start of WWI, by which time Belfast had nearly overtaken Dublin in size.

The partition of Ireland in 1920 gave Belfast a new role as the capital of Northern Ireland. It also marked the end of the city's industrial growth, although decline didn't really set in until after WWII. With the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969, the city saw more than its fair share of violence.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which laid the groundwork for power-sharing among the various political factions in a devolved Northern Ireland Assembly, raised hopes for the future and since then Belfast has seen a huge influx of investment, especially from the EU. Massive swathes of the city centre have been (or are being) redeveloped, unemployment is low, house prices continue to rise faster than in any other UK city, and tourism has taken off.

So what's Belfast like today? Well, it's packed with history, culture, exciting events, great food and super shopping, you might even spot a ship or two. You'll also find some of the friendliest people you'll ever meet.

Other information about Belfast:

[Belfast Pocket Guide](#) / [Belfast clips on YouTube](#) / [Belfast on Wikipedia](#)

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