

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

4th April, 2025

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall and remotely via MS Teams on Wednesday, 9th April, 2025 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Vacant to Vibrant Scheme (report to follow)
- (b) Closure of Connswater Shopping Centre Update (Pages 1 - 4)

3. Requests to Present

- (a) Request to Present - Department for Infrastructure - Eastern Transport Plan (Pages 5 - 8)
- (b) Request to Present - York Street Interchange Alternative Design (Pages 9 - 16)

- (c) Request to Present - Blackstaff Residents' Association - Proposal for a Workhouse Museum and an Interpretive Centre (Pages 17 - 18)

4. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Regeneration Tracker (Pages 19 - 24)

5. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) Culture Night (report to follow)
- (b) Invitation to Lord Mayor - Heroes of Irish America Awards (Pages 25 - 26)
- (c) Request for External Market Licences (Pages 27 - 30)

6. **Growing Business and the Economy**

- (a) Go Succeed Enterprise Support Service Update (Pages 31 - 36)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Request to Present – Eastern Transport Plan
Date:	9 th April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

x

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to request that the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to agree to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Eastern Transport Plan Belfast Update at a future meeting of the CG&R Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Agree to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Eastern Transport Plan Belfast Update, and to extend the invitation to Members of the Planning Committee.
3.0	Eastern Transport Plan
	The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is developing the Eastern Transport Plan for the city and four of the surrounding Local Authority areas. The CG&R Committee received a presentation from DfI on the 28 th June 2023 on the emerging Plan which set out the background to the Plan; an overview of the approach; delivery timescales and phasing; and details of the draft Vision, Objectives and General Principles. Further to this the CG&R Committee agreed the Council's response to the Public Consultation on the Emerging Plan at the Committee Meeting in October 2023.
3.1	In this response the Council outlined its support of the Departments proposed approach and welcomed the progress made. The Council raised a number of technical queries within the response, including a review of parking standards, confirmation of the approach to road protection lines and strategic proposals such as York Street Interchange, and the capacity to align with the Local Development Plan and the LPP. The Council also encouraged the Department to ensure key decisions are taken at an early stage to allow adequate design and planning time to unlock major capital investment in the city - in advance of waiting for the entirety of the Plan.
3.2	Following the consultation Council Officers have been working closely with the Department as the Plan has developed to ensure alignment with Strategic Council Policy's and Strategies including the Local Development Plan and A Bolder Vision. The Department are now at an advanced stage of the Belfast element of the Plan and are proposing to undertake engagement throughout the Summer of 2025. In advance of this the Department propose to present the emerging plan to the Members of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee. Given the strategic alignment with the LDP it is also proposed that the presentation invite is extended to the Members of the Planning Committee.
5.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.
6.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>

	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report.
7.0	Appendices
	None

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Subject:	Request to Present – York Street Interchange Alternative Design
Date:	9 th April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

x

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members that a request has been received from local architect Mark Hackett to present the York Street Interchange Alternative Design to a future meeting of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the request to receive a presentation from Mark Hackett in relation to the Alternative Design to the York Street Interchange, and that DfI are presenting the York Street Interchange Update to the Committee in May. II. Agree to defer the decision to receive the presentation on the York Street Interchange Alternative Design until after the DfI presentation, during which Members will have an opportunity to gain further clarity on the alternative design as previously presented to Committee.
3.0	<p>York Street Interchange Alternative Design</p> <p>At the February 2025 meeting of the CG&R Committee Members agreed to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure on the York Street Interchange (YSI) as per the Committee Paper attached in Appendix B of this report. The report outlined that the YSI Place Making & Active Travel Review (presented to the CG&R Committee in February 2023) is now complete and following engagement with the Minister for Infrastructure the Department have been asked to reengage with key stakeholders, including Council, on the preferred options for the YSI. This presentation is scheduled to take place at the Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee in May 2025.</p>
3.1	In addition to this, at the March 2021 meeting of the CG&R Committee, Members received a presentation from local architect Mark Hackett on the York Street Interchange Alternative Design that have been produced by Mr Hackett and a number of engineers employed to provide an alternative design that proposed to reduce the construction impacts of the scheme as well as reducing the longer term impacts of the strategic road connection on the local area.
3.2	At the February 2023 Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee the Department for Infrastructure presented the Place Making & Active Travel Review to the Committee. At the meeting Members asked the Department for an update on the York Street Interchange Alternative Design. The Department confirmed that the alternative design did not meet the scheme objectives for the YSI, and in addition introduced a number of safety issues and design conflicts with the design standards, including the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges and the Specification for Highway Works. As such the Department confirmed that they were no longer considering the alternative designs as presented by Mr Hackett.

3.3	Mr Hackett has subsequently requested to attend a future meeting of the CG&R Committee to present the York Street Interchange Alternative Design. Given that the alternative design has already been presented to the Committee, and that the York Street Interchange team will be presenting to the Committee on the 28 th May 2025 it is proposed that Members use the presentation in May as an opportunity to gain further clarity on the Departments position on the alternative prior to considering to receive a further presentation on the alternative design.
5.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.
6.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report.
7.0	Appendices
	Appendix A: Feb 2024 CG&R Request to Present York Street Interchange

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Subject:	DfI Request to Present on the York Street Interchange
Date:	5 th February 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

x

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to request that the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee agree to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the York Street Interchange at a future meeting of the CG&R Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Agree to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the York Street Interchange at a future meeting of the CG&R Committee.
3.0	Background
3.1	<p>At the February meeting of the CG&R Committee Members agreed to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure on the findings of the York Street Interchange Active Travel and Place Making Review. At Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee in February 2023 Members received the presentation from DfI and their consultant team. The minutes of that meeting, and the associated present are available via this link.</p> <p>The York Street Interchange (YSI) represents the last remaining at-grade junction on the Belfast Motorway Network and forms the junction of the M2, M3 and A12 Westlink strategic corridors. This signalised junction forms the busiest junction in Northern Ireland and caters for approx. 100,000 vehicles per day. The YSI project proposes to create a grade separated (free-flowing without signals) junction to free up the congestion experienced within the existing scenario and to improve air quality in the area.</p> <p>Following a legal challenge in 2018 the procurement competition to appoint a preferred Design and Build Contractor to develop the scheme designs and costs was set aside bringing uncertainty to the delivery timeframes for the project. The Minister for Infrastructure ordered a short-sharp external review of the YSI project in July 2020 focusing on the schemes ability to deliver on sustainable and active travel, creating thriving places for communities and creating liveable places and responding to the Climate Emergency. In March 2021 the Minister announced the outcomes of the review, accepting in full the six recommendations as outlined below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The YSI project brief should be reviewed and revised to ensure it aligns with the concept of “place making” and new best practice in terms of urban transport design, and with the Minister’s agenda. 2. The wider area impact and benefits of the Project should be evaluated using appropriate quantitative and qualitative assessment mechanisms. 3. The current Project costs should be updated to act as a benchmark to inform any decision on future alternative development.

	<p>4. There needs to be a system of ongoing communications with all interested parties. This should include updating the 2017 Communications Strategy and employing a robust Communications Structure now as well as during any construction phase. Communications should be ongoing and not just point in time.</p> <p>5. There needs be much closer co-ordination both within the DfI and between DfI and other relevant departments and interested parties at both policy and delivery levels with regard to YSI development and delivery.</p> <p>6. There needs to be a co-ordinated decision made in the context of emerging policies, which then needs to be applied to ensure that the YSI project aligns to this context.</p> <p>In November 2021 the CG&R Committee agreed that the Members of the Committee withdraw Belfast City Council's corporate support for the York Street Interchange scheme and will only reinstate corporate support for the scheme, if the review, and any new scheme arising from it, meets the Council's climate, air quality, place making and housing ambitions as a city and complements the aims of "A Bolder Vision". This decision was ratified at the December 2021 meeting of the Full Council.</p> <p>Following discussion at the Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee in February 2023 the Committee;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI would provide further information on the issues raised; • Agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to request that it reviewed the Strategic Transport Objectives of the York Street Interchange. in light of the objectives being set in 2008 and prior to the declaration of a Climate Emergency by the Council and the NI Assembly, and the passage of the Climate Act; and • Requested that DfI share the Assurance Review of the York Street Interchange which was provided to the Minister in March 2021. <p>The DfI response to the requests from the Committee was presented to the August 2023 meeting of the CG&R Committee, with the associated letters attached as Appendix A of this report.</p>
4.0	Main Report
4.1	<p>Following direction from the DfI Minister the Department has been considering options for improving placemaking and active travel as part of the development of the York Street Interchange project. Following the recommendations from the Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR) report, published by Minister O'Dowd in October 2022, the Minister asked officials to carry out further work on three scenarios recommended within it, to further refine them to maximise ambition</p>

4.2	<p>in terms of delivery for communities, connectivity, and the wider living places agenda, and to explore any implementation issues. This work, entitled Placemaking and Active Travel Development (PATD), was to consider how the scheme could deliver positive improvements for the local community. As part of this, along with our consultants AECOM, we met with stakeholders including Council, to discuss the work being carried out and seek any feedback on it.</p> <p>DfI have confirmed that the PATD work is now complete, and a report and presentation have been given to the Minister.</p>
4.3	<p>The Minister has asked officials to meet again with elected representatives to share the presentation, including the preferred option, and seek feedback prior to his final consideration and publication of the report.</p>
4.4	<p>To that end Members are asked to agree to receive a presentation from DfI on the York Street Interchange Place Making & Active Travel Review at a future meeting of the CG&R Committee.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report.</p>
7.0	<p><u>Appendices</u></p>
	<p>Appendix A: Correspondence YSI Place Making & Active Travel Review</p>



Subject:	Request to Present - Blackstaff Residents' Association - Proposal for a Workhouse Museum and an Interpretive Centre
Date:	9th April, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Some time in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	To consider a request from the Blackstaff Residents' Association to present to the Committee a proposal for a workhouse museum and interpretive centre to be located in or near the old Workhouse building within the grounds of Belfast City Hospital.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That, in the first instance, the request from the Blackstaff Residents' Association to present on a proposed workhouse museum and interpretive centre be referred to the South Area Working Group.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Correspondence has been received from William Dickson BEM, Chairperson of the Blackstaff Residents' Association, requesting to present to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee a proposal for a workhouse museum and interpretive centre to be located in or near the old Workhouse building within the grounds of Belfast City Hospital.
3.2	It is recommended, in the first instance, that the request to present is referred to the South Area Working Group for consideration.
4.0	Finance & Resource Implications
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report
6.0	Appendices
	None



Subject:	Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker
Date:	9 th April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, Angela McIntyre, Regeneration Project Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1	To provide Members with an update on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker which captures regeneration and development activity which took place in the City Centre during 2024, as aligned to the eight core policies of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). The detail of this report will be provided by way of a presentation at Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) An overview of regeneration and development activity which took place in Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024, as aligned to the eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, will be provided by way of a presentation to be made to this Committee on 9th April 2025. ii) This will include identifying challenges and proposed next steps to help unlock the next stage of the delivery of the Regeneration & Investment Strategy priorities in line with the 2024 BCCRIS 10 year stocktake for discussion with Members.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	<p>As members are aware the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out our collective ambition for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas for the period 2015 to 2030. It contains a road map of policies to guide city centre decision-making and key projects that translate those policies into action, aligned to our overarching ambitions outlined within the Belfast Agenda. BCCRIS seeks to address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast and is underpinned by the following eight core principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the Employment Population; • Increase the Residential Population; • Manage the Retail Offer; • Maximise the Tourism Opportunity; • Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres; • Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre; • Connect to the City Around, and • Shared space and social impact.
4.2	<p>To facilitate the implementation of the eight policies for the city centre, BCCRIS identified a series of projects aimed at creating a liveable and economically thriving city, alongside, identifying the following five Special Action Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner North • Inner West

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North East Quarter • Transport Hub and South Centre • Oxford Street and the Eastern Bank
4.3	<p>The city centre provides an important role for Belfast, the Council and the wider region given Belfast's role as the regional driver and the critical role the city centre in particular plays in terms of employment, investment, tourism, education and a place to live and to visit. , The city centre makes up 2.6% of Belfast's spatial area but represents the largest employment base employing over 86,000 workers across the various sectors, representing c37% of Belfast's workforce. Approx 80% of the Councils income comes from the district rate, with the city centre accounting for 41% of Belfast's non-domestic rates income. The sectors contributing greatest to city centre rates are the office sector (66% of city centre non-domestic rate) and retail (17% of city centre non-domestic rate). From 2020/21 to 2023/24 the city centre non-domestic rate has increased year on year going from £41.9m to £49.1m over this 4-year period.</p>
4.4	<p>In 2024 a stocktake was taken on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. the findings of the report are largely in line with the statistics reported in the Regeneration Tracker, focusing on what has been achieved since the Strategies launch in 2015 and to identify work that is yet to be done. After extensive engagement across key city partners and stakeholder, including the CG&R Committee, the Stocktake also identified the key areas of focus to drive catalytic change. These areas of focus include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase city centre living across all tenures by addressing viability, funding, policy and water infrastructure issues. Recognising the importance of good placemaking and connectivity to creating inclusive and sustainable communities. • Deliver A Bolder Vision priority projects including a prioritising a number of infrastructure related capital projects, sustainable and active travel, delivering green and climate resilient public realm and open space. • Unlock major regeneration schemes that have stalled and preserving built heritage where possible. This includes a particular focus on the Tribeca site. This will require concerted public and private sector commitment. • A multi-Agency approach to Place Keeping and City Management - ensuring the city centre is well managed, clean, safe, accessible, vibrant and animated, capitalising on Belfast's distinct draw.
4.5	<p>The purpose of the Regeneration Tracker, which will be presented to this Committee, is to provide Members with an overview of regeneration and development activity which has taken place in</p>

	Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024 (1st January – 31st December), aligned to the eight core policies outlined within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.
4.6	A number of the core principles and projects and developments identified within BCCRIS have progressed well since 2015 to date (and in particular during 2024 which will be the focus of the presentation to Committee). This has included retail, office refurbishment, hotel and tourism, purpose-built student accommodation and major developments identified in BCCRIS such as the relocation of the University Ulster, progression of the new Transport Hub and Weavers Cross development, progression of City Deal projects including the Belfast Stories tourist attraction, waterfront development etc. Whilst retail across the UK has remained challenging previous reports to this Committee have shown that city centre ground floor vacancy levels have decreased from 23% to 21% in 2024 and there have been a number of new first to Belfast /first to market brands who have recently located in the city centre.
4.7	It is however recognised that challenges remain around city centre living, place-keeping and public realm, dereliction, and infrastructure investment. As reported to CGR in February 2024 and through the BCCRIS Stocktake the lack of regeneration related funding for Belfast (and the wider region) as compared to other UK city regions has put Belfast at a distinct disadvantage in terms of city competitiveness and addressing issues of viability, place making and progressing development and regeneration including housing and increased city centre living. As highlighted to Committee there are a number of funding streams available in other UK cities that have helped accelerate development inc the Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Transforming Cities Fund etc. The experience from other cities has shown that these have been critical in order to realise the full regeneration potential of their city centres and to meet wider city region requirements.
4.8	Notwithstanding the lack of this external funding, the Regeneration Tracker presentation to be made to Committee will highlight positive development activity during the 2024 period across the private and public sectors. In order to deliver the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda to 2035 it has been estimated that this will require c £5.5bn investment and clearly the role of the private sector is critical in this. The Regeneration Tracker details the extensive private sector development delivered in 2024 along with highlighting some of the projects where Belfast City Council are leading on the delivery of addressing some of our key sectors for growth. This includes the Housing Led Regeneration Programme, the Bolder Vision, Strategic Property Acquisitions, Belfast Region City Deal Projects inc Belfast Stories, Cathedral Gardens redevelopment, and the Vacant to Vibrant Programme.

4.9	<p>An update on these various areas of work have been brought to both CGR and SP&R Committees. In terms of city centre living specifically it is worth highlighting the update brought to the March 2025 CGR Committee in relation to the housing led regeneration programme. This included an update appointment of Graham as the Council's Delivery Partner for a significant multi-site, residential led mixed use regeneration development opportunity (c £630m GDV). This followed the development of a number of Concept Regeneration Plans for Council and wider public and private sector lands and PADS for each of the cluster sites. Members were also updated on the Inner North West Development Brief which has now been awarded to Clanmil Housing Association. An update was also provided in relation to the city-wide Strategic Site Assessments where planning appraisals and feasibility studies are underway, and a number of sites agreed to progress to exploring delivery options.</p>
4.10	<p>It is worth highlighting that there are a significant number of consented residential units / schemes that have come through the planning system in the city centre particularly, and that many of these have not progressed for various reasons including issues around policy, viability, infrastructure etc, most of which are outside Council's responsibility. Notwithstanding this however it is worth noting that there are currently over 950+ homes under construction across 3 city centre sites, and over 1,503 social homes under construction across the city.</p>
4.11	<p>The Regeneration Tracker will present an update on the progress of development and regeneration activity within the city centre in 2024 as well as identifying challenges and proposed next steps to unlocking the next stage of the delivery, in line with the BCCRIS Stocktake, for discussion with Members.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
7.0	<p><u>Appendices - Documents Attached</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>

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Subject:	Invitation received by Lord Mayor
Date:	9 April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, EU and International Relations Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr> <td>After Committee Decision</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on an invitation received by the Lord Mayor to attend the Heroes of Irish America Awards in Buffalo, New York on 16 May 2025.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note and consider the invitation received by the Lord Mayor to attend and address the Heroes of Irish America Awards in Buffalo, New York on 16 May 2025.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that the Lord Mayor has recently undertaken a visit to Nashville and New York in order to explore and develop a range of economic linkages between Belfast and

	our sister city in Nashville and to engage in a number of cultural and social events around the St Patrick's Day celebrations in New York.
3.2	As part of his programme of engagements in New York, the Lord Mayor met with a number of senior representatives of the US-Irish community and diaspora in the city. Through these engagements, he has subsequently received an invitation from the Irish Echo and Congressman Tim Kennedy – the event host – to attend and address the Heroes of Irish America Awards in Buffalo, New York on 16 May 2025. This will be the second annual event and it recognises the unsung heroes of Irish America.
3.3	In addition to attendance at the event, the Lord Mayor will also be invited to take part in a business roundtable to discuss transatlantic economic links.
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Costs associated with attendance at the event for the Lord Mayor and one officer will not exceed £3,400. These costs will be covered within the International Relations budget for US-based activities.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None.



Subject:	Request for External Markets Licences
Date:	9 April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Clodagh Cassin, Markets Development Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="margin-left: 200px;"> <tr><td>After Committee Decision</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>After Council Decision</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Sometime in the future</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Never</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on two requests for market licences; one to operate a new market on a temporary basis in the former Europa bus station building and the other to operate a one-off market as part of the Cathedral Quarter festival in mid-May 2025.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve a licence for an external market to take place in Europa Bus Station on a monthly basis over the course of the coming months Approve a licence for a one-off market as part of Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival in May 2025.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	Belfast City Council has exclusive rights to hold markets in Belfast. Anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Council for permission. The Markets Unit has now received two applications for external markets.
3.2	<p><u>Halt Market/Bus Stop Bazaar</u></p> <p>The first request relates to a proposed market in collaboration with the upcoming “Halt” space opening in the former Europa Bus Centre, as part of the Weaver’s Cross rejuvenation.</p>
3.3	The market will be a curated blend of craft, art, music, and food, involving 20-30 traders on a monthly basis. Their aim is to transform the former bus station into a dynamic urban destination that appeals to both tourists and locals alike. By redesigning the area, they hope to create a space where people can eat, socialise, and purchase unique gifts from Northern Ireland’s finest makers and designers. The organisers see this market as an opportunity to collaborate closely with the Halt project to help make it a trendy, in-demand space even before it fully opens.
3.4	The organisers have been working with MRP Investment & Development Ltd, who are leading the redesign of the space due to open in July (this date has to be confirmed), and also working with Translink to ensure this market is in line with the wider regeneration of this area of the city.
3.5	The market will run from 11.30am – 3.30pm, on the last Saturday of month. Organisers are happy to revisit these times so they don’t conflict with St George’s Saturday market. The market will provide an opportunity for local vendors to promote and sell their products to tourists and create an exciting new offering to the local people in the area. They will work with the MRP, Translink, and the local community in the area to ensure the market adds vibrancy and is in line with the aims of the wider Weaver’s Cross project.
3.6	The proposed market has all the necessary approvals in place and they will ensure all food providers have the relevant documentation. They will also ensure any second-hand goods are checked and we will take responsibility to make sure that counterfeit or stolen goods are not sold at the market. There is a tight application process that ensures the right products are sold at each event. The market will be operated under permitted development rights as the market will be operated for less than 14 days in a calendar year. This means that planning permission is not required for the market. An application to use the site on a temporary (5 year) basis for hospitality use to include retail, food and beverage market and outdoor seating and entertainment space has recently been submitted to the Council for determination.

3.7	<p><u>Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF) Market</u></p> <p>As part of the 25th Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF), event organisers are planning to hold a market within the area on 5 May 2025 from 12-4pm. The market will complement the wider programme of activities over the course of the festival. Organisers currently anticipate that the market will attract around 40 stall holders selling a range of local products.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Both markets will bring a potential income of around £2750 to Belfast City Council.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None.

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Subject:	Enterprise Support Service update		
Date:	9 April 2025		
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development		
Contact Officer:	Margie McKay, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager Cathy Keenan, Programme Lead, NIESS		
Restricted Reports			
Is this report restricted?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?			
After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	
After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Some time in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Call-in			
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.0	Purpose of Report		
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that is being led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils.		
2.0	Recommendations		
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note and endorse the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses Note the update to the current funding position from MHCLG for the 2025/26 financial year 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to the provision of match funding from Belfast City Council of £314,415 to support delivery for the 2025/26 financial year • Agree to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March 2026.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the August 2024 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with an update on progress to operationalise and deliver the Enterprise Support Service which has been branded as Go Succeed. The service has now been operational for around eighteen months and has reached thousands of potential entrepreneurs and businesses across Northern Ireland.
3.2	By way of background, members will recall that Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to the UK Government's Ministry for Community, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) for UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies (SPF) to support delivery. This provided £17 million of support for the period to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants.
3.3	Belfast City Council, as lead for the service, has now secured additional funding via an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) of £9.2 million for the 2025/2026 financial year, ensuring continuity of the service. The focus over the next year, alongside delivery of the service, will be working to secure a more permanent funding source. The coming year is considered a "transition" year for Shared Prosperity Fund and work is underway within the NI government departments to consider how they will take a more direct management role in a future Fund from April 2026 onwards.
3.4	The service aims to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represents the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses can access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development. The concept is that the service will help people get the right support at the right time – and will also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.
3.5	<p>The service has been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start: this element of the service aims to identify individuals with entrepreneurial intentions as well as reaching those individuals who do not have an intention to start

	<p>a business but could be encouraged to do so. There is specific, targeted support for a range of underrepresented groups. The menu of support available includes masterclasses, peer support networks and 1-1 mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow: this element of the service provides support for existing businesses. 1-1 mentoring is allocated based on the business' potential to grow and innovate. Masterclass and peer support network activity are also provided to support existing businesses to make key decisions on issues such as entering new markets or accessing finance for growth • Scale: this part of the service is geared to supporting start-ups that have the potential to go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years. Support is delivered through 1-1 mentoring which aims to enable access to finance or further support through Invest NI, Catalyst or others.
3.6	In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £3,000 (up to 50% of capital costs) will be available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.
3.7	The delivery is underpinned by investments such as a wide-reaching marketing and communications campaign; a call handling service to deal with phone enquiries as well as an online portal to deal with online requests for support and a regional CRM system to enable tracking of client engagement across the service.
3.8	<p><u>Regional Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of regional performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities • 6,202 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 4,168 businesses supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 1,595 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.
3.9	The service provides an opportunity for councils to deliver a consistent approach to enterprise, start-up and growth provision across the region. However it also has the flexibility to adapt to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and businesses within local areas. To

	<p>achieve this, councils have developed local-level annual service plans which identify key areas of focus for outreach and delivery activities. This can include interventions to increase participation and address specific barriers faced by certain under-represented groups including females, individuals with a disability, ethnic minorities etc. It can also allow for targeted sector support activities such as those aimed at the tourism and hospitality sector or creative and digital sector support.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Belfast Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of Belfast performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,046 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities. This has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sector specific events and self-employment academies for those in the hair and beauty industry including delivery of aspirational workshops and hands-on mentoring support for over 80 newly qualified individuals ○ Delivery of a female-focused 'inspiring enterprise' event for a group of 100 female entrepreneurs providing practical support to starting or growing their enterprise ○ Working with apprenticeship providers across Belfast to deliver aspirational workshops to 100s of 16–18-year-olds encouraging entrepreneurship as a very real and achievable pathway for consideration ○ Facilitation of the '22 under 22' initiative, designed to unearth, recognise and fast track 22 exceptional potential entrepreneurs in the city ○ Increasing awareness of enterprise among young people at the Young Enterprise Big Market event in St George's Market in December 2024. • 1,036 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 756 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks).
3.11	<p>315 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £1 million. These grants have enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.</p>
3.12	<p>Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of the local business community. In Belfast, there has been a series of targeted</p>

	<p>masterclasses for businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector. We have also put in place several information and support sessions to help businesses access other support services such as the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and the Belfast Business Promise and have organised support clinics to help businesses interested in exploring new markets and introducing new technologies into their business. For the year ahead, planned activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups ○ Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, encouraging and supporting new and existing social enterprises and co-operatives as well as improving social value connections across the city ○ Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment.
3.13	<p>Looking ahead, it is critical that funding is secured to enable this service to continue. The SPF funding is currently scheduled to run out in March 2026 and there is no future SPF funding approach beyond this date. There has been some engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Minister has been vocal in her support for the service. However, at this point, DfE is not making a financial contribution to support the delivery of NIESS – although councils are using some of resources allocated to them from central government for the delivery of their statutory duty to provide start-up support as their match funding contribution to the overall funding pot. The councils have developed a detailed stakeholder engagement plan – including political engagement – for the coming months in order to drive home the value and impact of the service and to make the case to relevant departments to prioritise resources for future delivery. Local political support across the region will be critical in building support for this work.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council is currently acting as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we have established a delivery and management team which is fully resourced through the SPF funding. The overall indicative SPF budget for the 2025/26 financial year is in the region of £7.2 million revenue, with around £2 million in capital funding available across the funding period for grant support.</p>

3.15	A condition of the funding from MHCLG is that projects include match funding as part of the funding package. Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has a statutory obligation to support the promotion of jobs through business start-up activity. Members are therefore asked to note and endorse Belfast City Council's Enterprise and Business Growth Unit contribution of £314,415 in match funding to the NI Enterprise Support Service in order to comply with both the funder's requirement and Council's statutory obligation. The contribution is based on an agreed formula across all council areas, calculated on the number of businesses to be supported.
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	N/A