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| Subject: | Update on A Bolder Vision Connectivity and Place Making Projects |
| Date: | 7 May 2025 |
| Reporting Officer: | Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development |
| Contact Officers: | Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Callie Persic, Development Manager |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. | |
| Insert number <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sometime in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in |
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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 provide Members with an update on funding received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to support connectivity, placemaking and active travel projects aligned with A Bolder Vision Key Move of Embracing the River. This paper also provides an update on three public realm improvement works schemes, currently under design development and funded or part funded utilising Developer Contributions: Blackstaff Square, 5Cs and Little Patrick/Little York Street. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) funding received to support the development of the Under the Bridges project and Sailortown-Titanic Quarter Bridge proposals and the timeframes associated with the next steps. II. Note the update on progress in relation to the Little Patrick/Little York Street, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square Developer Contributions schemes and the timeframe for the associated planning applications. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| 3.1 | <p><u>DfI Active travel funding</u></p> <p>In January 2025 Members were advised that Council submitted applications for the DfI Greenways and Active Travel Enabling funding to avail of within the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years and, subject to funding approval, approved the progression of the projects outlined below.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>The Letters of Offer were received from DfI on 21 March 2025 for the three projects, Under the Bridges, Sailortown-Titanic Quarter Bridge and the Belfast Bikes expansion, with full expenditure required by 31 March 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under The Bridges (UTB): Expanding on the 'North-South Spine' project following the Waterfront Framework, UTB seeks to improve connectivity provision including new public realm, active travel infrastructure and reimaging open spaces under the M3 bridges. • Sailortown-Titanic Quarter Bridge: Improving connectivity provision with a focus on active travel infrastructure and associated public realm provision. • Belfast Bikes: Introduction of e-bikes into the scheme; supply and commissioning of 300 new pedal bikes and 100 e-bikes |

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| 3.3 | <p><u>Under The Bridges (UTB)</u></p> <p>Expanding on the 'North-South Spine' project following the Waterfront Framework, the UTB project seeks to provide a safe connectivity between the City Centre and the Sailortown / City Quays area including new public realm, active travel infrastructure and reimaging underutilised spaces under the M3 bridges to improve safety and to bring forward innovative outdoor leisure uses that can provide amenity space for local residents and users of the area. This project is being brought forward in conjunction with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, as a co-client for the delivery of the project. As detailed in January 2025, the funding will build upon the initial feasibility study and progress the technical design development for Under the Bridges placemaking and connectivity project to RIBA Stage 3, including Planning approval of a viable proposal that can be used to seek future capital funding. In line with the RIBA Plan of Work, preparation of design information to Stage 3 would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIBA Stage 3 Report • Outline Specification • Cost Plan • Planning application submitted |
| 3.4 | <p>In order to meet the DfI spend deadlines, procurement for the UTB commenced in December 2024 and Atkins Réalis has been appointed as the design team. In the coming months there will be consultation with community representatives, local stakeholders, and landowners to inform the design process with regular updates to be brought to the CG&R Committee for information.</p> |
| 3.5 | <p><u>Sailortown-Titanic Bridge</u></p> <p>As reported and agreed at the CG&R Committee meetings in August and October 2023, and in January 2025, the Sailortown to Queen's Island Bridge was identified as a major element of active travel infrastructure that will deliver a much-needed high quality active travel corridor, enhanced public realm and amenity space and aligns with key city strategies including the Belfast Agenda, A Bolder Vision, the emerging Eastern Transport Plan and the Belfast Cycling Network.</p> |
| 3.6 | <p>The proposed bridge would provide a new iconic and distinctive cross harbour cycle and walking swing bridge that could complete the Harbour Loop and provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to economic, educational and opportunities on Queen's Island as</p> |

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| | well as providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed Yorkgate Train Station. |
| 3.7 | Members were advised that the proposal for funding from DfI would develop the project to RIBA Stage 2 which will include concept design, technical requirements, cost plan and outline specification and provide the feasibility information, including capex and opex requirements that will clarify the long-term asset owner and the optimum route to long term operation and maintenance. |
| 3.8 | At the time it was proposed that under the existing BCC/Belfast Harbour Commissioners Memorandum of Understanding the BHC would undertake the procurement and project management of the project, overseen by BCC/BHC Client Team. However, due to operational and procurement constraints it has been agreed that Council will take up the role of the contracting authority and oversee the procurement and project management. A joint BCC/BHC Client Team will remain in place throughout the duration of the project and the scope of services has been drafted and procurement will commence in in the coming weeks. |
| 3.9 | <p><u>Belfast Bikes: Introduction of e-bikes into the scheme</u></p> <p>The DfI funding for the Belfast Bikes will enable the introduction of eBikes into the scheme. The update on the DfI Letters of Offer for the Belfast Bikes as well as UTB and the Sailortown-Titanic Bridge were brought to SP&R on 18 April 2025 where it was agreed to add the Belfast eBikes project to the Capital Programme at Stage 1—<i>Emerging</i> to allow the business case to be developed.</p> |
| 3.10 | <p><u>Developer Contribution Led Schemes</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that there are a number of public realm improvement schemes coming forward in the city centre that are aligned with historical Developer Contributions. In June 2023 Members agreed to progress with the Five Cs, Little Patrick/Little York Street and Blackstaff Square schemes that would see the Developer Contributions combined with funding from the Department for Communities to deliver public realm schemes aligned to the parameters outlined within the Section 76 Legal Agreements. In June 2024, Members received an update that outlined progress to date on these Public Realm Improvement Works delivered via Developer Contributions.</p> |
| 3.11 | I. The Five Cs Project update |

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| | <p>The Five Cs Public Realm Environmental Improvement scheme (c£2.4m), in the core of the city centre is being progressed in partnership with DfC, with DfC undertaking the delivery of the scheme. Council have committed £746,610 of Developer Contributions with DfC providing the remainder of the funding.</p> |
| 3.12 | <p>The planning application was submitted on 03 April 2025 LA04/2025/0609/F for the College Street and College Court areas of the scheme. Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) is due to submit the planning application for Callendar Street mid-May 2025 and once both planning applications are approved detailed design and construction procurement will commence, with construction works due to commence in Summer 2026. As previously reported, the Chichester Street element of this scheme will come forward at a future date following the completion of the Eastern Transport Plan Belfast City Centre Chapter.</p> |
| 3.13 | <p>II. Little Patrick Street & Little York Street Public Realm Improvement Works</p> <p>As previously agreed, the Little York Street/Little Patrick Street Scheme is being brought forward to deliver Section 76 Developer Contributions secured, specifically for public realm, (£1,298,101) within the area. This scheme is located within the University Quarter of the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown area, with the Developer Contributions secured from a number of Purpose-Built & Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) Blocks within the area. The scheme is adjoining a number of the PBMSA blocks, existing local businesses and adjacent to existing communities in the Lancaster Street area. The scheme will see the development of a high-quality placemaking public realm and environmental improvement scheme that will address road safety issues connected with “rat runs” through the area and safety issues in general that exist due to the environment surrounding these student blocks.</p> |
| 3.14 | <p>Planning approval for the scheme was granted in December 2024 and there has been ongoing engagement with DfI Eastern Division in relation to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process. In April the TRO Scheme Stages Report was submitted, including an Application for the Amendment to Traffic Regulation Orders to enact the reconfiguration of Little Patrick Street to a single lane carriageway, introduce traffic calming and restricted access to enable servicing and emergency access, and other works to include installation of planters with integrated seating, tree planting, rain gardens, bespoke lighting pillars, catenary lighting, and surface improvements.</p> |
| 3.15 | <p>The next stage in the TRO process would require the Department to undertake a review of transport legislation and preparation of a draft order ahead of public advertising Notices of</p> |

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| | Intention of the discrete TROs. Pending confirmation of timeframes of this process detailed design and construction procurement will commence. |
| 3.16 | <p>III. Blackstaff Square & surrounding streets Public Realm Improvement Works</p> <p>As per agreement in January 2023, Developer Contributions (for public realm) within the Blackstaff Square area (£615,315) are being taken forward in conjunction with DfC to progress public realm improvement works at Blackstaff Square and surrounding streets.</p> |
| 3.17 | The project scope includes Blackstaff Square, Brunswick Street, Amelia Street, Bain Place, James Street South (up to Bedford St. junction), Franklin Street (up to Bedford St. junction), McClintock Street and Clarence Street West. |
| 3.18 | McAdam Design is the ICT taking forward the Blackstaff Square scheme as the first part of the Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5 (BSA 5) project. The project is at RIBA Stage 2, Concept Design, with a planning application expected to be submitted in Summer 2025 pending feedback from DfI on the movement framework that is aligned to the Belfast Cycling Network. |
| 3.19 | The Blackstaff Square and the surrounding streets were identified as a catalyst project within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), and the Council's Linen Quarter Masterplan. This is a key public space, but it is often subject to anti-social behaviour and consists of low-quality public realm, often subject to utilisation as bin and keg storage by local businesses. The area has been subject to some short-term interventions in recent years although these have been delivered by different organisations and resulted in disparate designs and uses within the area. |
| 3.20 | With the opening of Grand Central Station footfall has increased through the area and bringing forward designs for Blackstaff Square and the connecting streets will complement and enhance the public realm improvement works that will be undertaken by the Belfast Grand Central Station scheme on Great Victoria Street, Grosvenor Road, Durham Street and Glengall Street. |
| 4.0 | Financial and Resource Implications |
| | <p>The financial requirements associated within this paper are met from externally funded, or previously approved budgets.</p> <p>The Capex and Opex requirements for the UTBs and the Sailortown-Titanic Bridge will be reported to this Committee and to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committees as appropriate pending the completion of the staged design work outlined within this paper.</p> |

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| 5.0 | Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment |
| | Equality, good relations and rural needs screening will be carried out as part of capital project development. |
| 6.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| | None |