



City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2024-25 End of Year Report



Belfast
City Council

Summary of Key Progress

Commercial Assets

129,520 journeys on Belfast Bikes during 2024-25 – up 15% from the previous year.

Appointed a new operator for the Belfast Bikes.

Welcomed 213k visitors to Belfast Zoo and appointed a new catering contract.

Visits to St. George's Market increased 14.9% compared to the previous year.

Culture and tourism

St Patrick's Day parade attracted up to 30k people to the city centre.

12k people attended Lord Mayor's Day event

The Christmas lights switch-on event attracted over 10k people.

Belfast 2024 included over 1,000 new cultural and creative events and provided over 1,400 contracts for the sector.

The Belfast 2024 attracted over 130k attendees.

The culture team facilitated £2.45 million CMAG funding to 59 cultural organisations; supporting 20 community festivals and 19 larger festivals.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann secured for 2026.

City Regeneration

Appointed a Private Sector Partner to deliver £630million housing-led regeneration opportunities.

Published a 10-year stocktake of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy.

46 vacant city centre premises brought back into use through the Vacant to Vibrant grant scheme.

This investment of £839k provided a Return on Investment of over 4:1.

Launch of a city wide Vacant to Vibrant regeneration scheme.

City Economy

525 people participated in our Employment Academies.

317 people are participating within our Upskilling Academies.

Of the 246 participants to have completed an academy in-year, 82% (202 people) have progressed onto a job or a better job via an Employment or Upskilling Academy.

Delivered NI Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) on behalf of all 11 councils.

Secured £9.2million of funding from UK Government to continue the NIESS service during 2025-26.

An estimated 208 jobs have been supported through Go Succeed business start activity. 1,036 entrepreneurs received 1 to 1 business start mentoring.

756 business were supported with 1:1 mentoring for business growth activity.

A total of 110 social enterprises and co-operatives have been supported.

16 Multiply projects supported 1,070 people to gain numeracy skills.

57 organisations signed up to the Belfast Business Promise.



2024-25 Key Programmes of Work – End of Year Report

1. Our Economy

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Academies: 526 participants with 199 successfully completed and 155 into work (78%). 309 still participating and low attrition (7 people). The focus of Employment Academies is on sectors of high job demand such as Tech, Business Services, Working with Children, Health & Social Care, Logistics etc. Upskilling Academies: 317 participants (306 of whom undertaking Level 3-5 qualification). Of the 47 successfully completing, 100% have gained a better job. 266 still participating and low attrition (2 people). Upskilling Academies are delivered in low-paid (female dominated) sectors where Level 3-Level 5 can assure a better job, such as Childcare, Classroom Assistants, Health & Social Care. So far this year, we are supporting 306 Level 3-Level 5 qualifications. Of the 246 who have completed an Employment or Upskilling Academy, so far 82% have secured a job/better job. BCC as an employer has undertaken a pilot phase of digitally badging skills development programmes within the People Strategy. Gateway to Choices supported 1,169 people to access the appropriate provision to meet their employability needs. The 16 Multiply projects supported 1,070 to gain numeracy skills and gain a digital badge to recognise the skills developed. A further Bridges to Progression programme being scoped to target vulnerable young people such as those leaving the criminal justice system, refugees/asylum seekers and care experienced. Health & Work Steering Group established with strategic partners to design a more cohesive ecosystem of support that encompasses both 'health' and 'employability' provision to better support those experiencing economic inactivity. Partners include DfE, DfC BHSCT, PHA, NICVA, DoF, Belfast Met, Belfast Works with extensive engagement planned in April/May across providers, employers, JBOs, health professionals and those with lived experience. This also includes benchmarking visit to London including DWP officials, local authorities, Health & Work provision, Working Well/Integrated Care Boards etc. The Enterprise & Business Group (EBG) team have been working to engage on various BRCD projects and have recently launched a pilot programme with Studio Ulster with the aim of engaging local SMEs in the facility and allowing them to avail of the state-of-the-art facilities. The EBG team alongside E&S are also working closely with the newly appointed BRCD E&S manager to look at opportunities for us to engage on the various projects and maximise benefits realisation for the local economy.
Support business start-up and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the launch of the NI Enterprise Support Service in November 2023, the council's Programme Management Office has overseen the following regional performance (for all NI councils): 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

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<p>supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks); and 1,595 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. ▪ Through the delivery of the Go Succeed Programme, we have supported an estimated 208 jobs based on business start activity (Note this is a provisional figure based on year-to-date) performance, as some Q4 data is still outstanding. It is expected there will be 346 business plans created during the 2024-25 year. Applying the recommended 60% multiplier to convert to “jobs promoted”, arrives at the estimated 208 jobs promoted (compared with the statutory target of 325). ▪ A total of 2,046 individuals were ‘reached’ through a range of community outreach activities; 1,036 individuals/ entrepreneurs received 1:1 mentoring for business start but many chose not to receive a business plan and instead focused on more relevant support for their business, for example market testing or a marketing plan. ▪ A total of 756 Belfast businesses were supported with 1:1 mentoring through business growth activity. ▪ A total of 315 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed grants since their launch in February 2024, drawing down over £1 million. ▪ For the 2024/25 year we supported a total of 110 social enterprises and co-operatives – of this total, 57 organisations were supported to start a social enterprise or cooperative via our dedicated Go Social support. Via Go Succeed we supported an additional 53 Social economy businesses to grow their existing organisation. ▪ We are continuing to work with Community Finance Ireland (CFI) in supporting our Social Economy Incentive Fund. The fund provides grants of up to £10,000 to new or developing social economy businesses in early growth stages, or in need of support to begin trading in the next six months. CFI's involvement in the fund ensures we are supporting ventures that can self-sustain post-grant intervention. In the 2024/25 year we supported 14 organisations via a total grant pot of £91,082.83. ▪ We have continued to support the delivery of Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF), with 28 successful companies receiving their DTFF grant in the 2024/25 year. Belfast City Council EBG team have provided enhanced support to guide businesses on the fund, providing support via Go Succeed peer support networks, events, masterclasses and dedicated mentoring support. ▪ At the end of Q4 occupancy at the Innovation Factory had dipped to 50% which will bring the average occupancy for the 2024/25 year to 70%. Via our governance structures, SRO and external advisors (KPMG) we are working closely with the operator to implement a recovery plan to achieve the annual service plan obligations.
Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Following the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Summit on 27 February 2025, we are working within the governance structures of the partnership to review the strategic direction and priorities of the partnership. A new partnership manager has been recently appointed and we will work closely with them to support this ongoing piece of work.
Support City Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The annual business plan for St. George's Market is on track including a review of stall fees and venue hire fees, trader compliance, a review of the storage policy is underway. Visitor experience has been improved with the use of footfall counters and customer research, a new CRM system has been established for the unit to manage market operations more effectively and trader engagement continues. Opportunities to maximise usage on the market mid-week are being explored with some external operators. Investment has been made

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<p>for new stalls for the market. A new brand has been developed and Marketing and comms is ongoing. Footfall counters are now installed and providing valuable insight into customer data to St Georges. Using Visitor Insights (the council's city footfall monitoring system), visits to the St. George's Market during vicinity 2024-25 (April - March) increased by 14.9% compared to the previous year 2023-24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Christmas Continental Market delivered for 2025. Visitor numbers were 1.6 million and market was a huge success. ▪ Markets Rights policy is currently under review and a report should be brought to committee in June with an update. ▪ Management of Smithfield Market is ongoing - however some areas of the building need improvement/investment. ▪ The Twilight Market took place on the 26 and 27 November and was big success with over 20,000 customers attending over the two nights. There were just over 150 local traders selling hot food, cold foods, arts, crafts and jewellery. There was live music on both evenings and officers worked in collaboration with officers from Belfast Stories to run events to raise the profile of their public consultation work.
Belfast Business Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We exceeded the initial target for 50 organisations signing up to the Belfast Business Promise (BBP). There are now 57 organisations signed up to the promise. BBP pledges are now digitally badged, which increases the currency and recognition of digital badging with employers. ▪ Of the 57 Supporter Organisations signed up to the BBP, 19 organisations are accredited as Members and 3 organisations (Belfast Harbour, Department for the Economy and Linen Quarter BID) are accredited as Ambassadors. ▪ Proposition being designed to offer BBP employers an accelerated offer for digitally badged Business Services Employment Academy, which will continue once in employment through CPD and in-work Learning & Development.

2. Our Place

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
Housing-Led Regeneration - Support and work with partners to address housing challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the conclusion of the Competitive Dialogue process, an evaluation of Final Tenders was completed in September 2024. Following approval at November's SP&R Committee (and Council ratification) work is advancing to finalise legals including a Partnership Agreement between Council and the Private Sector Partner. It is anticipated that the Partnership Agreement will be formally executed in Q1 25/26. Work will then commence on developing the overarching business plan. The SP&R Committee in February 2025 approved advancing the initial tranche of 11 sites via the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) Phase 2 for housing-led regeneration, with updates to be brought back to Committee as this work progresses. The delivery route for individual sites will be subject to further consideration and Committee approvals. Ongoing work through the Housing-Led Regeneration Group on the collation of public sector land data and analysis of housing-led opportunities, as well as working to develop placemaking pilots as set out in the Belfast Agenda. The evaluation process has been completed for the Development Brief for lands in the Inner North West (Little Donegal Street, Kent Street and Library Street). The SP&R Committee agreed the award of the Development Brief to the Housing Association with the highest score in February 2025. The award to Clanmill Housing Association was made publicly on 10 March 2025. This is subject to terms to be agreed with the Director of City Regeneration & Development and the City Solicitor and subject also to the approval of DfC (as joint landowner) through their own governance processes. The review of the City Centre Investment Fund has been undertaken, noting alignment in underpinning the need to bring forward interventions to support delivery and unlock housing-led regeneration. Further refinement of the Place Based Growth Proposition has progressed in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) 10-year stocktake, this includes proposals for dedicated funding to unlock housing-led regeneration and addressing viability which exists around city centre living.
Connectivity and City Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work with DfI and DfC in respect of reviewing the A Bolder Vision (ABV) strategy in line with the emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) City Centre Chapter, which DfI are currently advancing. The recent BCCRIS 10-Year Stocktake identified the delivery of ABV as a key area of focus for the next 5-10 years, to realise catalytic change. The BCCRIS Stocktake also evidenced that progress in policy areas is reflected in the blueprint envisaged through ABV, and that opportunities exist to see greater implementation. Ongoing public realm works at Grand Central Station. Design and Planning is ongoing with Little York St/ Little Patrick St, Blackstaff Square and the 5C's. Ongoing work under "Embracing the River" and with partners of the Waterfront Taskforce including building funding cases to advance 'Under the Bridges' and 'Sailortown Bridge' proposals. The recent BCCRIS Stocktake notes the development progress across the waterfront and the opportunity for further transformation. Our work to champion the council's preferred position is ongoing and has been strengthened within the emerging integrated prioritisation team, with DfI, on the ETP city centre chapter, and the publishing of the BCCRIS stocktake. We have continued to feed council's position into the various major infrastructure boards including York Street Interchange, BRT Phase 2, Living With Water, Belfast Streets Ahead and Weaver's Cross.

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Strategic regeneration and investment schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submissions have been received on proposals for the long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue, based on evaluation categories previously agreed by Committee. These included: Proposed operational terms / user proposals; Proposed community / social value; Proposed placemaking potential (including alignment to Inner North West Masterplan and BCCRIS); Proposed compatibility with first floor occupation (aligned to Peace Plus application); and proposed commercial terms. The evaluation of submissions is currently underway. Work has advanced with private sector landowners in the area on the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme. An MOU has been agreed and an inception meeting took place at the end of 2024 on the masterplan development. Work has progressed in delivering Arterial Routes Regeneration with £500k funding secured to deliver a City Wide Vacant to Vibrant grant scheme (£200,000 has been awarded from the UKSPF, with a further £300,000 from DfC). The city wide regeneration scheme was launched in November 2024. The launch included promotion of information surgeries held in local centres across the city at the end of November providing one-to-one briefing sessions for interested businesses on the parameters of the scheme and to prepare the businesses for submitting application forms. Six applications have been approved representing a capital grant investment of £140,000 to date, resulting in 24 direct employment opportunities and an estimated rates value of £237,773.31 (subject to LPS assessment) over the course of the lease periods. This means for every £1 invested in the grant, at least £1.70 is estimated to be returned in rates income over the terms of the leases due to the activation of vacant properties. Ongoing implementation and application of the regeneration framework. Recommendations from the Place-Based Growth Proposition have been recognised as levers to enable catalytic change in the recent BCCRIS 10-year stocktake. Work is ongoing in respect to giving consideration to the implementation of key recommendations focused on decision making powers and new models of funding, with reporting to SP&R expected in Q1 25/26. Following an extensive engagement and research programme the BCCRIS 10-year stocktake, "Looking Back to Look Forward" report and key messaging was launched on 25 November 2024. This included a launch event at City Hall, with attendees across a broad range of sectors, panel discussions and speeches from the Lord Mayor, Chairs of SP&R and CG&R Committees, the Chief Executive and the NI Executive Minister of Finance. The stock take provides a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evidence base of progress in the city over the last 10 years. Importantly it also includes the need to understand the city's opportunities, challenges and key areas of focus to drive catalytic change to move forward. Key areas of focus include the need to increase city centre living, deliver on ABV, unlock major regeneration schemes and a multi-agency approach to place keeping and city centre management. To move forward the recommendations from the Belfast Place-Based Growth Proposition are evidenced as key levers to enable catalytic change namely addressing the transfer of decision-making powers and new models of funding. Reporting in respect of the Place Based Growth Proposition and advancing the compelling asks for Belfast are scheduled to be reported to SP&R Committee in Q1 25/26. Ongoing developer contributions work includes placemaking scheme at Little York Street / Little Patrick Street and working with DfC on 5Cs and Blackstaff Square (surrounding environs). 46 Vacant to Vibrant applications approved. representing a capital grant investment of £839,203.55. This results in approximately 133 direct employment opportunities with approximately a further 32 indirect jobs across the supply chain, and an estimated Rates Value of £3,551,377.30 (subject to LPS assessment) over the course of the lease periods. This means that for every £1 invested in the grant, at least £4.23 will be returned in rates income over the term of the leases. The total output of businesses/organisations through the scheme (based on sales for Year1 and Year 2) is £21m.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing management of regeneration assets including 2 Royal Avenue, Commission House, Site 10, Corporation Street, noting the additional target acquisitions of 106 -114 Joy Street (pending completion) and 35-39 Royal Avenue (completed August 2024).
Promote and Position the City for Inclusive Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing to support the Belfast City Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) programme and play a role in the joint public / private sector approach to attracting inclusive investment. This includes working across the key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; and Communications aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region. During Q4, the council were part of the Belfast presence at MIPIM 2025, with 134 leads, of which 25 were developer /investors; preparations for UKReiiF are advancing with the event scheduled to take place in May 2025; and advancing comprehensive and strategic advocacy engagement aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, including meetings scheduled in Q1 25/26 with NI Ministers. ▪ Ongoing maintenance of the Invest in Belfast website and associated promotion platforms including updated investment guide.
Future City Centre Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing monitoring and reporting of City Centre strategic and operational indicators via the City Centre All Party Working Group, including detailed overview on Council led activity and comms digest.
Deliver year 3 of the Tourism Strategy 'Make Yourself at Home'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neighbourhood Tourism options continue to be scoped beyond the Investment Programme awards of 12 grants to include Visitor Experience Development Plans and uplifting Council's own work in assets, learning journeys etc. ▪ Full Accessible Tourism programme delivered for the year including annual conference and accessible tourism awards. ▪ Full Food and Drink programme delivered for the year including positioning, seminars, annual conference and appointment of a facilitator. ▪ The Business Tourism - Conference Subvention programme was delivered in partnership with Visit Belfast and attracted match funding from Tourism NI. ▪ Visit Belfast business plan – delivered their first business plan (2024-25) of their new three-year strategy New Horizons (2024-2027). Highlights included exceeded their target to deliver an economic impact of £172million. 625k leisure bed nights, 8 leisure marketing campaigns, 114 business event wins, 31k business delegates, 89k business bed nights, 2 global awards (including Best events destination 2024). ▪ All Marketing campaigns to position Belfast in national and international markets were successfully delivered in year including Christmas, St Patrick's Day etc.
City Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lord Mayors Day and Christmas Lights Switch-On events were successfully delivered with large attendance numbers and integration with Belfast 2024 programming. ▪ Attendance figures at city events included 12,000 at Lord Mayors Day and 10,500 at the Christmas Lights Switch On. ▪ St Patrick's Day was successfully delivered late in Q4 with an evaluation report pending. Early indication shows attendance levels of circa. 25,000-30,000 for the parade on 17 March in Belfast City Centre. Over 16,000 people attended events across 13 venues as part of the St Patrick's Music Festival, with an estimated 12,000 visitors engaging with programming at Cathedral Gardens alone over the course of the weekend. The festival featured 410 participants and over 60 hours of content. The TradTrail, delivered by Féile an Phobail, extended across 60 venues citywide, featuring 87 artists. Spraoi Cois Lao which took place at Custom House Square on Saturday 8th March, was the biggest fun day of its kind, attracting almost 6,000 attendees. At 2 Royal Avenue, over 3,550 visitors engaged with a tailored programme of family-friendly activity, including arts, dance, traditional music, and a sensory zone. Approximately 50,000 attendees in total across combined activity

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning is underway for Lord Mayor's Day 2025 and Maritime Festival 2025. Officers conducted a full technical site visit with the Oireachtas team on the 3rd of December – the site visit covered the ICC Belfast, Ulster Hall, City Hall and the Europa. The Oireachtas team are overlaying their event schedule, evening social and media awards with associated technical requirements. This will inform any additional financial support on technical and production fees. A partners' working group has also been stood up to identify and deliver additional work packages on marcomms, visitor servicing, volunteering, fringe activity and legacy. Option scoping continues for Belfast / NI to maximise the potential for the Euro 2028 tournament in the absence of a stadia and games. Secured the 2026 Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for Belfast. Development of plans is underway aligned to the Fleadh.
Cultural Strategy 'A City Imagining'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of £2.8 million has been distributed to Culture organisations in Belfast, including £2.45million to 59 organisations delivered through the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants (CMAG) funding programme. Supported 20 community festivals through the Community Festivals Fund; and 19 larger festivals with CMAG Festivals funding. Supported 19 projects through the Arts and Heritage Small Grants. Delivered a programme of sectoral development and strategic partnerships with Arts and Business NI, Craft NI, Theatre and Dance NI, Thrive, University of Atypical, Music Venue Trust and Eden Project. Delivery of heritage workshops and dissemination of research as part of the heritage audit and roadmap for development. Completed cultural animation activities including Belfast Canvass and City as a Gallery. Design and deliver wraparound support programmes including leading sector forums for festivals, visual arts and sustainability. Delivered four visual arts forum events, 8 festival forums and 6 green arts forums; Belfast Art Map developed and distributed; supported four pilot sustainability projects; and delivered marketing support for 18 festivals and Late-Night Art. Gig buddies project completed. Developed and completed new programme entitled Sounds Atypical, a programme to support deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists. Supported creative workspaces in the city including the delivery of Artist Studio Support scheme with 12 artist studios receiving a combined £100k in support, a new skills programme for creative workspaces and completed a strategic review with findings forming the development of an action plan with key stakeholders over Q3 and Q4. Delivered actions aligned to the Music Strategy's 4 strands and delivery of £400k of targeted support within workplan presented to CG&R Committee in Aug 2024. Includes bursaries to 21 musicians, over 70 young people in deprived areas supported with access to instruments and tuition, 30 individuals provided production skill training, 4 individuals provided social media strategy mentorship, 4 international exchanges with UNESCO Cities, 6 City of Music Industry sessions, the Music Connections website, social channels, a conference for Grassroots Music Venues, the NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast programme and delivery of Output, Irelands largest music conference and showcase.
Belfast 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast 2024 was delivering throughout 2024-25, achieving significant successes across the programme, with very positive feedback including: 99% of attendees agreeing they had a good time; 97% agreeing the activity was absorbing and held their attention; and 98% agreeing they would come to something like this again.

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The programme commenced with a weekend of events to welcome Little Amal to Belfast and our welcome performance, with over 200 community and professional performers. This was the biggest and most ambitious welcome Amal has seen across 160 cities she's visited previously. Following this activity several Belfast artists have been invited to work with the Amal team on future projects. ▪ Other events which took place throughout the summer included Lyric's Midsummer - sell out audiences in a new outdoor theatre space. ▪ Waterworks – the culmination of more than 90 workshops held with residents, community groups, schools and residential homes since February during which participants created their own boats. ▪ Drift – a floating river pavilion, opened at Stranmillis and was at full capacity for their special events. It moved to a second location at the ICC allowing for activity in the city centre. ▪ Green House has continued to grow their offering with a series of skills workshops to challenge fast fashion. ▪ Bank of Ideas – Participatory Budgeting as part of Belfast 2024 'Creative Me' Programme. This scheme awarded £50,000 to 28 projects, divided evenly between ideas for North, South, East, West, Belfast, and City Centre. ▪ Safari in the City have completed their first mural at Cliftonville Football grounds – incorporating nest boxes for local wildlife which received extensive coverage from the BBC. ▪ 9ft in Common have mapped over 202km of alleyways in our city and led a series of events, from foraging to music gigs and art workshops, across the city. ▪ Nobodaddy - Michael Keegan Dolan's world premiere opened in Belfast in September – a first for one of Ireland's most prolific choreographers. ▪ Soundlinks – Townsend Street closed to traffic and welcomed 1,000s to their Block Party on International Peace Day, with food music and fun throughout the day for all ages and communities. ▪ BBC Concert – A Century of Stories took place in Waterfront Hall and will be aired on TV at the end of October. ▪ Eurocities Culture Conference - We hosted a 3- day Eurocities Culture Forum 25-27 Sept, with 136 participants from 64 cities & 23 countries. ▪ We were able to showcase 14 Belfast 2024 projects, 22 venues and spaces, and 33 local artists and culture sector representatives. ▪ An Irish Goodbye mural was launched on 30th Sept celebrating the success of this home-grown Oscar and Bafta winning film. ▪ Shadowdock brought to life the Thompson Dry dock where the Titanic was built. Despite cancellation of one show due to adverse weather – this was followed by a sellout run over the last weekend in September. ▪ Work has commenced on the programme evaluation. Initial findings have presented the following highlights: 1,000+ new cultural and creative events across the city, 1,400+ contracts for cultural sector, 20+ large scale commissions, 28 participatory budgeting projects, 16 creative bursaries, 6 international artist residencies, 130,000+ attendees (audience and participants) and £400k raised in partnership investment. A final evaluation report will be published in June 2025.
Belfast Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ralph Applebaum and Barker Langham were appointed in the role of Interpretive Planner and Concept Design Team. ▪ RIBA Stage 1 report completed. ▪ RIBA Stage 2 draft designs for experience and buildings completed and presented to Project Board, SP&R Committee and completed Public Consultation exercise.

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme revised to accommodate additional design development work. Due for completion May 2025. ▪ Revised programme for completion of RIBA Stage 2 and commencement of RIBA Stage 3 in place for Q1 2025/26. ▪ Members Working Group study visit to Liverpool undertaken in August 2024 and evaluation report completed. ▪ Stories Network meetings have taken place throughout 2024/25 including as part of the Public Consultation. An Ethical Framework has been completed and includes Terms of Reference for a Stories Panel to be implemented in next stage, RIBA Stage 3. ▪ The Public Consultation on the current design thinking and plans was extended to 9 March due to level of interest. Feedback has been analysed and a report completed. It will be brought through Belfast Stories governance structures and presented to SP&R Committee in Q1 2025/26. ▪ A full draft of the OBC has been completed and presented to Belfast Stories Project Board and the internal Financial Oversight Group. It will be presented to SPR in April 2025 with recommendation to submit to Department for Economy in May 2025, if approved and ratified by Council.
Commercial Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and delivery of Belfast Bikes has continued with the current operator. ▪ A new operator of Belfast Bikes has been appointed. Officers have worked with both the current and new operators to develop a transition plan to allow for a seamless transfer, with the aim of launching the new operation in late summer 2025. This will be supported by a user-focused marketing campaign to encourage use of the new scheme. ▪ There were 129,520 bike journeys during 2024-25; representing an increase of 17,198 rentals compared to the previous year. ▪ Commercial Assets continue to be operationally managed. Income for each asset is relatively healthy, however the increasing cost of supplies and additional operational expenditure requirements continues to significantly increase costs which is having a detrimental impact on the 'bottom line'. Catering contracts for Belfast Castle and Malone House continue to perform well. A new catering contract for the zoo was appointed at end of Q4. ▪ Whilst the annual footfall for the Zoo represents an increase of 7,349 (to 213k) compared to previous year, it falls below the average annual footfall of 227k. The zoo continues to offer a range of promotions, offers and events to appeal to visitors however it continues to face increased competition from other visitor attractions and leisure facilities, and is impacted by the weather.

3. Our Planet

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework: UP2030 Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ongoing work with partners in respect of the UP2030 Net Zero pilot, including extensive engagement and workshops through existing forums.▪ Progressing the final draft of the Net Zero Framework (which will include an elected members' workshop in early Summer 2025) on the emerging draft prior to taking the final framework for Committee approval in Autumn 2025.▪ The 3 main themes of the Framework are around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing-led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.