

# West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 29th May, 2025

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson),  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Carson, Doherty,  
M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Garrett,  
McCoubrey, McCallin, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,  
R. McLaughlin and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;  
Ms. M. McKay, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager;  
Ms. A. Diver, Climate Programme Manager;  
Mr. A. O' Neill, Assistant Estates Surveyor;  
Ms. F. Dennison, Neighbourhood Services Integration  
Manager; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Canavan.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 27th February were approved and adopted.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Presentations**

It agreed that invitations be extended to representatives of Spórtlann na hÉireann and the Lenadoon Community Forum to present at a future meeting on projects which they are overseeing.

### **Physical Programme Update**

The Working Group considered the following report:

#### **"1. Introduction**

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf

of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

## 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed project – Sporting Pitches Improvements 24/25 - Falls Park GAA pitch at Appendix 1;
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 2.

## 3. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

### Summary of BIF allocated projects

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>West</b> | Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidió Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's- £3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k<br>Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment<br>Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment |
|-------------|---|

The table below shows an overview of the remaining BIF project –

| BIF Ref | Project                     | Funding   | Stage                    | Status  | Action/ Recommendation              |
|---------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| BIF09   | Glencairn Community Project | £900,000<br><i>BIF- £700,000;<br/>NRF- £200,000</i> | Committed; Due Diligence | The Design Team has been appointed. Revised concept design has been prepared and drawings will be updated for Planning application. Awaiting updated costs. | Continue engagement with the group. |

## 4. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for West was £3,446,654

(West - £2,721,133 and Shankill - £725,521) and 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

### **West Belfast – NRF overview**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>West</b> | <p>Stage 3— Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre- £684,058; Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1- £537,058; The Mountainview Hotel- £1,500,000; The ACT Initiative Community Hub &amp; Visitors' Centre- £295,000; Glencairn Community Project (Hub)- £200,000, The Road- £210,759; <i>Shankill contingency- £19,762.</i></p> <p>Stage 1— <i>Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanai na Fuisgeoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy &amp; External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i></p> |
|-------------|--|

### **West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery**

| Project  | Funding  | Stage              | Status  | Action/ Recommendation              |
|--|--|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre</b>              | £1.1m<br>NRF £684,058<br>Group - £463,490      | Stage 3- Committed | <b>On ground.</b> Contractor appointed and works started onsite in April. Site progress meeting took place on Monday 19 May 2025.   | Continue engagement with the group. |
| <b>Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1</b>    | £787,058<br>NRF-£537,058<br>An Ciste- £250,000 | Stage 3- Committed | <b>Development stage.</b> Design team is progressing work and cost estimates are now in place. Some match funding already in place. Fundraising activities are continuing along with engagement with other funders. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| <b>The Mountainview Hotel</b>                                  | £1.5m  | Stage 3- Committed | <b>Development stage.</b> Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. Clarification on the site boundary is necessary to make any further progress with this project.                               | Continue engagement with the group. |
| <b>The ACT Initiative Community Hub &amp; Visitors' Centre</b> | £295,000                                       | Stage 3- Committed | <b>On ground.</b> Contractor appointed for heating element of contract and preparing to start on site. Exhibition works due to complete in early 2026.  | Continue engagement with the group. |
| <b>Glencairn Community Project</b>                             | £900,000<br>NRF- £200,000; BIF- £700,000       | Stage 3- Committed | <b>Development stage.</b> As above at BIF09. The Design Team has been appointed. Revised concept design has been prepared and drawings will be updated for Planning application. Awaiting updated costs.            | Continue engagement with the group. |

|                 |          |                    |   |                                     |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>The Road</b> | £210,759 | Stage 3- Committed | <b>Development stage.</b> The group is continuing to work with a consultancy on funding opportunities. No further funding secured to date. Planning Permission has expired and group submitted a new application in March 2025. | Continue engagement with the group. |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|

## 5. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

### West Belfast – Capital programme overview

| Project   | Status and update   |
|---|---|
| <b>City Cemetery Visitor Centre –</b><br>Heritage Fund/ DfC                                 | Project complete. <i>Members will continue to receive reports on this project until the other external works are completed.</i> CNS is undertaking a re-procurement exercise for an operator for the Visitor Centre due to no replies to original advertisement. Victorian Fountain and landscaping works are progressing. Railings for central steps are due to be installed and completed by end of May which will enable security fencing to be removed. |
| <b>Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25</b>  | <i>Stage 3 – Committed. Project completed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in June 2024. Works at four sites across the city including Falls Park. Spectator fencing and hard-standing installation is now complete.  |
| <b>Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide</b>  | <i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. Members agreed in February to proceed with the gating order for Phase 5b, with an estimated completion timeline following the enactment of four to six months.   |
| <b>Electric Vehicle Charging Network</b>  | <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Land Asset Assessment underway to identify a long list of sites suitable in principle. Progressing.   |
| <b>Access to Hills - Black Mountain/ Upper Whiterock Pathway</b>                            | <i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Design stage. Design team is continuing to develop the project. Ongoing engagement with DfI as key partner. Full Planning application has been lodged and is in process. Application to DAERA Challenge Fund has been unsuccessful. Project continues to be developed despite this outcome.  |
| <b>Colin Greenway</b>   | Meetings are continuing between the Council and key stakeholders DfI, DfC and NIHE on the Colin Active Travel Plan. Lagmore Avenue cycle scheme works has commenced and will be completed in late September 2025.   |
| <b>Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain</b> | <i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> This is being considered within the wider study as below.  |
| <b>Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme</b> (city wide)                                 | <i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Feasibility study presented to Members. Ongoing engagement with other stakeholders such as the National Trust and Belfast Hills Partnership.  |
| <b>Historic Cemeteries</b>  | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries including Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street, Friar's Bush, Balmoral   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Scoping work underway. Strategic case prepared and request at May SPR to move to Stage 2.   |
| <b>Historic Tiled Street Signs</b>  | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding. Strategic case prepared and request at May SPR to move to Stage 2.   |
| <b>Mobile Changing Places modular facility</b>  | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed.   |
| <b>Communications Boards in playgrounds</b>   | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Initial capital funding secured via UKSPF recouped monies for first phase of installation at 29 playground sites. Strategic case prepared for overall rollout and request at May SPR to move to Stage 2.   |
| <b>West Basketball courts</b>   | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> New facilities at Blacks Road and Páirc Nua Chollan – designs being prepared and engagement with key stakeholders.  |
| <b>Woodvale Park Sensory Garden</b>   | <i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> New sensory facility. Next step is to appoint the design team to take the scheme forward.   |
| <b>Belfast Bikes Expansion</b>  | A new provider/ operator has been appointed. Currently in transition phase. The new scheme will be launched in Autumn 25. DfI funding received on Belfast Bikes e-Bikes.   |
| <b>Lidl, Stewartstown Road</b><br>Suffolk 3G Pitch and Lenadoon Park Pitch Improvements | This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space.<br><i>Suffolk pitch</i> - Planning application approved and awaiting decision notice. Will require additional funding.<br><i>Lenadoon Park</i> – Grass soccer pitch improvement works complete; includes spectator hard-standing, extension to height of boundary fence, including extended dugout areas; land drainage, new pedestrian access gate and path connections. MUGA improvements programmed for Summer 2025. |

## 6. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, PEACEPLUS, DfI, DfC, DoJ as well as schemes with IFI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.

### Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).

#### West Belfast – UV overview

| Project   | Status and update  |
|---|--|
| <b>Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub</b> | Business case stage. TEO advise that the completion of the business case is scheduled for late 2025. |

## **PEACEIV/ PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects**

**Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACE Programmes.**

### **West Belfast – Capital Projects overview**

| Project  | Status and update   |
|--|---|
| <b>Forth Meadow Community Greenway</b>         | <b>Project completed.</b> Signage being progressed.   |
| <b>Distillery Street Redevelopment Project</b> | Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. The project includes creation of a cross-community Peace and Reconciliation Park providing sustainable drainage and flood risk management as an integral part of urban renewal. The procurement for the design team is underway and a design team should be appointed by early Summer 2025. Project Steering Group established, first meeting held with regular programme of meetings going forward. |

### **Other externally funded projects**

**Below is the status update on capital projects funded by other partners in West Belfast. *Other external funders – West Belfast projects overview***

| Project  | Status and update  |
|--|--|
| <b>Black Mountain Shared Space Project – Phase 2</b> | <i>Via IFI, DoJ, DfC On Ground.</i> Contractor works progressing on site. Estimated completion in Summer 2025. |

## **9. Capital funding opportunities**

**Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 2 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs.”**

In response to a Member’s question regarding the Glencairn Community Project, the Director reported that the design team had been appointed and that revised concept designs and drawings had been prepared in advance of the submission of a planning application. The Director added that engagement was ongoing with the group and that she would be willing to discuss the project further with the Member should he wish to do so.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed to note the contents of the physical programme update for West Belfast, together with the associated appendices, and a list of external capital funding opportunities for information.

The Working Group agreed also to undertake a site visit to view a range a projects across West Belfast at a future date.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Point Network Project - Update**

(The Climate Programme Manager, along with the Assistant Estates Surveyor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Working Group was informed in the work undertaken to identify potential sites within the Council's estate where EV charging stations could potentially be installed. It was explained that 44 sites had been identified as suitable as part of Phase 1 of the charging network roll out and that there was the potential for 132 to 170 connections across the 44 sites. She stated that there were 30 potential sites to be reconsidered during Phase 2 which were currently not suitable and that 26 sites had been ruled out. She concluded by providing the Working Group with an overview of the next steps of the project, which are set out below:

- Exploration of operating models and recommendations;
- Engaging with NIE regarding wide ranging cost variables per site;
- Potential charge point operators;
- Preliminary market engagement exercise;
- Charge Point Operator engagement to assess site viability and revenue forecasts; and
- Equality and rural needs screening.

The Working Group thanked the officers for the update which had been provided.

### **Presentation from Enterprise and Business Growth**

The Working Group considered the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the business support available to constituents and businesses in their areas including 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:**

- **Note and endorse the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) in West Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses**
- **Promote opportunities for business support to constituents where relevant and appropriate**
- **Provide recommendations to Enterprise and Business Growth team on community and stakeholder engagement in the West Belfast area**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **3.1 Go Succeed (Enterprise Support Service)**

**The Go Succeed service has now been operational for around eighteen months and has reached thousands of potential entrepreneurs and businesses across Western Ireland.**

By way of background, Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This provided £17 million of support for the period November 2023 to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants. Following receipt of the funding agreement in September 2023, the service became operational in November 2023.

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 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 key objectives of the model are to:

- Nurture a strong entrepreneurial culture, recognising enterprise as a viable career option and/or a route out of economic inactivity
- Enable a vibrant and productive business base across Western Ireland
- Increase the proportion of 'innovation-active' businesses in NI and embed this more firmly with enterprise/ start-up agenda
- Diversify the representation amongst those supported by the enterprise and innovation ecosystem
- Delivery a service designed with the user in mind
- Focus on adding value to existing support available in the ecosystem
- Providing regional coverage while ensuring that delivery reflects local differences/nuances.

Go Succeed provides a continuum of support from early-stage enterprise awareness through to starting, growing, and scaling a business. The concept was that the service would help people get the right support at the right time – and would also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

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.

- 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 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

- **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.

In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £3,000 (up to 50% of capital costs) are available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.

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.

### **Belfast Performance Update**

Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of Belfast performance:

- 4,059 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities. This has included:
  - 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 2025.
- 1528 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) with 383 (25%) of these entrepreneurs being from the West Belfast area
- 888 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) with 185 (21%) of these businesses being based in the West Belfast area.

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.

The Enterprise and Business Growth team would welcome any guidance from working group members to increase engagement in the West Belfast area. Constituent referrals or enquiries can be sent to the Enterprise and Business Growth team via [gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk)

### **3.2 Go Social (Social Economy Support)**

Developing the social economy sector has been a priority of the NI Executive for some time and Belfast City Council is aware of the important and unique contribution which the sector can, and does, make to the local economy. In the 2024/25 year the demand for Belfast City Council's 'Go Social' programme, aimed at encouraging more start-ups within the local Social Economy, has increased with over 60 individuals starting their social enterprise/cooperative.

Via our dedicated 'Go Social' service we offer enhanced support to those thinking of starting up a new business as a social enterprise or co-operative and we encourage existing SE businesses to join our social economy register to help us on our journey to grow the sector. Go Social support is open to individuals, groups and existing organisations seeking to set up, or transition to, a social enterprise or cooperative model.

We recognise setting up a social enterprise or cooperative can be difficult due to navigating complex legal structures and governance along with tackling a social cause or issue. Our Go Social support helps clients via specialist 1-1 mentoring support, access to networking opportunities and best practice visits as well as peer to peer support.

As part of our investment in the sector, Belfast City Council also deliver the Social Economy Incentive Fund which provides grants to new or developing social economy businesses in early growth

stages. Each year we launch the fund in September with grants provided for up to £10,000, applications are assessed by a panel with shortlisted applicants invited to pitch. The fund is available to Belfast-based social enterprises and co-operatives, we would encourage anyone interested to sign up to our enterprise and business growth newsletter to be the first to hear about the fund launching again in September.

The Enterprise and Business Growth team would welcome any guidance from working group members to increase engagement in the West Belfast area. Constituent referrals or enquiries can be sent to the Enterprise and Business Growth team via [gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk)

### **3.3 Test trading**

The Enterprise and Business growth team also offer fully funded opportunities for those receiving support through our services to test their products or services at St George's Market.

This opportunity gives businesses starting out, or those who have been in business for less than two years, the opportunity to test trade their products at our thriving, award winning St George's market. Taking part is free of charge, and businesses have the opportunity to test trade up to six times – a fantastic opportunity to gain real customer feedback, insights from other traders and hone their sales pitch.

The Enterprise and Business Growth team would welcome any guidance from working group members to increase engagement in the West Belfast area. Constituent referrals or enquiries can be sent to the Enterprise and Business Growth team via [gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gosucceed@belfastcity.gov.uk)

### **4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications for members to consider.

### **5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

Equality impact assessments for all of the above services have been completed."

After discussion, the Working Group adopted the recommendations within the report.

Chairperson