



Subject:	Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition
Date:	10 September 2025
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Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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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

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1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

<input type="checkbox"/>
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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	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition, including the Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment. II. Note the update on strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, and the Northern Ireland Executive, including forthcoming joint Ministerial meeting with NI Executive as part of a strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition to seek to secure place based and regeneration investment funding. III. Note the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level. IV. Note the response received from the Minister for Communities in relation to a letter issued from the Council at the request of CGR Committee seeking an update on what consideration had been given to the transfer of regeneration powers to local government.
3.0	Background
3.1	Members will recall that an update was brought to this Committee in June 2025 and SP&R Committee in April 2025 on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition which sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding in line with other UK cities, aligned to a growth proposition underpinned by regeneration priorities for the city.
3.2	As previously reported, the Place Based Growth Proposition sets out the compelling case for Belfast but notes that there are significant levers required for the city to realise its growth potential. It notes that due to a combination of funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations, and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive basis, results in Northern Ireland having amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes. Members will also note that the scale of under investment in Belfast is set out in a separate report to this

	Committee on the current DfC consultation on their proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places' programme.
3.3	<p>The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth. Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. Strategic Authorities designated at the Established Mayoral level of devolution will receive Integrated Settlements. By way of example, West Midlands Combined Authority will receive £388.6m for 2025-26 and Greater Manchester will receive £630m for 2025/26. Other areas include the North East, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region and Greater London Authority, where the process for determining the value of the integrated settlements has been published but not the funding allocations currently.</p>
3.4	<p>Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities. This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.</p>
3.5	<p>The Proposition seeks to secure regeneration funding for Belfast from UK Government and sets out asks for capacity (revenue) funding to further regeneration priorities, in line with similar funding received by the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Strategic Authorities in England; and a Regeneration, Housing and Infrastructure Fund seeded by the Government focussed on potential priority areas to transform Belfast, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing led regeneration across all tenures including measures to address dereliction • Improved infrastructure, connectivity, public realm and place making • Unlocking major regeneration schemes • Delivery of public and green spaces

3.6	Development of the Proposition has been informed through significant engagement with a range of cross-sector stakeholders and in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake findings which received political and stakeholder endorsement.
3.7	Work is advancing on the full five-part business case to underpin the ask that is aligned to both corporate and Belfast Agenda priorities, and the BCCRIS Stocktake findings. Engagement continues with NI and Westminster at officer and political level to advocate for the Proposition.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	<p>Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment</p> <p>As noted to Committee in June 2025, a full five part business case is being developed to support the Place Based Growth Proposition. The business case outlines the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case to support the request to Westminster. The business case outlines how BCC has spent the last 18 months laying the groundwork to develop the proposition and establish the conditions for successful delivery. This has included stakeholder engagement with elected representatives and business, investor and local communities, and builds on more than 10 years of wider community and stakeholder engagement through the Belfast Agenda and BCCRIS. The emerging recommendations have been informed through previous engagement with members on key areas including Housing-led regeneration and recent engagement with BCC officers, senior officials from DoF, DfI and DfC and representatives from local development, business and local communities to inform the priority areas, assist with quantifying the ask and assessing project readiness. Members should note that any future funding that might become available would be subject to further discussion and agreement on how it would be deployed.</p>
4.2	The emerging business case includes a comprehensive evidence base to provide insight about Belfast's economic, demographic, housing, business, labour market and commercial property performance. The analysis recognises the city's strategic role within the wider region and its function as the capital city of Northern Ireland. The proposal builds on the success of the Belfast Region City Deal, and targets the city's legacy of physical regeneration challenges, and the wider 'regeneration deficit' that has seen Belfast struggle to match the power and dynamism of the English and Scottish Core Cities. This proposition sets out a compelling case for change and notes that unlike its peers, Belfast has lacked the means and resources to correct what could be seen as 'regeneration deficit'. Public spending on 'regeneration' has been about one half of its English counterparts, while decision-making remains fragmented and difficult. It notes that there are significant opportunities to be gained from an uplift in place-

	based regeneration and that this is best addressed by public-sector led investments which can then provide the leadership and confidence to the private sector and strategic stakeholders.
4.3	It outlines how BCC is seeking to equip itself with the ability and responsibilities to drive growth and investment in the city and is seeking to establish a new City-Wide Investment Fund (CWIF) designed to drive catalytic change - focusing on people and city living, delivering active and sustainable travel, developing green and climate resilient public realm, unlocking stalled major redevelopment schemes, addressing dereliction and vacancy and taking a multi-agency approach to place making and city management.
4.4	Critically, the proposition is based on an evidence-led understanding of market failures and a shared vision for the future. The emerging business case highlights that the proposed areas of focus provide value for money and deliverability, and will provide long-term benefits which will be transformational for city and wider region. Benefits include housing delivery and enhanced sustainable travel provision, better public spaces, improved community wellbeing and cohesion, addressing deprivation and continued regeneration.
4.5	The proposal builds on established systems and existing work streams undertaken by BCC and its partners. This includes the strong governance and administrative structures already in place, and a Regeneration Framework which can prioritise investments and activities
4.6	<p>It recognises the incredibly difficult financial conditions across the United Kingdom but highlights that this proposal is about unleashing potential and growth and is a statement of intent for the future of the whole of Northern Ireland. It notes that our asks mirror arrangements in other parts of the country, and requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity (revenue) funding per annum for three years - Belfast, like other strategic growth areas and new Strategic Authorities in England, would benefit from specific funding to further its regeneration priorities - this would help put the city on a more equal basis with English city regions. • City-Wide Infrastructure, Housing and Regeneration Fund - seeded by the UK Government. This would be targeted on delivering housing led regeneration, green urban infrastructure and placemaking and unlocking strategic regeneration schemes. To address the 'regeneration deficit', we would ask that this be provided on a similar basis as a City Deal, that is over and above the Northern Ireland Block Grant settlement.
4.7	Further detail on the Business Case will be brought back to Members upon completion.
4.8	Advocacy & Engagement

	<p>Work is continuing on engagement and advocacy activities to support the Proposition, including engagement with NI Executive and Westminster at official and political level. As noted to Committee in June 2025, a joint Ministerial meeting with Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities has been convened in conjunction with the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership and is scheduled to take place in late September 2025. This meeting follows a meeting with Minister for Finance in April 2025 which was facilitated by the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership.</p>
4.9	<p>Engagement is scheduled with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), Treasury and institutional investment houses in London, and at the Labour Party Annual Conference 2025 in October to advance the Place Based Growth Proposition.</p>
4.10	<p>In tandem, a wider communication and engagement plan, with supporting messaging documents aligned to the business case findings, are being progressed. Continued support from Members in advocating for this Proposition, notably through party political channels, will be very important to raise visibility for this Proposition within NI Executive and Westminster at local, MP / MLA and Ministerial level.</p>
4.11	<p>Correspondence from Minister for Communities on transfer of regeneration powers</p> <p>At its meeting on 4 June 2025 the Committee agreed that the Council would write to the Minister for Communities to seek an update on what consideration had been given to the transfer of regeneration powers to local government.</p>
4.12	<p>The Council has received a response from the Minister (see Appendix 1) which outlined that the most recent attempts to transfer additional regeneration powers to local government did not progress due to a lack of consensus, on the broader issue of local government reform, or on the content of the legislation itself.</p>
4.13	<p>It also noted that due to the time which has passed since the introduction of the last Regeneration Bill (2014), and the experience of recent initiatives in response to Covid-19 e.g. the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation and Small Settlements Programmes in partnership with DfI and DAERA, the cross-departmental nature of regeneration activities has been clearly demonstrated, and concluded by stating that any further transfer of regeneration powers would require a fundamental review of the position across several Departments, consideration by the NI Executive and the introduction of primary legislation. There are no plans to take this forward at this time.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>

5.1	Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and emerging business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course.
6.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
7.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix One – Minister for Communities response to Committee on transfer of regeneration powers