

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



**Belfast
City Council**

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 6th December, 2023 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Belfast Zoo Quarterly Update (Pages 1 - 6)
- (b) Vacant to Vibrant Scheme Update (Pages 7 - 14)
- (c) Quarter 2 Finance Update (Pages 15 - 22)
- (d) Markets Quarterly Update (Pages 23 - 32)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Motion - Regional Jobs and Investment Bill (Pages 33 - 36)

4. **Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Response to Department for Infrastructure Consultations (Pages 37 - 62)
- (b) Proposed Study Visits (Pages 63 - 66)

5. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) City Imagining Update (Report to follow)
- (b) Belfast Bikes Scheme - Quarterly Update (Pages 67 - 78)
- (c) Tourism Strategy Consultation Response (Pages 79 - 168)
- (d) Update on the Fleadh Cheoil (Report to follow)

6. **Growing Business and the Economy**

- (a) Building an inclusive labour market - research and event update (Pages 169 - 176)
- (b) Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Partnership Agreement approval (Pages 177 - 214)
- (c) Vibrant Business Destinations Update (Pages 215 - 222)
- (d) Employability and Skills - Bridges to Progression Update (Pages 223 - 226)

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

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Subject:	Notice of Motion – Regional Jobs and Investment Bill
Date:	6th December, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. 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 matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a motion in relation to Regional Jobs and Investment Bill, which was referred to the Committee by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 28th November.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to consider the motion and, if the proposal is agreed, to agree that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> At the meeting of the Standards and Business Committee held on 28th November, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor Whyte, was referred to the Committee for consideration: <u>Regional Jobs and Investment Bill</u> <i>“Belfast City Council:</i> <i>Expresses grave concern at the significant geographic disparities in the economy of Northern Ireland between those areas which have experienced economic prosperity and those areas which have been left behind.</i> <i>Recognises that of the ten of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, six can be found in the Belfast City Council district.</i> <i>Welcomes the publication of an action plan by Invest Northern Ireland (NI) to implement the recommendations of the recent review which revealed the scale of failure of Invest NI to work as a partner on a sub-regional basis.</i> <i>Welcomes the proposal for legislation to address these regional economic imbalances through a Regional Jobs and Investment Bill.</i> <i>Resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography.</i> <i>Commits to responding to the consultation on this legislation which is currently open.”</i> Proposer: Councillor Paul Doherty Seconder: Councillor Carl Whyte
3.2	
3.3	
3.4	

	Members are reminded that in accordance with Standing Order 13(l) where the notice of motion seeks to commit the Council to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process, the notice of motion has been referred to this Committee for consideration. This will usually require a further report from officers outlining the financial and other implications should the notice of motion be adopted. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> This Notice of Motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Responses to Dfl Consultations
Date:	06 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	To update Members of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on ongoing Dfl Consultation work and to agree responses to the various consultations.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: i. Note the correspondence received from Dfl as included within Appendices A, B, C, D & E of this report in relation to Montgomery Road, Belmont Church Road, Dunville St, Sorella St, and Suffolk Road. ii. Agree the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Montgomery Road Two Way Cycle Lane as included within Appendix A of this report.

	iii. Agree the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Belmont Church Road proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix B of this report. iv. Agree the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Dunville Street proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix C of this report. v. Agree the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Sorella St proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix D of this report. vi. Agree the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Suffolk Road proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix E of this report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	DfI have issued a number of letters to Council regarding various scheme designs or changes to legislation in relation to waiting restrictions on a number of streets following correspondence from Members. DfI have requested comment from Members prior to bringing these schemes forward. These notices have been shared on the Members portal on receipt. This paper sets out the proposed Council response for agreement by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. <u>Montgomery Road, Belfast – Proposal for Two-way Cycle lane</u>
3.2	The Council recently received a letter from the Department, as appendix A of this report, outlining the Department's proposed Order The Cycle Routes (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 and proposed amendment to The Parking Places (Electric Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 in relation to a proposed two-way cycle lane on the Montgomery Road, Belfast, along with authorisation for lengths of the Montgomery Road to be allocated as a parking place for an electric vehicle connected to a charging post.
3.3	Officers have considered the Department's proposals, and have drafted a response for approval as included within Appendix A of this report, including the following comments: i. The Belfast Agenda is the city's community plan and was first published in 2017. We're required under legislation to regularly review our community plan. Following a two-year period of extensive consultation and engagement with city partners,

	residents and other stakeholders to get their views, we have updated the Belfast Agenda and action plans to ensure that it reflects the city's current priorities. As part of the refresh 'Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel' (CAST) was identified as a priority area for the city. To thrive, cities must have transportation systems which allow the maximum volume of people to travel, whilst doing the least possible harm to the environment and bringing health benefits for all. ii. A Bolder Vision (ABV) is a joint BCC/DfI/DfC initiative that aims to provide a holistic look at the city centre's infrastructure and connectivity with surrounding communities; its streets and places, connecting routes and placemaking and regeneration opportunities from a people and place-based priority. One of the visioning principles that underpins ABV is Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car. iii. When assessed against the principles of promoting connectivity, engendering and encouraging sustainable and active travel, and working to end the dominance of the private car the proposal for a two way cycle lane along Montgomery Road, Belfast is a small but welcome step.
3.4	We further welcome the proposed segregation of the two-way cycle path from the main carriageway (and parking bays) and footways, thereby greatly reducing the potential for conflict between cyclists and motorists and between cyclists and pedestrians. Segregated cycle paths are critical to ensuring that there will be an inclination towards modal shift from the private car especially for the less competent and less confident cyclists who require such safeguards. Council are hopeful that this scheme can be brought forward for delivery in the near future.
3.5	<u>Proposed Imposition of Waiting Restrictions:</u> - Belmont Church Road - Dunville Street - Sorella Street - Suffolk Road

3.6	The Department has issued a number of letters, as included within Appendices B, C, D & E) to Belfast City Council in recent weeks seeking agreement to commence the preparation of necessary legislation to implement waiting restrictions at the above listed streets. Enclosed with each of the letters proposing waiting restrictions are accompanying plans detailing the proposed layout, distances and duration of the waiting restrictions.
3.7	The proposals have in each case been prompted following requests from a local representative in each of the areas citing concerns about traffic progression, congestion and/or traffic management issues.
3.8	Officers have considered each of the proposed waiting restrictions and agree that the introduction of the proposed waiting restrictions are likely to improve traffic progression, reduce congestion and contribute positively to traffic management in the affected areas.
3.9	Moreover, in a number of cases, including at Dunville Park officers are of the view that the proposed introduction of new 'At any time' waiting restrictions will also improve pedestrian safety and reduce the occurrence of inconsiderate parking that can impede and inhibit sightlines for road users accessing or egressing Dunville Park car park. The new restrictions could also serve to discourage non-residential parking in neighbourhood streets such as Sorella Street and reduced traffic and vehicular manoeuvring along neighbourhood streets would improve residents' safety as well as reduced emissions.
3.10	Given the timeframes for the consultation responses, and pending comments from the December meeting of the CG&R Committee it is proposed to issue the consultation responses as attached to this paper as draft subject to Council ratification in January 2024.
4.0	Finance & Resource Implications
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix A1 – Consultation letter from Mr McMeekin (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) DfI, Montgomery Road, Belfast – Proposal For Two Way Cycle Lane Appendix A2 – Proposed Montgomery Rd Layout – Sheet 1 of 3

	Appendix A3 - Proposed Montgomery Rd Layout – Sheet 2 of 3 Appendix A4 - Proposed Montgomery Rd Layout – Sheet 3 of 3 Appendix A5 - Draft response to Mr McMeekin (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Montgomery Road, Belfast – Proposal For Two Way Cycle Lane Appendix B1 – Consultation Letter, Belmont Church Road, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restriction Appendix B2 – Belmont Church Road Layout proposal Appendix B3 – Draft Response, Belmont Church Road, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restriction Appendix C1 – Consultation Letter, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Dunville Street, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restrictions Appendix C2 – Dunville Street Layout proposal Appendix C3 – Draft Response, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Dunville Street, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restrictions Appendix D1 – Consultation Letter, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Sorella Street, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restrictions Appendix D2 – Sorella Street Layout proposal Appendix D3 – Draft Response, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Sorella Street, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restrictions Appendix E1 – Consultation Letter, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Suffolk Road, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restriction Appendix E2 – Suffolk Road Layout proposal Appendix E3 – Draft Response, (Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division) Dfl, Suffolk Road, Belfast – Proposed Waiting Restriction
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Network Traffic



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

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Mr John Walsh
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
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BT1 5GS

Email : generalenquiries@belfastcity.gov.uk

Annex 7
Castle Buildings
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BT4 3SQ

Tel: 0300 200 7899
Fax: 028 9025 3220
Textphone number 028 9054 0022
Email: Traffic.Eastern@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Being Dealt With By : Stephen McMeekin
Direct Line 028 90 526245

Your reference:
Our reference:

13 November 2023

Dear Mr Walsh,

MONTGOMERY ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSAL FOR TWO WAY CYCLE LANE.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposes to make an Order entitled The Cycle Routes (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023. The Order will provide a cycle lane on a length of Montgomery Road, Belfast and two-way shared cycle tracks on lengths of Montgomery Road, Belfast. Drawings CO401944-AMEY-00-XX-SK-c-0101 to 01003 attached.

The Order also amends The Parking Places (Electric Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 by the deletion of the item relating to Montgomery Road, Belfast and to authorise lengths of Montgomery Road, Belfast as a parking place for an electric vehicle connected to a charging post.

The scheme proposal will be advertised on the 15 November 2023 in the Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter and Irish News as well as appearing on the Departments Consultation Web page.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Stephen McMeekin, Traffic Manager responsible for the project directly on 028 90526245.



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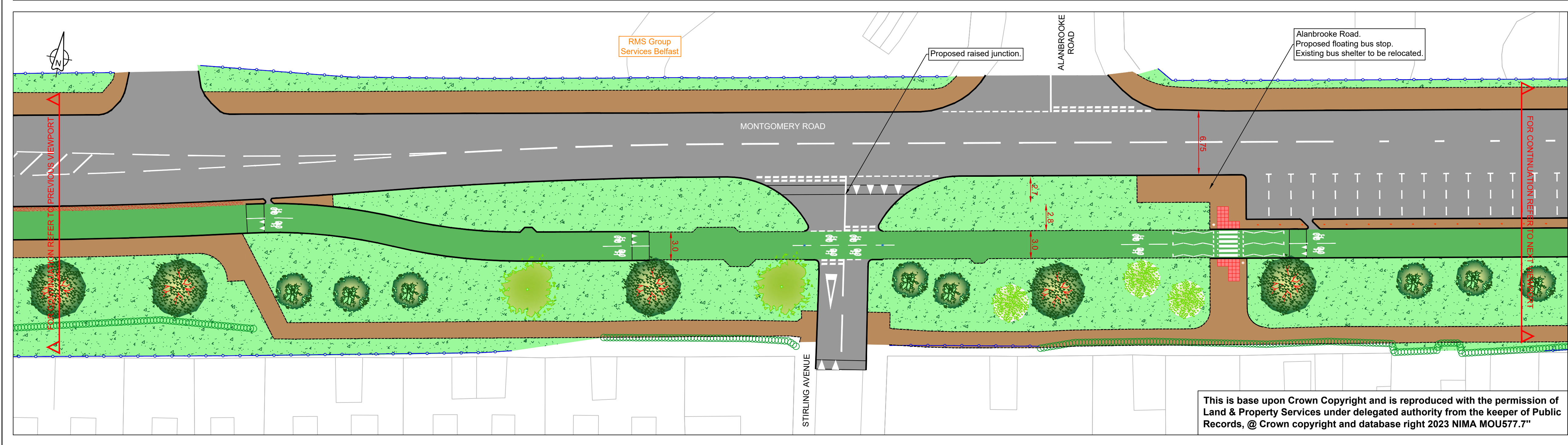
Depairtment fur

Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-nl.gov.uk

I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen McMeekin
STEPHEN MCMEEKIN
Traffic Manager



RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS
(The following information has been collected from Preconstruction Information and the Amey CDM Hazard Management Process.)

1. Working adjacent to live traffic.
2. Working adjacent residential and commercial properties and other members of the public.
3. Underground and overhead services.
4. Possible concurrent site activities.

NOTES

1. All dimensions are in meters unless stated otherwise.

Key:

- Kerb.
- Edging Kerb.
- Carriageway and Parking Bays.
- Footways and Traffic Islands.
- Two-Way Cycletrack.
- Gardens.
- Fences.
- Proposed precast edging kerb.
- Hedges.
- Road Markings.

Rev	Revision details	Drwn	Chkd	Appd	Date
Designed:	JFC				Date: 16-09-2022
Drawn:	JFC				Date: 11-07-2023
Snr Tech Check:	-				Date: -
Checked:	NA				Date: 09-11-2023
Approved:	PW				Date: 09-11-2023

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Client

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Infrastructure
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Project Name
Montgomery Road Cycle Link

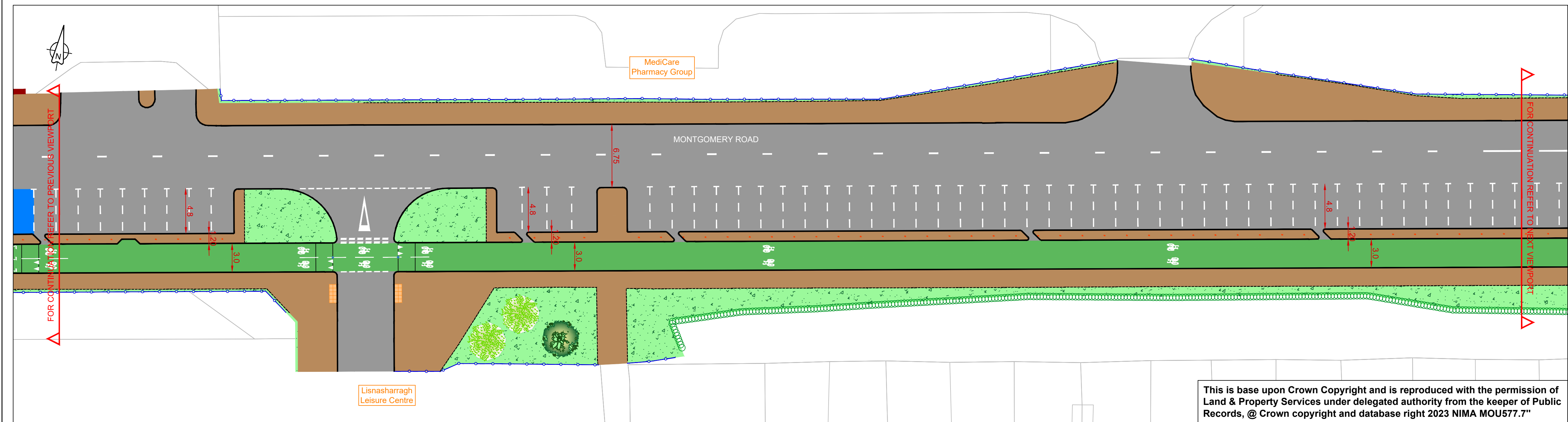
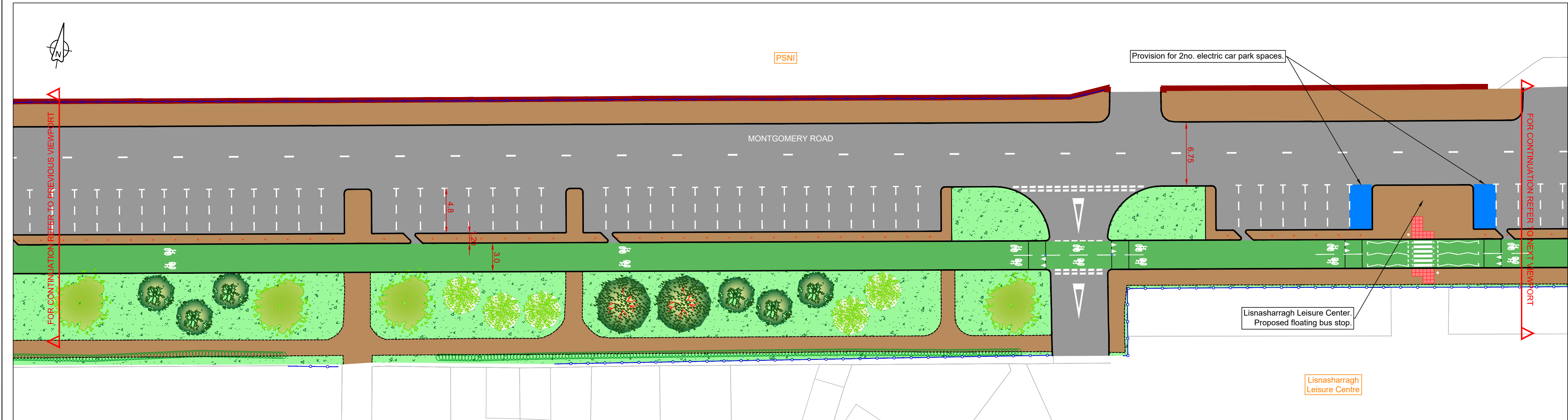
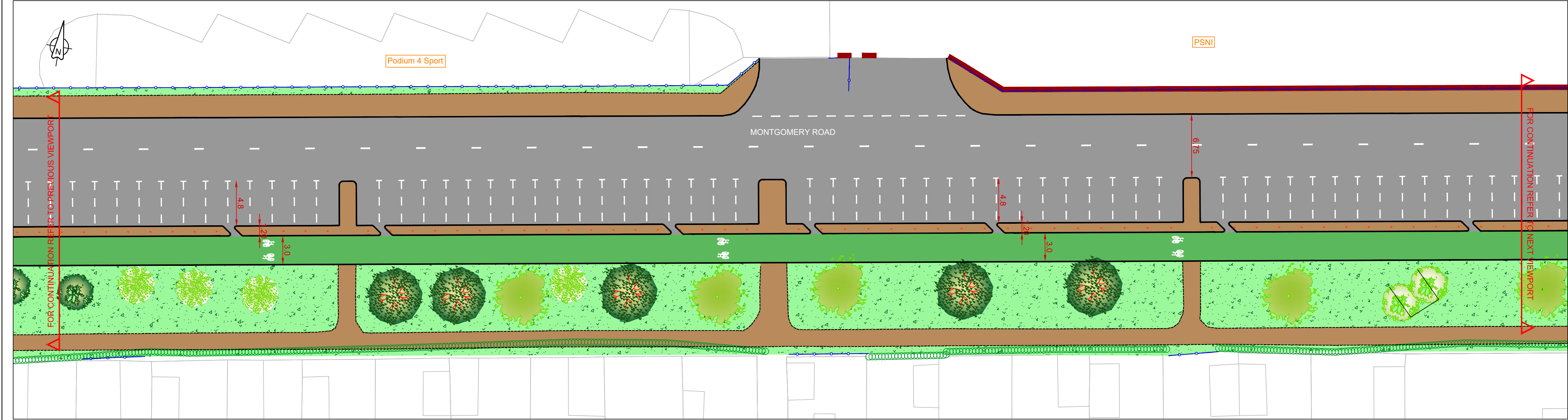
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Highways
**Proposed Layout
Public Consultation
Sheet 1 of 3**

Original Drawing Size : A1	Scale : 1:250
Dimensions : m	

Drawing Status SUITABLE FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT	Suitability S3
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Drawing No CO401944-AMEY-00-XX-SK-C-01001	Rev P01
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Road Markings.

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Snr Tech Check:	-				Date: -
Checked:	NA				Date: 09-11-2023
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Client

Department for Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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Project Name

Montgomery Road Cycle Link

Drawing Title

Highways

Proposed Layout

Public Consultation

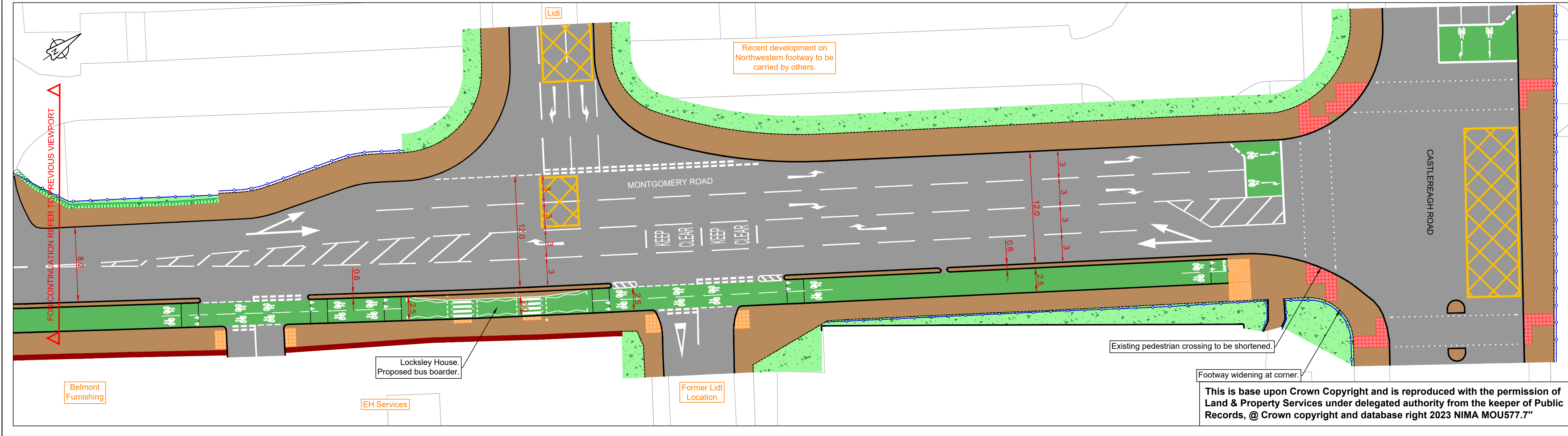
Sheet 2 of 3

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Dimensions : m	

Drawing Status	Suitability
SUITABLE FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT	S3

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Client

Department for
Infrastructure
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Project Name
Montgomery Road Cycle Link

Drawing Title
Highways
**Proposed Layout
Public Consultation
Sheet 3 of 3**

Original Drawing Size : A1	Scale : 1:250
Dimensions : m	

Drawing Status SUITABLE FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT	Suitability S3
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Drawing No CO401944-AMEY-00-XX-SK-C-01003	Rev P01
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Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Mr. M. O'Neill

Our reference

Email: oneillmartin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date: 26th November, 2023

Mr. Stephen McMeekin
Network Traffic
Department for Infrastructure
Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr McMeekin,

MONTGOMERY ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSAL FOR TWO WAY CYCLE LANE

Thank you for your letter dated 13th November, 2023 outlining the Department's proposed Order *The Cycle Routes (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023* and proposed amendment to *The Parking Places (Electric Vehicles) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012*.

The Council has considered the Department's proposals and offer the following comments:

- i. The Belfast Agenda is the city's community plan and was first published in 2017. We're required under legislation to regularly review our community plan. Following a two-year period of extensive consultation and engagement with city partners, residents and other stakeholders to get their views, we have updated the Belfast Agenda and action plans to ensure that it reflects the city's current priorities.

As part of the refresh 'Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel' (CAST) was identified as a priority area for the city. To thrive, cities must have transportation systems which allow the maximum volume of people to travel, whilst doing the least possible harm to the environment and bringing health benefits for all.

- ii. A Bolder Vision (ABV) is a joint BCC/DfI/DfC initiative that aims to provide a holistic look at the city centre's infrastructure and connectivity with surrounding communities; its streets and places, connecting routes and placemaking and regeneration opportunities from a people and place-based priority.

One of the visioning principles that underpins ABV is *Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car.*

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



- iii. When assessed against the principles of promoting connectivity, engendering and encouraging sustainable and active travel, and working to end the dominance of the private car the proposal for a two way cycle lane along Montgomery Road, Belfast is a small but welcome step.

We further welcome the proposed segregation of the two-way cycle path from the main carriageway (and parking bays) and footways, thereby greatly reducing the potential for conflict between cyclists and motorists and between cyclists and pedestrians. Segregated cycle paths are critical to ensuring that there will be an inclination towards modal shift from the private car especially for the less competent and less confident cyclists who require such safeguards. Council are hopeful that this scheme can be brought forward for delivery in the near future, and that the type of approach of be further endorsed through the Eastern Transport Plan and the delivery of the wider Belfast Cycle Network.

Yours sincerely



Mr John Walsh,
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council,
Belfast,
BT1 5GB

Annex 7,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3SQ

E-mail:
OfficeoftheChiefExecutive@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 200 7893

Texphone: 028 9054 0022

Email: Traffic.Eastern@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Website: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Being Dealt With www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

By: Raymond McCaughtry

Direct Line: 028 90 526184

Our Ref:

Date: 10 November 2023

Dear Mr Walsh,

BELMONT CHURCH ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTION

Following correspondence from a number of local elected representatives on behalf of a local resident in which concerns were raised about traffic progression in the above street, the Department has been asked to consider the introduction of an additional waiting restriction on Belmont Church Road, Belfast.

In our subsequent reply, following site observations, we agreed to draw up a proposal to consider the introduction of the waiting restriction. This is intended to reduce congestion and improve traffic progression in the area. Please see the attached plan for details.

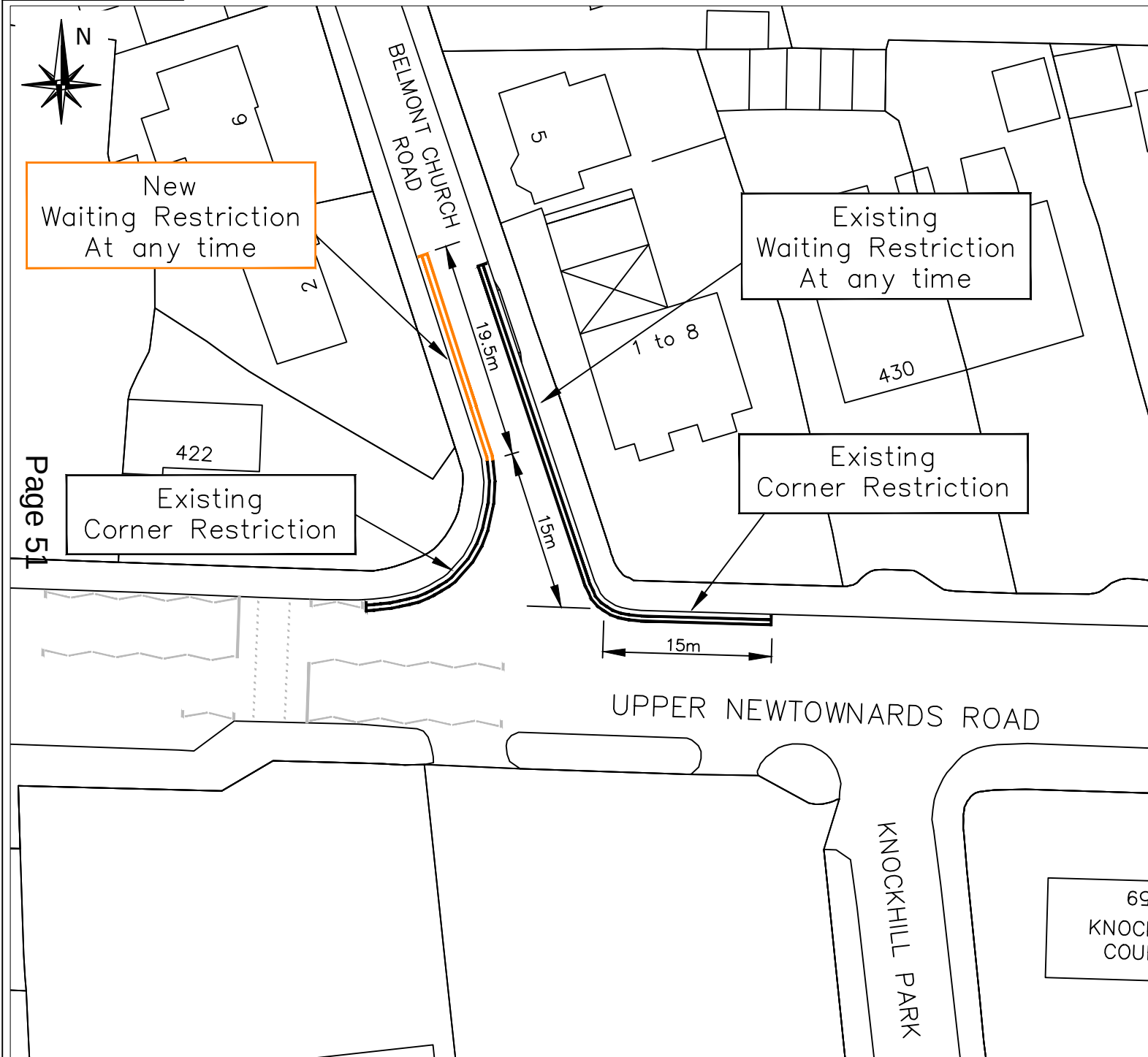
Subject to agreement, we will prepare the necessary legislation to implement this waiting restriction. This letter is to give the Council the opportunity to consider the proposal and forward any comments they wish to have considered.

Please can you confirm that the Council has had time to consider these and are content with these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McGarry

Jim McGarry
Traffic Management 1



NO.	REVISION	DATE
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Project BELMONT CHURCH ROAD AT UPPER NEWTOWNARDS ROAD		
Title NEW At any time WAITING RESTRICTION		
FILE NO.	DESIGNED	date AUG 23
DRAWN	CHECKED	date
TRACED	APPROVED	date
Drg. No.		Revision
Scales 1:500		
Eastern Division Annex 7 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ Telephone: 0300 200 7893 Textphone: 028 90540022 Department for Infrastructure An Roinn Bonneagair www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk INVESTOR IN PEOPLE		

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Mr. M. O'Neill

Our reference

Email: oneillmartin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date: 26th November, 2023

Mr. Jim McGarry
Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division
Department for Infrastructure
Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr McGarry,

BELMONT CHURCH ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTION

Thank you for your letter dated 10th November, 2023 outlining the Department's proposal to consider the introduction of the 'At any time' waiting restriction on Belmont Church Road at Upper Newtownards Road.

The Council has considered the Department's proposal and shares the view that the intervention could reduce congestion and improve traffic progression, including public transport movement, along the Upper Newtownards Road, a key arterial route.

As such, we are content with the Department's proposals.

Yours sincerely



Mr. John Walsh,
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council,
Belfast,
BT1 5GB

Annex 7,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 0300 200 7893

Texphone: 028 9054 0022

Email: Traffic.Eastern@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Website: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Being Dealt With By: David McCombe

Direct Line: 028 90 765751

Our Ref:

Date: 27 November 2023

Dear Mr. Walsh,

DUNVILLE STREET, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Following a request from a local representative in which concerns were raised about traffic progression in the above street, the Department has been asked to consider the introduction of waiting restrictions on Dunville Street, Belfast.

In our subsequent reply, following site observations, we agreed to draw up a proposal to consider the introduction of these waiting restrictions. These are intended to reduce congestion and improve traffic progression in the area. Please see the attached plan for details.

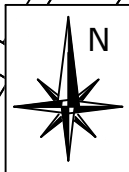
Subject to agreement, we will prepare the necessary legislation to implement these waiting restrictions. This letter is to give the Council the opportunity to consider the proposal and forward any comments they wish to have considered.

Please can you confirm that the Council has had time to consider these and are content with these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McGarry

Jim McGarry
Traffic Management 1



Page 54

DUNVILLE PARK

New
Waiting Restrictions
At any time

New
Waiting Restriction
Monday-Friday
8am-6pm

New
Waiting Restriction
Monday-Friday
8am-6pm

NO.	REVISION	DATE
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Project DUNVILLE STREET AT TURNING HEAD		
Title WAITING RESTRICTIONS 'At any time' Monday-Friday : 8am-6pm		
FILE NO.	DESIGNED	date AUG 23
DRAWN	CHECKED	date
TRACED	APPROVED	date
Drg. No.		Revision

Scales 1:500

Eastern Division

Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 0300 200 7893
Textphone: 028 90540022

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Mr. M. O'Neill

Our reference

Email: oneillmartin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date: 26th November, 2023

Mr. Jim McGarry
Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division
Department for Infrastructure
Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr McGarry,

DUNVILLE STREET, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Thank you for your letter dated 27th November, 2023 outlining the Department's proposal to consider the introduction of the waiting restrictions at Dunville Street.

The Council has considered the Department's proposal and shares the view that the interventions could reduce congestion and improve traffic progression along Dunville Street.

As such, we are content with the Department's proposals.

Yours sincerely

Mr. John Walsh,
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council,
Belfast,
BT1 5GB

Annex 7,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 0300 200 7893
Texphone: 028 9054 0022
Email: Traffic.Eastern@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
Website: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
Being Dealt With By: David McCombe
Direct Line: 028 90 765751
Our Ref:
Date: 27 November 2023

Dear Mr. Walsh,

SORELLA STREET, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Following a request from a local representative in which concerns were raised about traffic progression in the above street, the Department has been asked to consider the introduction of waiting restrictions on Sorella Street, Belfast.

In our subsequent reply, following site observations, we agreed to draw up a proposal to consider the introduction of these waiting restrictions. These are intended to reduce congestion and improve traffic progression in the area. Please see the attached plan for details.

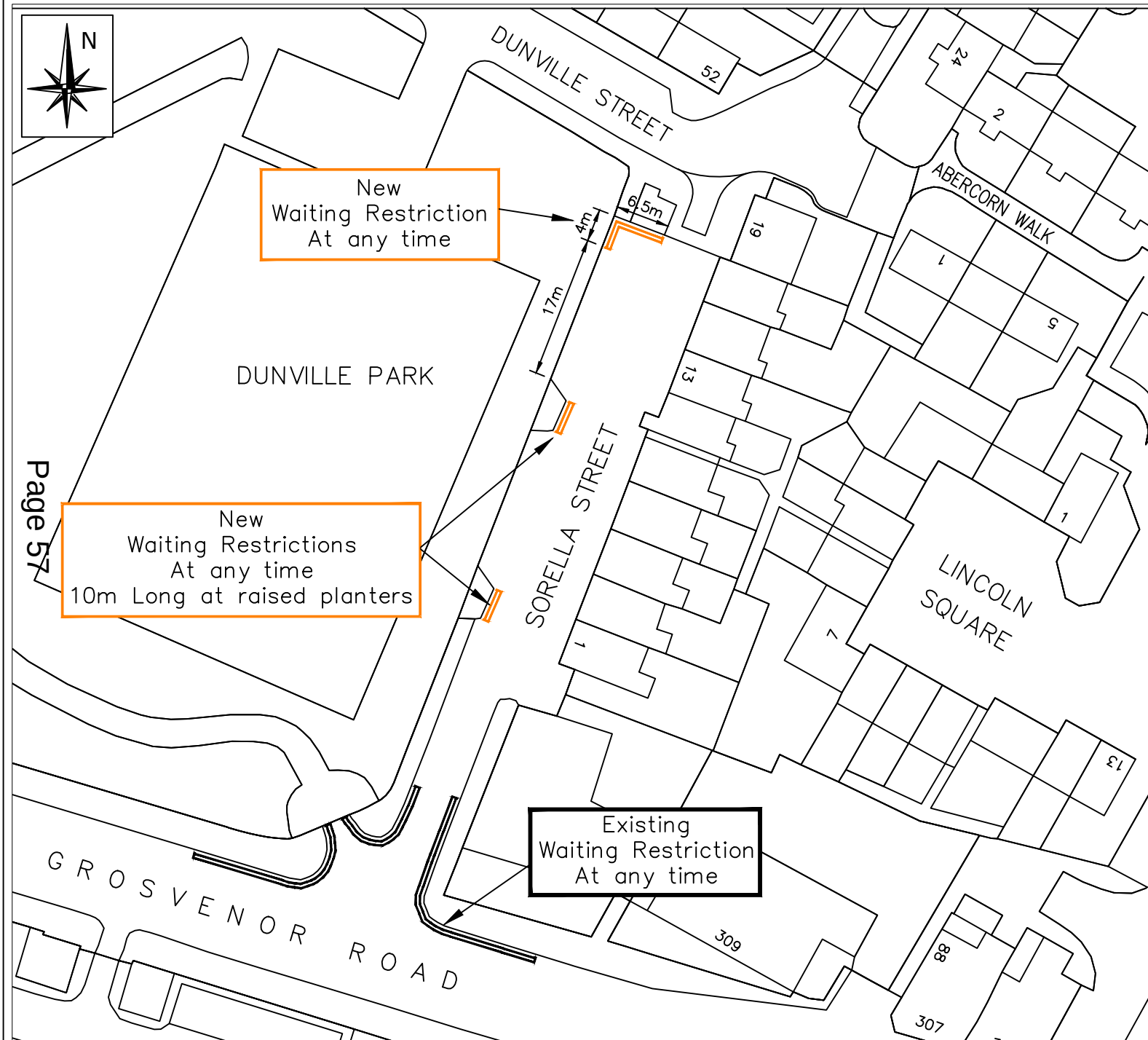
Subject to agreement, we will prepare the necessary legislation to implement these waiting restrictions. This letter is to give the Council the opportunity to consider the proposal and forward any comments they wish to have considered.

Please can you confirm that the Council has had time to consider these and are content with these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McGarry

Jim McGarry
Traffic Management 1



NO.	REVISION	DATE
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Project SORELLA STREET BELFAST		
Title WAITING RESTRICTIONS 'At any time'		
FILE NO.	DESIGNED	date AUG 23
DRAWN	CHECKED	date
TRACED	APPROVED	date
Drg. No.		Revision
Scales SCALED TO FIT		
Eastern Division Annex 7 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ Telephone: 0300 200 7893 Textphone: 028 90540022		
Department for Infrastructure An Roinn Bonneagair www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk		

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Mr. M. O'Neill

Our reference

Email: oneillmartin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date: 26th November, 2023

Mr. Jim McGarry
Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division
Department for Infrastructure
Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr McGarry,

SORELLA STREET, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Thank you for your letter dated 27th November, 2023 outlining the Department's proposal to consider the introduction of the waiting restrictions at Sorella Street.

The Council has considered the Department's proposal and shares the view that the interventions could reduce congestion and improve traffic progression along Sorella Street.

As such, we are content with the Department's proposals.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Walsh,
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council,
Belfast,
BT1 5GB

Annex 7,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast,
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 0300 200 7893
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Website: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
Being Dealt With By: David McCombe
Direct Line: 028 90 765751
Our Ref:
Date: 27 November 2023

Dear Mr Walsh,

SUFFOLK ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTION

Following a request from a local elected representative in which concerns were raised about traffic progression in the above road, the Department has been asked to consider the introduction of waiting restrictions on Suffolk Road, Belfast.

In our subsequent reply, following site observations, we agreed to draw up a proposal to consider the introduction of these waiting restrictions. These are intended to address traffic management issues on Suffolk Road in the vicinity Glen Community Centre. Please see the attached plan for details.

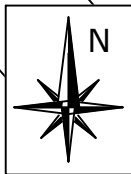
Subject to agreement, we will prepare the necessary legislation to implement these waiting restrictions. This letter is to give the Council the opportunity to consider the proposal and forward any comments they wish to have considered.

Please can you confirm that the Council has had time to consider these and are content with these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McGarry

Jim McGarry
Traffic Management 1



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Riverside
Mews

GLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

New
Waiting Restriction
At any timeExisting
Corner Restriction
At any time

SUFFOLK ROAD

DERRYVEAGH MEWS

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Project

SUFFOLK ROAD
AT
GLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Title

WAITING RESTRICTION
At any time

FILE NO.

DESIGNED

date OCT 23

DRAWN

CHECKED

date

TRACED

APPROVED

date

Drg. No.

Revision

Scales 1:500

Eastern Division

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Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Mr. M. O'Neill

Our reference

Email: oneillmartin@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date: 26th November, 2023

Mr. Jim McGarry
Network Traffic, Street Lighting and Transportation - Eastern Division
Department for Infrastructure
Annex 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr McGarry,

SUFFOLK ROAD, BELFAST – PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTION

Thank you for your letter dated 27th November, 2023 outlining the Department's proposal to consider the introduction of the 'At any time' waiting restriction on Suffolk Road.

The Council has considered the Department's proposal and shares the view that the intervention could address traffic management issues and improve traffic progression.

As such, we are content with the Department's proposals.

Yours sincerely

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Subject:	Proposed Study Visits
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Adrian Ferguson, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. 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 matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To seek Committee approval in relation to extending the scope of previously approved study visit with a focus on regeneration projects including city centre living and public private partnership approach to delivery.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: I. Agree to extend the scope of a previously approved study visit to Newcastle to include other cities including Greater Manchester and Leeds which will focus on regeneration projects including city centre living and public private partnership approach to delivery. Approve attendance of Party Group Leaders or their nominees, accompanied by officers.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	In December 2021 following an invitation from Newcastle City Council to facilitate shared learnings around regeneration projects and good practice in city centre living, the City Growth & Regeneration Committee agreed to a proposed study visit which was subject to restrictions at the time around travel and Covid – 19. Due to advice regarding the implementation of Covid restrictions at the time the study visit had to be postponed.
3.2	Officers have continued to engage with representatives from Newcastle and other Irish and UK cities, through existing fora such as UKReeIF / MIPIM, Urban Land Institute, and the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership. In addition to the planned visit to Newcastle, there has been ongoing contact with Greater Manchester and Leeds City Council. It is proposed to extend the scope of the previously approved study visit to include Greater Manchester and Leeds.
3.3	These visits will provide an opportunity to examine examples of housing led regeneration, institutional investor partnership approaches that these local authorities have taken to deliver regeneration as well as public private partnership approaches that support city centre living.. The proposed extended visit is considered timely given the commencement of the procurement process to seek a Private Sector Partner to deliver residential led, mixed use developments in the support of the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda. While the core focus will be on city centre living and the institutional investor partnership / public private partnership approach to delivery of regeneration projects it will also provide an opportunity to discuss other regeneration projects including City Deal, Innovation Districts and funding mechanisms available to support regeneration.

3.4	It is proposed that this visit takes place at the end of January / early February 2024, and would take place over 2 days (one overnight). It is proposed that this would include Party Group Leaders or their nominees and accompanying officers.
4.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> To accommodate flights, along with hotels, transport, and subsistence for two days and one night, it is estimated that a budget of up to £600 per person will be required for the proposed extended visit which will be met from existing budget.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.
6.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme
Date:	7 th December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Fintan Grant, Operational Development Manager Cathryn Mc Oscar, Assets Development Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐	No ☒
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒	No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in quarter two (1 st July 2023 - 30 th September 2023) of year 8 of operation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • note the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Y8 Q2 (July-September); financial year • note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people; • note the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion. • note the update that tender will be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme • note an Expression of Interest has been circulated for a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015 as part Belfast City Council's physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital

	funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception using bikes and supporting infrastructure from 'Nextbike by TIER'. The scheme currently operates with 588 (including those in reserve for new stands) and 56 docking stations.
3.2	<u>Expansion of the Scheme</u> At CG&R on 12 May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast Bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. All stations below are now operational • Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre • Olympia Leisure Centre • Kennedy Centre • Waterworks
3.3	At CG&R on 9 June 2021 it was agreed to proceed with an additional 15 docking stations. At SP&R on 18 June 2021 members agreed for £980,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal (£480,000 non-recurrent funding for Belfast Bikes expansion and £500,000 non-recurrent reallocated from public space programme).
3.4	Works are ongoing for the design and installation of eight stations in Phase 1 (to be installed throughout 2023): • North: Shore Road - complete & operational • West: Coláiste Feirste – complete & operational • South: Malone Road (Elms Village) - complete & operational • East: Castlereagh Road – complete & operational • North: Yorkgate – on hold due to train station construction • West: Glencairn Park – to be installed in Autumn 2023 • South: Lisburn Road (Drumglass Park)- to be installed in Autumn 2023 • East: Upper Newtownards Road (Sandown Carpark) – to be installed late 2023
3.5	There are plans for seven further stations in Phase 2 in year 2023/24. Planning for those are on hold as officers are currently preparing documents for a tender process to appoint a new provider/operator. Locations for the seven stations will be identified and brought back to the AWG and to be implemented in the new scheme.

3.6	<u>Operational Performance</u> Availability Following the ongoing challenges sourcing replacement bike parts, this issue has now been resolved and the number of bikes on the street during Q2 has increased. The average daily bikes on the street during Q2 was 385
3.7	An additional 180 bikes have been purchased to facilitate the ongoing docking station expansion, and this stock has been filtered onto the street, so availability levels have further increased.
3.8	<u>Membership</u> There were 26,974 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q2. This is a 19% increase of users from the previous quarter. Nextbike by Tier the current provider changed their payment operator during Q4 (2022-2023) and as such the details of non-active members are no longer recorded as registered users. Going forward all active users will need to update their information with the new supplier. • In Q2 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships remained the most popular form of membership, accounting for 83.5% of users. • Annual memberships accounted for 15% of users. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG. • Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for just over 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.
3.9	<u>Journeys</u> There have been 1,422,196 journeys since the scheme was launched including 36,043 journeys during Q2 Year 8. This is a decrease of 36% from the same period in Year 7 (which was a very busy year for the scheme) and also 12% lower than with the 5-year average for Q2.
3.10	<u>Vandalism</u> Members will be aware that vandalism is an ongoing problem. Upgrades to the forks to help prevent the unauthorised removal of bikes has been successful however, damage is now being caused to the rear wheels and to the docking points while bikes are being forced from docking stations.

3.11	There were 299 instances of vandalism in Q2. This is much higher than in previous periods and higher than the quarterly average by 54%. Vandalism costs payable by the Council for this period is £12,838 Whilst this figure is significantly lower than the same period last year it is higher than the quarterly average (£3,689).
3.12	Members should note that generally the number of vandalism incidents had increased in recent times. However, Members should also note that following the upgrade to 'SMART' bikes, the amount of theft has decreased due to GPS tracking in the bike allowing for recovery. The operator is very proactive at retrieving missing bikes.
3.13	The bikes operator continues to deliver operational improvements and community engagement initiatives with PSNI to help decrease vandalism incidents.
	<u>Subscriptions and Usage Revenue</u>
3.14	Income from fees and charges YTD is £67,958. This is 57% lower than estimated for this period and is partly due to change of payment provider and associated issues and the fact that there currently is no sponsor for the Bike Share Scheme.
3.15	<u>MARCOMMS</u> Marketing activity during Q2 included: • Promotion of a specially animated & fun Belfast Bikes video – promoting the different docking stations across the city. This was promoted on Belfast City Council and Belfast Bikes social media channels. • Promotion of newly installed docking stations on social media channels • Social media messaging on the new Belfast Bike branding of other council assets e.g. Belfast Castle, 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast Zoo, St George's Market Belfast Bikes currently has 5k followers on Twitter; 1.8k on Facebook; and 1.1k on Instagram.
3.16	<u>Operator contract</u> NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bikes scheme until March 2024. Council staff have reviewed the scheme and a recent Expression of Interest (EOI) was completed as a market testing exercise. This is used to inform the next stage of the tender process. It is suggested to brief parties about the main specifications of the tender documents before it will be

	published.										
3.17	<u>Sponsorship</u> Sponsorship has ended and council officers released an Expression of Interest (EOI) seeking a sponsor for the scheme. This process is currently ongoing.										
3.18	<u>Response to Notice of Motion</u> Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O'Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to investigate <i>"as part of the current strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, consideration be given to granting free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme"</i>.										
3.19	Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, added date of birth (D.O.B.) as an essential criterion for users from 13 October 2022. From this data we now know that the majority of Belfast Bike users fall within the "25 and under" age group.										
3.20	From (October 22 – June 23), the 16 – 25 age group accounted for 52% of users across the scheme.										
3.21	If free usage was implemented for under 25's- then it would have resulted in a loss of income for the current financial year and previous 3 years as per the table below. <table><tr><td></td><td>Year 20 / 21</td><td>Year 21 / 22</td><td>Year 22 / 23</td><td>Forecasted 23 / 24</td></tr><tr><td>Loss 52% of bike usage revenue</td><td>£70,205</td><td>£177,901</td><td>£91,609</td><td>£72,169</td></tr></table>		Year 20 / 21	Year 21 / 22	Year 22 / 23	Forecasted 23 / 24	Loss 52% of bike usage revenue	£70,205	£177,901	£91,609	£72,169
	Year 20 / 21	Year 21 / 22	Year 22 / 23	Forecasted 23 / 24							
Loss 52% of bike usage revenue	£70,205	£177,901	£91,609	£72,169							
3.22	At its meeting in September 2023, the Committee considered an update on the Motion. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that it would consider this as part of the rate setting process for 2024/25 and to write to the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Health to request investment in this proposal, to be delivered on an annual basis.										
3.23	A response was received from the Department for Infrastructure advising that the operation of the Belfast Bikes scheme is a matter for council. However, if DFI was to consider future capital investment, they would seek assurance that the operation of the Belfast Bike Scheme remains sustainable.										

3.24 3.25	Financial & Resource Implications <u>Finance</u> Providing free usage to under 25's is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on revenue generated from the bike scheme, which directly contributes to its operating costs and sustainability. Members are asked to confirm if they wish the additional financial allocation to cover the loss of revenue to be considered as part of the rate setting process however members are advised that any financial implications, from any decision, have not yet been factored into the current rate setting process. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> none
4.	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Belfast Bikes - Performance Data Q2 (July 2023- Sept 23)

Table 1 – Belfast Bike rentals by Month and Year

Month	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
April	2,162	15,163	17,253	13,274	13,306	0*	30,693	10,617	8482
May	16,151	20,490	21,689	17,867	16,720	0*	20,533	12,711	13,237
June	20,828	20,404	21,902	17,448	14,698	0*	26,142	15,579	14,281
July	19,807	16,593	18,461	16,878	15,350	2,898	25,310	17,891	11,226
August	17,709	21,345	19,756	15,406	13,799	4,693	23,840	20,858	12,626
September	19,448	21,448	17,037	15,438	11,959	4,755	22,968	17,426	12191
October	18,807	21,270	17,348	19,373	12,402	3,274	18,587	14,564	
November	15,274	18,676	12,726	15,031	9,173	3,462	15,716	11,794	
December	13,036	15,022	7,724	10,526	7,829	3,149	9,678	7094	
January	12,121	16,300	9,461	13,316	9,712	4,967	10,053	6928	
February	13,846	15,695	10,640	13,434	7,540	9,233	8,137	8057	
March	14,982	19,064	11,199	12,314	4,761	28,903	12,119	9133	
Total	184,171	221,470	185,196	180,305	137,249	65,334	223,776	152,652	

*Not operational due to Covid-19

Table 2 - Vandalism costs to Council

Mth	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/23	2023/24
Apr		£411.00	£429.24	£225.72	£1,060	£0.00	£3,449.83	£0.00	£2,712.35
May	£949	£1,862	£2,970.54	£0.00	£1,707	£0.00	£1,766.12	£748.91	£1,768.82
Jun	£1,005	£1,025	£1,829.92	£977.04	£2,303	£0.00	£1,934.00	£3,371.76	£695.87
Jul	£0.00	£846.08	£1,793.98	£0.00	£904	£404.21	£1,427.00	£7,256.48	£3,131.00
Aug	£744	£2,258	£1,794.00	£222.15	£1,374	£967.16	£1,815.32	£3,573.92	£4,598.01
Sep	£356	£3,527	£2,444.02	£1,635	£0.00	£991.79	£1,809.04	£6,370.18	£5,109.31
Oct	£556	£1,297	£4,918.74	£0.00	£939.41	£0.00	£397.23	£7,303.39	
Nov	£674	£771.22	£2,459.30	£2,316	£701.91	£0.00	£1,314.79	£2838.65	
Dec	£0.00	£2,374	£135.48	£0.00	£417.24	£0.00	£0.00	£1592.39	
Jan	£0.00	£1,170	£1,763.62	£1,130	£1,274	£259.31	£0.00	£860.63	
Feb	£0.00	£3,227	£1,112.26	£930.35	£0.00	£432.43	£173.06	£2,862.04	
Mar	£0.00	£840.68	£464.54	£119.20	£215.05	£3,153	£494.28	£2059.35	
Total	£4,285	£19,612	£21,844	£7,556	£10,898	£6,208	£13,913	£38,837.67	

Table 3 – Vandalism incidents

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Apr		16	82	35	23	17	84	17	57
May	7	50	111	31	45	0	70	17	56
June	6	19	78	32	54	0	47	24	50
July	13	17	61	28	31	21	48	35	79
Aug	14	28	84	34	8	31	40	27	116
Sept	16	17	98	87	5	43	61	68	104
Oct	15	22	107	27	26	13	34	50	
Nov	11	28	78	12	18	15	18	41	
Dec	7	47	41	37	23	15	5	5	
Jan	7	41	23	19	27	14	13	3	
Feb	4	59	35	33	17	14	18	10	
Mar	4	54	29	20	17	92	12	15	
Total	104	398	827	395	294	275	450	312	

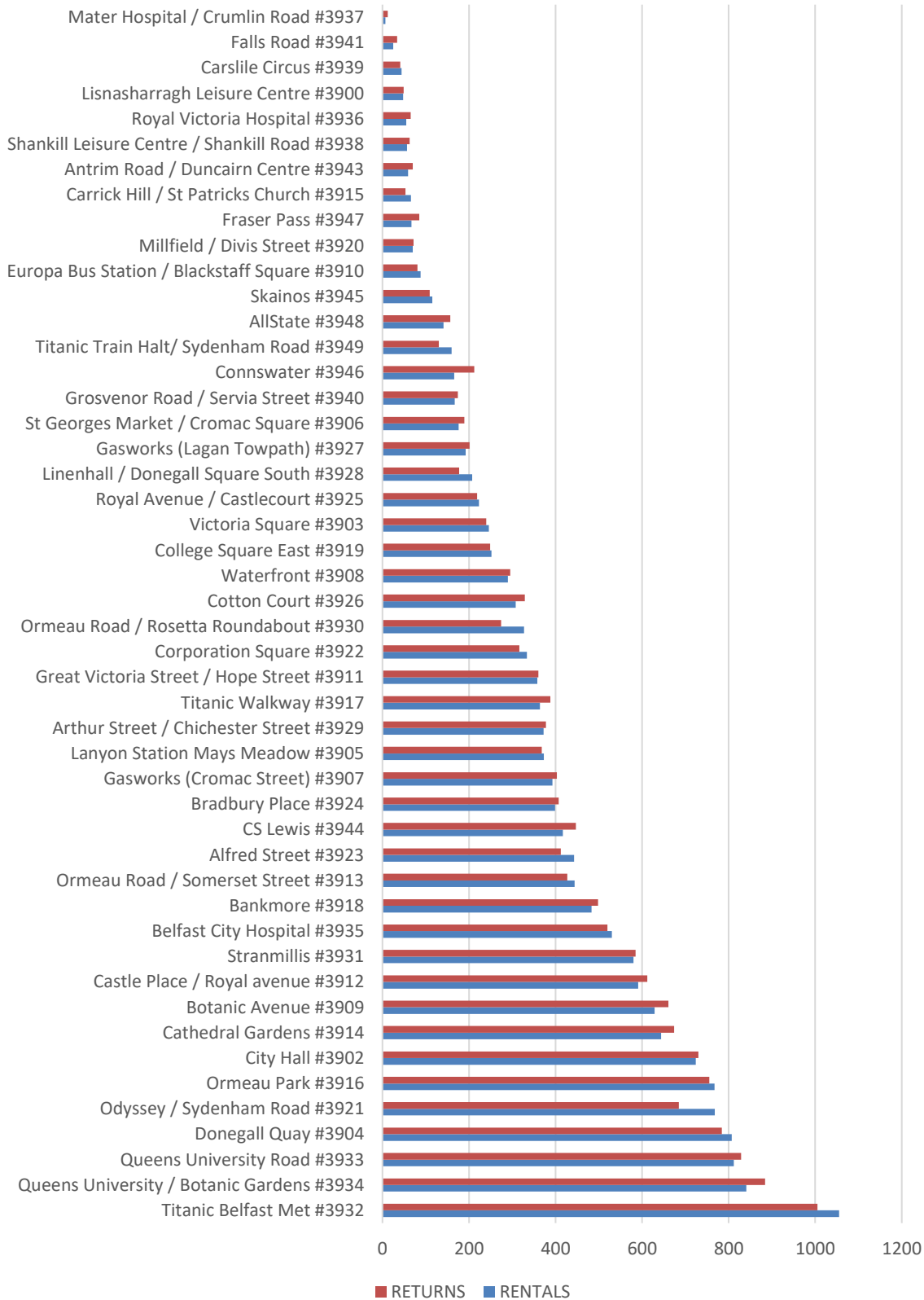
Table 4 – Location of docking stations Sept 2023 (alphabetical order)

Place name	Official Station	Station number	Bike racks
Alfred Street	1	3923	14
AllState	1	3948	12
Antrim Road / Duncairn Centre	1	3943	8
Arthur Street / Chichester Street	1	3929	8
Bankmore	1	3918	16
Belfast City Hospital	1	3935	18
Botanic Avenue	1	3909	16
Bradbury Place	1	3924	16
Carrick Hill / St Patricks Church	1	3915	12
Carlisle Circus	1	3939	20
Castlereagh Road	1	3901	12
Castle Place / Royal Avenue	1	3912	22
Cathedral Gardens	1	3914	20
City Hall	1	3902	20
Coláiste Feirste	1	3982	10
College Square East	1	3919	16
Connswater	1	3946	10
Corporation Square	1	3922	14
Cotton Court	1	3926	12
CS Lewis	1	3944	16
Donegall Quay	1	3904	16
Elms Village	1	3983	20
Europa Bus Station / Blackstaff Square	1	3910	16
Falls Road	1	3941	8
Fraser Pass	1	3947	14
Gasworks (Cromac Street)	1	3907	12
Gasworks (Lagan Towpath)	1	3927	16
Girwood Community Hub / Cliftonville Park Avenue	1	3942	14
Great Victoria Street / Hope Street	1	3911	18
Grosvenor Road / Servia Street	1	3940	12
Kennedy Centre	1	3981	9
Lanyon Station Mays Meadow	1	3905	20
Linenhall / Donegall Square South	1	3928	16
Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre	1	3900	12
Mater Hospital / Crumlin Road	1	3937	10
Millfield / Divis Street	1	3920	18
Odyssey / Sydenham Road	1	3921	22
Olympia Leisure Centre	1	3994	12
Ormeau Park	1	3916	12
Ormeau Road / Rosetta Roundabout	1	3930	16
Ormeau Road / Somerset Street	1	3913	12
Queens University / Botanic Gardens	1	3934	14
Queens University Road	1	3933	16
Royal Avenue / Castlecourt	1	3925	12

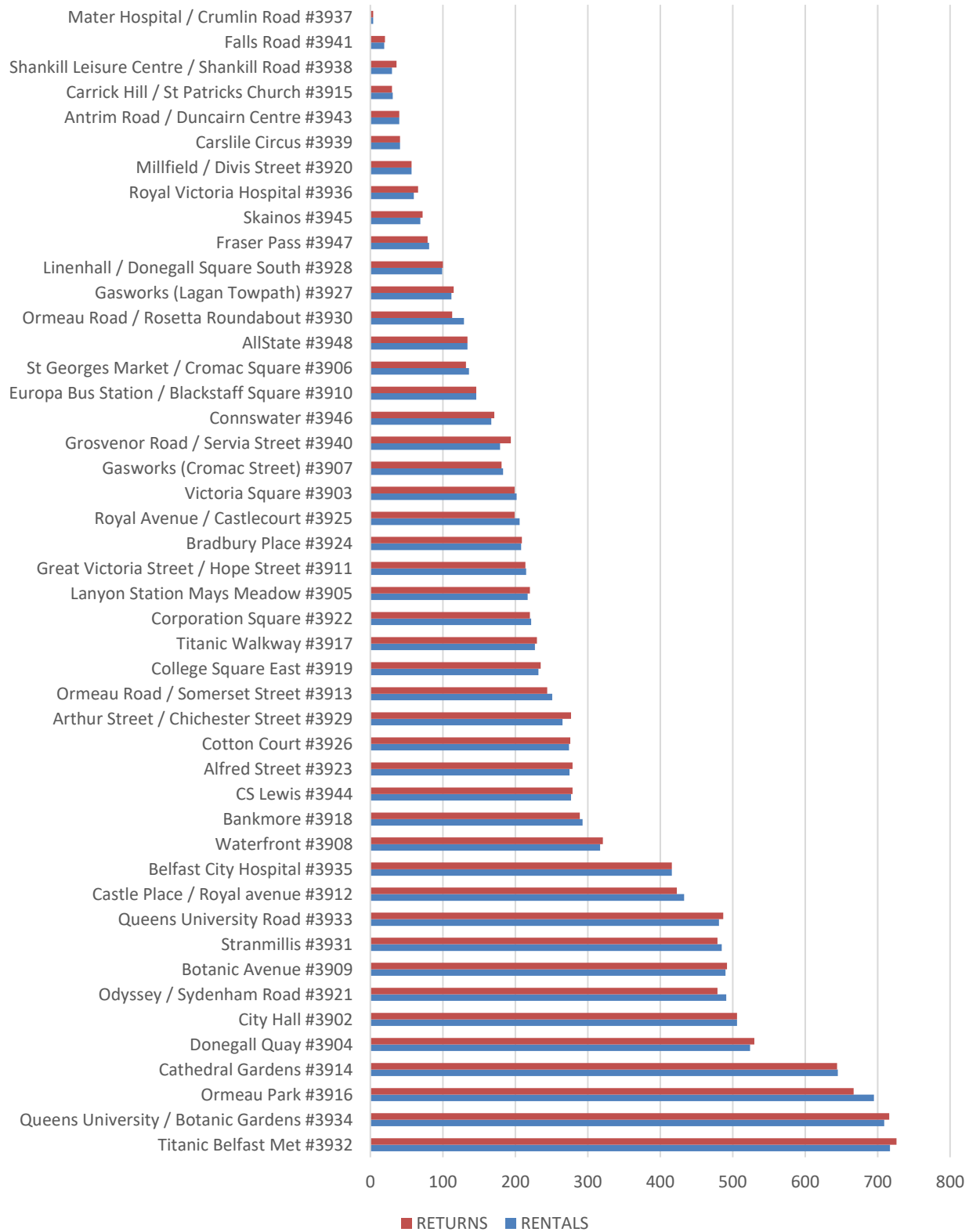
Royal Victoria Hospital	1	3936	20
Shore Road	1	3990	20
Shankill Leisure Centre / Shankill Road	1	3938	18
Skainos	1	3945	8
St Georges Market / Cromac Square	1	3906	12
Stranmillis	1	3931	14
Titanic Belfast Met	1	3932	18
Titanic Walkway	1	3917	20
Victoria Square	1	3903	10
Waterfront	1	3908	24
Waterworks	1	3985	10

Graph 1 – Rentals and returns for each station (in order of popularity)

Rentals /Returns Sep22



Rentals /Returns Mar 22



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Subject:	Update on Draft response for DfE Tourism Strategy Consultation
Date:	6 th December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager Culture, Tourism & Events

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. 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 matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: Note the contents of report and agree the draft response to the consultation laid out in Appendix 1
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that the Department for the Economy (DfE) opened consultation on their Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland on the 6 th November the consultation period will close on the 12 th January 2024
3.2	The draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland is a 10 year plan that sets out DfEs vision and mission for the growth of the tourism sector in Northern Ireland over the next decade. It seeks to help position the region internationally as an attractive place to visit, making visitors feel welcome while at the same time helping to make the lives better of all of our citizens. It seeks to deliver on the objectives of 10x by generating economic growth that is sustainable, inclusive and innovative.
3.3	Since the publication of the 10x strategy the Department has been working to consider how the practical implementation of overarching objectives set out in the 10X Economic Vision is to be achieved. It has issued a number of related documents such as the Skills Strategy (Skills for a 10X Economy) and has been working on appropriate metrics to track progress. The Tourism Strategy is a continuation of this delivery and remains aligned to the proposal of DfE investment to be aligned with activity that supports the 10x ambition
3.4	The draft Tourism Strategy is premised on five themes and seeks to strive for a new and ambitious growth trajectory that is: • Innovative and uses our creative skills • Inclusive by bringing opportunities for all • Sustainable for generations • Attractive to visitors and investors • Collaborative to deliver a shared vision The document identifies the key challenges and opportunities for growth.
3.5	The Department now wants all interested parties to consider the draft proposals for growth in the tourism sector. And sees this as an opportunity to help shape the final strategy and next steps.
3.6	A summary of the five questions posed and draft responses to each of these have been collated and are attached in Appendix 1. Members are asked to review the draft responses and confirm their agreement that this can be submitted to DfE as the Belfast City Council response to the consultation or to raise any other matters that they wish to incorporate.
3.7	From the perspective of Belfast City Council, the fact that the regional government department with responsibility for economic growth has identified the role that Tourism plays as an economic driver that can deliver for visitors and citizens alike is welcome. As a result, the tone of the draft response is to recognise and support the need for an innovative and collaborative tourism strategy and sector. However the response also suggests that there is a more effective mechanism for achieving this, namely to utilise the data, insights and structures that already exist at local level and to identify greater opportunities for

	collaborative working that takes cognisance of cross cutting objectives and shared resources that focus efforts and facilitate effective delivery.
3.8	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> No specific financial or resource implications.
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The Department have conducted and published their EQIA as part of the consultation process.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached Appendix 1 – Draft Belfast City Council Response to Consultation Members should note that there is a 1,000 character limit on responses Appendix 2 – Draft DfE Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland – 10 year plan

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1. What type of organisation do you represent?

- ☐ Central Government
- ☒ Local Government
- ☐ Voluntary & Community Sector
- ☐ Tourism Industry
- ☐ Private Sector
- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Other

If you have selected 'Tourism Industry' please specify below, which area of the Industry you represent:

- ☐ Attraction/Experience Provider
- ☐ Accommodation
- ☐ Transport
- ☐ Tour Operator
- ☐ Destination Management Organisation
- ☐ Food & Drink
- ☐ Other

If you have selected 'Other' Please specify below:

2. Thinking of the Vision, Mission and Strategic Aim, to what extent do you agree or disagree that they are the right Vision, Mission and Strategic Aim for the Industry?

Our Vision: Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core.

Our Mission: To support the tourism sector in building an innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which enriches its people, its economy and its guests.

Our Strategic Aim: To increase the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50-75% compared to 2019.

NB: Please note the 50-75% increase in the value of tourism expressed in the Strategic Aim is based on a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4-6%. We are particularly keen to hear views on the quantitative aspect of this aim that balances ambition, realism and sustainability.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☒ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

If 'Disagree or Strongly Disagree' Please Expand Below.

We welcome the recognition of a need for a 10 year Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland, and whilst agree that the vision and mission statements effectively consider driving tourism forward, the strategic aim appears overly focused on a single statistic. To ensure sustainable growth it should make recognition of alignment with market needs and demands, encompassing a broader perspective for long term success.

We consider that underpinning this approach presents a significant opportunity for better data sharing between and across government departments and local authorities. However clarity is sought on the measurement and value placed on metrics beyond traditional measures of economic impact such as visitor numbers, bed nights and day spend.

We understand that targets are set at topline level but would seek clarity on the role at local levels and ability to deliver aligned to tourism product, infrastructure and capacity. Alongside this greater depth of modeling against the targets wo

3. Thinking about the Themes and associated Indicators outlined in the Strategy, to what extent do you agree or disagree that they are the right ones to target future growth of the industry?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Inclusive	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Innovative	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Sustainable	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Collaborative	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Attractive	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐

If 'Disagree or Strongly Disagree' Please Expand Below.

We are broadly in agreement that the themes are aligned with delivering the objectives of the strategy. Consideration could be given to the role of attractiveness as an underlying principle opposed driving all themes to position Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit.

Accessibility is an important theme to consider taking into account air access, ETA and enabling infrastructure. Strengthening the need for cross cutting collaboration with departments that have ownership of levers that will drive forward and enable change and growth.

We also recognise the need to consider definitions of the terminology associated with innovation and sustainability giving clarity to industry on how they can work to deliver against these objectives. It is important to note that in order to deliver on innovation in particular having the processes and partnerships in place that can deliver timely action and decision making will enable the sector to take advantage of market trends.

4. What would you view as the five most important actions which could contribute to achieving the indicators outlined within the Strategy? Please note a number of these actions would be dependent on the Public Expenditure available and the wider political and financial climate.

-
- ☐ Develop and deliver a bespoke Skills Action Plan
-
- ☐ Develop a Quality Employer Charter
-
- ☐ Develop a Tourism Employer Excellence Programme
-
- ☐ Build awareness in businesses of sustainability (green) practices
-
- ☒ Encourage and develop NI cross government collaboration
-
- ☐ Build awareness of, and support for, accessing sources of alternative funding
-
- ☐ Build awareness in businesses of innovation within the tourism sector
-
- ☐ Formally recognize/accredit businesses for demonstrating innovation
-
- ☒ Additional Data Collection and Robust Benchmarking
-
- ☒ Marketing Campaigns – Regional messaging across international campaigns
-
- ☐ Develop a NI Events Framework
-
- ☐ Support local events and festivals
-
- ☐ Support larger events that attract people from outside of NI
-
- ☒ Promote importance of Business Tourism and deliver on Business Tourism Strategy
-
- ☐ Deliver an annual tourism awards programme to recognise best practice in the industry
-
- ☐ Develop an air route development programme to improve connectivity with France and Germany
-
- ☐ Increased delivery of Travel & Tourism programmes in schools leading to increased qualifications
-
- ☐ Stronger connection between employers/delivery partners/programmes to support businesses to participate in opportunities
-
- ☐ Develop a bespoke Sustainability Accreditation Scheme and/or promote a framework to promote and recognize other quality assured sustainability accreditation schemes
-
- ☐ A Regenerative/Sustainable Tourism Development Programme similar to the EDP to support the development of new and enhanced sustainable tourism experiences;
-
- ☐ Promote the role tourism plays in sustaining other sectors, eg culture, arts & heritage and food
-
- ☐ Encourage and facilitate collaboration within the sector to share best practice/knowledge/networks
-
- ☒ More collaboration between councils to produce integrated tourism/destination plans at local level
-

5. What do you think your organisation, business or those you represent, could deliver to contribute towards the Tourism Strategy? This could be in general, or in terms of the specific Themes and Indicators set out in the Strategy.

We consider that local authorities can provide a range of support roles in the department's proposal. We are committed to Belfasts role in delivering against the Tourism strategy by fostering inclusivity, embracing innovation, promoting sustainability and nurturing collaboration.

We aim to enhance visitor experiences through diverse offerings, implement innovative solutions for tourism development that prioritise sustainable practices and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to city tourism.

In addition to our delivery responsibility as outlined in the 10 year Make Yourself at Home Tourism Strategy published by Belfast City Council. We are strongly positioned to deliver a people centred approach that delivers for visitors and citizens alike , we can play an important convening role and are well placed to advice on relationships, networks, key contacts and local infrastructure.

6. Based on your responses to the above questions, do you have any further comment on the Strategy as a whole? i.e. Is there anything missing? Is it taking the industry on the right path for current and future challenges/opportunities?

We consider that councils are well-placed to work with DfE and to advise on appropriate approaches – based on their local knowledge, networks, insights and contacts.

We welcome the opportunity to consult and look forward to the associated action and delivery plans that will identify timelines, associated resources, collaborative opportunities and ownership to deliver.

We welcome the importance placed on a data driven approach but would urge clarity on consistency across reporting, access to real time data and usable dashboards that can facilitate both regional and local level insights.

Greater inclusion on the value of tourism segments and the opportunity that business tourism presents to drive seasonal and mid week high value spend against the outlined targets could be considered.

The opportunity presented is exciting particularly as alignment with city and growth deals will welcome new product that drives demand and strengthens broader industry opportunity.

7. In the event that we need to better understand some of the responses collected, would you be willing to be contacted by the Department for the Economy to discuss your responses in further detail? Please note that your responses are otherwise confidential.

☒ **Yes**

☐ **No**

If Yes, please provide:

Name: Lesley-Ann O'Donnell

Job Title: Senior Manager Culture, Tourism and Events

Name of Organisation (if appropriate): Belfast City Council

Email: odonnell@belfastcity.gov.uk

If you have any concerns or questions at all about the Tourism Strategy, please do not hesitate to contact 02890529930 or tourismstrategy@economy-ni.gov.uk

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Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

TOURISM STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

10 YEAR PLAN

TOURISM STRATEGY
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
10 YEAR PLAN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism is one of Northern Ireland's most important economic sectors and key to dispersing wealth right across Northern Ireland, contributing an annual tourism expenditure of more than £1 billion in 2019 and supporting approximately 71,000 jobs across the region.¹

In addition to revenue and job creation, development of the tourism sector has the capacity to cultivate and showcase local history, culture and natural and built heritage, making Northern Ireland not only a great place to visit but also a great place to live.

The Tourism Strategy: 10 Year Plan establishes a vision and mission for the growth of the tourism sector in Northern Ireland over the next decade. It will be a key enabler of the Department's 10x Economic Vision to help position the region internationally as an attractive place to visit, making our visitors feel welcome whilst at the same time helping to make the lives better of all our citizens. It will seek to deliver on the objectives of 10x by generating economic growth that is sustainable, inclusive and innovative.

¹ Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics 2019 (nisgra.gov.uk) (Due to the Covid pandemic these remain the most up to date figures to act as a baseline)

The **Vision** of the Strategy is to:

“Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core.”

With a **Mission** to:

“Support the Tourism Sector in building a more innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which enriches its people, its economy and its guests.”

The Vision and Mission are supported by a **Strategic Aim** to increase the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy compared to 2019 – which is the last full year of tourism statistics currently available.

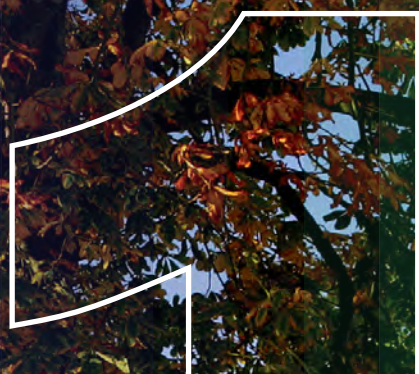
It is designed to be a roadmap, premised on five themes, which seeks to strive for a new and ambitious growth trajectory that is **Innovative, Inclusive, Sustainable, Attractive** and **Collaborative** over the next decade. These five themes form the core of the Strategy and are designed to support continued growth in tourism in Northern Ireland to appeal to both overseas and domestic visitors, and also contribute to a better quality of life for the people who live here, enriching communities and spreading the economic and social benefits of tourism throughout the region.

The document identifies the key challenges and drivers for growth.

It recognises the industry's ability to develop as a thriving, sustainable industry of the future, showcasing world class visitor attractions and creating a year-round destination that will stand out in international markets.

It will also position Northern Ireland on the world stage as a destination of choice as well as increasing its attractiveness as an investment location.

This Strategy provides a framework for our delivery bodies such as Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to work with other public authorities and the tourism industry to shape and develop local tourism strategies and action plans which will support and guide the industry to prepare for future success for the benefit of all of our communities. The Indicators associated with each theme will guide our delivery partners as they set shorter term, measurable objectives in their business plans to ensure we realise our vision and optimise tourism's contribution to the ambitions of the Department's 10x Economic Vision. The vision and mission of the Strategy can only be realised by businesses, communities and regional and local government working together in a truly collaborative approach.



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The importance of tourism as a significant driver of economic growth and its potential to deliver wide reaching change presents a real opportunity to maximise its contribution to growing the Northern Ireland economy and continue its role as an important export sector and provider of employment.

The tourism sector in Northern Ireland is a vital element of our export led economy and the industry has experienced healthy growth over the past decade, contributing an annual tourism expenditure of more than £1 billion (2019)². However, there is significant potential for further expansion and opportunities exist to build on our strengths and grow the sector in line with the Department's 10x economic vision by enabling the innovative, inclusive and sustainable development of this value-added sector.

Recovering and rebuilding from the impact of the global pandemic provides us with a fantastic opportunity to think differently, to think longer-term and most importantly to consider how we can emerge as a thriving sustainable

tourism industry for the future, enriching local quality of life and showcasing world-class visitor attractions and creating a year-round destination that will stand out in international markets. With new international destination choices and visitor experiences continually emerging, we need a long-term vision which will require all those with a tourism interest to work collaboratively, grasping every opportunity to grow our tourism sector and bringing benefits to every part of Northern Ireland and make everyone feel welcomed.

The Department for the Economy has worked closely with our delivery partners, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, to develop this draft 'Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy: 10 Year Plan'.

² Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics 2019 (nisra.gov.uk) (Due to the Covid pandemic these remain the most up to date figures to act as a baseline)

The Department provided Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland with a Vision Statement to signal our direction of travel and to help them plan for the incoming financial year and beyond. We have engaged with other relevant government departments. Tourism NI has used its close links with the tourism industry to help us engage with a range of stakeholders across the sector. This has greatly assisted our thinking and informed the development of our Strategy. This Strategy identifies the strategic future direction needed to realise tourism's already vital contribution to the Department for the Economy's '10x Vision: A Decade of Innovation'³; the outcome of which will ultimately see Northern Ireland positioned amongst the elite small advanced economies in the world, and the benefits of this change felt by all of our people. The 'Research on the Future of Tourism in Northern Ireland' Report⁴, commissioned by the Department and published in May 2023, demonstrates how tourism is aligned with the 10x Vision and is already delivering on key priorities.

Over the next decade, the 'Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy: 10 Year Plan' will be at the heart of everything

we do. It provides a framework for our delivery bodies such as Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to work with other public authorities and the tourism industry to shape and develop local tourism strategies and action plans which will support and guide the industry to prepare for future success for the benefit of all of our communities. This will be our focus and the vehicle through which we deliver on our common purpose of supporting a growth in tourism that is Innovative, Inclusive, Sustainable, Attractive and Collaborative. These five themes form the core of the strategy and we want this growth to contribute to a better quality of life for all our citizens.

Alignment with this framework provides an opportunity to shape the future growth of tourism, harnessing the full potential of the industry; building on the strengths we have; adding to our appeal to both overseas and domestic visitors; and creating opportunities to spread sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits around the region, so that communities in **all** parts of Northern Ireland benefit, **all** year round.

³ [10x Economy NORTHERN IRELAND'S DECADE OF INNOVATION](#)

⁴ [Research paper on the future of tourism in Northern Ireland](#)

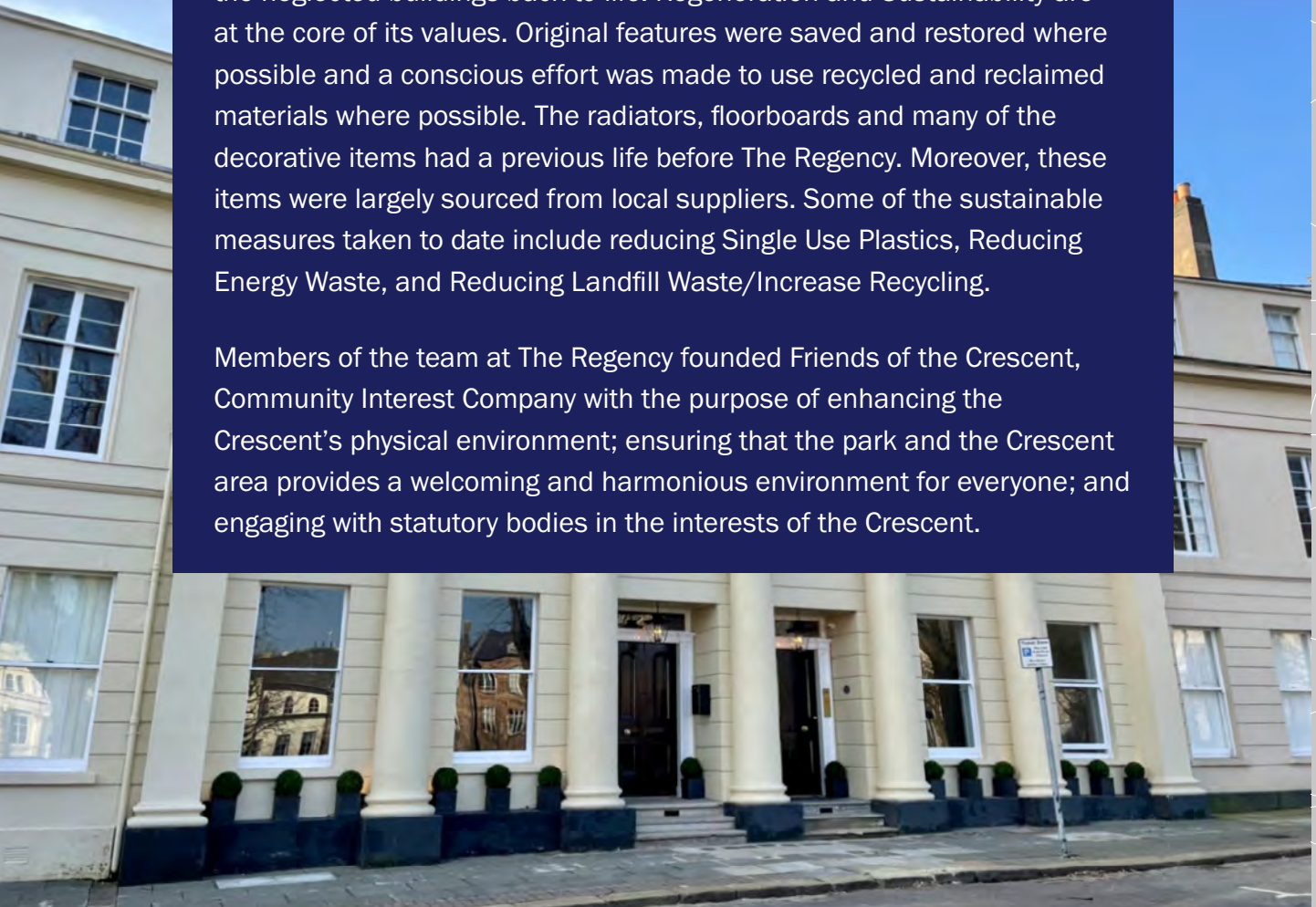
CASE STUDY

THE REGENCY

Situated in the heart of Belfast's historic Queen's Quarter and close to the city centre, The Regency is tucked neatly into South Belfast's Upper Crescent.

The £2.5m restoration of two derelict Georgian townhouses dating back to 1846, has transformed this unique property into luxurious accommodation offering short stays complete with 24/7 butler-style service. Some of Northern Ireland's most talented craftspeople were enlisted to transform the neglected buildings back to life. Regeneration and Sustainability are at the core of its values. Original features were saved and restored where possible and a conscious effort was made to use recycled and reclaimed materials where possible. The radiators, floorboards and many of the decorative items had a previous life before The Regency. Moreover, these items were largely sourced from local suppliers. Some of the sustainable measures taken to date include reducing Single Use Plastics, Reducing Energy Waste, and Reducing Landfill Waste/Increase Recycling.

Members of the team at The Regency founded Friends of the Crescent, Community Interest Company with the purpose of enhancing the Crescent's physical environment; ensuring that the park and the Crescent area provides a welcoming and harmonious environment for everyone; and engaging with statutory bodies in the interests of the Crescent.

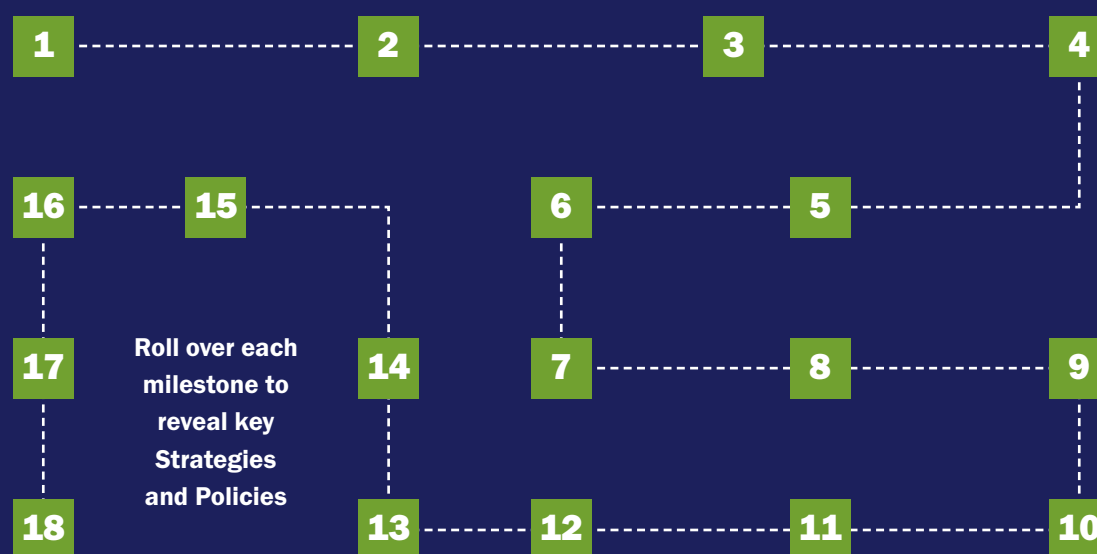




THE POLICY CONTEXT

THE POLICY CONTEXT

The importance of tourism is fully recognised by Government and this Strategy seeks to complement the aims and objectives of other key strategies and policies, both published and emerging, across a wide range of sectors who have an interest in shaping the future direction of the growth of the sector.



1. People. Planet. Prosperity.
2. Draft PfG 2021-2026
3. NDNA
4. NI Industrial Strategy
5. DfE '10x Economy' Economic Vision
6. DfE Circular Economy Policy
7. DfE NI Energy Strategy 'The Path to Net Zero Energy'
8. TNI Unlocking the Outdoors draft Strategy
9. NI Business Events Integrated Strategy

10. DfC Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategy
11. DAERA NI Marine Plan
12. DAERA NI BioDiversity draft Strategy
13. NIE Green Growth Strategy
14. DAERA Rural Policy Framework
15. DfE Skills Strategy
16. DfE 14-19 strategy
17. NI City and Growth Deals
18. Climate Change Agenda - The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022



The Department for the Economy's economic vision, '10x Economy - an Economic Vision for a Decade of Innovation', seeks to set a long term vision for the Northern Ireland economy to deliver a ten times better economy. The outcome of this vision will ultimately see Northern Ireland positioned amongst the elite small advanced economies in the world, and the benefits of this change felt by all of our people.

The 'Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy: 10 Year Plan' will be a key enabler of the vision for a 10x economy and our tourism sector will be integral to contributing to the ambitions of this vision. Working together we can shape the future direction of the growth of the sector, growth that will be sustainable, inclusive and innovative that builds our sense of place making Northern Ireland an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit. This will be crucial to our ability to compete in global markets and, therefore, our tourism sector will be at the forefront of marketing our reputation and attractiveness to the world.



VISION, MISSION & STRATEGIC AIM

VISION, MISSION & STRATEGIC AIM

The vision, mission and strategic aim of the Department's Tourism Strategy are set out below.

OUR VISION



Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core.

OUR MISSION



To support the tourism sector in building an innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which enriches its people, its economy and its guests.

OUR STRATEGIC AIM



To increase the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50-75% compared to 2019⁵.

⁵ Please note the 50-75% increase in the value of tourism expressed in the Strategic Aim is based on a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4-6%.



WHY IS TOURISM IMPORTANT IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

WHY IS TOURISM IMPORTANT IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

**Tourism has
the power to
foster inclusion,
protect nature &
promote cultural
understanding.⁶**

Tourism plays a vital role in the preservation of our historic, cultural and recreational resources and helps to sustain and promote our internationally renowned landscapes. It creates a unique sense of place, provoking pride and confidence within local communities; providing fertile ground for enterprise, creating new, independent, small businesses and new services or facilities that could not be sustained by the local population alone.

⁶ World Tourism Day 2022: Sector United Around "Rethinking Tourism" for People and Planet (unwto.org)



CASE STUDY

CHOCOLATE MANOR

Located in the picturesque village of Castlerock, Chocolate Manor was grown from a homebased, startup business established in 2012 to one of NI's leading artisan chocolate producers, winning best Food & Drink tourism business at the 2022 NI tourism awards.

In 2020, owner Geri Martin moved into new premises in Castlerock, establishing the North Coast's only Chocolate Shop & Chocolate Experience Provider, running a range of hands-on, bespoke experiences and a food emporium where visitors can see, and purchase locally made creations, welcoming thousands of visitors per year.

In March 2022, Chocolate Manor became the 12th Economusée in Northern Ireland, the first chocolate maker outside of Canada to gain this accolade, focusing on the preservation and protection of traditional skills and crafts.

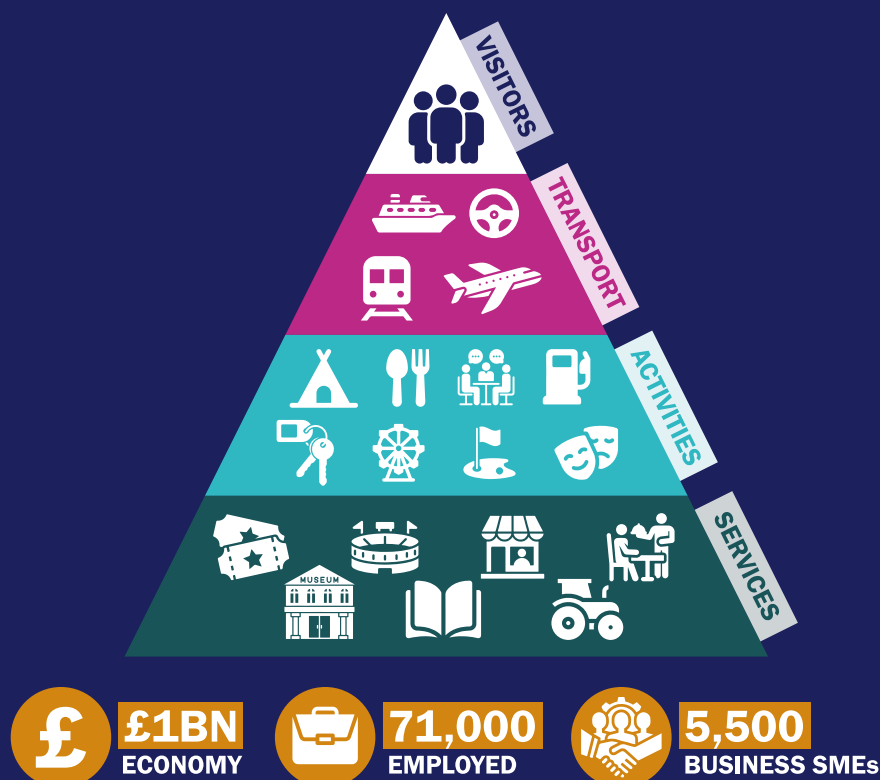
Northern Ireland has a unique history, culture and landscape, all contained within a small geographic area. We have the capacity and potential to be the 'hidden gem' that visitors can discover and enjoy. We are ambitious for the future and believe in our capacity and capability to deliver sustainable growth ahead of the international tourism market, competing on the global tourism stage.

The societal impact is key in that a vibrant tourism economy positively positions Northern Ireland as a place to visit, study, live, work and invest. Positive perceptions of a destination are critical to wider business decisions and choices linked to inward investment, exports and education. It brings new facilities to our towns and cities, creates opportunities in rural areas and is a source of pride for local people.

Northern Ireland tourism remains one of the largest, locally owned, internationally traded sectors of our local economy, directly impacting the economy by generating demand for tourist services such as accommodation, recreational and cultural activities and transport services. As visitor numbers and spend increase, so too does the direct economic impact for the local economy.

More widely, indirect benefits are also generated as tourism generates demands on sectors across the economy, such as construction and agriculture. The tourism sector overall has grown to become a key contributor to the Northern Ireland economy firmly establishing its role in supporting the Department for the Economy reaching its 10x ambitions.

How Tourism Supports the Northern Ireland Economy



The Northern Ireland Tourism Landscape

In Northern Ireland, our tourism sector has become a huge success story. In 2019, the sector contributed £1 billion of expenditure to the local economy, including delivering £731 million in export earnings⁷. The sector employed approximately 71,000 people throughout the region, accounting for one in every 12 jobs. An estimated 12,800 new jobs were created across the tourism and hospitality sectors between 2013 and 2019 (+22%).

Employment was geographically dispersed with 70% of those jobs outside of Belfast offering inclusive opportunities and benefits throughout all regions and to all ages.

2019 was also another record year for overseas trips to Northern Ireland, indeed the 7th consecutive record year. In 2019 overseas visitors contributed £589m (£369m from GB, £220m from Other Overseas) to the economy.

⁷ [Tourism Statistics Annual Publication 2019](#)

TOURISM STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

10 YEAR PLAN



With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 the tourism industry experienced an immediate shock with an unprecedented and detrimental impact on a global scale. In Northern Ireland this was further exacerbated with preparing for, then delivering on, EU Exit. Additionally, we have faced challenges such as a cost-of-living crisis, high inflation, and political uncertainty.

However, by 2022 the tourism sector showed positive signs of recovery to pre-COVID levels, especially from our closest markets.

In 2022, Northern Ireland welcomed over 1.1m overnight trips by Republic of Ireland residents, eclipsing the one million figure for the first time and seeing record levels of trips, nights and spend.

Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland trips, nights and spend during 2022 have each seen an increase of 50.6%, 41.6%, and 64.6% respectively, compared to 2019.

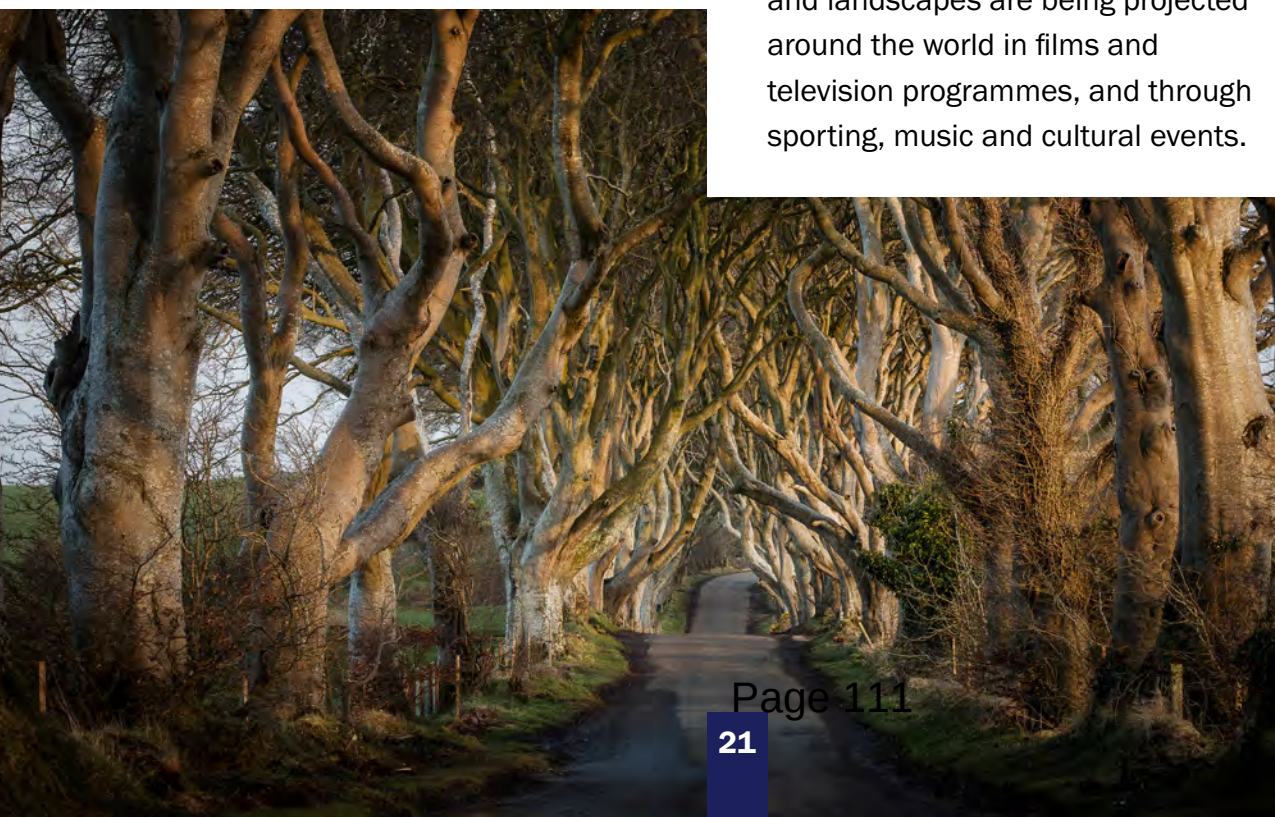
In 2023 there has been a strong post covid recovery and its anticipated visitor numbers will reach 90% of 2019 levels (GB 91%, Other Overseas 87%).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2019 remains the last year for which NISRA tourism statistics are available and hence that will be the baseline year for our strategic aim. The NISRA statistics measure expenditure within the tourism sector. The Department has also contracted NISRA to complete work on a Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) to give a measure of the wider value of the Tourism sector to our local economy including the number of jobs supported. A TSA is an internationally recognised methodology and consists of a set of data tables based around analyses of data on both expenditure by tourists, and on business sectors which serve tourists. It is hoped that this will be available by the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

Northern Ireland's International Reputation

For a long time, Northern Ireland was not viewed as an attractive tourism destination due to our recent troubled past. Since the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, the tourism industry in Northern Ireland has emerged as one of the greatest success stories of the wider peace process. Since then, we have been able to capitalise on our tourism potential as we develop a reputation as a great place to visit with outstanding scenery, strong culture and heritage, authentic experiences and warm people.

Our tourism attractions are officially being recognised as 'world-class' and images of our amazing scenery and landscapes are being projected around the world in films and television programmes, and through sporting, music and cultural events.



CASE STUDY

TITANIC BELFAST

Titanic Belfast opened in 2012 with the aim of establishing Belfast as the home of RMS Titanic, celebrating the city's maritime and industrial heritage, and showing that the spirit that built Titanic remains today. Since then, the visitor attraction has gone from strength to strength on a local, national and international level.

A £4.5m large-scale refreshment of the Titanic Experience, completed in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust in 2023, was designed to deliver a world-class spectacle, enabling the attraction to continue to drive visitors to Belfast and Northern Ireland while enhancing the interpretive and interactive experience in an innovative way for future generations. The project helps the Titanic story to come to life in a new immersive way, incorporating innovative new technology whilst also including authentic storytelling, animation, music and more. An illuminated 7.6m long scale model of RMS Titanic is suspended from the ceiling and fully rotates, known as 'The Ship of Dreams'.

Continuous improvement at Titanic Belfast drives digital innovation, focusing on seamless experiences for visitors through mobile ticketing, digital maps and multi-media guides provided in different languages. Social sustainability is an important consideration throughout, partnering with local businesses where possible and creating jobs across these companies.

The growth in Northern Ireland tourism 2011-2019



WHY IS TOURISM IMPORTANT IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

There is, however, still significant potential for further growth if the Northern Ireland tourism economy is ultimately to perform at the same level as that of the rest of the Island of Ireland.

In 2019, 11.3m overseas tourists were welcomed to the island of Ireland, 2.2m visited Northern Ireland, 26% of overseas visitors to Northern Ireland arrived via the land border (7% of GB tourists, 62% of Other Overseas tourists).

Total GB and Other overseas visitor tourism revenues in ROI were over seven times the level achieved in NI – £4.5 billion in ROI compared with £589 million in NI. In landmass terms, the Republic of Ireland is five times larger than Northern Ireland and 2.5 times larger by population in 2019. During 2019, 67% of total overnight tourism revenue in ROI came from GB and Other Overseas visitors compared with 56% for NI, these earnings were mainly generated by visitors from mainland GB rather than outside the UK.

A further indicator of the future potential of the Northern Ireland tourism sector is when compared to ROI the average spend per visit for GB and Other Overseas Visitors was only £264 in Northern Ireland during 2019, compared to £470 in Republic of Ireland. GB and Other overseas visitors also stay longer in ROI, staying on average 7.4 nights compared with 4.4 nights in NI (2019). NI spend per head in ROI (for the over-16 population in 2019) was £235; conversely, ROI spend per head in NI was £34, demonstrating a ratio of 7:1 in favour of ROI.





OUR SUCCESS

OUR SUCCESS

How did we get here?

There are a number of key drivers which can be attributed to our past growth. Our decade of success undoubtedly helped enable the sector to reach the significant achievement of becoming a £1billion industry in 2019. Now regarded as one of the most important export sectors of the region's economy, the tourism sector is a key pillar of economic growth.

It generates wealth, jobs, civic pride and innovation. Understanding these drivers will help equip us to meet the challenges facing the industry as we move through the next decade and grasp the opportunities to set tourism on a path to a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future, creating wealth for the Northern Ireland economy.

DRIVERS FOR GROWTH

Visitor Attractions and Experiences - Outdoors, Culture & Heritage



Accommodation



Screen Tourism



Food & Drink



Events



Business Tourism

Underpinned by

Targeted Marketing and our Experience Brand, 'Embrace a Giant Spirit'
Digital Innovation and Enhancements

Regional Spread

ENABLING

Season Growth

In 2012, there were a number of “signature” tourism projects completed with Tourism NI having invested around £100 million in support of projects worth more than £225 million. These projects included the new visitor centre at the Giant’s Causeway World Heritage Site and Titanic Belfast. These authentic ‘Hero Products’ have delivered a step change in the number of visitors coming to Northern Ireland to see these world class attractions.

These visitor attractions are clearly focused on our landscape and our heritage whilst at the same time meeting the expectations of those visitors from Northern Ireland’s core target markets and priority market segments.

However, since our last significant capital investment over a decade ago, our competitor destinations have been continuing to invest in their tourism infrastructure. Our tourism products are focused in key honey pots, namely Belfast and the Causeway Coastal Route - with many of these sites reaching capacity in peak season and creating potential frustrated demand.



It is welcome therefore that significant investment through City and Growth deals offers capacity building opportunities through development of additional demand generating product in other locations that will encourage wider geographical dispersion of visitors.

Our approach to tourism development requires strategic alignment and collaborative thinking on both a geographical and organisational level.

CASE STUDY

HOTEL KILLEAVY CASTLE

Opened in April 2019 by Mick and Robin Boyle after a sympathetic restoration, Killeavy Castle Estate offers accommodation including a 19th century castle, boutique hotel and luxury lodges. The 365-acre estate has an onsite working farm, Walled Garden and Estate Garden. The Estate is complete with a 2 AA Rosette award-winning restaurant, bistro bar, spa and farm store. Amongst a range of accolades, the Estate won Best Food & Drink Tourism Provider at the 2022 NI Tourism Awards.

Sustainability principles are prioritised in the day-to-day running of the hotel, in particular to the authentic Farm to Fork dining experiences with 90% of food served in the dining areas either grown onsite or sourced within a 20-mile radius.

Visitors to the Estate can take a farm & heritage tour or foraging experiences with visitor experiences designed to maximise the positive environmental impacts of tourism. Additionally, Killeavy Castle Estate has a sustainability plan in place which aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This internationally recognised framework focuses on 17 key goals and guides, the setting of targets and measures for each, which are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis. Future committed plans include planting 50,000 native trees on their 200-acre mythical woodlands to create a biodiversity corridor between the estate and Slieve Gullion.

Enhanced Visitor Accommodation

Our tourism accommodation offering has developed to provide a breadth of choice to visitors. New arrivals have ranged from luxury hotels to luxury glamping pods. Private sector development across the region's hotel sector boosted high quality

accommodation and other tourism developments with a low environmental footprint. The enhanced accommodation supply has helped to meet the demands, needs and expectations of our visitors, in terms of volume of supply, quality, and affordability.

CASE STUDY

SALT HOUSE

The Salthouse Hotel, in the seaside town of Ballycastle, generates its own energy through solar and wind power, with a wind turbine mounted onsite and solar panels installed around the hotel.

The energy generated is used to ignite the hotel's motion-sensor LED lighting, heat the hotel through heat pumps, charge the electric vehicle charging points as well as the electric bikes onsite. It also supplies energy for the fully electric kitchen in the restaurant and the SMART technology system which monitors consumption around the hotel. Timber frames around the building are used to retain any heat, and biogas and wood pellet boilers are used for further heating. The net result is that the hotel gives back more to the grid than it consumes. These measures not only minimise emissions but also lead to significant cost savings for the property.

Local and eco-friendly options are favoured as part of the hotel's purchasing policy. Local sourcing builds local relationships, contributes to the local economy and allows for shorter and quicker delivery times. The hotel works with local, environmentally-conscious waste management companies. There is also a herb garden onsite from which produce is used in the kitchen.

Sharing knowledge and educating both staff and guests is a fundamental element of The Salthouse Hotel's Sustainability Strategy.

Collectively, Belfast and Causeway Coast and Glens account for just over half (52%) of all of Northern Ireland's accommodation. In developing future accommodation policy it will, therefore, be important to consider how to encourage development of

accommodation outside the Belfast area that will support a greater balance across Northern Ireland and provide the visitor with a choice of places to stay that will lead to greater regional dispersal and, hence, more nights spent on trips.

Events

Events have played an important role in the growth of the tourism industry in Northern Ireland in recent years. International events such as the Giro d'Italia, the MTV European Music Awards, hosting of the Irish Open and the Women's Rugby World Cup have played a key role in generating a positive impact on the perception of Northern Ireland in key overseas markets. The 148th Open, hosted at Royal Portrush in 2019 itself brought over £100m economic benefit to Northern Ireland. Expectations are high for its return in 2025.

Events have the potential to play a role in the overall visitor experience and economic benefit for Northern Ireland. Events offer the visitor the opportunity to immerse themselves in local culture, heritage and tradition. Events also meet other important industrial, cultural and social agendas, including creating a sustainable, inclusive and welcoming event programme for all our local communities as well as visitors.

Our vision is to create a portfolio of distinctive, high-quality sustainable tourism events which tell a compelling story of Northern Ireland to the world.

We will also work to maximise the tourism benefit for Northern Ireland from any events curated through the development of a Northern Ireland Events Framework.

Tourism Marketing Campaigns

Northern Ireland tourism specific campaigns sought to maximise the opportunities in both the NI and ROI markets to increase visitor numbers and spend. Campaigns in ROI yielded a considerable rise in spend and revenue in NI businesses. This increased our share of the all-island staycation market particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic with a significant number of people from ROI having travelled to NI for the first time on leisure breaks.

Overseas marketing campaigns delivered by Tourism Ireland have enabled dramatic improvement in visitation to Northern Ireland. In 2022 Northern Ireland featured in the highly successful Green Button campaign that kick started the recovery of overseas Tourism. In 2023, in addition to the Global Campaign Fill Your Heart with Ireland, spotlight features on Belfast City of Music UNESCO designation were brought to New York and Boston. In Great Britain there were collaborations with Spotify to position Belfast's vibrant music scene.



Tourism NI's high profile "Embrace a Giant Spirit" re-brand was launched at the end of 2019 to promote Northern Ireland as a visitor destination on the island of Ireland and supports Tourism Ireland's messaging overseas. This was developed to help Northern Ireland stand out amongst our competitors, emotionally connect with its target market segments and communicate to the consumer the experience they can expect if they choose to visit Northern Ireland. The rebrand is synonymous with a high-quality tourism offering and visitor experience, instantly recognisable as distinctively Northern Irish and has ensured the region has the ability to complement and compete with the other experience brands on the Island of Ireland. The appeal of the "Giant Spirit" re-brand has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in driving increased visitor numbers. It also capitalised on the staycation trend across the island that had started to surge prior to 2020, which was then accelerated by the pandemic.

Fill your heart with
Ireland 



Tourism Ireland has promoted Northern Ireland as part of the island of Ireland destination message overseas in over 20 markets worldwide. This approach has seen dramatic improvements not just in terms of visitation and contribution to the sector but to the desirability of Northern Ireland as a holiday destination. The development of new attractions, accommodation offerings and experiences are visible and promoted heavily across Tourism Ireland media platforms and headline brand campaigns. The 2023 "Fill Your Heart with Ireland" TV campaign featured actors from the internationally recognised "Derry Girls" programme.

CASE STUDY

CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL

Crumlin Road Gaol is Northern Ireland's only remaining Victorian era prison. Having closed in 1996 it was re-opened as a visitor attraction in 2012, designed to allow visitors to gain a unique and memorable insight into 150 years of history surrounding the daily lives and routines of both prisoners and staff.

Innovation is central to the experience at the Gaol, continuing with the 2023 completion of a digital project to enhance the self-guided visitor experience which includes holograms to bring the history to life and an AR Zone for visitors to fully immerse themselves into the Gaol when it was a working prison.

Audio Guides are also available to help customers navigate their way around the 13-acre site. To enhance the inclusiveness of their self-guided offer, content is offered in 6 languages and there is also a facility to allow British Sign Language allowing material to be interpreted via sign videos and making the tour more accessible.

Digital Innovation and Enhancements

From an innovation perspective, the industry has had to continually innovate to adapt to the digital revolution which has swept through the travel and tourism industries in recent years. Today's traveller is accustomed to being able to do practically anything from their mobile

device; from booking flights, checking in, and booking hotel rooms, unlocking their hotel room door, ordering room service, accessing information, booking experiences, sharing these with their peers and sharing their opinions instantly on review websites.

CASE STUDY

DERRY GIRLS SPONSORSHIP

With an average of 2.9m viewers per episode, TV series Derry Girls, has been an international success connecting to audiences through its humour and storytelling. In 2022, Tourism Ireland in GB sponsored the final series of the show on Channel 4 including creating idents around the broadcast and an online partnership with C4. Producing a creative infused with humour and aligned to the style of the show enabled Tourism Ireland to showcase Derry-Londonderry and NI as an exciting holiday destination.

The campaign delivered excellent results with a broadcast reach of 9.5m adults and a reach of over 41m impressions through video on demand driving 96k clicks through to the Ireland.com website. On social media, 9m Facebook impressions were delivered with 12.7m impressions on YouTube of the sponsorship. A follow up brand study demonstrated that 23% of viewers claimed to have visited Ireland.com in the month following the sponsorship and consideration of NI as a holiday destination rose by 12%.

Screen Tourism

Screen tourism has grown at a phenomenal rate with Northern Ireland having become an ever-increasing popular destination choice for filming television and screen dramas such as Game of Thrones and Derry Girls. The significant investment in the growth in studio space has also helped secure Northern Ireland's reputation as a world class film location.

Visitors want to visit locations and landmarks where the most exciting and memorable scenes have been filmed. The industry has responded to this trend by adding value to the tourists' experience with a range of offerings such as guided tours having been developed around the story-telling and the opening of new attractions such as the Game of Thrones Studio Tour in Banbridge.

Business Tourism

Business Tourism, (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector) has grown our international reputation by showcasing Northern Ireland as a destination for unique, authentic and memorable conferences and events supporting the region's economic development, education and tourism objectives.

Business Tourism plays an important role in offsetting seasonality and in 2019, it generated £37 million of direct expenditure for the Northern Ireland economy. Tourism Ireland provides platforms overseas to enable operators to grow this business.

Food & Drink

Northern Ireland's food & drink offering has played a key role in enhancing the visibility and reputation of NI as a must-see destination. Food & drink are key elements of the travel experience and contribute to some of the strongest memory triggers. Importantly, food & drink expenditure accounts for around a third of total overnight visitor spend. The success

of the Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink initiative back in 2016 did much to enhance the visibility and reputation of Northern Ireland's artisan produce, restaurants, markets, food tours and festivals. Ultimately this led to Northern Ireland being awarded the prestigious 'Best Food Tourism Destination' at the 2018 World Travel Awards.

CASE STUDY

WALLED CITY BREWERY

Walled City Brewery is a multi-award-winning restaurant and craft brewery at the end of the Peace Bridge in the heart of Derry/Londonderry, opened in May 2015 by husband-and-wife James and Louise Huey. Housed in an historic military barracks, Walled City Brewery have crafted over 500 different beers with identifiable links to the city, and in 2022, opened new additions to enhance the visitor experience including a taproom which resulted in a 50% uplift in revenue.

Walled City Brewery are members of the Legenderry Food Network and active supporters of other entrepreneurial enterprises in the city, encouraging smart ideas in food and hospitality. Collaboration is equally important, collaborating with family-run business Foyle Bia Mara to host the UK & Ireland's first ever Oyster & Stout Festival in February 2023, where everything was produced within a 15-mile radius.

Further extending their appeal to visitors, Walled City Brewery offer a range of tasting experiences that celebrate the art of gin-making and rich history of brewing, including the Earheart Gin School, where visitors can design, distill and take home a bespoke gin recipe.

Food-motivated visitors are of significant value, tending to spend more, stay longer and often buy products both in destination and when they return home. Both international and domestic visitors are looking for experiences that are unavailable where they live, seeking to eat foods as close to their source or place of origin as possible. This, coupled with a more sustainable approach to travel,

will increase the focus on local food & drink in the years ahead. Northern Ireland is well poised to meet these needs with its warm welcome, giant spirit and high quality, traceable food & drink offer. The food & drink offer, therefore, needs to deliver to a consistently high standard, complimenting and reflecting Northern Ireland's agricultural importance and history, and our broader culture and heritage.



WHAT TYPE OF TOURISM IS BEST FOR NORTHERN IRELAND?

WHAT TYPE OF TOURISM IS BEST FOR NORTHERN IRELAND?

What Visitors Want

Consumers seek authentic, immersive experiences and a wider tourism economy that allows them to connect with the people and places they are visiting. They increasingly see their holidays as an extension and reflection of themselves.

This includes a desire to discover new and interesting places, explore, learn, and have a memorable time with friends and family. Moreover, they are prioritising eco-friendly options that are affordable, sustainable, and accessible.

CASE STUDY

OM DARK SKY PARK

OM Dark Sky Park at Davagh Forest is one of only 78 destinations around the world with Dark Sky accreditation, and the only one of its kind in Northern Ireland.

It offers a range of compelling visitor experiences such as daily guided tours and collaborates with local guides for their innovative Stars and Stones experience where visitors can spend a night under the stars, learn about the ancient Beaghmore Stone Circles and gaze at the constellations through a state-of-the-art telescope. They further collaborate with Sperrin View Glamping to encourage visitors to extend their stay in the area and promote the destination.

Protection against the negative impact of light pollution is a core ethos of OM Dark Sky Park, safeguarding the night skies for present and future generations.

TOURISM STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

10 YEAR PLAN



Warm Welcomes

Visitors like to feel **welcome, comfortable and safe**, from the Northern Irish hello to supporting infrastructure that provides a sense of place and accessibility for all.



Innovative Stories & Attractions

Visitors like **stories** and attractions that connect them with the place, people and culture: from creative and **innovative attractions** to tours that showcase the real Northern Ireland and its people.



Landscape & Nature

Visitors like to immerse themselves in the **landscape and nature**: From multi-sensory experiences to heightened connection and emotional engagement with the landscape, particularly the coast.



Active Outdoors

Visitors like being **active in the outdoors** or **exploring the countryside**; from the freedom of the outdoors whether through land or water-based activities to immersive attractions.



Heritage & Tradition

Visitors like to immerse themselves in the **past, heritage & traditions** of the place; from the authentic and iconic historical sites to re-imagined modern ways of showcasing them.



Cultural Venues & Landmarks

Visitors like connected places of interest, providing a range of things to see and do; from **cultural venues to landmark touch points**.



Animated & Connected Places

Visitors like **distinctive towns and cities**; from exploring attractions, architecture and city walking trails to seeking an **animated place** across day and night.

Source: Tourism NI Product Review 2023

With ever changing market demand for tourism product and experiences it is vital that the tourism industry remains innovative and a destination that champions its warm welcome, authentic stories, natural landscapes, and cultural assets.⁸

Key Markets

Concentration of our efforts will be vital to our future success. With this in mind, our strategy for growth will focus on a number of priority market and segments. This focus does not imply that there are markets or segments that we are not interested in, rather there are ones that we are focused on ahead of others.

The strategy will seek to develop a well-balanced market portfolio and minimise overreliance on any one market.

Fundamental to our focus on being a sustainable destination, our emphasis will be less on encouraging more visitors, and more on encouraging our visitors to stay longer, consume more tourism product thus spending more.

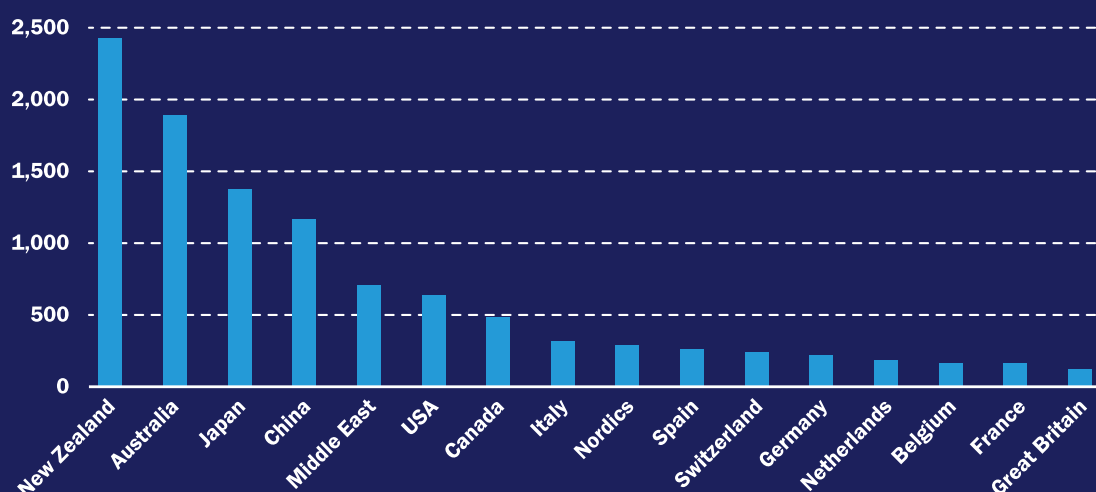
The four markets of primary focus will be the NI domestic market, Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and North America. Official statistics show that in 2019 there were 5.33 million overnight visitors in NI, staying for a total of 16.6m nights and spending £1.04 billion.

⁸ Based on TNI Experience Research (Innovation Screener), 2020

The domestic, ROI, GB and North American markets collectively accounted for 90% of these trips, 82 % of nights spent and 87% of revenue generated. The three 'closer to home' markets of NI, ROI and GB, represented the focus of our Covid-19 recovery

programme under the Tourism Recovery Action Plan. With this stable base for further recovery and growth and with the full opening up of international travel in 2022, pent up demand in the US has resulted in a strong recovery from this market in 2023.

Passengers from long-haul markets generate higher CO₂e



These four markets have been chosen based on their scale, value, potential for growth and likely propensity to consider Northern Ireland as a holiday destination. Critically, they are markets where the carbon footprint of the visitor will have least environmental impact.

The North American market has been included in our priority list as, whilst it obviously has a higher carbon footprint than the closer to home markets due to the distance required

to travel, visitors from the US and Canada tend to spend more and stay longer.

These markets will be given primary consideration with respect to strategy and resource allocation in the following areas:

- Marketing and brand activation
- Product and experience development
- Distribution development and network building.

Northern Ireland

Overall, Northern Ireland is held in high esteem as a short break destination within the domestic market, perceived as offering better value for money than the Republic of Ireland and GB. In 2019 it accounted for 44% of all overnight trips taken in NI with 65% of these being holiday trips – higher than any other key market. For some Local Authority areas, the NI domestic market accounts for up to 65% of visitors. NI consumers taking a break in NI are keen to relax and unwind and have fun. The domestic market is important for both season extension and regional dispersal.

Great Britain

As NI's single largest market in terms of revenue, 35% in 2019, it is imperative that GB is a core focus for the future. GB holidaymakers making their first visit to Northern Ireland see us as a short-break destination which can be enjoyed at any time of the year. Subsequently, 53% of our GB holidaymakers are coming on a repeat visit – a much higher proportion than from any other source market. Encouraging previous visitors to come back again and explore other parts of Northern Ireland beyond Belfast on their return trip, is a real opportunity from GB.

The majority of GB residents enter directly through NI airports or seaports.

Republic of Ireland

As our nearest neighbour, the Republic of Ireland market is one that represents huge potential, having previously underperformed. The ROI Market Recovery Taskforce launched its growth strategy in 2017, further refreshed in 2021. With highly focussed priorities required to drive growth, the strategy has been embraced by the industry and enabled by Tourism NI's targeted marketing campaigns and supporting activities. This has directly resulted in a post pandemic recovery of ROI to NI trips, nights and spend (£233m) during 2022 each seeing increases of 50.6%, 41.6%, and 64.6% respectively, compared to 2019. Consumer sentiment research throughout 2022 and into 2023, indicated that approximately half of NI's visitors from ROI were visiting for the first time, presenting an opportunity to attract these visitors for a return visit. The ROI market is also stronger for regional dispersal than other markets.

North America

In 2019 visitors from the North American market took 280,000 overnight trips in Northern Ireland, staying 1,341,000 nights and spending £79m (8% of total revenue in 2019). US and Canada visitors stayed on average 4.8 nights in Northern Ireland and spent on average, £281 per trip. For the majority of these visitors (62%), a holiday was their main reason for visiting Northern Ireland. Around one-third (32%) came to visit friends/relatives, with the remaining 6% visiting for business/other reasons. The US market accounts for 56% of the Incentive trips to Northern Ireland since 2019-20 and is Northern Ireland's largest market for incentive at present. Post covid, the US market has been recovering during the second half of 2022. The US market's desire to travel is evident and holiday makers are keen to make up for lost time. USA's historic political connections with Northern Ireland and a strong diaspora ingrain a strong connection between the US and the Island of Ireland. Canada too has an affinity with Northern Ireland, through diaspora and Scots Irish ties, and strong air access to the island with possible potential for a future direct route to NI.

Canadian visitors, like US visitors, will be familiar with the requirements of Electronic Travel Authorisations (ETAs).

Tourism Ireland forecast that visitors from North America will return to 2019 visitor number levels by 2024/25 and revenue spend by 2023/24. By 2030, North American revenue is forecast to increase by 35% on the 2019 level (by 11% in real terms).

Other Important Markets

The French and German markets are also key sources of visitors from Mainland Europe. In 2019, France and Germany jointly accounted for 120,000 trips, 680,000 nights and £26m in overnight visitor spend. These closer to home European markets with direct access have proven to be strongly attracted to the type of tourism product on offer in Northern Ireland.

It is important to reiterate that the focus on these markets does not mean that opportunities in other markets will be ignored or not acted upon. However, these markets will be prioritised as they offer the greatest capacity to drive the sustainable growth and development required.

The background image shows a dramatic coastal scene. A suspension bridge with a metal mesh deck spans a deep, rocky gorge. The bridge is supported by cables and runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the upper right. On the right side, a steep, grassy cliff rises, topped with a rocky peak. The left side of the gorge shows the dark, turbulent sea. The sky is a clear, bright blue. Two white-outlined rectangular boxes are superimposed on the image: one on the cliff face above the bridge and another on the cliff face below the bridge. The text 'DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE' is centered in a white box with a blue border.

DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE

DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE

Trends in consumer needs and requirements:

Value for Money: With significant increases in the cost of living and high inflation, consumer disposable income has seen a dramatic reduction. Despite the current economic uncertainty, there is still a strong desire for travel. Travellers will prioritise a trip that delivers strong value for money, however, will still expect high quality experiences.

Relaxation and Escapism:

Motivations for travel vary among different market segments, but relaxation and getting away from it all are key reasons behind post pandemic travel. Linked to this, the trend of wellness travel continues. Travelling solo to get away from it all is on the rise particularly among young people.

Authentic Experiences: There is rising interest in unique and authentic experiences. Local excursions are likely to become increasingly popular as tourists search for authenticity in destinations that have a culture different to their own.

Immersive culinary journeys will allow travellers to sample local produce and screen tourism will provide unique experiences to a range of tastes.

Sustainable Tourism: There is more to the topic of sustainability than just the environmental focus. The social aspect of sustainability is equally important and, given the rising costs facing tourists and businesses, the economic aspect of sustainability is now more crucial than ever.

Seamless Travel: Aligning with relaxation being the top motivation for travelling, consumers want a seamless, hassle-free experience when taking a trip. They are interested in how the latest digital innovations can enhance their experience but still expect high quality, human-led hospitality.

Challenges to the growth of the tourism sector:

As the targeted government interventions provided to support the tourism and hospitality sector survive and recover from the pandemic withdrew, as the sector opened up and restrictions were lifted, ongoing and new challenges and threats have put significant pressure on the industry again.

Many businesses are still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, experiencing cash flow difficulties with the need to pay back government loans amongst other financial and resourcing pressures.





Economic Pressures:

High inflation and unprecedented energy costs and constrained public expenditure resulting from the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in early 2022, increasing UK interest rates and an uncertain economic situation continue to present challenges for businesses in the tourism sector.



Reducing Carbon Emissions/Climate Change:

Businesses will need to implement sustainable working practices in order to reduce their carbon footprint and use energy from more renewable sources. This will be a challenge for some businesses more than others and will require ongoing investment in order to support the delivery of energy reduction targets whilst ensuring that their tourism offer is sustainable to positively respond to changing consumer demands. Outdoor and nature-based attractions will play an important part in communicating a sustainable approach to visitors.



Skills and Recruitment:

Skills shortages and recruitment difficulties have been particularly exacerbated by the pandemic, with many employees leaving the sector and not returning. Prior to the pandemic, the tourism and hospitality sectors had a reputation of offering a poor work/life balance with long working hours and conditions, and a lack of career progression opportunities. Brexit also impacted the sector due to new immigration rules resulting in a significant number of EU nationals employed in the industry leaving NI.

Significant strides have been made in addressing perceptions of the sector, however with a tight labour market, an ongoing focus on communicating the career opportunities and positive changes in employer terms and conditions will be required to ensure that access to a skilled workforce does not restrict sustainable growth of the sector. A potential solution lies in tourism's ability to address economic inactivity in both our urban and rural communities through bringing people who have been outside the labour market back into a working environment that can offer flexibility and tangible career options.

ONS statistics show that 1 in 3 employees in the sector are between the ages of 16 and 20 - for many young people it provides a path out of joblessness into the employment market. Across the UK, the tourism and hospitality sectors support almost half (46%) of all people aged under 24 in the UK workforce. The tourism industry provides a career path for school leavers into management and leadership that is rarely found across other sectors. The soft skills that young people are equipped with when working in tourism and hospitality are highly transferable to many occupations. As a socially important sector, it provides a route to greater social mobility for many within our most deprived city and rural communities. It provides jobs for less highly qualified or educated people and so can attract workers from a wide spectrum of society. In the longer term, the only way to resolve NI's social problems and dependency on benefits is to create meaningful employment opportunities for our young people who otherwise will continue to suffer from low aspirations and low self-esteem which in turn exacerbates economic inactivity. It is worth noting that a core characteristic of the tourism sector is the job intensive nature of the industry.

It is estimated that for every £ million output, tourism supports 31 jobs, substantially higher than the majority of other sectors, including construction (24 jobs) and telecommunications (7 jobs).



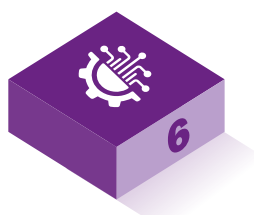
Sustainable Market Connectivity:

Given our dependency on both sea and air travel to remain competitive as a tourist destination, we will need to strike the balance between managing the risks associated with rising carbon prices and maintaining connectivity of airports between target tourist markets. Northern Ireland is physically remote from the rest of the UK and does not have the same road and rail connectivity options available. All direct flights to NI are from GB and mainland Europe and direct access from North America and long-haul markets is via the Republic of Ireland. Around two thirds of overseas (excluding GB) visitors to Northern Ireland arrive through the Republic of Ireland. There is a heavy reliance on air travel for both business and leisure travellers to and from NI. Attracting inbound visitors, access to tertiary education, and connecting the NI diaspora also depends heavily on aviation.



Changing Government

Policy: The UK government's Borders and Nationalities Bill to introduce a new travel visa known as an ETA will be a requirement to all non-visa national visitors to Northern Ireland whether they arrive directly at a UK airport or ferry terminal. Some 70% of overseas tourists arrive in ROI first, mainly into Dublin, and include a visit to NI as part of their trip. The Department for the Economy is working with key stakeholders and the Home Office to inform the UKG communications campaign with the aim of ensuring that the ETA requirement will not deter overseas visitors from coming to Northern Ireland.



Technological

Advances:

Advances in new technologies and the application of these, such as Artificial intelligence (AI) are moving very quickly. As consumers adapt to new technologies, travel and tourism businesses need to ensure that they are utilising the latest methods of engaging with potential customers and in the running of their day-to-day operations.



Market Competition:

Northern Ireland's geographical location and the legacy of the Troubles, particularly regarding consumer perceptions, create a unique set of circumstances and challenges that are not faced by the other UK nations. Northern Ireland is a relatively immature tourism destination compared with the well-established industry infrastructure and destination attractiveness of the ROI.

The 52% growth in overnight visitor spend demonstrated in Northern Ireland between 2012 and 2019, was much higher than that experienced across Europe and the world. However, when compared with the revenue growth experienced by the ROI, our nearest neighbour, Northern Ireland's growth pales in significance. ROI overnight tourism expenditure grew by 69% between 2012 and 2019, equating to an average annual growth of 9.8%.



Infrastructure Investment:

In order to remain competitive and have a tourism infrastructure that supports our ambition, investment in visitor centric tourist attractions and accommodation, particularly in hotels outside Belfast, will be required.

An aerial photograph of a coastal town and a large stone fortification. The town is built on a hillside overlooking the sea, with numerous houses and buildings. The fortification is a large, multi-towered stone structure situated on a rocky outcrop in the water. Two white circles are drawn on the image: one around a tower in the town and another around a tower in the fortification. The text "LOOKING TO THE FUTURE" is overlaid in a white box with pink lettering.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Where are we going?

To fulfil the potential of our tourism industry in Northern Ireland we require a shared vision for the future; a vision which recognises the vital role tourism plays, and will continue to play, in showcasing the very best experiences of our incredible landscape. Not only for our international visitors but for our domestic visitors who can enjoy world class visitor experiences at home.

With new destination choices continually emerging, Northern Ireland is under intense pressure to remain both attractive and competitive. In this competitive environment, we must be authentic, distinctive, innovative, and creative in our approach.

In addition, there are a number of initiatives underway of mutual and synergetic benefit to the Tourism Economy. In the past co-operation has seen global events like “Giro d’Italia” deliver material benefit. Currently work is underway on an all-island Sustainability Certification programme, and opportunity to more seamlessly experience the North West by better aligning the offerings of the Causeway Coastal Route, Derry/Londonderry and Wild Atlantic Way.

The Department has identified its strategic intention through our 10x Vision. Aligning with this Vision, the Tourism Strategy provides a regional approach to growing tourism across Northern Ireland in the next 10 years. Our delivery partners, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, are already embedded in the local tourism industry bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise, providing support and guidance on local tourism strategies. These delivery partners will lead the sector in designing approaches and targeted programmes and prioritise interventions which will aggregate towards achieving the strategic aim and indicators of this Strategy, and ultimately contribute to the 10x Vision.

The Strategy will enable the region to capitalise on its uniqueness and authenticity to help market and promote Northern Ireland internationally as an attractive place to visit, whilst at the same time helping to make the lives better for those that live, work and study here.

CASE STUDY

FINN LOUGH

Finn Lough has been operating as a luxury accommodation provider since 1983, as a quiet hideaway nestled on a 100-acre peninsula resort, in County Fermanagh.

With the next generation of owners taking over Finn Lough in 2012 they set out to develop the experience in a way that was eye catching, respectful and largely invisible within the forest surroundings. This led to the addition of the unique bubble domes in 2017. A bespoke private spa trail experience, set within the forest was also added. The sustainability merits of Finn Lough also evolved naturally with initiatives such as capturing and using rainwater and composting waste. As the only place to stay in a bubble dome on the island of Ireland, these take glamping to another level of luxury. They have received international recognition and attention and in 2017 Finn Lough Fermanagh was ranked as the coolest hotel in Ireland by The Times.

How will we get there?

Five interrelated and interdependent Themes and associated Indicators have been developed to help ensure we support our businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators; boost economic productivity; expand career pathways; break down barriers for residents and visitors with disabilities; improve regional dispersal and increase off-season growth. Together these measures can contribute to the sustainable growth of our tourism industry and benefit our communities across the region.

It provides a framework for implementing the Vision and Mission of the Strategy and contributing to the aims of the 10x Economic Vision. Taking these steps will lay the foundation for future development in the tourism sector over the next 10 years as government (central and local), the tourism industry and wider stakeholders work together to achieve our Strategic Aim of increasing the value of tourism to the NI economy by 50 - 75% compared to 2019 and support the tourism economy to realise its potential for the future.

CASE STUDY

GLENSHANE COUNTRY FARM

Fourth generation sheep farmer Jamese McCloy opened up his family farm, Glenshane Country Farm, to tourism visitors in 2019. Since then he has embraced continuous development and improvement to sustainably grow his offer of a truly authentic Northern Irish experience to show an appreciation for the special landscapes of the Sperrins and to keep the traditional sheep farming practices alive.

The visitor offering on the farm has recently been enhanced with the development of an iconic visitor centre, which not only enriches the quality of visitor services for the international visitor but increases capacity to attract additional leading international global tour operators.

Glenshane Country Farm has become a tourism destination driver and plays a pivotal role in collaborating with other tourism businesses within the destination to encourage longer stays and increased spend.

These Five Strategic Themes reflect the priorities identified in the 10x Performance Management Framework⁹ and the associated Indicators provide a framework for implementing the Vision and Mission of the Strategy to enhance the contribution the tourism sector is already making to the implementation of the principles of the 10x Vision.

Achieving any one of the Indicators will not be enough; delivery against **all** of the indicators will reinforce that tourism can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits accelerating tourism's contribution towards a more innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy.

9 [10x-performance management framework consultation document](#)



WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



STRATEGIC THEME ONE: **INNOVATIVE**



10x Vision: 'A focus on innovation is increasing incomes, improving productivity levels, providing opportunities for all our people, creating a net zero economy and showcasing our brilliance.'

Tourism Strategy: We will build on our culture of innovation and creativity to deliver positive change. We will pursue excellence and world class ideas to make our industry more competitive and sustainable.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit the tourism sector harder than any other and, as a result, the sector had to be **innovative** in its response, embracing ways to mitigate the impact and not only kickstart its recovery efforts but also build for the future of the sector. The sector has demonstrated its resilience and ability to successfully respond to the toughest of challenges, displaying creativity and agility to

move with changing consumer trends. Research, insights and data analytics have allowed the sector to develop products aligned to market needs including digitisation and using new technologies to attract tourists, maturity of VR and IR and sector diversification, providing new and innovative experiences and activities for visitors and local communities alike.

To meet rapidly changing demands from international and domestic tourists it will be important to support small businesses – who make up 89%¹⁰ of the Northern Ireland economy - to operate online and have the ambition to reach new international markets, to create a sustainable sector where everyone can use technology

ensuring our tourism offer remains competitive internationally. Focussing our innovation and entrepreneurship in areas where we have real strengths can create a more sustainable future for all, not only increasing the quality of the experience for visitors but also improving the quality of life for our residents.

What Innovative success looks like

- Use creative ideas and methods to develop new products or services to maximise benefits.
- Capitalise on new and emerging technologies to develop solutions to tourism industry challenges.
- Tourism workforce has the right digital skills to ensure that they meet the needs consumers' evolving needs.
- Use real time quantitative analytics and insights to develop, market and monitor performance of our tourism offer.

Innovative Indicators

Creating new and innovative tourism experiences:

- Annual Increase in the number of our tourism businesses receiving Innovate NI recognition levels.
- Annual Increase in the number of high value-added business start-ups and entrepreneurship levels within the tourism sector.
- Increase the export value of the tourism sector measured by expenditure from overnight visitors from outside Northern Ireland.
- Annual Increase in the number of tourism businesses participating in Tourism Innovation Programmes.
- Annual Increase in the number of meetings, incentives, conferences and business events aligned with the 10x strategy to position Northern Ireland as a place to innovate.

¹⁰ In March 2022, the majority of businesses (89 per cent, 70,510) in Northern Ireland were micro-businesses (less than 10 employees). Just over 2 per cent (1,640) of businesses had 50 or more employees. Source: [DfENIBusinessActivityJune2023](#)

STRATEGIC THEME TWO: **INCLUSIVE**



10x Vision: All people across Northern Ireland are benefitting from improved economic prosperity, there is a fairer distribution of opportunities for all our people and there are better opportunities for our young people.

Tourism Strategy: A tourism ecosystem that brings opportunities for all, with lasting and positive economic and societal benefits to our communities throughout all parts of Northern Ireland.

Creating an environment that our people are proud to call home with a high quality offering requires businesses to have the right amount of people with the right skills working in the sector. Tourism is people oriented. It has a major role to play in delivering an **inclusive** balanced sub-regional growth and has the potential to address economic inactivity in both our urban and rural communities. It is one of the few industry sectors which has the potential to create substantial employment across every part of Northern Ireland and within every section of our society. By placing an emphasis on our people, their skills and professionalism we can enhance the attractiveness of Northern Ireland as a world class visitor destination.

A challenge for the sector is the image of tourism as a career choice. Without a confident, well trained and

professional workforce we have no visitor experience. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address the identified skills gaps and shortages within the tourism sector and develop tourism career opportunities and life-long career pathways, creating a sector that people of all ages aspire to work in.

To deliver the strategy, the ability to further drive sustainable regional and seasonal growth will also be dependent upon the development of a number of tourism hubs across Northern Ireland.

These hubs, which have the right mix of accommodation, attractions, experiences and a vibrant evening economy to meet the needs of the tourist, will provide a base from which visitors can explore the surrounding area on every day of the week on a year-round basis.

These hubs are likely to already have a minimum level of tourism infrastructure or be close to attractions with substantial growth potential and have the potential too, to contribute to the placemaking priority in 10x. It will be critical that these destination hubs can offer

all of the key requirements for the visitor to ensure that they do not just become a day trip destination with visitors migrating back to Belfast for their overnight stay. Regenerative investment will be required in new tourism and retail infrastructure to ensure success.

What Inclusive success looks like

- More sectors of the economy across the whole of Northern Ireland will benefit from tourism.
- Tourism investment, conferences and events have tangible benefits to local communities.
- The sector is actively engaged with local communities as valued stakeholders in tourism development and delivery.
- Tourism is an inclusive employer offering a diverse range of desirable career paths throughout Northern Ireland.

Inclusive Indicators

Contributing to a more inclusive economy:

- Improve the Work Quality¹¹ for the tourism sector, including competitive salaries, career pathways, opportunities to secure qualifications and comfortable working conditions, creating an accessible, competitive and attractive industry in which to work.
- Annual Increase in the number of employees within the tourism sector from underrepresented groups (including people who are economically inactive, people with disabilities, and from deprived areas) contributing to an equitable distribution of opportunities to all our people.

11 [Work Quality in Northern Ireland - July 2021 to June 2022](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/work-quality-in-northern-ireland-july-2021-to-june-2022) | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk)

CASE STUDY

GALGORM COLLECTION

Through its strong leadership commitment, inclusive policies, diverse workforce, comprehensive training programs, and a welcoming guest experience, Galgorm Collection creates a vibrant and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered. It recently became the first hospitality group on the island of Ireland to achieve official Great Place to Work certification.

Its recruitment practices focus on attracting talent from diverse backgrounds, leveraging collaborations with Community organisations such as a strategic partnership with the NOW Group, and creating its own academies to remove barriers to employment whilst seeking to address the current skills shortage.

The Galgorm Collection continues to work with the local council and colleges to strengthen its employer credentials and grow new talent through its School of Excellence and Spa Scholarship. In 2021, it partnered with a local charity and two other local hotels to launch the Northern Ireland Hospitality School and in 2022 the Galgorm Collection launched a new Chef Academy.



STRATEGIC THEME THREE: **SUSTAINABLE**



10x Vision: Tourism is supporting a greener, more sustainable economy which is delivering positive economic, environmental and societal outcomes.

Tourism Strategy: We will build upon Northern Ireland's unique journey of regeneration. We will evolve our tourism ecosystem to be greener and sustain and invigorate our people, our place and our natural environment. We inspire future generations to thrive.

The growing global demand for responsible tourism – including climate consciousness, sustainable tourism, environmental tourism and a desire for culturally and socially enriching activities – has been in part driven by legislation, an increasing sense of corporate responsibility but, most importantly, as a result of consumer expectations. This has accelerated the need to develop new and innovative products and services which are more **sustainable**.

Promoting tourism developments with a low environmental footprint takes into consideration the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹² which strives for a better and more sustainable future for all through economic growth, reducing poverty, supporting cultural heritage and environmental sustainability.

These can lead to improving the experience for our tourists and also the quality of life for our residents.

Sustainable Travel International estimates that 8% of the world's carbon emissions are generated by activities relating to tourism, including the fuel required to fly passengers to their destination. Northern Ireland has a high dependency on tourists arriving via sea and air. In 2019, of the 5.3 million overnight trips taken in Northern Ireland, around 3 million (56%) of these were taken by external visitors (visitors originating from outside of NI). In December 2019, Northern Ireland air passenger flow for the previous 12 months was recorded at 8.9 million, demonstrating NI's airplane dependency at the time.

¹² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

CASE STUDY

BROOK HALL ESTATE

For over thirty years, the historic estate of Brook Hall located on the banks of the River Foyle has actively committed to researching and promoting renewable energy, environmental, and landscape management strategies to achieve genuine sustainability and inspire behavioural change; becoming the first heritage landscape in Northern Ireland to be measurably beyond carbon neutral.

Keen to share the impact of their sustainability practices, David Gilliland, the sixth generation living at Brook Hall, developed a series of innovative tourism experiences which take visitors on a journey through the heritage, nature, and sustainability of the demesne. Experiences include a guided tour of the willow farm and biomass processing facilities followed by a series of experimental activities across the wider estate and gardens, exploring the soil health and biodiversity within the landscape along the way.

The vulnerability in this dependency was exposed due to the fact that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, global connectivity with air traffic into Northern Ireland's three airports reduced by 85% in early 2020¹³.

Given our dependency on both sea and air travel as part of our external tourism, to remain competitive as a tourist destination, we will need to strike the balance between managing the risks associated with rising carbon prices and maintaining connectivity of airports between target tourist markets.

The sustainability of NI's future air connectivity is hugely important in light of the obligations of the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022. International aviation will be subject to the targets in the Climate Change Act and air carriers will be expected to reduce or offset carbon emissions.

Northern Ireland is physically remote from the rest of the UK and does not have the same road and rail connectivity options available. There is a heavy reliance on air travel for both business and leisure travellers to and from NI.

13 [Research of future tourism Northern Ireland](#)

Attracting inbound visitors, access to tertiary education, and connecting the NI diaspora also depends heavily on aviation. By working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs who are leading on the development of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan which will cover the period 2023 to 2027, and with the UK Department for Transport, we have the opportunity to co-ordinate our approach rather than make separate regulations for emissions of greenhouse gas from domestic and international aviation.

Progressing sustainable practices involves finding new ways to reduce the sector's carbon footprint, including promoting the circular economy; caring for our natural environment; protection and conservation of our cultural, natural and built heritage; advocating local businesses by supporting locally produced goods and services, in turn helping the local economy; enhancing our outdoor experiences; and support our businesses to develop quality sustainable products and experiences and ultimately to embark on a journey towards sustainability accreditation.

What Sustainable success looks like

- Tourism will be a key driver of green growth and will make a full contribution to NI's ambition to become a net-zero society.
- Tourism will bring benefits to the local community for future generations.
- Tourism businesses in Northern Ireland will become more self-sustaining, agile and resilient.
- Sustainability will be at the heart of Tourism, we will develop and manage tourism effectively and responsibly.

Sustainable Indicators

Supporting a greener and more sustainable economy:

- Support the tourism sector to become more sustainable through an annual increase in participation in a tourism specific Sustainability Accreditation scheme.
- Improve regional dispersal and seasonal growth of the tourist offering to enhance Northern Ireland as a competitive all year-round tourist destination.
- Support tourism businesses towards becoming carbon neutral.

CASE STUDY

LIFE ADVENTURE CASTLEWELLAN

Life Adventure, located within Castlewellan Forest Park, is on the edge of the Mourne Mountains. Owned by Martin McMullan, the company has been at the core in the development of many key activity tourism products and services across the Mourne, tapping into the unique outdoor assets the Mournes has to offer. The company's site at Castlewellan Adventure Centre covers paddle board, kayak and mountain bike adventures and hire, coupled with the development of a new 'Bike Mourne' with two new outlets at the Rostrevor Mountain Bike Trails and in Newcastle with a particular focus on electric bikes. The big focus is on sustainability, increasing the attractiveness of the destination, facilitating responsible visitors and activity and providing direct and in-direct economic benefits across the destination.

The careful restoration of the heritage courtyard visitor centre provides comfort and functionality while retaining the unique and authentic character of the building itself. Life Adventure have achieved a carbon neutral status, recognised by a 'Gold Award' certification from Green Tourism UK.

The business has also invested in their people assets to ensure high standards of service, reinforced by their 'Adventure Mark' accreditation, a kite mark for quality provision in the adventure activity industry.

STRATEGIC THEME FOUR: **ATTRACTIVE**



10x Vision: We are building on our success in attracting visitors to world class, experiences and events, energising our ecosystem through innovation and collaboration.

Tourism Strategy: To inspire and energise others through our passion, enthusiasm, pride, determination and Giant Spirit. Our spirit will set us apart and make Northern Ireland a great place to work, live, visit and invest.

It is also important to consider the sustainability of the tourism sector in Northern Ireland to ensure long-term resilience in a more agile way and protect and accelerate the future of the sector both in terms of regional spread and seasonal growth. A key challenge for any destination is overcrowding at popular resorts and attractions, especially during peak seasons and it will be important to promote Northern Ireland as an **attractive** year-round destination, promoting experiences that offer variety, quality and authenticity – the things that make Northern Ireland special.

The importance of sustaining the domestic and closer to home markets cannot be overemphasised. The domestic market is vital to the season extension and regional dispersal as it provides the sector with a loyal

customer base and counters, to some degree, the current seasonality of external visitors.

Tourism is about place making - its success is based on developing and caring for local attractions and amenities and managing growth so it enriches the lives of local residents as well as visitors. The quality of Northern Ireland's natural environment and cultural offering makes the region ideally placed for the further development of tourism attractions and experiences.

Over the next few years, Northern Ireland will benefit from a package of investment from four City and Growth Deals. The combined funding from the NI Executive and the UK government will total £1.3bn which will also be complemented by private sector and other sources of funding.

This investment package provides an opportunity for a further step change in the visitor offering, helping to deliver benefits across the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

It will increase tourism's contribution to local economies through job creation, and additional incomes for residents and business across all parts of the sector. Sustainability

and inclusion will be at the heart of an approach which seeks to achieve strong connections between people, place and prosperity.

As globally compelling propositions, the projects are designed to appeal to key international markets and will inspire future visitors to stay longer and to spend more in our local communities.

What Attractive success looks like

- Deliver high quality, memorable and authentic experiences, making Northern Ireland renowned as a unique and prime location for international visitors and investors.
- We have a clear brand and reputation of having a big-hearted, pioneering, legendary and elemental spirit.
- Our tourism offer is varied with rich experiences and across Northern Ireland all year round.
- We will be responsive to changing trends in customers' needs.

Attractive Indicators

Promoting Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit:

- Enhance our international profile and tourism appeal as measured by Northern Ireland's Net Promoter Score.
- Annual Increase in number of return visitors and/or visitor average length of stay to fuel local and regional economic growth.
- Secure a portfolio of distinctive, high-quality sustainable tourism conferences and events which underpin and optimise Northern Ireland's attractiveness as a dynamic tourism destination.

CASE STUDY

EBRINGTON

Ebrington is a 29-acre heritage asset situated on the Foyle riverfront. Initially built by the army in 1841, the military base was home to the British military in Derry-Londonderry until 2001 when the site was gifted by the Ministry of Defence to the Executive Office.

The Peace Bridge, which itself has become a major tourist attraction in Derry-Londonderry, connected the site to the Walled City when it opened in 2011 and was the catalyst for the redevelopment of the site as a new public space in the city.

The transformation of the former parade grounds into Ebrington Square, a world class events space attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to major events such as the Maritime and Halloween Festivals, BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend and hosted the Turner Prize during the UK City of Culture in 2013.

The former soldier and officer accommodation quarters have been transformed into the stunning, Ebrington Hotel and Spa, which opened in June 2023.

Three of the buildings flanking the hotel are soon to become the new Derry North Atlantic Maritime Museum with support from Tourism NI, Department for Communities and The Executive Office.

Ebrington is a living demonstration of how tourism can not only protect our built environment, so it is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, but in doing so create vibrant spaces which encourage creative industries to invest there as well.

STRATEGIC THEME FIVE:

COLLABORATIVE



10x Vision: We have created clusters which have built upon existing strengths and capitalising on windows of opportunity.

Tourism Strategy: We collaborate widely in a spirit of true partnership. We nurture a shared vision and common clarity of purpose.

Crucial to the success of the Tourism Strategy: Ten Year Plan the willingness for **collaborative** working. If our tourism industry is to be successful and sustainable all partners must work together to meet and exceed the expectation of our visitors by giving them an experience they will never forget.

Tourism is the responsibility of many stakeholders, all of whom have a part to play in delivering our vision. Those stakeholders are wide and varied. They include:

- Those government departments and their agencies who are responsible for maintaining our landscape and built heritage, providing transport infrastructure, supporting culture and the arts, licencing laws and regulatory services, rural development, urban regeneration and the provision of broadband and telecommunication services.
- **The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)** DAERA has a vision for sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone and has a key role in championing thriving rural communities that contribute to prosperity and wellbeing. DAERA recognises the economic and social benefits that sustainable rural tourism can bring to rural communities and is committed to working in collaboration with DfE, Tourism NI and other key stakeholders to maximise these benefits and to showcase the tourism opportunities of Northern Ireland's wonderful environment and its world class food and drink production. DAERA also recognises the challenges in relation to tourism in rural areas including access to sustainable transport options, access to quality broadband and

telecommunications, the impact of climate change and the need to safeguard rural tourism assets. DAERA will continue to provide support to DfE, Tourism NI and local councils with implementing the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 to help ensure that the social and economic needs of people in rural areas are appropriately considered and to help deliver better and more sustainable outcomes for rural communities, rural businesses and people visiting rural areas for the purposes of tourism.”

- **The Department for Communities (DfC)** DfC’s common purpose is supporting people, building communities and shaping places. The Department’s work in supporting place-based regeneration, including significant interventions through the City and Regional Growth Deals in places such as Carrickfergus and Derry~Londonderry, provides places that are attractive to residents and visitors alike. It provides overall support for the large and diverse voluntary and community sectors which support all strands of what makes our places authentic and distinctive. It has a lead role in supporting the

development of sport and physical activity, with its intentions brought together in Active Living, the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland, recognising that many visitors travel to Northern Ireland in association with sporting activity. And it has a lead role in the support and development of Northern Ireland’s culture and heritage – key drivers for our tourism industry. A Culture, Arts and Heritage strategy is in preparation, building on the ongoing work across the sectors which has been refined and reshaped to build back from the challenges and opportunities presented by the Covid pandemic. This recognises the ways in which our culture, arts and heritage support our prosperity, strengthens our society, and shapes our character. The particular interface between our culture and heritage, and our attractiveness to visitors, has been strengthened in recent years, following joint activity during the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage which has developed into a joint programme of work coordinated by a Leadership Group of cultural, heritage and tourism representatives.

- **The Department for Infrastructure (Dfi)** To compete globally Northern Ireland needs to be well connected both internally and with the rest of the world. Gateways are strategically important transport interchanges which are important for economic development, tourism and employment generation. The quality of connection from the air and seaports to the internal transport network in Northern Ireland is crucial for tourism and economic competitiveness of the region and the convenience of the travelling public. Any visitor to Northern Ireland will enter the province by one of these gateways whether that be our ports, airports or transport networks to and from the Republic of Ireland.

Dfi has the prime responsibility in Northern Ireland for the development and management of key transport infrastructure and services to and from gateways and across the region. Dfi recognises the crucial role played by tourism in driving economic growth and through promoting our region. A key focus of the Department is to ensure that visitors arriving here have easy access to all parts of the province through the transport network.

Dfi has invested heavily in the upgrade of transport infrastructure and services in the last number of years to improve the accessibility of our transport network to gateways and key tourist sites. This has included upgrading of our major roads on our Strategic Road Network like the A1 to Dublin, A4 to Enniskillen, A6 to Derry/Londonderry, A8 to Larne and A26 to the North Coast. Given the need to significantly and urgently reduce transport emissions, in line with commitments within the Climate Change Act and associated carbon budgets, the Department has also invested heavily in new and improved public transport on both our bus and rail network including the development of new transport hubs in Belfast, Portrush and the North West. Increased frequency and capacity of rail services and the expansion of zero emission buses will help to reduce our carbon emissions. The Department is working with Local Councils to develop more sustainable travel options for tourism including the development a range of greenways across the region. It also is committed to working with Local Councils to provide additional, reliable, EV infrastructure throughout Local Council regions.

- **The Executive Office** As a Devolved Administration, there are limitations to our international role as international relations remain formally an excepted matter. However, it is well established that we can and should build relationships with international partners, on matters within the devolved competence. The Executive Office International Relations team coordinate and maximise the international activities of all NICS departments with a view to ensuring that Northern Ireland is a place where people want to live and work, to visit, study and invest. The TEO team seek to influence governments and their stakeholders to respond positively to Northern Ireland's priorities and view us as a favourable trading and knowledge exchange partner, encouraging mutual exchange of people and ideas, tourism and beneficial business relationships by working with partners across government to foster and cultivate an understanding at home of the benefits and opportunities from international engagement (business, policy and tourism led) and create a greater desire to pursue those opportunities.
- Our eleven Councils also have a role to play as they manage many of our visitor attractions, run our Tourist Information Centres, deliver festivals conferences and events and ensure our towns and villages are attractive and safe places in which to live and visit.
- Businesses within the tourism industry - which are wide ranging in size, from micro enterprises to large international hotel chains – and their representative organisations are key to making Northern Ireland tourism flourish.
- Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, both of whom play a critical role in the development and promotion of the Northern Ireland tourism product both at home and overseas.
- Tourism NI's work on the development of three thematic Visitor Experience Development Plans (Food and Drink, Culture and Heritage and Landscapes and Activity Tourism) is to support the development of market-led tourism experiences which will set Northern Ireland apart in the international marketplace.
- Tourism NI is working with both DAERA and DFC in the development of these plans, ensuring alignment with respective strategies.

- Tourism NI has worked in collaboration with DAERA in delivery of key actions within the Tourism Recovery Action Plan to ensure we enhance the competitiveness of the region. For example, this has included the development of a new DAERA Rural Tourism Investment Scheme to build on the 2014-2020 £10 million Rural Tourism Scheme.
- There is also engagement with the DFI on the development of public transport routes relevant to tourism and also with Translink. Licensing and events management are two further areas where Tourism NI is actively involved with DfC and the Department of Justice.
- Numerous charities and voluntary organisations which provide services to our visitors such as the National Trust who manage some of our most iconic visitor attractions.



Key to making NI tourism industry flourish lies with the industry itself and the businesses and organisations at its heart.

Working together in clusters can unlock huge potential – local businesses who have an affinity in areas where it is easy and natural for them to work together can enhance the offering for new and returning domestic and international visitors.

It can improve their own sales performance but being knowledgeable about other tourism activities in their area can spread the benefits to other local businesses, create jobs and strengthen the local economy. Councils too have a pivotal role to play in presenting what the region has to offer, supporting the expansion of tourism right across the region.

What Collaborative success looks like

- Collaboration will be embedded within the Sector, Government and key strategic partners to bring benefits to the whole of Northern Ireland.
- The Sector will work together to develop creative products and services that maximise opportunities across Northern Ireland.
- Government will work together at a local, regional and national level to align strategic priorities.
- Industry will work with local communities to ensure they experience the benefits of Tourism.



CASE STUDY

AND SUSTAINABLE GIANTS

Launched in 2022, AND Sustainable Giants are a collaborative group of tourism businesses who actively demonstrate commitment to providing a sustainable choice for visitors to Ards & North Down; helping to make the destination climate-ready and recognised as a sustainable destination to live, work and experience. Their goal is to position themselves at the forefront of green and sustainable practices leading to the achievement of a 'green destination status'.

Sustainable Giant businesses commit to a charter of six key principles of sustainability, including protecting the natural environment, working to ensure that tourism has a positive contribution to the social sustainability of local communities, employing local people and using ethical products wherever possible.

Through a collaborative approach, the members work together to encourage visitors to come to the area more often, stay longer and spend more, whilst helping to enrich communities, improve the environment and support growth of local businesses.



STRATEGY ON A PAGE

TOURISM STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

10 YEAR PLAN

TOURISM STRATEGY GOAL	OUR VISION	STRATEGIC INTENTIONS	HOW WILL WE GET THERE?	WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?
Tourism Growth is: INNOVATIVE and uses our creative skills INCLUSIVE bringing opportunities for all SUSTAINABLE for generations ATTRACTIVE to visitors and investors COLLABORATIVE to deliver a shared vision	Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination, which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core. OUR MISSION To support the tourism sector in building an innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which enriches its people, its economy and its guests.	- Build on our culture of innovation and creativity to deliver positive change. We will pursue excellence and world class ideas to make our industry more competitive and sustainable. - A tourism ecosystem that brings opportunities for all, with lasting and positive economic and societal benefits to our communities throughout all parts of Northern Ireland. - Build upon Northern Ireland's unique journey of regeneration. We will evolve our tourism ecosystem to be greener and sustain and invigorate our people, our place and our natural environment. We inspire future generations to thrive. - Inspire and energise others through our passion, enthusiasm, pride, determination and Giant Spirit. Our spirit will set us apart and make Northern Ireland a great place to work, live, invest and visit. - Collaborate widely in a spirit of true partnership. We nurture a shared vision and common clarity of purpose.	Creating new and innovative tourism experiences: - Annual Increase in the number of our tourism businesses receiving Innovate NI recognition levels. - Annual Increase in the number of high value-added business start-ups and entrepreneurship levels within the tourism sector. - Increase the export value of the tourism sector measured by expenditure from overnight visitors from outside Northern Ireland - Annual Increase in the number of tourism businesses participating in Tourism Innovation Programmes - Annual Increase in the number of meetings, incentives, conferences and business events aligned with the 10x strategy to position Northern Ireland as a place to innovate. Contributing to a more inclusive economy: - Improve the Work Quality14 for the tourism sector, including competitive salaries, career pathways, opportunities to secure qualifications and comfortable working conditions, creating an accessible, competitive and attractive industry in which to work. - Annual Increase in the number of employees within the tourism sector from underrepresented groups (including people who are economically inactive, people with disabilities, and from deprived areas) contributing to an equitable distribution of opportunities to all our people. Supporting a greener and more sustainable economy: - Support the tourism sector to become more sustainable through an annual increase in participation in a tourism specific Sustainability Accreditation scheme. - Improve regional dispersal and seasonal growth of the tourist offering to enhance Northern Ireland as a competitive all year-round tourist destination. - Support tourism businesses towards becoming carbon neutral. Promoting Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit: - Enhance our international profile and tourism appeal as measured by Northern Ireland's Net Promoter Score. - Annual Increase in number of return visitors and/or visitor average length of stay to fuel local and regional economic growth.	Innovative - Tourism workforce has the right digital skills to ensure that they meet consumers' evolving needs. - Use real time quantitative analytics and insights to develop, market and monitor performance of our tourism offer. - Use creative ideas and methods to develop new products or services to maximise benefits. - Capitalise on new and emerging technologies to develop solutions to tourism industry challenges. Inclusive - More sectors of the economy across the whole of Northern Ireland will benefit from tourism. - Tourism investment and events have tangible benefits to local communities. - The sector is actively engaged with local communities as valued stakeholders in tourism development and delivery. - Tourism is an inclusive employer offering a diverse range of desirable career paths throughout Northern Ireland. Sustainable - Tourism will be a key driver of green growth and will make a full contribution to NI's ambition to become a net-zero society. - Tourism will bring benefits to the local community for future generations. - Tourism businesses in Northern Ireland will become more self-sustaining, agile and resilient. - Sustainability will be at the heart of Tourism, we will develop and manage tourism effectively and responsibly. Attractive - Deliver high quality, memorable and authentic experiences, making Northern Ireland renowned as a unique and prime location for international visitors and investors. - We have a clear brand and reputation of having a big-hearted, pioneering, legendary and elemental spirit. - Our tourism offer is varied with rich experiences and across Northern Ireland all year round. (for example in culture, social, escape, sport, business and screen) - We will be responsive to changing trends in customers' needs. Collaborative - Collaboration will be embedded within the Sector, Government and key strategic partners to bring benefits to the whole of Northern Ireland. - The Sector will work together to develop creative products and services that maximise opportunities across Northern Ireland. - Government will work together at a local, regional and national level to align strategic priorities. - Industry will work with local communities to ensure they experience the benefits of Tourism.
PURPOSE	OUR STRATEGIC AIM			
	To increase the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50-75% compared to 2019.			



ALIGNMENT OF INDICATORS WITH 10x METRICS

ALIGNMENT OF INDICATORS WITH 10x METRICS

INNOVATION



10x Tier 1 Metrics

- Increase total R&D expenditure by 55%.
- Increase the number of R&D performing businesses by 450.
- Increase number of innovation active firms to 55% of NI businesses
- 10% of NI businesses receiving Innovation Accreditation.
- Increase proportion of individuals leaving NI HE institutions with first degrees and post-graduate qualifications in narrow STEM subjects from 24% to 27%.

10x Tier 2 Underpinning Metrics

- Number of R&D Companies.
- R&D Companies by (employee) size, ownership, location, sector.
- Number of Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs) (subject to data availability).
- Innovation Accreditation.
- Entrepreneurship.

Tourism Strategy Indicators

Creating new and innovative tourism experiences:

- Annual Increase in the number of our tourism businesses receiving Innovate NI recognition levels.
- Annual Increase in the number of high value-added business start-ups and self-sustaining levels within the tourism sector.
- Increase the export value of the tourism sector measured by expenditure from overnight visitors from outside Northern Ireland.
- Annual Increase in the number of tourism businesses participating in Tourism Innovation Programmes.
- Annual Increase in the number of meetings, incentives, conferences and business events aligned with the 10x strategy to position Northern Ireland as a place to innovate.

INCLUSIVE



10x Tier 1 Targets

- Increase Northern Ireland Household Disposable Income above the SAE average while maintaining NI as one of the top performing SAEs in relation to the Gini-coefficient (a measure of income equality)
- Close the employment gap between men and women; people with disabilities and people without; and most deprived area of NI and the least deprived area of NI
- Increase the proportion of the working age population with qualifications at level 3 and above from 57.2% (2020) to 70%-75%

10x Tier 2 Targets

- Employment rate/gap by gender, age, disability, geography, MDM
- Proportion of the working age population with qualifications at level 2 and above or level 3 and above. Broken down by gender, age, disability, geography, MDM
- Career progression by gender, age, disability, geography, MDM
- Economic inactivity by gender, age, disability, geography, MDM
- Disability and gender pay gap
- Work quality indicators for a 'Good jobs' metric

Tourism Strategy Indicators

Contributing to a more inclusive economy:

- Improve the Work Quality¹⁵ for the tourism sector, including competitive salaries, career pathways, opportunities to secure qualifications and comfortable working conditions, creating an accessible, competitive and attractive industry in which to work.
- Annual Increase in the number of employees within the tourism sector from underrepresented groups (including people who are economically inactive, people with disabilities, and from deprived areas) contributing to an equitable distribution of opportunities to all our people.

15 [Work Quality in Northern Ireland - July 2021 to June 2022](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/work-quality-in-northern-ireland-july-2021-to-june-2022) | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency ([nisra.gov.uk](https://www.nisra.gov.uk))

SUSTAINABILITY



10x Tier 1 Targets

- 80% electricity consumption from renewable sources
- Greenhouse gas emissions 48% lower than baseline
- Double the size of NI's low carbon and renewable energy economy to more than £2bn turnover

10x Tier 2 Targets

- Energy-related greenhouse gas emissions
- Business energy purchases relative to turnover
- Energy efficiency indicators

Tourism Strategy Indicators

Supporting a greener and more sustainable economy:

- Support the tourism sector to become more sustainable through an annual increase in participation in a tourism specific Sustainability Accreditation scheme.
- Improve regional dispersal and seasonal growth of the tourist offering to enhance Northern Ireland as a competitive all year-round tourist destination.
- Support tourism businesses towards becoming carbon neutral.

ATTRACTIVE



Tourism Strategy Indicators

Promoting Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit:

- Enhance our international profile and tourism appeal as measured by Northern Ireland's Net Promoter Score.
- Annual Increase in number of return visitors and/or visitor average length of stay to fuel local and regional economic growth.

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Subject:	Inclusive Labour Market conference
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. 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 matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on plans for a conference to take place on 22 January 2024. The conference will focus on how to make the labour market more inclusive – with a particular focus on addressing economic inactivity.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: • Note the report including details of the planned 22 January 2024 event focusing on inclusive labour markets • Promote the event to key contacts in their networks in order to ensure a wide representation and discussion at the event.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that funding for projects and organisations working with those who are economically inactive were significantly impacted with the cessation of EU funds. Traditionally, this work had been resourced through European Social Fund (ESF) funding. This concluded in March 2023. The replacement funding – Shared Prosperity Fund – does include a theme which focuses on People and Skills. The most significant element of this funding – around £50million – has been set aside for projects which focus on addressing economic inactivity. 18 projects were awarded funding for delivery through to March 2025 (from April 2023). 13 of these projects are based in Belfast (but some have regional coverage).
3.2	As these projects mobilise for delivery, there are concerns around the sustainability of the funding model (which will run out in just over a year from now) as well as the ability of those projects, alone, to address a long-standing structural issue in the local labour market.
3.3	In Belfast, economic inactivity presents a significant challenge for the city. The current economic inactivity rate for Belfast is around 29% - slightly ahead of the regional average. There are a number of reasons why people are economically inactive: students are counted among this figure as are those with caring responsibilities (looking after the family and home), health reasons and early retirees. While the inactivity rate is high, the overall unemployment rate for the region has decreased to an all-time low: figures for November 2023 show it sitting around 2.1%. What this means is that employers are competing within a limited talent pool. However the inactivity rate has never seen any real improvement over many decades – regardless of the prevailing economic climate and employment/unemployment rate.
3.4	In more recent times, there has been a wider discourse around what solutions are needed to address the challenges of economic inactivity. This is a very complex problem that will require

	a multi-faceted solution involving partners across many areas including health; skills support; economic development; social security and childcare support.
3.5	While DfC retains the policy remit for this area of work, the input from a wider number of partners means that sustainable solutions that make an impact can only be found if all partners get behind the issue and make long-term commitments in this space.
3.6	One of the reflections that we have identified is the absence of a clear understanding of the scale, nature and scope of the challenge. This inhibits the ability to have an informed discussion on potential solutions. In recognition of this, under the banner of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership, officers are planning to host an event at Ulster University's Belfast campus on 22 January 2024 entitled: Inclusive Labour Markets: Opportunities, Challenges and Solutions.
3.7	The aim of the conference is to facilitate discussion and instigate actions which can address economic inactivity and champion inclusive employment, stimulate an informed discussion of the need for and value of creating a more inclusive labour market and work towards a coherent solution that can improve outcomes for citizens and support a more competitive and productive economy.
3.8	The objectives of the event are to: • Establish a shared understanding of the nature and scale of economic inactivity across the region • Establish a critical analysis of challenges and solutions within 'the system' • Develop a shared understanding of what is possible and what could be achieved through collaboration • Provide opportunities to learn from best practice, exchange knowledge and share ideas for the future • Identify key steps require to move towards a sustainable solution.
3.9	The conference is intended to act as an opener for a much wider discussion on this issue. This is particularly important given the pending funding end-date in March 2025 and the need to ensure that a well-considered solution in developed and resourced to take over at that point.
3.10	Aligning with key policy and strategic priorities, including the Belfast Agenda, the Inclusive Growth Strategy, Levelling Up and 10X, the programme will include opportunities for discussions on a range of issues such as:

	• Opportunities for greater engagement between health and employment support services • Potential implications of further welfare reform • Re-skilling and upskilling support to encourage labour market participation and progress • A future investment model that can make an impact.
3.11	A draft agenda can be found in Appendix 1. This is still in development and is subject to further changes as we work through it with our partner organisations.
3.12	The target audience for the event will include: • Employer/business organisations: Chambers of Commerce, FSB, CBI, Software Alliance, CITB, NISCC etc. as well as local enterprise agencies and anchor institutions such as Belfast HSC Trust, Belfast Harbour • Government departments and agencies responsible for policy, commissioning and delivery: Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, NI Skills Council, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Health, Public Health Agency, Department of Justice, The Executive Office • Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) across the region • Employability and skills providers and representative/support groups such as NICVA, UKSPF projects, Apprenticeships NI providers, FE colleges, Belfast Area Partnerships, VCSE panel, advice sector etc. • Other key stakeholders within the employability and skills field such as RSA, Institute for Employment Studies, IPPO, QUB, UU, ERSI, The Law Centre etc. • Academic input through universities, colleges and research institutes.
3.13	In order to set the scene and ensure that the discussion is grounded in research and analysis, Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre (EPC) team will undertake research in advance of the conference and this will be shared on the day. This research will focus on: • Context and background: high level long-term trends in economic inactivity, identifying the social and economic implications, backdrop of demographic and labour shortage challenges, importance and success of third sector in working with key marginalised groups and need for creative solutions • Understanding the economically inactive: outlining definitions, levels and rates of inactivity in Belfast/NI, overview of headline reasons for inactivity • Medium term and post-pandemic picture: reasons for inactivity both medium term and post-pandemic; long-term sick (e.g. benefit system, reasons for sickness, severity of

	conditions, increased waiting lists, etc.), looking after family home (e.g. women overrepresented in unpaid labour, lack of flexibility in positions across all sectors/occupations, affordable childcare etc.), early retirees (e.g. 'great resignation' post-pandemic but broader need to retain older workers) and other • Geographic concentration: outline the spatial composition of inactivity, highlighting inner city areas that perform particularly poorly on multiple economic indicators (e.g. inactivity, employment deprivation, multiple health conditions, poverty) and how these indicators link together to form at times entrenched concentrations over many years • Demand-side insights: understanding where jobs are likely to come from; in what numbers; what skills levels they will require – and thinking about potential impacts for engaging those not currently actively engaged in the labour market • Policy and employer solutions: begin to identify policy solutions and the need for creativity, including third-sector cooperation, cross-departmental approaches and employer engagement.
3.14	There will also be a contribution from Tony Wilson who leads up the Brighton-based think tank Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and who is currently working on the Commission for the Future of Employment Support. Tony has worked at the heart of UK government on a range of labour market and skills issues and has particular expertise in labour market policy and analysis, the design, delivery and evaluation of employment and skills programmes and supporting organisations to understand and apply evidence of “what works” in employment policy and service delivery. Tony was part of the team that developed the Employability NI model which had, at its core, the Labour Market Partnerships structure so he is very familiar with the Northern Ireland landscape.
3.15	The event will also include an input from Andy Haldane, Chief Executive of RSA and former Chief Economist at the Bank of England. Belfast City Council has been working closely with the RSA over a number of years on projects such as Digital Badging.
3.16	It is hoped that the conference can act as the start of a conversation about what needs to change to create the best conditions for achieving an inclusive labour market. It is expected that it will lead to further cross-sector engagement in order to drill into this complex issue and to try to identify sustainable solutions that can start to make an impact on what has been an intractable challenge for many decades. This has been identified as a priority area of work in the refresh of the Belfast Agenda.

3.17	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Funding for the event has been set aside within existing Employability and Skills and Labour Market Partnership budgets already approved by this committee. Ulster University is making the venue available free of charge.
3.18	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The outcomes of this event are to try to identify solutions that can have a positive impact on equality and good relations as well as addressing other economic and social challenges. The event will include invitees from all across the region.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Draft conference programme

Inclusive Labour Markets: Opportunities, Challenges and Solutions Ulster University Belfast Campus, 22 January 2024	
08:45-09:15	Registration, refreshments and networking
09:15-09:20	Event Welcome
09:20-09:25	Context and Overview
09:25-09:45	Economic inactivity: who, what, where and why? UU Economic Policy Centre
09:45-10:05	Emerging findings from the Commission of the Future of Employment Support: lessons for Northern Ireland Tony Wilson, Director, Institute for Employment Studies
10:05-10:35	Panel discussion: reflections on the research and emerging Commission findings
10:35-10:55	Comfort break and refreshments – move to breakout rooms
11:00-12:00	Breakout sessions
	Breakout session 1: Health and employment services – working together? <i>More than 110,000 people in NI are sick and disabled and out of work. This figure is proportionately higher than RoI and all other UK regions. This session will focus on ways in which our health and employment services might work together better. What lessons have been learned about effective personal support? Are there local-level interventions that could have a positive impact if they were scaled up? Do we need to develop new programmes in NI and, if so, what should they look like?</i>
	Breakout session 2: Future challenges: welfare reform and advice <i>The introduction of Universal Credit is ongoing and further reforms are planned. The implementation of these reforms has been a significant challenge to individuals, JBOs and employment service providers. What will be the future challenges and how are JBOs responding? What role can the advice sector play - working alongside employment services - to ensure that all claimants receive a comprehensive and quality support service that meets their needs?</i>
	Breakout session 3: Joining up skills and employment services <i>With unemployment levels at a record low, employers are operating in a challenging labour market. By widening their approach to talent attraction to include engagement with those not currently in the labour market, there are opportunities to address those pressures. But what is the skills journey for those who are not currently in work? And is there more that can be done to encourage training and upskilling for those who are unemployed and economically inactive? How can companies think more laterally about their approach to talent attraction and retention? And what support is available to help them do that?</i>
	Breakout session 4: Resourcing the solution: discussion on the future investment model for economic inactivity and labour market support <i>The principal funding source for economic support delivery is currently SPF. With no clarity of commitment beyond March 2025, what should the resourcing model for this support look like? Do we need to think more radically about the system? And who might be involved? What can we learn about good practice examples in other locations and what impact would this have in NI - both in terms of investment levels and in terms of outcomes?</i>
12:00-12:15	Comfort Break – return to plenary session
12:15-12:35	Feedback from breakout sessions
12:35-13:00	People Make Places: inclusive labour markets at the heart of successful towns and cities Andy Haldane, Chief Executive, RSA
13:00-13:15	Next steps and close
13:15	Lunch and networking

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Subject:	Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
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 1. Information relating to any individual. 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. 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 matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
After Committee Decision	☐								
After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a progress update on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to seek Committee approval for signature of a new Collaboration and Funding agreement among the partners.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Note progress on the development of the DBEC initiative • Approve the Collaboration and Funding Agreement attached as Appendix 1.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At its meeting in March 2023, members received an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor including work on the strategy and action plan. The plan aims to support sustainable economic growth across the region, identifying areas of focus for the partnership to address future opportunities and seeking to address any gaps in existing provision.
3.2	The vision of the strategy is to become a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative R&D, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. This includes an ambition to be world renowned as a major international centre in growth sectors such as Professional Services, Advanced Manufacturing, ICT and Life and Health Sciences.
3.3	The strategy articulates a number of strategic objectives for the partnership, including; • Increase skills and training to meet the labour requirements of the region, building on and expanding the existing workforce • Advocate for cross-border infrastructure to strengthen connectivity and access to markets and labour • Enhance cross-border collaboration in R&D and Innovation, targeting investment in high growth sectors and the green economy • Promote sustainable and climate-conscious growth along the corridor, aligned with councils' development plans and wider policy objectives • Align with and support economic development partners to increase trade and investment along corridor • Market the region and elevate the DBEC brand so that the region becomes globally renowned as an attractive place to live and do business.

3.4	The action plan outlined key pillars to support effective delivery, including ways of working, governance and resourcing, and communication and marketing. Priority actions to date include: • Staffing: in line with recommendations under the strategy, two full time staff members, a Programme Manager and Project Officer were recruited in Summer 2023. The staff are based at Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and operate across the partnership • Management and governance: Dates have been agreed until September 2024 for regular meetings of the partnership governance structure, including monthly meetings at Director level, bi-monthly among CEOs and quarterly meetings for elected representatives. A new Collaboration and Funding Agreement has been prepared to further clarify areas of co-operation and partnership working and to confirm the budget profile for 2024 (attached for approval) • Communications: DBEC is developing a coherent marketing and communications strategy in line with the strategic objectives. The team will work with an external communications partner to support delivery • Engagement: Given that the Partnership now has dedicated resources in place, the team is working on a stakeholder engagement framework that will identify priority linkages, aligned to the action plan. The Team is already engaging in key meetings and this work will continue in order to further shape the programme of activity • Research: The immediate focus on research includes a review of existing skills strategies, identifying gaps, barriers and opportunities for co-operation. The DBEC staff have also participated in consultation around research commissioned by the Shared Island Unit in relation to the all-island labour market and are exploring opportunities for engagement in Peace Plus projects in this area of work • Funding: The Irish Government's Shared Island initiative aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future. The DBEC Partnership was successful in an application for Shared Island funding to carry out a feasibility study into regional innovation hubs within the partnership area. This work will conclude in early December and relevant findings will be brought back to this committee for information.
3.5	As part of the governance structure for the partnership, there are 24 councillors who make up a Political Advisory Group (3 nominees from each council area). This group provides an advisory and consultative forum, supporting the Directors Group and CEO group in the governance of the partnership.

3.6	Following the local elections in May 2023, new nominees were sought to represent Belfast. The Belfast City Council nominees are Cllr Ronan McLaughlan, Cllr Sarah Bunting and Cllr Eric Hanvey. Nominees are appointed for a two-year period, with a view to participating in quarterly meetings. The most recent meeting of the group took place in September 2023 hosted by Dublin City University. The next meeting is expected to take place at the Ulster University Belfast Campus in December 2023.
3.7	The development of a new Collaboration and Funding Agreement was recommended as part of previous work to strengthen and clarify the governance and management arrangements for the Partnership. A draft document was prepared by the DBEC secretariat and has been reviewed by council officers. This is attached as Appendix 1.
3.8	The Agreement sets out the detailed workings of the collaborative partnership between the 8 partner councils and the 2 universities. Newry Mourne and Down District Council has agreed to undertake the role of Lead Council on behalf of and with the agreement of the other Collaborating Members. The Lead Council will continue to administer the DBEC resource team and will request and co-ordinate input from the Collaborating Members as and when required. The Lead Council will also provide accounting and financial management for the partnership and will be responsible for procurement.
3.9	The Political Advisory Group (PAG), Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Steering Group and Directors Steering Group will oversee programme delivery and review performance against the DBEC Strategy and the Action Plan.
3.10	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> A contribution of £35,000 was approved in March 2023, resourced from the 2023/2024 Enterprise and Business Growth budget. This will fund the Belfast City Council contribution for the current financial year. The contribution for the 24/25 financial year will be considered as part of the estimates process.
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Given the nature of this initiative as a multiparty, cross border partnership, equality and good relation impacts will be assessed throughout delivery within the overall governance framework.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: DBEC Collaboration and Funding Agreement 2024

DATED THIS 01 DAY OF September 2023

COLLABORATION AND FUNDING AGREEMENT

Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Collaboration

This **COLLABORATION AND FUNDING AGREEMENT** is made the 01 September 2023 between the following Councils

1. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
2. Belfast City Council
3. Dublin City Council
4. Fingal County Council
5. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
6. Louth County Council
7. Meath County Council
8. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

and the following Universities:

1. Ulster University
2. Dublin City University

(together referred to as "the Collaboration", each referred to as "Collaborating members")

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Agreement	means this Collaboration and Funding agreement
Collaboration	means the DBEC Collaboration and its programmes and projects
Collaboration Budget	means the financial resources made up of contributions from Collaborating Members (excluding Collaborating Universities) and contributions from other sources such as grants
Collaborating Member or Collaborating Members / party or parties	means the Councils and Universities within the Collaboration and listed below, including the Lead Council
Programme	means any programme operated by the Collaboration
Lead Council	means Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Collaborating Councils	1. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council 2. Belfast City Council 3. Dublin City Council 4. Fingal County Council 5. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council 6. Louth County Council 7. Meath County Council
Collaborating Universities	1. Ulster University 2. Dublin City University
Political Advisory Group (PAG)	means the DBEC Council elected members nominated to sit on DBEC as described in the governance section of this agreement
Chief Executives Steering Group (CEOs Steering Group)	means the DBEC Council and University Chief Executives described in the governance section of this agreement
Directors Steering Group	means the DBEC Council and University Directors described in the governance section of this agreement

Secondment	means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer (the Employer) for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship with the permanent employer, of the person seconded
DBEC Resource	Means the DBEC Programme Manager and the DBEC Partnership Officer
Action Plan	The 2022 Dublin Belfast Economic Action Plan attached at Schedule One of this agreement

1. Background

In 2018, Chief Executives from the eight Councils across the Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor agreed to form a Partnership to explore the development of a regional proposition for economic growth. The Collaboration also includes representatives from Ulster University and Dublin City University.

The purpose of the Collaboration is to improve competitiveness and support economic growth across the region. This ambition has been reflected by governments North and South of the border who have made a commitment to support greater cooperation, connectivity, and opportunity North / South on the island.

The Collaboration aims to leverage the existing local government network and resources of the participating partners to identify areas where together, they can exert a significant positive impact and add value to the economic development of the corridor.

The Action Plan is in place setting out a strategic vision and associated actions for the Collaboration. The Action Plan sets out an ambitious plan for delivery against the strategic vision over an 8 year period.

This Collaboration and Funding Agreement sets out the detail workings of the Collaboration between the Lead Council, the Collaborating Councils and the Collaborating Universities, which will seek to build the DBEC brand as a leading investment region and economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through the delivery of collaborative research and development, and the creation of a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. This Collaboration and Funding Agreement also sets out the obligations of the Lead Council, the Collaborating Councils and the Collaborating Universities.

2. Aims of DBEC

The ambition of the DBEC Collaboration is to become “a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative research and development, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure”.

The Collaboration wants to raise the profile of the Dublin to Belfast Corridor to be world renowned as a “major international centre in growth sectors like professional services, advanced manufacturing, ICT, life sciences and advanced agriculture”.

A number of key enablers and strategic objectives have been agreed and are outlined as follows:

DBEC Strategic Objectives against which the Collaborating Members will align on corridor specific initiatives:

1. Increase skills and training:
 - meet labour requirements, building on and expanding the existing workforce
2. Advocate for cross border infrastructure:
 - strengthen connectivity and access to markets and labour
3. Enable cross-border collaboration in research & development and innovation:
 - targeting investment in high growth sectors & green economy
4. Increase trade and investment:
 - aligning and supporting economic development partners
5. Promote sustainable & climate conscious growth:
 - aligned with Councils' development plans and wider policy objectives
6. Market the region & elevate the DBEC brand:
 - ensure the region is globally renowned as an attractive place to live and do business

DBEC Key enablers, required to underpin future economic growth of the corridor:

Key Enablers	Actions
Skills	• Undertake targeted research on the corridor's labour market • Develop a clear skills policy and strategy • Become an active player in skills development in priority sectors
Infrastructure	• Identify infrastructure gaps and map assets with development potential • Contribute to the development of business cases for corridor specific infrastructure projects
Research & development	• Grow DBEC's profile within the R&D community • Contribute to cross-border funding applications to grow R&D • Be a voice for the potential of the circular economy

Key enablers will have a specific focus on key growth sectors:

- Professional services and ICT
- Advanced manufacturing and agriculture
- Life sciences

3. Collaboration

The Lead Council, the Collaborating Councils and the Collaborating Universities shall co-operate in accordance with the provisions of this agreement in relation to the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Collaborating Members agree that they have full legal power and authority to enter into this Agreement and are committed to jointly delivering against the strategic objectives and associated actions as defined in the Action Plan and to meet the Aims of the Collaboration as set out at Clause 2 hereof.

4. Commencement and Duration

This Agreement shall commence on the date hereof and shall terminate by agreement of the Chief Executives of the Collaborating Members or 30 days after Newry Mourne and Down District Council serves notice on the other Collaborating Members that it no longer wishes to act as the Lead Council, where no other Collaborating Member has agreed to assume the Lead Council role, whichever event occurs first.

5. Roles and Governance

The Lead Council has agreed to undertake the role of Lead Council on behalf of and with the agreement of the other Collaborating Members¹.

The Political Advisory Group (PAG), Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Steering Group and Directors Steering Group will oversee programme delivery and review performance against the DBEC Strategy and the Action Plan.

The role, functions and governance structures of the DBEC Political Advisory Group, CEOs Steering Group and Directors Steering Group are as set out in Schedule Two hereof.

The Directors Steering Group will direct the activities of the DBEC Resource, so that the Collaborating Members control the operations of the Collaboration.

The Chief Executive Officers Steering Group will direct the Directors Steering Group, so that the Collaborating Members control the strategic direction of the Collaboration.

The Political Advisory Group will provide advice and guidance to the CEOs Group to ensure political input into the strategic direction of the Collaboration.

¹ Agreed at Directors Steering Group meeting on 30th March 2022. At CEO Meeting on 20th September 2023 NMDDC agreed to retain the position of lead Council for DBEC subject to further review of DBEC Government arrangements which may need reflected in this agreement.

6. Lead Council Roles and Responsibilities

(a) Administer the DBEC Resource team

On behalf of the Collaborating Members, the Lead Council will be responsible for the recruitment, procurement (where relevant) and management of the DBEC Resource Team posts, as appropriate, that will carry out the shared functions of the Collaboration. It will assure the work of the DBEC Resource.

During the period of a secondment, the secondee remains an employee of their employing Council along with their respective terms and conditions, with the exception of those identified at the time of recruitment. As such, no employment liability is created for the Lead Council (*unless the Lead Council is the employer of the secondee*). The employing Council(s) will draw down the salaries (including mileage and subsistence) costs from the Lead Council through the DBEC finance budgets at a frequency to be agreed. The Lead Council will be responsible for the administration of payments relating to the DBEC Resource team.

(b) Financial and Audit

The Lead Council will provide accounting and financial management for the Collaboration, through its finance function. The Lead Council will provide financial information and governance documentation and any other assistance required for external audit.

The Lead Council may perform internal auditing of the Collaboration arrangements in line with the standard of the Lead Council's audit processes and make available the results of all audits to the Collaborating Members through the regular reporting mechanisms of the Collaboration governance.

(c) Insurance

The Lead Council will ensure that it maintains adequate employers' liability and public liability insurance to cover its liabilities as may arise in the course of the agreement and shall produce evidence of same upon request. For the avoidance of doubt, the Lead Council will not indemnify Collaborating Members against any losses they may sustain of any nature as a result of participating in this Collaboration.

(d) Provide Governance Support

The Lead Council, via the DBEC Resource, will request and co-ordinate input from the Collaborating Members wherever it is required.

The Lead Council, via the DBEC Resource, will ensure the governance groups are provided with such materials, reports and so on as they may require within the Collaboration arrangement.

The Lead Council, via the DBEC resource, will ensure the administration of the meetings of the governance groups described in the governance section of this agreement to ensure effective governance.

The Lead Council, via the DBEC Resource, will inform the DBEC Directors Group in a timely manner of all significant and / or untoward events especially those likely to attract media attention or become the subject of legal action which includes any circumstance which will or may affect the ability of the Collaboration to meet the targets set out by the Collaboration.

(e) Manage the Procurement Vehicles

The Lead Council will be responsible for the procurement of consulting resources and any other third-party support required, and for the payment of consulting contracts.

The Lead Council, via the DBEC Resource, will manage procurement processes according to their Council's Procurement Policy.

As the current Lead Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will manage procurement processes according to their Council's Procurement Policy as amended from time to time. The Lead Council's Procurement Policy can be accessed at [Procurement Policy \(newrymournedown.org\)](http://ProcurementPolicy(newrymournedown.org)), and may be updated from time to time.

However, other Collaborating Members's may also operate procurement processes on behalf of the Collaboration by agreement with the Lead Council.

The approval thresholds to enable procurements to proceed will be in line with the procurement policy of the Lead Council, or the Collaborating Member leading on the procurement.

All proposed expenditure is to be presented at both Directors and CEOs Steering Group meetings.

The Lead Council will take reasonable steps to attempt to keep all costs in relation to the Collaboration within the Collaboration Budget for the relevant Financial year.

7. Authority of Lead Council

Each Collaborating Member hereby agrees that the Lead Council has power to procure and award all necessary Contracts required to deliver against the Collaboration and the Strategy and Action Plan. The Lead Council shall ensure that information in respect of such Contracts are made available to the other Collaborating Members on request and as required for participation in the Collaboration and the Governance Structure.

Each Collaborating Member hereby agrees that the Lead Council has power to ask another Collaborating Member to award such contracts as are required to deliver against the Collaboration and the Strategy and Action Plan.

8. Collaborating Members Obligations

(a) Work Together in the Collaboration

The Collaborating Members will work together and actively participate in the DBEC Collaboration to support the DBEC Resource Team in achieving the Collaboration objectives.

In particular, the Collaborating Universities will seek to assist DBEC through their expertise in the delivery of evidence-based research, policy development and wider stakeholder engagement. Where relevant and appropriate, the Collaborating Universities will utilise their connections to cross-border and international research networks to advance the Strategy and Action Plan.

Collaborating Members will adhere to the DBEC governance structure and ensure that activities are delivered, and actions taken as required.

Collaborating Members will be accountable for the performance of the respective roles and responsibilities set out in this agreement.

Collaborating Members will be open and transparent and communicate openly about major concerns, issues or opportunities relating to the DBEC Collaboration and its programmes and projects.

Collaborating members will learn, develop and seek to achieve the full potential of the Collaboration. In respect of the Collaboration aims, they will share information, experience, materials and skills to learn from each other and develop effective working practices, work collaboratively to identify solutions, eliminate duplication of effort, mitigate risk and reduce cost.

In the event that a Collaborating Member is asked to procure a contract by the Lead Council they will follow their Procurement Policy and will ensure best value for the Collaboration.

(b) Support the Governance Structure

Collaborating members will undertake all of the DBEC Collaboration responsibilities under the direction and guidance of the DBEC CEOs Group and DBEC Directors Group.

Collaborating members will support the shared activities of the DBEC Resource team and enable it to represent individual organisation interests to stakeholders, suppliers, DBEC CEOs Group and DBEC Directors Group as required and appropriate.

Collaborating members will respect the remit of DBEC Resource team, the DBEC CEOs Group and DBEC Directors Group to enforce the terms of DBEC agreement on suppliers and all Collaborating Members.

Collaborating Members will act at all times in a way that is not detrimental to the reasonable and agreed participation of other Collaborating Members.

Each Collaborating Member will have appropriate insurance in place for the duration of the agreement and can provide satisfactory documentary evidence of the insurance effected and maintained upon request by the Lead Council.

9. Costs and Payment

Collaborating Councils and the Lead Council will make financial contributions to the operation of the DBEC Collaboration.

Each Collaborating Council and the Lead Council will be responsible for the payment of the operational costs of the Collaboration. Each Collaborating Council and the Lead Council will pay the agreed percentage of the Collaboration Budget which said percentages are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 3.

The anticipated Collaboration Budget of the Collaboration in the year 2023 / 2024 is set out in Part 2 of Schedule 3 which may be varied from time to time by the Directors Steering Group and agreed by the CEOs Steering Group.

Each Collaborating Council hereby agree that in addition to the payment of the relevant percentage of the agreed Collaboration Budget (as varied from time to time) they will pay the same percentage of any Collaboration costs beyond the Collaboration Budget set out in Schedule 3 (as varied by agreement).

In the event that the Lead Council suffers or incurs a liability as a result of its role as Lead Council each Collaborating Council shall be responsible for the payment of such

liability in accordance with the proportions set out for each Collaborating Council set out in Part 1 of Schedule 3.

The Lead Council shall invoice each Collaboration Council in respect of budgeted costs in January 2024 and each anniversary thereof throughout the Term of this agreement in respect of the Collaboration Budget due for the relevant year (running from 1st January until 31st December in the relevant year) to come. In the event that the Collaboration Costs exceed the Collaboration Budget or the Lead Council incurs a Liability as a result of its role as Lead Council then the Lead Council will invoice the Collaborating Councils the following January or as and when necessary.

The Collaboration Budget shall be based on the Euros currency, however invoices can be issued in Euro or Sterling as agreed with each Collaborating Council. The value of the sterling invoice will be determined by the exchange rate on the day of invoicing.

Unless otherwise specified sums invoiced by the Lead Council are exclusive of VAT which shall be included in invoices and payable in addition to the sum invoiced.

The Lead Council will hold budgets in the currency received and can exchange budgets as required as the currency of agreed expenditure is determined. DBEC Resource will report on expenditure incurred and forecast on a quarterly basis at the meetings of Directors and CEOs Steering Groups.

Collaborating Councils shall pay an invoice issued to it within 30 days of the date of the Invoice

If a party fails to make any payment due to another party under this agreement by the due date for payment then the defaulting party shall pay interest on the overdue amount at the rate of 2% per annum above Danske Bank Limited's base rate from time to time. Such interest shall accrue on a daily basis from the due date until actual payment of the overdue amount, whether before or after judgement. The defaulting party shall pay the interest together with the overdue amount.

All amounts due under this agreement shall be paid in full without any set – off, Counterclaim, deduction or withholding (other than any deduction or withholding of tax as required by law).

10. Data Protection

Each Collaborating Member shall, at its own expense, ensure that it complies with and assists the other Collaborating Members to comply with the requirements of all legislation and regulatory requirements in force from time to time relating to the use of personal data and the privacy of electronic communications, including, without limitation, the Data Protection Legislation applicable in the relevant legal jurisdiction within which the relevant Collaborating Member or Collaborating Members are situated.

11. Freedom of Information “FOI”

Collaborating members who receive a request for information relating to the Collaboration and which the Collaborating Member is treating under as an FOI under the FOI legislation or regulations applicable in the relevant legal jurisdiction within which the relevant Collaborating Member is situate should:

- a. Notify the Lead Council of the request within two working days;
- b. Issue a 'draft response' for consideration to the Lead Council who may provide comment within 3 working days;
- c. Provide the Lead Council with a decision on whether the Lead Council's comments are accepted or rejected. If rejected include a rationale; and
- d. Provide the final response issued to the request by the Collaborating Member.

12. Indemnity

Subject to fulfilment by the Lead Council of its obligations under this agreement, the Collaborating Councils and Collaborating Universities shall on a several basis, indemnify the Lead Council against all liabilities, costs, expenses, damages and losses (including but not limited to any direct, indirect or consequential losses, loss of profit, loss of reputation and all interest, penalties and legal costs (calculated on a full indemnity basis) and all other reasonable professional costs and expenses) suffered or incurred by the Lead Council arising out of or in connection with:

- a. the breach of the UK Data Protection Legislation by one or more of the Collaborating Members or
- b. the breach of this agreement by one or more of the Collaborating Members,
- c. any claims made by staff of the DBEC Resource.

except to the extent that the liability arises as a direct result of the action or omission of the Lead Council.

If a payment due from the indemnifying party under this clause is subject to tax (whether by way of direct assessment or withholding at its source), the indemnified party shall be entitled to receive from the indemnifying party such amounts as shall ensure that the net receipt, after tax, to the indemnified party in respect of the payment is the same as it would have been were the payment not subject to tax.

Nothing in this clause shall restrict or limit the indemnified party's general obligation at law to mitigate a loss it may suffer or incur as a result of an event that may give rise to a claim under this indemnity.

13. Termination of Agreement

Without affecting any other right or remedy available to it, any Collaborating Member may terminate this agreement or with immediate effect by giving written notice to the other Collaborating Members if:

- i. any Collaborating Member fails to pay any amount due under this agreement on the due date for payment and remains in default not less than 10 Business Days after being notified in writing to make such payment
- ii. any Collaborating Member commits a material breach of any other term of this agreement which breach is irremediable or (if such breach is remediable) fails to remedy that breach within a period of 10 Business Days after being notified in writing to do so;
- iii. any Collaborating Member repeatedly breaches any of the terms of this agreement in such a manner as to reasonably justify the opinion that its conduct is inconsistent with it having the intention or ability to give effect to the terms of this agreement;
- iv. any other party suspends, or threatens to suspend, payment of its debts or is unable to pay its debts as they fall due or admits inability to pay its debts;
- v. in accordance with clause 15.
- vi. the Lead Council resigns from its role as Lead council, and no alternative Lead council can be appointed.

For the purposes of clause i, **material breach** means a breach (including an anticipatory breach) that is serious in the widest sense of having a serious effect on the benefit which the terminating party would otherwise derive from a substantial portion of this agreement; over any 6-month period during the term of this agreement. In deciding whether any breach is material no regard shall be had to whether it occurs by some accident, mishap, mistake or misunderstanding.

14. Consequences of Termination

On termination of this agreement in respect of any party the following clauses shall continue in force:

- i. Clause 9 (Costs and payment);
- ii. Clause 10 (Data protection);
- iii. Clause 11 (Freedom of Information)
- iv. Clause 12 (Indemnity);
- v. Clause 15 (Force Majeure);

- vi. Clause 19 (Expert Advice)
- vii. Clause 21 (Relationship of the Collaborating Members)
- viii. Clause 22 (variation)
- ix. Clause 22 (Governing law); and
- x. Clause 24 (Jurisdiction).

Termination of this agreement in respect of any party shall not affect any rights, remedies, obligations or liabilities of the Collaborating Members that have accrued up to the date of termination, including the right to claim damages in respect of any breach of the agreement which existed at or before the date of termination.

15. Force Majeure

No party hereto shall be in breach of this agreement nor liable for delay in performing, or failure to perform, any of its obligations under this agreement if such delay or failure result from events, circumstances or causes beyond its reasonable control. In such circumstances the affected party shall be entitled to a reasonable extension of time for performing such obligations. If the period of delay or non-performance continues for 8 weeks, any party not affected may terminate this agreement by giving 30 days' written notice to the affected party.

16. Entire Agreement

This agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the Collaborating Members and supersedes and extinguishes all previous drafts, agreements, arrangements and understandings between them, whether written or oral, relating to its subject matter.

Each party agrees that it shall have no remedies in respect of any representation or warranty (whether made innocently or negligently) that is not set out in this agreement. No party shall have any claim for innocent or negligent misrepresentation based on any statement in this agreement.

17. Review

This Agreement shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the Directors Steering Group.

The Chief Executive Officers Steering Group may agree to extend the scope of the Collaboration, if identified as required to progress the delivery of the DBEC Collaboration and against the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan.

The Chief Executive Officers Steering Group may agree to extend or shorten the Agreement's duration as required, and to add new members where appropriate.

The Chief Executive Officer Steering Group may agree to make changes to the terms of reference of the DBEC Governance Bodies, or to the contents of this Agreement.

Any changes to the terms of this agreement agreed after the annual review will be recorded in writing and signed by all Collaborating Members in accordance with Clause 22.

18. Rotation of Lead Council

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is the current Lead Council. The Lead Council may rotate on a biennial basis by agreement of both DBEC Directors Steering Group and DBEC Chief Executive Steering Group. Should Newry, Mourne and Down District Council decide that it wishes to resign from its role as Lead Council, it may do so by giving the other Collaborating Members 30 days' notice of its intention. The other Collaborating members shall use their best endeavours to appoint a new Lead Council within this 30-day time period.

If rotation of the role of Lead Council is proposed and agreed by the Directors and CEOs Steering Groups, or a new Lead council is appointed in any other circumstances, a Lead Council transfer plan will be established and agreed between the outgoing Lead Council and the incoming Lead Council. The transfer plan will outline the process for the transfer of management of the DBEC Resource, DBEC finances, DBEC social media platforms, and DBEC supplier contracts. It is anticipated that any live supplier contracts would remain under the outgoing Lead Councils procurement team.

19. Expert Advice

The Lead Council shall be at liberty to procure whatever expert advice it requires, including legal, to undertake its responsibilities under this Agreement, and the costs of such expert advice shall be shared between the Collaborating Members in accordance with clause 9.

20. Dispute Resolution

In the Event of any disagreement between the Collaborating members the matter may be referred by any of the Collaborating members to a suitable independent person to be agreed by the Collaborating Members for determination, failing which to a person nominated by the President for the time being of the Law Society of Northern Ireland.

21. Relationship of the Partnership Members

For the avoidance of doubt this Agreement shall not be construed as a Partnership Agreement within the meaning of Section 1 of the Partnership Act 1980 nor is there any intention on the part of the Collaborating Members to form a Partnership.

22. Variation

Any variation to this agreement shall be in writing and signed by all Collaborating members.

23. Governing Law

This agreement and any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it or its subject matter or formation (including non-contractual disputes or claims) shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the law of Northern Ireland.

24. Jurisdiction

Each party irrevocably agrees that the courts of Northern Ireland shall have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with this agreement or its subject matter or formation (including non-contractual disputes or claims).

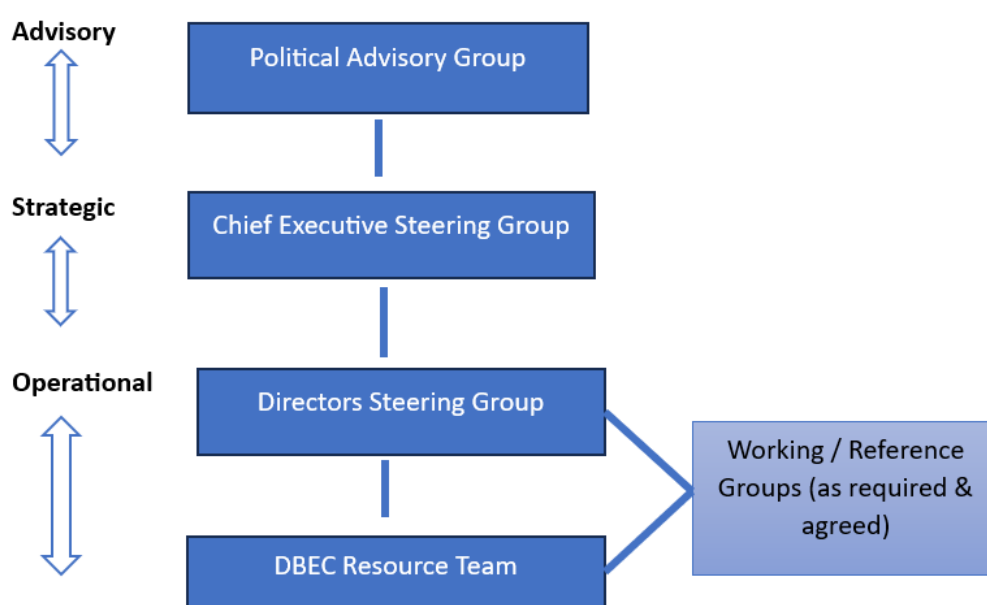
SCHEDULE ONE: DBEC Strategy and Action Plan

DBEC Strategy and Action Plan available at [Research | Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor \(dbec.info\)](https://research.dbec.info)

SCHEDULE TWO: Governance Structure

A Governance structure was agreed by Chief Executives; it was recognised that a continued high level of engagement from Collaborating Councils and Collaborating Universities at a senior level is required to achieve the ambition of the Collaboration.

The Governance Structure is shown below:



Advisory Management Level

Political Advisory Group	
Role	- To provide input and direction to achieve the ambitions of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor - To provide political support and support political engagement in pursuit of Collaboration objectives - To provide advice and guidance to the Chief Executive Officers Steering Group
Members	- 24 Elected Representatives in total - 3 nominated elected representatives from each Collaborating Council

Function	- 2 Co-Chairs will be elected, with representation North and South - The roles of Co-Chair will be elected every 2nd year. - For each meeting of the PAG, the role of the Chair will rotate between each Co-Chair
Communication Flow	- Directly to relevant Council committees - Correspond down to Council Chief Executives
Frequency of meetings	- Meetings will take place quarterly, in person. - While in person meetings are favoured, hybrid / online meetings will be facilitated were required.

Strategic Management Level

Chief Executives Steering Group	
Role	- To set the vision and provide strategic input and direction to achieve the ambition of the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor - To maintain a strategic overview of the Collaboration - To champion the aims and work of the Collaboration - To act as a communication channel into Council bodies and Department teams - To provide high level support in pursuit of the Collaboration objectives - Lead on political engagement - Review progress on delivery against Collaboration objectives
Members	- 8 Council Chief Executives, one from each of the Collaborating Councils - 2 senior Collaborating University representatives, 1 from Dublin City University and 1 from Ulster University
Function	- A Chair will be elected and rotate annually across each of the Collaborating Councils with a balance of representation north and south - The Chair, working with the DBEC Resource, will be responsible for organising meetings, setting the agenda, and allocating key action points

Communication Flow	- Correspond up to Political Advisory Group and directly to relevant Collaborating Council Committees - Correspond down to Directors Steering Group
Frequency of meetings	- Meetings will take place bi-monthly, in person. - While in person meetings are favoured, hybrid / online meetings will be facilitated where required

Operational Management Level

Directors Steering Group	
Role	- To provide overall operational level guidance to achieve the ambition of the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor as defined in the Action Plan - To develop an action plan, and manage the delivery of ambitions of the Collaboration - To provide support in pursuit of the operational delivery of the Collaboration objectives - Liaise with reference groups on specific work streams - Manage engagement with internal and external stakeholders - Review progress on delivery against Collaboration objectives - Provide strategic assurance of financial and auditing activity - Make financial decisions, and seek internal Council approvals where required and appropriate
Members	- 8 council Directors, one from each of the Collaborating Councils - 2 Director level University representatives, 1 from each of the Collaborating Universities - Other Director level organisational representatives, in an advisory capacity, as deemed appropriate
Function	- The Lead Council will assume the role of the Chair of the Directors Steering Group² - The Chair, working with the DBEC Resource, will be responsible for organising meetings, setting the agenda, taking, and allocating key action points

-
- ² At Directors meeting on 30th March 2022, it was agreed that the Lead Council would also act as Chair of the Directors Steering Group.

Communication Flow	- Correspond up to CEO Steering Group, and directly to relevant Collaborating Council Committees and Council Departmental teams - Correspond down to DBEC Resource Team
Frequency of meetings	- Meetings will take place monthly, in person. - While in person meetings are favoured, hybrid / online meetings will be facilitated where required

Working Groups / Reference Groups	
Role	- Created as and when required, to support the strategic direction of the Collaboration - Created to provide practical advice and insights into thematic work areas, including shaping work plan development based on sector/subject area specialism. - Created based on identification of collaborative projects - Potential thematic areas, including but not limited to: - o Skills - o Research & Development - o Innovation - o Infrastructure - o Funding - o Investment - o Communication and marketing
Members	- Representation identified and agreed at the Directors Steering Group dependant on requirement - A representative from the Director Steering Group will sit on each reference group
Function	- The representative Director will Chair each meeting - The Chair, working with the DBEC Resource, will be responsible for organising meetings, setting the agenda, taking, and allocating key action points
Communication Flow	- Correspond up to Directors Steering Group and correspond directly to DBEC Resource Team
Frequency of meetings	- To be agreed via ToR set for each working group / reference group

SCHEDULE THREE: Financial Model

PART 1: AGREED PERCENTAGES

	Population Nr	% Population *
Dublin City Council	592,713	27.20%
Belfast City Council	345,418	15.85%
Fingal County Council	330,506	15.17%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	218,656	10.03%
Meath County Council	220,826	10.13%
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	182,074	8.36%
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	149,106	6.84%
Louth County Council	139,703	6.41%
	2,179,002	100.00%

- Population figures updated August 2023. Sources:
- Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - Demography and households (nisra.gov.uk)
- CSO.ie / Census 2022 / [Profile 1 - Population Distribution and Movement / F1004A - Population](#)

PART 2: COLLABORATION BUDGET

- Operational Budget and apportionment of costs

It was agreed at the Political Advisory Group³ that the Collaborating Council and the Lead Council from the DBEC Collaboration would jointly fund the resources to ensure there are focused resources in place to deliver against the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan. A budget as outlined below was agreed to support costs associated with the DBEC Resource, a small operational budget and overheads⁴.

It was agreed that the budget would be apportioned across the Collaborating Councils and the Lead Council based on percentage share of population. The tables below outline the budget allocation against the share of population. (Note budget allocation for 2024/25 has been updated with recent population data.)

DBEC is initially funded 100% by Collaborating Council's and the Lead Council. The total quantum of funding covered by the respective Councils does not decrease over time as the Collaboration develops; However other funding sources instead will be explored to expand the Collaborations operation.

The lead Council will invoice Collaborating Councils in January for contributions towards the forthcoming financial year. Invoices can be issued in Euro or Sterling as agreed with each Collaborating Council. The value of the sterling invoice will be determined by the exchange rate on the day of invoicing.

The Lead Council will hold budgets in the currency received and can exchange budgets as required as the currency of agreed expenditure is determined. DBEC Resource will report on expenditure incurred and forecast on a quarterly basis at the meetings of Directors and CEOs Steering Groups.

INCOME CHARGED to Partnership – 2023/24		(January 2023 / Paid)
	% of Population	Budget
Dublin City Council	27.53	€ 71,575.60
Belfast City Council	16.57	£35,805.83
Fingal County Council	14.69	£33,295.81
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	9.91	£21,415.98
Meath County Council	9.68	€ 25,174.09
Newry, Mourne and Down DC	8.52	£18,395.97
Lisburn & Castlereagh Borough Council	6.69	£14,459.88
Louth County Council	6.4	€ 16,634.90
		€ 113,384.59
		£123,373.47

³ At the PAG held on 14th October 2022

⁴ This was considered and agreed at Sept 2022 Directors Steering Group and October 2022 CEO Steering Group. It was noted at the October 2022 Political Advisory Group

Forecast Budget Requirement – based on updated population data

	Population Nr	% Population *	Budget
Dublin City Council	592,713	27.20%	€70,722
Belfast City Council	345,418	15.85%	€41,215
Fingal County Council	330,506	15.17%	€39,436
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	218,656	10.03%	€26,090
Meath County Council	220,826	10.13%	€26,349
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	182,074	8.36%	€21,726
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	149,106	6.84%	€17,792
Louth County Council	139,703	6.41%	€16,670
	2,179,002	100.00%	€260,000

Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Belfast City Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Dublin City Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Fingal County Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Louth County Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Meath County Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below Council was affixed hereto:

Council: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below University was affixed hereto:

University: Dublin City University

Signed: Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)

Signed: Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)



Present when the corporate seal of the below University was affixed hereto:

University: Ulster University

Signed: **Chairperson (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)**

Signed: **Clerk and Chief Executive (Amend as appropriate & delete red text)**



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Subject:	Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations - update
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
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 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. 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 matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the work to support local commercial districts through the Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations programme. This programme aims to work with business and trader associations to develop and deliver interventions that can drive footfall and create vibrancy in those areas.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: Note the update and work undertaken to support the delivery of area-based Vibrant Business Destinations.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At its meeting on 9 November 2022, members agreed a new investment approach to support local business associations to develop and deliver interventions to drive footfall and create vibrancy in those areas.
3.2	The overarching purpose of the pilot initiative was to strengthen the competitiveness of our local business destinations, focusing on actions which aim to: - Support the development of shared and safely accessible commercial areas - Support the diversification of business destinations outside of the city centre - Bring together key stakeholders to benefit business destinations outside of the city centre - Improve the quality of urban design, distinctiveness, and townscape quality.
3.3	Members are reminded that the pilot was developed in response to feedback from a range of businesses and traders associations across the city regarding drop off in footfall and a challenging operating environment post-Covid. Through engagement with the Department for Communities (DfC), an opportunity was identified to secure resources through the DfC Revitalisation programme. The concept for the “Vibrant Business Destinations” (VBD) intervention was identified as a pilot programme in keeping with work undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to develop a “Living High Street Toolkit”. Belfast City Council successfully secured funding of £475,000 from the Department for Communities (DfC). The council also provided match funding to enable the delivery of advice and support to extend the scope of the scheme. VBD was intended to complement a wider programme of support and activity that had been taking place within the city centre, including the Vacant to Vibrant Support Programme and previous business support interventions through the Covid Revitalisation Programme.

3.4	The pilot initiative aimed to support up to 10 business associations to a maximum of £40,000 each for expenditure on a range of eligible activities. The objectives were to: • Increase engagement and partnership working between statutory partners and local business associations • Support the development of area-based actions plans which address specific local concerns and deliver specific, measurable benefits over the short/medium and long term • Increase footfall and sales as a direct result of marketing and promotional activity; generate new customers or sustaining customer loyalty through increasing sales revenue, increasing the number of new customers or developing repeat business • Enhance the profile of the area with a view to stimulating economic activity • Support the growth and development of businesses engaged in associated activity • Support the sustainability of businesses and local business associations.
3.5	The initiative operated via a two-stage application process. Basic eligibility criteria included: • Groups or established associations must be led by the business community (including social enterprises and cooperatives) to address locally based issues and be committed to becoming a constituted association • Groups or established associations must be made up of retail/hospitality/consumer facing businesses located on road frontage/local high streets • The priority focus is on arterial routes and routes with a minimum number of 15 confirmed businesses located on road frontage • Group membership should be representative of the businesses in the eligible area – both by volume and by business type • Business membership must represent predominantly owner-occupiers and independent traders, however, it can involve representation from community organisations.
3.6	There were 48 initial Expression of Interest (Eoi) requests covering the following areas: East Belfast: Eastside Partnership, Ballyhackamore, Cregagh and Woodstock Roads, Newtownards Road, Tullycarnett, The Mount, Albert Bridge, Castlereagh Place, Belmont Road, Kings Square and Gilnahirk, Castlereagh Road, Hollywood Arches. South Belfast: Forward South Partnership Board, Lower Ormeau Road, Crescent Arts, Malone Road. West Belfast: West Belfast Partnership Board, Falls, Springbank Industrial Estate, Blackstaff Mill, Andersonstown Road. North Belfast: Cliftonville Circus, Lower Antrim Road, Cavehill Road, Argyle Business Park. Other: City Centre Management, Dundonald.

3.7	Many of the original requests failed to meet the funding criteria or the initial enthusiasm of groups or individuals diminished over time, while others couldn't garner enough local business support to formally apply. From the original 48 requests, ten groups are now currently being supported.
3.8	Following successful completion of an EoI at stage 1, groups were supported to become formally constituted, and to develop area-based action plans. These plans provide an analysis of the locality, the physical environment, existing provision and key challenges and opportunities. They identify priority issues to be addressed to improve the business environment through engagement with existing businesses and stakeholders in the area. In addition, a Design Team was appointed to assist trader groups in the delivery of any capital-based activities. The action plans and designs formed the basis for moving to a stage 2 application. A successful Stage 2 application enabled the group to draw down funding to support their action plan delivery. An overview of support is included in Appendix 1.
3.9	The following groups are currently delivering agreed project activity, having had their action plan approved by an Assessment Panel whose members included Department for Communities (DfC), Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and council officers: 1. Ballyhackamore Business Association 2. Cliftonville/Oldpark Business Association 3. Kings Square and Cherryvalley Traders 4. Cregagh Woodstock Traders 5. Cavehill Business Association 6. Belmont Road Traders Association 7. Lower Ormeau Traders Association
3.10	Each of these groups have received £32,000 (80%) of their £40,000. The remaining £8,000 (20%) balance is released upon successful delivery and monitoring of their activities.
3.11	In addition to the work of these seven groups, three other groups are actively engaging with the council. They include Holywood Arches, Twin Spires and Lisburn Road Traders. They are working through issues including resolving land ownership, finalising locations for planters and displays and addressing potential traffic impact of proposed measures. In some instances, projects have not progressed as the groups have not been able to take ownership of the plan in a way that will make the investment sustainable or secure local ownership. Council officers continue to liaise with these groups to complete their applications and work towards agreed action plans.

3.12	To date there have been a number of successful activities including development of new markets, installation of planters and plant tubs and additional landscaping work and development of new mural artworks. In addition, areas have begun to develop their marketing, branding and advertising in line with the programme outcomes. As predicted, there is a significant ramp-up in activity in the run-up to Christmas in order to derive maximum return on investment.
3.13	Early evidence from the funded interventions has shown an increase in retail spend, increase in footfall, and an uplift in positive perceptions of neighbourhoods. Trader groups have also developed their networks through additional internal cooperation and exchange of ideas and resources.
3.14	The Enterprise and Business Growth Team continues to coordinate this programme and engage with internal officers and departments to identify wider opportunities and synergies with similar projects across the council. Council officers will continue to engage with DfC to identify any potential future funding opportunities following the conclusion of the pilot.
3.15	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The activities outlined within this report are being resourced through the existing Enterprise and Business Growth budget for 2023/24 and funding secured through DfC.
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The unit undertook a process of equality screening, to ensure consideration was given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project. All districts are within the Belfast City Council urban area.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Vibrant Business Destinations – eligible areas for support – stage 2 of the programme

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Appendix 1 – Vibrant Business Destinations – eligible areas for support – stage 2 of the programme

Area of support	Key area / Activity	Budget Limit
Marketing and Footfall Activity to enhance the marketing of an area and drive footfall e.g. marketing plan, promotional activity for the area, development of area-based campaigns Support to enable businesses to grow and become more competitive will be provided through existing council provision and includes 1-1 mentoring and workshops this will support individual business development.	Advertising - Branding, Marketing/Advertising Material, PR and Social Media Campaigns, visitor experience development, seasonal window displays, promotional items	Revenue Grant up to £6,000
	Business Development – Business support and networking opportunities, click and collect pilots, website development, footfall counters, loyalty cards, marketing campaigns, mystery shopper visits, promotional shopping events, discount cards, meanwhile use	
Look and Feel Activity to address capital requirements in the area, subject to relevant statutory approvals. Funding can also support area lighting schemes and initiatives to enhance active travel in an area.	Environment (excluding shop-front improvements, as focus on area enhancement not individual businesses) – seasonal lighting, community gardens, decorative street furniture/dressing, environmental improvements, floral displays, mural projects/painting schemes. This also includes activity focused on increasing active travel in an area. It is the responsibility of the association to ensure all of the required statutory approvals are in place and to ensure any capital items are managed and stored appropriately.	Capital Grant up to £30,000* *Note. The services of a technical/design team are available
Animation Activity to support area-based animation, events, tourism, culture, arts and heritage activity. This should not duplicate existing supports as groups will be able to access existing interventions delivered through Belfast City Council and other partners.	Events - markets/fairs, Christmas lights, food/fashion events, music events, on street animation including hire of event space, marquee, stalls, IT equipment etc. It is the responsibility of the association to ensure all of the required statutory approvals are in place.	Revenue Grant up to £4,000
	Arts/Heritage – exhibitions, trails, events, festivals and workshops, public art	
Partnerships Activity to enhance Networking opportunities with businesses in other traders' associations, city wide partners and statutory bodies.	Business Development / Area based development	Networking and signposting opportunities outside the area

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Subject:	Employability and Skills – Bridges to Progression
Date:	6 December 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Sinéad O'Regan, Employability & Skills Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
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 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. 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 matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
After Committee Decision	☐								
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Never	☐								
Call-in									
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐								

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the allocation of Bridges to Progression resources based on the outcome of the competitive application process undertaken.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the allocation of Labour Market Partnership (LMP) resources for Bridges to Progression and note the proposals to seek proposals from delivery partners to provide targeted support that can improve outcomes for participants.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Labour Market Partnership</u> Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership is an intervention supported by DfC within all 11 council areas. Resources from the Labour Market Partnership enable the Council to increase the range and scope of employability and skills activity. The LMP also provides a platform for engagement with government departments, community partners and business organisations as a means of refocusing regional programmes more effectively within the Belfast area. The LMP action plan recognises that, while there are gaps that have been identified that will necessitate the creation of new interventions, not all activity need be new ‘provision’ or ‘programmes’; sometimes it is equally important to profile and/or promote existing interventions. One of these interventions is Bridges to Progression which officers have ensured operates as a ‘test and learn’ to inform any recommissioning of Skills for Life & Work DfE contracts.
3.2	<u>Bridges to Progression</u> Bridges to Progression is an intervention to support young people aged 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances. Participants can access intensive personal support to help them progress in and complete their formal training, with the ambition of improving the levels of progression into employment or further training. Previous analysis had flagged a very high level of drop out from these programmes, particularly in Belfast. It showed that the reasons behind participants no longer engaging with the programme related to wider social challenges – rather than the programme content itself.

3.3

At the October 2023 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it was agreed that officers would seek expressions of interest from organisations delivering these programmes, outlining how they would use resources to add value to the core activity with the objective of improving outcomes for participants. It was also agreed that officers would undertake assessment of the applications for funding in line with the approach detailed in this report.

3.4

While all Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work providers were invited to submit applications for 2023/24 outlining how they would use the resources, seven applied and six met the quality threshold. Bridges to Progression offers an average of £750 per participant up to the maximum of £90,000 allocated from LMP Budget 2023/24:

Applicant	Activity proposed	Requested	Awarded
Springvale	Engage Programme: teambuilding, mentoring, mental health support, employer engagement & lifestyle support	£19,811	£15,113
People First	Employ a counsellor: 1-1 and group counselling sessions, crisis response service, behavioural support through CBT & staff support around boundaries, signposting and managing challenging behaviour	£20,000	£15,257
Springboard	HeadStart Programme: lifestyle support, employer engagement, training, team building and extra tutoring support for essential skills	£18,466	£14,087
Workforce	Jets Programme: personal and social development mentoring, employability coaching	£20,000	£15,257
Bryson	Well-Mind: mental health support through goal planning, conflict resolution, health and nutrition	£19,700	£15,028
Impact	LEAVE Programme: employability mentoring, mental health support, employer interfacing, training, workplace resilience, steps to overall participation	£20,000	£15,257

3.5

While the LMP budget has £90,000 allocated for Bridges to Progression, the total cost of applications above was £117,977. As outlined above, officers recommend to proportionally reduce each award to ensure that we keep within budget.

3.6

The key performance indicators are to engage with 120 young people at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work for a minimum of 10 hours contact time. With the submissions and awards as detailed above we are confident we can deliver a quality and effective intervention to support those most at risk of disengagement supporting a minimum of 120 young people.

Officers are also engaging with the Department for the Economy to seek to incorporate the flexibility offered within Bridges to Progression with future iterations of Skills for Life & Work with the aim of improving employability outcomes. The Department are keen to ensure that

	the learning from Bridges to Progression are utilised as a 'testbed' for innovative approaches to keep young people engaged on and progressing from statutory programmes such as Skills for Life & Work. This engagement will therefore include establishing common measurement and evaluation tools and processes as well as convening targeted engagement with each provider and their participants to capture learning in real time.
3.7	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the agreed 2023/24 budget for the Belfast LMP Action Plan.
3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The project referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and a rural needs assessment completed. Consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development.
4.0	Appendices
	None