

North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 25th November, 2025

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Bradley (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Anglin, Cobain, Doran,
Magee, Meenehan, Murphy, O'Neill and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager;
Mr. C. McCartan, Regeneration Project Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th August were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Doran declared an interest in relation to item 4, Physical Programmes Update, in that he was employed by Westland Community Group Ltd.

Presentation

North Belfast Community Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Morgan, Ligioni Improvement Association, Mr. Manus Maguire and Ms. J. Kinnear from Ashton, to the meeting.

The representatives explained how they had worked with the Department for Communities and the Council to develop an area plan and outlined how the North Belfast Community Partnership was working to deliver the plan through the following themes:

- Early Intervention;
- Poverty;
- Community Inclusion;
- Safer Communities;
- Festivals, Sport and Culture;
- Regeneration;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Economic Prosperity;
- Education;

- Youth; and
- Environment.

Ms. Morgan explained how the themes had been informed by a survey which had been carried out by the Ulster University, and she outlined the main issues which had been raised through the surveys.

She stated that the North Belfast Community Partnership provided representation and a collective voice for the people of north Belfast.

Several Members asked questions with regard to representation and engagement with local community groups. Ms. Morgan explained that there had been extensive community engagement and that the project was both inclusive and transparent, she added that all north Belfast community groups were welcome to become involved in the scheme and that further outreach would be undertaken.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation, and they retired from the meeting.

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for north Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets.

The Senior Planning officers outlined the housing numbers, proposed zones for housing and explained why certain sites had been discounted. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas.

In regards to employment and retail designations, they outlined proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. They emphasised the importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area's economic growth and community development.

The environmental assets within north Belfast were highlighted, including proposed Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs).

Overall, the Members were reminded that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area's natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the Local Development Plan would go out for public consultation in the new year subject to Members' agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group thanked the officers for the update provided.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects outlined the undernoted report:

1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, a North Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the Physical Programme update for North Belfast including the recently completed project – Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street at Appendix 2.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the North being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £800,000 under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 43 projects in total have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 38 have been completed; 2 are at delivery stage; 1 is at pre-construction stage, and 1 remains at due diligence/ initial stage.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	16 (89%)	£708,201
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	1 (6%)	£75,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (4%)	£65,000	1 (6%)	£15,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	25 *	£1,127,500	17 **	£798,201

*This includes additional funding for a LIF 2 project, Ballysillan Youth for Christ.

** This includes additional funding for two LIF 1 projects, Marrowbone Parochial Hall and Jennymount Church.

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/Recommendation
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. Construction works on the gallery paused due to resourcing issues with the contractor. BCC officers are assisting the group to resolve this issue.	Continue engagement with group and HED.
NLIF057	Ardoine Holy Cross Boxing Club (UV – ABC Trust Hub)	£7,317,000 <i>UV- £4,751,000 DfC- £1,300,000 FT- £1,200,000 LIF- £66,000</i>	On Ground	On ground. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. Phase 2 of the project is complete. The final phase, installation of sports hall is due to complete Winter 2025.	Continue engagement with Group.
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building	£1,084,172 <i>UV- £1,019,172 LIF- £65,000</i>	Design stage	Partnership project with UV. Letter of Offer has been signed by UV, BCC and Westland. Project approved by Due Diligence in September 2025. Integrated Design Team has been appointed.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO
NLIF2-23	Ardoine Youth Club and Benview Community Centre	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Funding agreement with group for signature and return. Benview works planned for early New Year with quotations having been provided for works required at Ardoine Youth Club.	Continue engagement with Groups.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – North Belfast was allocated £5.5m. In North Belfast, 7 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m: and 2 projects are on the longer BIF list. Each of the ‘In Principle’ projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Members are asked to note the status update of these projects provided below. The table provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects.

North	Stage 3 - Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k, Malgrove -£950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k <i>Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment</i>
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Stage 3 - Committed	Received approval at June 2025 Planning Committee. Issue of Green Form subject to NIEA and SES responses. Ongoing dialogue between planners, ICT and statutory bodies. Procurement of contractor underway – PQQ complete and ITT to be issued imminently.	Continue engagement with planners and statutory agencies re responses.
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£498,000 <i>BIF- £350,000 DFC- £74,000 Cost Risks- £74,000</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Project signed off at DD. Works Contractor has been appointed and we are awaiting a programme from the contractor. Works period likely to be 10-12 months.	Works to commence on site late 2025, early 2026.

5. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for North was £2,503,158. Five projects received an In Principle funding commitment and a contingency sum of £68,179 has also been retained. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

North Belfast – NRF overview

North	Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises, <i>Stage 1 (Reserve)— Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain, Indian Community Centre, North Belfast Working Men's Club, North City Business Centre, Quaker Service, Belfast Charitable Society, Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Arts for All, Ligoniel Improvement Association</i>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£518,191	Stage 3-Committed	Procurement stage. BCC reviewed comments on funding agreement and continues to liaise with USEL solicitor. Procurement of main contractor complete and will be awarded when funding agreement signed.	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3-Committed	Development stage. Land boundary issue being addressed. BCC awaits an update from DfC regarding the vesting of land process.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoine Youth Enterprises – Community Hub <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£1,717,763 UV- £1,563,067 NRF- £154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Business case stage. Awaiting supplementary Letter of Offer from UV. Second additional funding application has been successful. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed. Main contractor tender issued.	Continue engagement with the group and finalise due diligence.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	On Ground. Contractor started works on 29th September with estimated completion w/c 15th December. First Progress meeting held 29th October. Works progressing.	Continue engagement with the group.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Procurement stage. Planning permission is required; group already applied and received HED consent for ongoing works. Works identified that can be carried out with reduced budget. Structural survey finalised. ICT was appointed in February 2025. They are preparing tender for contractor. Surveys complete	Continue engagement with the group.

			and design pack produced. Submitted for Planning in September 2025.	
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6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new ones. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on the council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in the North Belfast area.

Members are asked to note the updates on the Physical Programme.

North Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Gas Extraction Pipework contractor is on site. Expected completion of gas ring main installation is January 2026. Foul Pumping Station contractor appointed. NIE upgrade connections to fully service the site development have started (with completion anticipated at end of 2027).
Floral Hall Health & Safety Works	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Health & Safety works completed. Options now being considered and discussions ongoing with other funders.
Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Progressing.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	Stage 3 Committed. Technical designs complete. Contractor has been appointed. Contractor currently mobilising and intends to be onsite early January 2026.
Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works	Stage 3 – Committed. Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	Stage 3 Committed. Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	Stage 3 – Committed. Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Communications Boards	Stage 3 – Committed. Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	Stage 3 – Committed. The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.

Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street	Project completed. The Phase 1 H&S works to Clifton Street Cemetery are now completed.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friars Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. A successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution with design fees for Phase 2 has been made.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Reservoir Safety Programme (links to PEACEPLUS)	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Reservoir improvements at Waterworks and Alexandra Park. SEUPB PEACEPLUS funding of €13.5m to enhance shared space and connectivity. Planning application submitted.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. DfC partnership project. Design team continues to develop designs to Planning Stage. Officers continue to respond to queries from DfC regarding the business case.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design complete. However, further discussions ongoing with C&NS to confirm the current requirements & schedule of accommodation for the new facility.
Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Greening and Growing Project	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island programme at the Waterworks. Procurement progressing. Due to be completed by February 2025.
Access to the Hills - Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design team procured. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mtn	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill.
Loughside Playing Fields	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Creation of a modular changing and flexible space facility. Early stage design works underway with a view to moving to procurement.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Duncrue Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Redevelopment of the whole Duncrue site which aims to improve the efficiency of the site. Strategic outline case being worked up.
North Foreshore - Giant's Park	A complex development agreement is in place with Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL). This agreement commits GPBL to deliver over 250 acres of phased development over a number of years in four distinct hubs: Adventure Hub, Welcome Hub, Pit Stop Hub, Distributions and Logistics Hub. Adventure Hub - Members have approved at Council in November 2025,

	changes reflecting market conditions and planning advice. Under the MDA programme the first stage is an Adventure Hub which is currently in the planning process. The next stage of the programme is for a Distribution and Logistics Hub and a Pitstop Hub which comprises commercial uses including food and beverage uses and a hotel.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 th September 2025.
Little York Street/ Little Patrick Street Public Realm Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Public Realm Improvements scheme. Consultants are continuing to work on the design and a planning application has been submitted.

7. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, including Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office and PEACE under SEUPB. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to North Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in North Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined North Belfast geography (Ardoine and Greater Ballysillan).

North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

Project	Status and update
ABC Trust Health & Leisure Hub (links to LIF programme)	On ground. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. Phase 2 of the project is complete. The final phase, installation of sports hall is due to complete December 2025.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	On ground. Partnership project with UV, DfC and DfI. Works progressing, on-site. Pitch, Pump Track and Pavilion design progressing. Stakeholder engagement still ongoing. Project progressing well.
Ardoine Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project (links to NRF programme)	Business case stage. Awaiting supplementary Letter of Offer from UV. Additional funding applications have been successful. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed. Main contractor tender issued.
Sunningdale Community Centre (links to BIF programme)	Business case stage. Site for development identified. Group to submit possessory title application in consultation with their solicitor. Full treatment of invasive species required at site. UV to bring forward new business case including cost to treat.
Westland Community Centre (links to LIF programme)	Letter of offer received. Consultant team appointed.

PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on capital projects under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

North Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park €13.5m SEUPB PEACEPLUS	Enhancements to shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park. Planning ongoing. Integrated Consultancy Team has been appointed for detailed design stage.
Access to the Hills – Glencairn/ Ligoniel <i>Link to Capital Programme</i>	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design Team has been appointed. Next stage is submission to Planning. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing.

DfI funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in North Belfast.

DfI – North Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Under The Bridges Public Realm	Consultants have been appointed to undertake design works and a planning submission is due to be issued November 2025. The works extend to Gamble Street, Tomb Street, Little Patrick Street & several areas under the M3 bridge to create enhanced amenity/urban recreation space.
Sailortown/ Titanic Quarter Bridge	Consultants have been appointed to undertake RIBA Stage 1 & 2 design services for a proposed new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle swing bridge. The bridge could complete the Harbour Loop and provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island, as well as, providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station.

8. Capital funding opportunities

Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 3 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs.”

The Director of Property and Projects stated that she would be providing an update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund projects to the next Area Working Group meetings and that she intended to hold a future meeting of the Working Group on a project site.

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme

The Regeneration Project Officer provided the Working Group with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and highlighted the following key points:

- Recent correspondence from the Economy Minister which outlined that £45m had been committed to Local Economic Partnerships;

- DfC's funding extension of £500k would be subject to confirmation of a contribution from the Council;
- The Director of Finance had identified a further allocation of £200k to the contract extension; and
- Subject to approval processes, it was hoped that the scheme would reopen to applications in December, 2025.

He stated that further detail would be brought to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to agree direction and next steps.

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

Request to present: Community Places

The Working Group acceded to the request from Community Places to present to a future meeting.

Chairperson