

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



**Belfast
City Council**

10th February, 2021

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 11th February, 2021 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

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

2. **Presentations**

- (a) SEUPB - Ms. G. McIntyre and Mr. D. McGarrigle (Pages 1 - 14)
- (b) Queen's University Belfast - Mr. D. Phinnemore

3. **Brexit Services Review** (Pages 15 - 18)

4. **Support for Business** (Pages 19 - 28)

5. **Restricted Items**

- (a) Port Health Unit Update



PEACE PLUS



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Agenda Item 2a



Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projects

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE – PEACE BUILDING



The PEACE PLUS programme will contribute to a more **prosperous and stable society** in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland and will leave a lasting legacy. The programme will achieve this by funding activities that **promote peace and reconciliation** and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the programme area. It will build upon previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes.

Activities that support Peace and reconciliation will be at the core of Programme and all assessments

Context: Programme Development



- Detailed drafting of the Programme Themes and Investment Areas well progressed
- A **summary document** of the views expressed and surveys submitted during the **Stakeholder Engagement process** was published on SEUPBs Website.
- **Bi-lateral engagement** with Government Departments in Northern Ireland and Ireland based on their **Joint North South Position Papers** as work continued in designing the themes.
- **Engagement with European Commission** re progress and technical areas in the Programme – Programme used as best practice example in terms of development (particularly on stakeholder engagement)

Context: Programme Development



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Thematic Areas

Theme 1

**Building
Peaceful and
Thriving
Communities**

Theme 2

**Delivering
Economic
Regeneration
and
Transformation**

Theme 3

**Empowering
and Investing
in Our Young
People**

Theme 4

**Healthy and
Inclusive
Communities**

Theme 5

**Supporting a
Sustainable
Future**

Theme 6:

**Building and
Embedding
Partnership
and
Collaboration**

Investment Areas

1.1 Co-designed
Local Community
Peace Action
Plans

1.2 Empowering
Communities

1.3 Building
Positive Relations

1.4 Reimagining
Communities

2.1 SME
Development and
Transition

2.2 Innovation
Challenge Fund

2.3 Programme
Area Skills
Development
Programme

2.4 Smart Towns
and Villages

3.1 Learning
Together
Programme

3.2 PEACE PLUS
Youth
Programme

3.3 Youth Mental
Health &
Wellbeing

4.1 Collaborative
Health and Social
Care

4.2 Rural
Regeneration and
Social Inclusion

4.3 Victims and
Survivors

5.1 Biodiversity,
Nature Recovery
and Resilience

5.2 Marine and
Coastal
Management

5.3 Water Quality
and Catchment
Management

5.4 Water Quality
Improvement
Programme

5.5 Geothermal
Demonstration
Programme

5.6 Sustainable
Travel
Connections

6.1 Strategic
Planning and
Engagement

6.2 Maintaining
and Forging
Relationships
between Citizens

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities



- **Investment Area 1: Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans**

To enable and empower local community partnerships, led by the Council, to select and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis, which will result in improved local services and facilities, and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

PEACE PLUS Action Plans will be produced for each of the 17 local authority areas. These will be designed to complement the community planning approach adopted across the Programme area.

- **Investment Area 2: Empowering Communities**

To empower community, voluntary and statutory organisations at all levels across the Programme area to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and prosperous society.

3 Strands: (1) The Empowering Communities to Embed Peace Small Grants Programme; (2) The Institutional Capacity Development Programme; (3) The Community-Based Interventions Programme

- **Investment Area 3: Building Positive Relations**

To promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

It will provide support for projects which transcend local boundaries and have the potential to achieve significant peace and reconciliation across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

- **Investment Area 4: Re-Imaging Communities**

To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of transformative shared space and services, which will support and embed peace and reconciliation.

This Programme is a transformative re-imaging programme, which will create new significant shared spaces for use by all communities; or increase the shared usage of existing facilities. It will result in an increased number of individuals and groups utilising shared spaces and accessing shared services.

Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation



- **Investment Area 1: SME Development and Transition**

To enhance sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs, including by productive investments.

The Programme will build upon existing investment to support SMEs to operate at scale through cross border collaboration; engage in commercially led innovation; effectively transition to engage in the low carbon, circular economy; and strengthen capacity for maximum engagement in a post Brexit, post COVID-19 economic landscape.

- **Investment Area 2: Innovation Challenge Fund**

To develop and enhance research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies.

This will support high level, commercially focused research, development and innovation within key Programme area growth sectors, resulting in increased productivity, higher export levels and sustainable employment. It will deliver major change innovation projects, which result in lasting local and national economic and social benefit.

- **Investment Area 3: Programme Area Skills Development Programme**

To develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

This will support area-based approaches, designed to address key skills gaps, which will result in increased productivity and employment and higher levels of cross border labour mobility. It will enable cross community and cross border collaboration between education and training-based collaborations which will reduce duplication and maximise the capacity to address existing and emerging skills gaps. It will encompass the opportunity for up skilling, reskilling, training and job placement opportunities.

- **Investment Area 4: Smart Cities Towns and Villages**

To reap the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisation and public authorities.

It will provide greater access to and awareness of telecommunications. An area-based approach will be adopted to the creation of Smart Towns and Villages. This proven model utilises a social innovation led approach to maximise the potential of ICT to deliver improved social and economic outcomes in target areas; particularly those of a rural nature. The Programme will also incorporate measures for the transformation of vacant spaces and facilities within town and village centres for communal recreational and social usage.

Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People



- **Investment Area 1: Learning Together Programme**

To provide direct, sustained contact between children from all backgrounds through collaboration between early childhood settings, schools and youth organisations, to promote good relations and enhance children's skills to contribute to a cohesive society.

It will facilitate the education together of those of different religious beliefs, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic children and young persons; including those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant education providers.

- **Investment Area 2: PEACE Plus Youth Programme**

To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

It is a targeted capacity building Programme for young people aged 14-24 years, who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or dissident activity. The Programme is outcomes focused across a number of key areas including good relations, personal development and citizenship.

- **Investment Area 3: Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing**

To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

It will support non statutory provision activity involving cross community and cross border multi-agency collaborative approaches, which will lead to improved understanding of youth mental health issues and the sharing of best practice to improve related interventions. In addition to mental health, supported projects will also focus on the social, emotional and environmental wellbeing of young people and building their capacity. The Programme will make a considerable contribution to peace and reconciliation through the development of enhanced emotional resilience in our young people.

Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities



• **Investment Area 1: Collaborative Health and Social Care**

To ensure equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care.

It will build upon existing and new cross community and cross border collaborative approaches to health and social care delivery models, to deliver an increased number of episodes of care. It will support the development of innovative community based health care interventions, which complement statutory provision. It will support information communications technology to transform healthcare services and reduce inequalities as a potential highlighted by COVID-19.

• **Investment Area 2: Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion**

To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of key services and supports in rural areas.

The Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion Programme will support social, economic and environmental projects which contribute to the creation of healthy and thriving communities in rural areas. By adopting a strengths-based approach, the programme will contribute to the creation of a more balanced society, in which our rural communities thrive.

• **Investment Area 3: Victim & Survivors**

To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of services.

To enable post traumatic growth, a structured and consistent approach to enable those wishing to engage with the legacy of the past should be sustained. The proposed areas are as follows:

- Further development of the health and wellbeing case worker network model; and
- Advocacy support programmes (Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement) sector training and development.

Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable Future



- **Investment Area 1: Biodiversity, Nature Recovery & Resilience**

To enhance protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in the urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution. It will facilitate the recovery of additional protected habitats and priority species.

- **Investment Area 2: Marine and Coastal Management**

To promote climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and disaster resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches. It will enable a cross border approach to the protection of the marine and coastal environment from natural and anthropological threats; safeguarding this irreplaceable natural asset and resulting in economic, social and cultural benefits.

- **Investment Area 3: Water Quality and Catchment Management**

It will enable a cross border collaborative approach to the management and improvement of water quality in selected transition water bodies. It will improve freshwater quality in cross border river basins and result in an increased percentage of cross border freshwater bodies in cross border river basins with good or high quality.

- **Investment Area 4: Water Quality Improvement Programme**

It will result in an improvement in the water quality of three specific transitional water bodies: Lough Erne, Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay through cross border collaboration.

- **Investment Area 5: Geothermal Demonstration Programme**

It will build the knowledge, skills and capacity required to develop a policy framework and encourage investment in the geothermal technology sector. To achieve the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector, will result in a reduced reliance on fossil fuels and enhanced energy security.

- **Investment Area 6: Sustainable Travel Connections**

The Sustainable Travel Connections Programme will increase connectivity in the form of sustainable public transport. It will involve significant investment in sustainable rail stock. The improvement of the rail service linking the two capital cities and the smaller adjacent urban centres can exploit this dynamic to its full potential, providing spin-off agglomeration and wider economic and environmental benefits.

Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration



• Investment Area 1: Strategic Planning and Engagement

It will support, the engagement of strategic stakeholders, targeting legal and administrative obstacles to cooperation in relevant sectors. The funding will focus on enabling joint development and management of strategies; cooperation capacity building; and identification of solutions to reduce obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Cross Border Council Cluster strategies

• Investment Area 2: Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens

Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people to people actions.

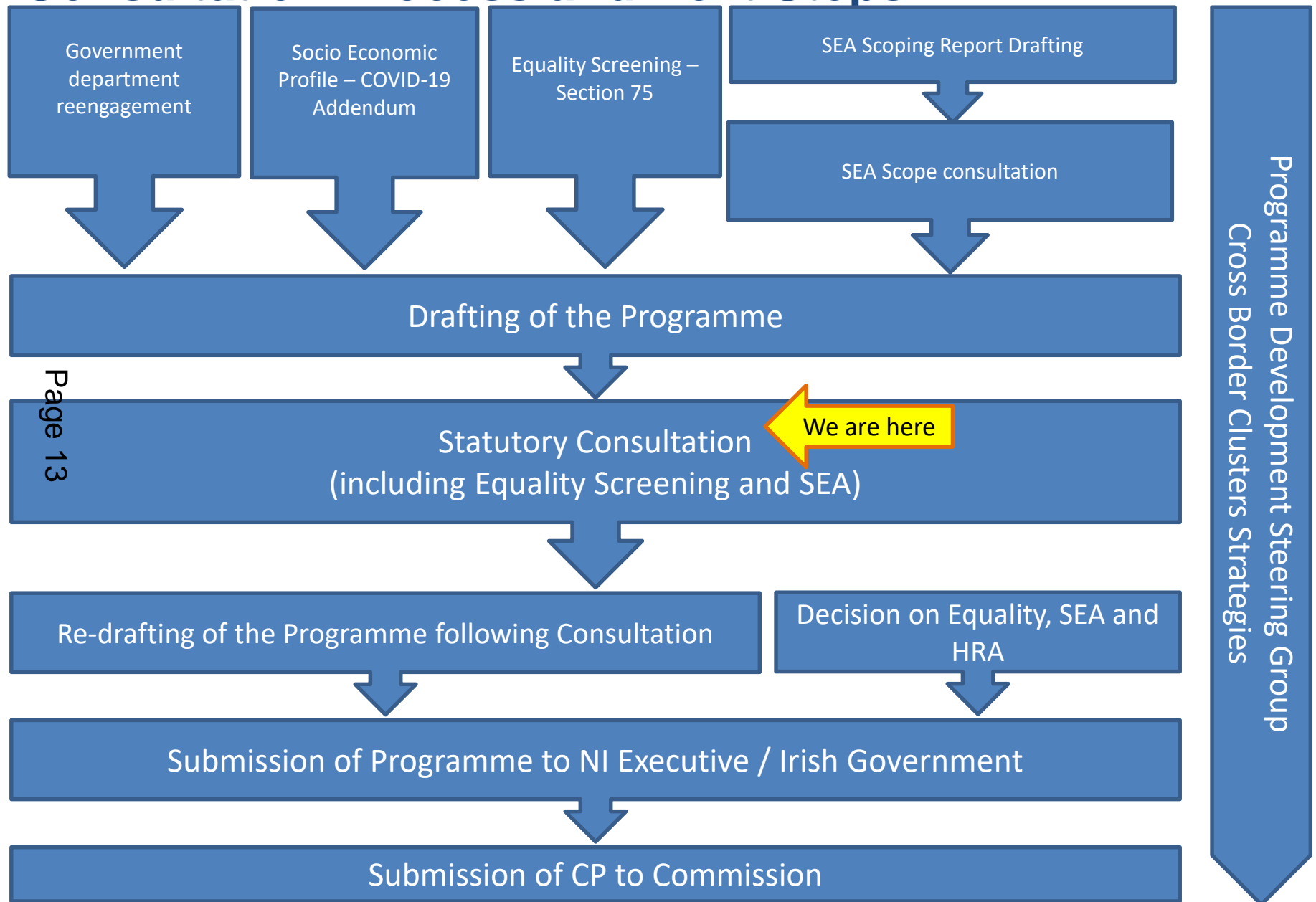
This Programme will put in place mechanisms to finance smaller projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civic cohesion on a cross border basis.

Local Authority Co-Designed Community Plans



- PEACE PLUS Action Plans will be produced for each of the **17 local authority areas**
- The **Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans** will enable diverse partnerships to establish priority actions for their local areas and collectively address these in a manner which will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.
- Actions within the localised plans will span the range of social, environmental and economic interventions included within the PEACE PLUS Programme. However, principally, the plans will be centred around three core themes:
 - **Community regeneration and transformation;**
 - **Thriving and peaceful communities;** and
 - **Celebrating culture, diversity and inclusion.**
- This approach will enable and empower local community partnerships to self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis; which will result in improved local services and facilities; and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation across the region.

Consultation Process and Next Steps



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Brexit Services Review

Brexit Committee
11 February 2021



Initial Review of Impacts

- A review was undertaken with all the services that completed Brexit readiness templates
- Purpose of the review was to identify any issues that had arisen in period since the end of the transition period and to seek assurance that these were now being dealt with through business as usual processes
- Separate updates will be provided re the Port Health Unit and support for business
- There has been no requirement to date to activate the support for vulnerable people processes



Initial Review of Impacts

- The majority of services have not identified any issues to date
- The main areas of concern are around availability of supplies, delays in obtaining supplies and price increases
- Services are liaising with suppliers and to date there has been no disruption to supply
- Services are monitoring prices and any increases will be notified through the usual financial processes
- Services have confirmed that any issues will be dealt with through the relevant Council processes



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Subject:	Brexit Business Support Update
Date:	11 February 2021
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

☒

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
1.1	At the meeting of the Brexit Committee in January 2021, members received an update on support provided to help local businesses overcome challenges and help them address impact of UK exit from EU. The purpose of this report is to update members on the impact faced by Belfast businesses in a constantly changing environment and provides an update on the current project status and outline future delivery plans.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the work undertaken to date by the Enterprise and Business Growth Unit to deliver support to enable businesses to overcome Brexit challenges.

3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that, the Enterprise and Business Growth team are updating evidence-based analysis to determine what impact EU Exit is having on Belfast businesses. Data and insights from this analysis helps identify if support is required, assess gaps in provision and if appropriate, design support to meet local business needs in a timely manner.
3.2	<p>This analysis builds on earlier work undertaken at the end of 2020 and is based on discussions with professionals supporting Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) that are navigating their way through EU Exit. Main issues include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior to the Deal, the biggest concerns were among businesses that exported to the EU, particularly RoI. There was a wide range of issues highlighted reflecting the complexities of the new arrangements and the fact that few businesses have adjusted. Now most issues and confusion are around the operation of the NI Protocol and specifically the import of goods from GB. - Where emphasis had been on challenges for exporters, the NI Protocol means there are new paperwork requirements when moving goods from the rest of the UK into or out of Northern Ireland. This impacts on a larger number of small businesses that purchase from the rest of the UK. - With the EU Exit agreement only finalised a few days before it was implemented, both GB and NI businesses had very little time to prepare for new procedures and set up new processes. This has caused considerable friction with uncertainties around what is required and who is responsible for providing it. - It is likely that as businesses and the economy recover from lockdown, and as stockpiles are used up, there will be an increasing number of businesses that have to adapt to the new arrangements. Many that have been shut owing to lockdown measures arising from COVID are likely to be unprepared. At this stage, the volume of goods brought across the Irish Sea is estimated to be around half the level prior to the pandemic. - There are some smaller businesses, especially microbusinesses, that do not understand what they have to do and have never been importers before. - There is a mix of short and long-term issues. For example, there are significant logistics issues that businesses are facing immediately in organising the right paperwork, but

	<p>longer-term issues around how supply chains may be affected and how transport routes may change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite these challenges, Northern Ireland's status of being in both the UK and the EU single market for goods, is a particular opportunity for manufacturers and in attracting foreign investment. These opportunities will not be immediately clear to foreign multinationals from outside Europe and there is an important role for all the agencies in NI to raise awareness as these opportunities will not be immediately clear to foreign multinationals.
3.3	<p>This analysis contains a number of detailed themes in Appendix One, illustrating how SMEs are impacted and this intelligence has informed support requirements. A summary of the main issues includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact on SME businesses in the wholesale and retail trade is greater. - There is still a misunderstanding of what a grace period is and a body of education needs to be carried out, especially at a microbusiness level. Education is required to raise awareness on changes to paperwork, procedures and logistics. The need to provide new information on these areas will be required to continue for some time yet. - There are issues around who is responsible for completing the paperwork – supplier or customer – and what documents need to go with goods. - For SMEs, there is concern and uncertainty about whether they are 'doing the right thing' and what the paperwork should look like for "at risk" goods. - There are impacts on businesses' cash flows, the treatment of VAT payments and new costs associated with much of this, the time required, getting advice, additional haulage costs, new markings, delayed supplies etc. It may be necessary for SMEs to find new suppliers and this will require new credit term agreements. - Manufactured goods produced in NI may require dual certification. - There have been cases of goods being delayed because customs are considering NI as outside the EU and are unaware of the Protocol. For example, where NI businesses have transported goods between EU countries. - Visas and recognition of qualifications has been less of an issue more recently
3.4	<p>Using this analysis, four areas for support identified are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provisions of mentoring and advice to individual businesses (one-to-one) to prepare action plans. In many cases, businesses need one-off advice; help to walk through new processes, so they are empowered to do this themselves in future. Evidence from consultations showed there was a wide range of cases and problems requiring unique solutions. This approach will ensure the council's support is responsive and agile.

	<p>Retail and Wholesale sector will be targeted, although support will be open to all sectors. Mentoring support was launched on 28 January via social media, business networks and via direct contact with businesses. Four businesses have enrolled for support and marketing will continue to ensure that businesses are supported. Members will be aware that there are a range of other organisations who are currently providing support to businesses in relation to EU Exit. Officers will continue to work with these organisations to ensure content aligns, adds value to what is already in place and businesses are signposted to relevant support to meet their needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of support (two webinars will be held in March. Protocol and the customs themes processes but will be led by business need and additional marketing undertaken to reach clients) to raise awareness of the new procedures for small and micro-businesses that import from GB. Requirements through the Protocol and the customs processes are likely to affect many more businesses and many businesses are still unaware because they are in lockdown. - Raising awareness of the Protocol in GB and in the EU. The consultations highlight the problems with GB suppliers but also cases where EU suppliers or customers are not aware of NI's status.
3.5	<p>There is an important role for all the government organisations in NI to raise awareness of NI's status in both the UK and the EU single market for goods and use it to attract investment. (For example, manufacturers and in attracting foreign investment). Therefore we will be working closely with organisations such as Invest NI, Intertrade Ireland, Belfast Chamber, FSB to name a few to ensure that businesses are aware of the supports available and can access them in a timely manner.</p>
3.6	<p>An update on progress will be presented at a future committee meeting.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All activities outlined within this report will be resourced from the 2020/21 Economic Development budgets agreed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 4 March 2020.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The proposed project referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.</p>

4.0	Appendices
	Appendix One – summary of the main issues raised in discussions with experts that have been working with SMEs through EU Exit.

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Appendix 1

Summary of the main issues raised in discussions with experts that have been working with SMEs through EU Exit and draws out the implications for the support they need.

- 1. Change of focus** - issues around exporting to importing means that EU Exit is affecting a larger group of businesses than anticipated. In total, purchases of goods from GB is estimated to be worth £10.4bn¹ and of this 63% (£6.5bn) was purchased by the NI Wholesale and Retail Sector. The table below shows how many more businesses in NI make purchases from GB than sell there. An estimated 15,134 businesses purchased from GB, while half of this (7,804²) sold goods there. It suggests that the number of businesses that could potentially be affected is substantial, that many are micro businesses and that much of this volume will be in wholesale and retail.

Number of businesses purchasing from and selling to GB, by size

Type	Size	Total no. businesses in BESES* population	Purchase from GB	Sell to GB
Micro	0-9	44,071	10,538	5,363
Small	10-49	8,558	3,649	1,827
Medium	50-249	1,299	729	445
Large	250+	319	218	169
Total	-	54,247	15,134	7,804

*Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES)

Source: NISRA: Overview of NI Trade with GB, October 2019

- 2. Timing:** lockdown and stockpiling prior to EU Exit has meant that the volume of trade has been limited so far (volumes of trade across the Irish Sea is around half of its pre-pandemic levels). Some seasonal businesses may not yet have started to address these issues yet. For example, many small retailers will still be closed. It will become more

¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/eu-exit-analysis/eu-exit-trade-analysis>

²

www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/NISRA_Overview_of_NI_Trade_with_GB_2017_0.pdf

important that new paperwork, procedures and logistics adapt and challenges will continue for some months. Protocol and elements of the Deal will change through further negotiation. For example, there is a grace period for supermarkets and food and requirements for UKCA certification on sales into GB and will be implemented from next year. It means that uncertainty, and the need to raise awareness and provide new information will continue for some time yet.

There are still people who misunderstand what a grace period is and that it relates only on export health certificates. There is still that body of education to be done, especially at the microbusiness level.³

3. **Logistical issues:** Most obviously, EU Exit has caused a number of logistical problems. Some goods and shipments have been delayed as a result of missing or the wrong paperwork, as businesses in NI and GB were not prepared and were unclear what was needed. Hauliers have then faced problems as they have been unable to collect shipments, delaying deliveries, reducing efficiency and increasing rates.

Consultations found that NI businesses have reported struggling to deal with GB suppliers – a lot of GB suppliers were not prepared or aware of the Protocol leading to a lack of engagement or not supplying at all. Some NI businesses have offered to do this. The experience of one consultee was that there were many cases where GB suppliers were not prepared, and some where GB businesses had paused supply completely. As a result, clients have been charged with VAT because of the wrong paperwork. These are particular issues where different goods are combined and require separate declarations. There are specific challenges for small businesses that use consolidators in GB and more generally for companies that bring in goods (or sell to EU) that transit GB. For some, it may be easier to import directly from the EU, which would have implications for NI ports. Suppliers and hauliers will no doubt be considering efficient methods and routes. (Information provided from small qualitative sample).

4. **Customs administration:** The main tool for managing goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, or bringing goods into Northern Ireland from outside the UK, is the free Trader Support Service (TSS). However, some businesses are either not aware of it or

³ Aodhán Connolly Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Oral evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland protocol, HC 767, Wednesday 6 January 2021

find it difficult to use. In general, businesses will need to apply for a special 'XI' EORI code with HMRC.

There are issues around who is responsible for completing the paperwork – supplier or customer – and what documents need to go with goods. Often the supplier will do the first declaration and the customer in NI must complete the supplementary declaration, but it is not always clear who has done what. Hauliers have also asked for payments for completing declarations.

The Protocol also introduces the idea of “at risk” goods – goods that are at risk of onward sale into the EU. Consultations suggest that the definition of this is much broader than anticipated and that current definitions are very high level, leading to a higher proportion as high risk. There is a limited capacity among agents and even knowledge in making these changes. The definitions of “at risk” and categorising goods is a new process for everyone. For small businesses, there is concern and uncertainty about whether they are doing the right thing and what the paperwork should look like for “at risk” goods.

5. **Cashflow, VAT, Tariffs, Credit terms:** There is an impact from problems on businesses' cash flows and the treatment of VAT payments. There are new costs associated with much of this; the time required, getting advice, additional haulage costs, new markings, delayed supplies etc. It may be necessary to find new suppliers and this will require new credit term agreements. Businesses will have to look at pricing as the system settles down, while some are tied into longer-term fixed price contracts. The process for reclaiming duties is another area of uncertainty, with a lack of clarity around how this will function, and how long repayments will take. Consultees reported issues around the de-minimis rules on rebates which may impact some businesses.

6. **Diverging emerging standards**

Consultees described potential challenges around the replacement of the CE marks. These will expire for goods placed in the GB market at the end of this year and be replaced by the new UKCA. It means that manufactured goods produced in NI may require dual certification. Again, advice will be needed on how these will change and for which products.

7. **Visas and recognition of qualifications:** This will relate mainly to service-sector businesses and has been less of an issue recently, perhaps overshadowed by the short-term challenges relating to goods. Where there are issues, it may be that businesses are able to use industry bodies for help.
8. **Wider understanding of the protocol in the EU:** There have been cases of goods being delayed because customs are considering NI as outside the EU and are unaware of the Protocol. For example, where NI businesses have transported goods between EU countries.