

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



**Belfast
City Council**

5th November, 2025

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall, and remotely via MS Teams on Wednesday, 5th November, 2025 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
- (d) Schedule of Meetings 2026 (Pages 1 - 4)

2. Presentation (Restricted)

- (a) St George's Market Traders

3. Restricted Items

- (a) St George's Market Update - Storage Proposals (Pages 5 - 10)
- (b) 2 Royal Avenue Update (Pages 11 - 16)
- (c) Vacant to Vibrant Programme (Pages 17 - 34)

4. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

- (a) Notice of Motion - Bike Bunker Trial (Pages 35 - 36)

5. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update (Pages 37 - 42)
- (b) Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements - Council Response (Pages 43 - 58)

6. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) International Engagement - Update on Proposed Approach (Pages 59 - 80)
- (b) Major Events Update - Christmas Animation Programme 2025 (Pages 81 - 84)

7. **Growing Business and the Economy**

- (a) Enterprise Support Service Update (Pages 85 - 90)

8. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

- (a) City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan - Mid-Year Report (Pages 91 - 116)
- (b) Minutes of the Belfast Stories Working Group - 18th September 2025 (Pages 117 - 120)
- (c) Minutes of the City Regeneration Members' Working Group - 13th October 2025 (Pages 121 - 122)



Subject:	City Growth and Regeneration Committee Schedule of Meetings 2026
Date:	5th November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee 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 or Summary of main Issues
	To advise the Committee of the dates and times of the meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee between January and December, 2026.
2.0	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to approve the schedule of meetings for 2026.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The monthly meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee is normally held at 5.15 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.
3.2	However, due to holiday periods and the timing of the monthly Council meetings and, in order to assist with the decision-making process, it has been necessary on occasions to move some of the meetings to earlier or later in the month.
3.3	Please note that as previously agreed, special meetings of the Committee have also been scheduled in respect of presentations.
3.4	<p>Accordingly, the following dates have been identified for meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for the period from January to December 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 14th January at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 28th January at 5:15pm (Special); • Wednesday 11th February at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 11th March at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 25th March at 5:15pm (Special); • Wednesday 15th April at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 13th May at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 27th May at 5:15pm (Special); • Wednesday 10th June at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 12th August at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 26th August at 5:15pm (Special); • Wednesday 9th September at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 7th October at 5.15 pm;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 21st October at 5:15pm (Special); • Wednesday 11th November at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 25th November at 5:15pm (Special); and • Wednesday 9th December at 5.15 pm.
3.5	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Subject:	Notice of Motion – Bike Bunker Trial
Date:	5th November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider a motion in relation to a Bike Bunker trial, which was referred to the Committee by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 23rd October, 2025.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to note that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or fall within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.</p> <p>At this stage, the Committee is asked to note that the notice of motion has been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report will be brought back to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the motion and the potential cost implications.</p>

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>At the meeting of the Standards and Business Committee held on 23rd October, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor Groogan, was referred to the Committee for consideration:</p>
3.2	<p><u>Bike Bunker Trial</u></p> <p>“This Council notes the progress being made by Dublin City Council in regard to the Bike Bunkers Scheme and their recent trial of this project. They are a way to securely store bikes for those who don’t have easy access to off street storage, particularly in terrace housing.</p> <p>This Council will seek to commit to carrying out a trial to find where demand is across Belfast and where people can register their interest. As well as working collaboratively with our partners such as the Department of Infrastructure and cycling advocacy groups, as we look to find way to support and expand practical sustainable city living.”</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor Brian Smyth Seconder: Councillor Áine Groogan</p>
3.3	<p>The motion calls upon the Council to carry out a trial to find out demand for a Bike Bunkers Scheme across Belfast. A previous motion on Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities was before the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and subsequently the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, which agreed to look at how covered cycle stands could be incorporated into the Council’s existing programme of work.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None at this stage as there is no commitment to proceed with the Notice of Motion. Details of any financial and resource implications will be reported at a subsequent meeting.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.



Subject:	Housing Association Grant Update
Date:	5 th November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control
Contact Officer:	Paula Conway, Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

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 advise Members of recent changes to Housing Association Grant (HAG) rates announced by the Department for Communities (DfC) and outline the potential implications for the delivery of social housing within Belfast.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. note the recent changes to Housing Association Grant (HAG) announced by DfC; II. note the potential challenges these changes present for the delivery of social housing in Belfast; and III. note that a more comprehensive report will be brought back to Committee at a later stage following detailed review of this announcement and further engagement with the statutory partners and delivery agents.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Minister for Communities has recently announced changes in grant funding for the delivery of new social homes across Northern Ireland. The Minister confirmed that the proportion of Housing Association Grant funding (HAG) provided by the Department for Communities (DfC) for new social housing starts will decrease, with the average grant reducing from 54% to 46% of total costs. The benchmark costs will increase by 13.7 percentage points on average to take account of changes to construction costs, inflation, rent levels and interest rates and will apply from 1 December 2025 until the end of the 2026/27 financial year. However, the grant associated with the development of new social housing will reduce by 7.7 percentage points on average. What this means is that the calculation has taken account of relevant recent changes to costs and concluded that against these higher costs, and anticipated higher income from rent, the grant can reduce slightly.
3.2	The Minister explained that, given the challenging financial context, the changes are intended to secure the maximum number of new homes from the Department's £177.5 million budget this year.
3.3	The Department has confirmed that the revised framework will reduce the average level of grant support available to housing associations, with the stated aim of ensuring consistency across the region and maximising the number of schemes that can be supported within existing budgets.
3.4	The Minister acknowledged that meeting the Programme for Government target of 5,850 new social homes within this mandate will be difficult. However, he emphasised the need to

	<p>“achieve more, for less” and expressed confidence that housing associations will continue to deliver for those most in need.</p>
3.5	<p>Under the previous funding model, Belfast received an average grant level of around 54% of scheme costs. As previously discussed with Members, this level of grant funding presented viability challenges for delivery of certain housing products within the Belfast Boundary area. These challenges were particularly acute in the City Centre where the Local Development Plan identifies significant housing growth as a strategic priority.</p>
3.6	<p>Following the announcement, the regional average grant rate has now been reduced from 54% to 46%, a decrease of 8 percentage points. Belfast is set to receive an even lower rate of 42.5%, which is 11.5 percentage points below its previous level. For Belfast, this represents just over 21% reduction relative to the original regional average, placing Belfast at a distinct disadvantage compared to other areas. Housing Associations will need to secure more private finance or absorb higher costs to deliver the same schemes.</p>
3.7	<p>While the Department has emphasised the need for efficiency, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) has expressed serious concern about the impact of these changes. NIFHA warned that <i>“the budget for the Social Housing Development Programme is already insufficient to meet need, and that the reduction in grant rates will render many schemes financially unviable, particularly in Belfast where costs are higher”</i>. Analysis carried out last year <i>“indicated that, at a 48% regional grant rate and 44.5% for Belfast, 70% of 75 sites examined were unviable and unlikely to progress. With the Belfast rate now expected to fall further to 42.5%, notably below the new regional average, the consequences are expected to be more severe, with a significant proportion of planned developments at risk of delay or cancellation”</i>. NIFHA have also expressed concerns that <i>“as the funding gap will have to be met by housing associations, this will require longer repayment terms and higher borrowing costs which in turn could have the potential to impact rents. For Housing Associations, pursuing schemes where rents become unaffordable is simply not viable”</i>. NIFHA also advise that the <i>“initial investigation into the impact of the rate changes suggest new build developments appear to be more viable in regional and rural areas outside of Belfast”</i>.</p>
3.8	<p>At this stage, the full impact of the Department’s announcement is yet to be fully understood. However, following the joint meeting of the City Regeneration & Growth and People & Communities Committee on 27th August 2025 when NIHE presented on the city centre waiting list, officers had already commenced work to assess the viability challenges associated with delivering homes within the city centre under the then-existing Total Cost Indicators (TCI) and Housing Association Grant (HAG) levels. The relationship between these calculations in determining the level of grant funding is outlined in Appendix 1. These rates were already perceived as insufficient to support delivery in high-cost urban areas. Work to date has</p>

3.9	<p>included engagement across the sector to consider the cost basis specific for city centre housing development and explore how housing associations, the private sector and Council might advocate for a more refined, market sensitive approach, particularly in progressing a dedicated city centre TCI. This would reflect the Local Development Plan's demographic assessment and the strategic importance of housing in the city centre.</p> <p>With this recent announcement of further reductions to the grant rate, it is now critical to understand the full impact of these revised grant levels, which seem to have the potential to exacerbate existing viability concerns and pose greater risks to housing delivery especially given the current housing need of 13,599 people across the city (as at June 2025, NIHE data), spanning families, young people, and the elderly. Of these, 11,371 have been identified as being in housing stress.</p>
3.10	<p>Whilst further analysis will be required there are concerns that lower grant rates are likely to slow the pace of new social housing delivery, reduce the number of schemes that can proceed, and make it harder to meet housing targets.</p>
3.11	<p>Council officers will continue to engage with DfC, the Housing Executive, Housing Associations, Developers and NIFHA to understand the detailed implications for Belfast-based schemes. A fuller report will be brought back to Council in due course, setting out the scale of the impact, options for mitigating risks, and any recommendations for Council engagement or advocacy.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p>Appendices –</p> <p>Appendix 1: Explanation of relationship between Total Cost Indicators (TCI's) and Housing Association Grant (HAG)</p>

Appendix 1: Explanation of relationship between Total Cost Indicators (TCI's) and Housing Association Grant (HAG)

Total Cost Indicators (TCI's)

TCIs are 'all-in' forecast unit costs used to assess social housing funding covering three main cost elements:

- **Acquisition** Element (Cost of land/property),
- **Works** Cost (Construction & building costs); and
- **On-Cost** (Professional fees etc)

Each council area is placed into a TCI Cost Group by DfC which determines how much grant funding housing associations receive through the Housing Association Grant (HAG).

Housing Association Grant Rate (HAG)

This rate determines actual grant funding for each scheme when applied to above TCI figure.

Grant Rates typically cover c 55% of total scheme costs with housing associations fund the remaining c45%.

This page is intentionally left blank



Subject:	Department for Infrastructure Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements Draft Consultation Response
Date:	5 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, 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
Some time in the future
Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

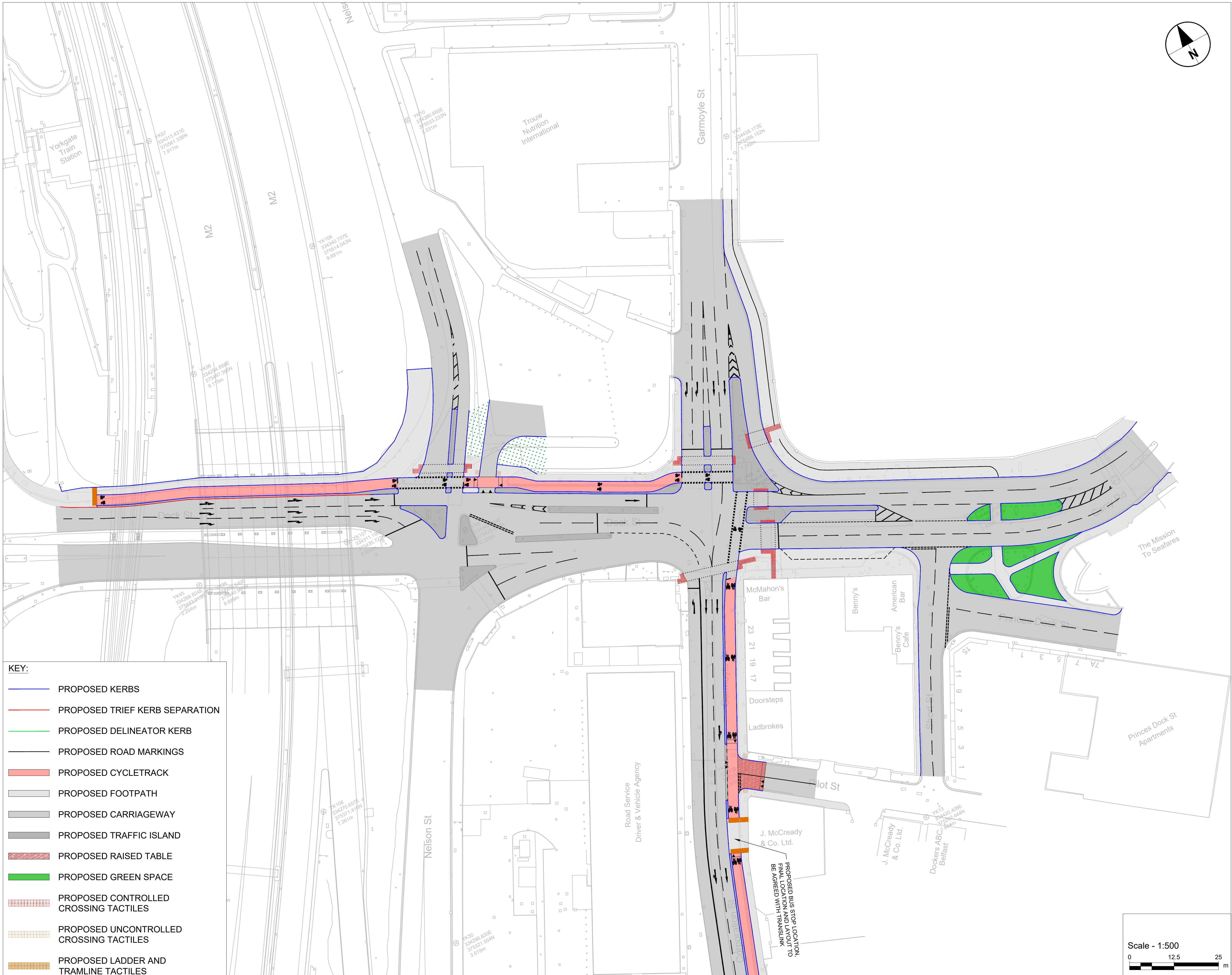
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements currently out for consultation by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), and to agree the draft response to be submitted from Belfast City Council.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the content of this report in relation to the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements that are currently out for consultation. II. Agree the Council's draft consultation response submission to DfI on the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements as enclosed with this report in Appendix B, which will be submitted to DfI on the 14th November subject to Council ratification on the 1st December.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	<p>The Department for Infrastructure has developed proposals for Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycle improvements. These proposals aim to provide 1.5km of new high quality active travel infrastructure, connecting York Street Station to Ulster University and the Cathedral Quarter via Dock St, Corporation St and the Dunbar Link. This route forms a key route identified within the Belfast Cycle Network. A link to the consultation is included here https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/sailortown-and-ulster-university-pedestrian-and-cycling-improvements , with construction drawings included within Appendix A of this report. The closing date for the Consultation is the 14th November 2025.</p>
3.2	<p>Key features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new segregated cycle facility and improved footways between Yorkgate Train Station and the University of Ulster Campus via Dock St, Corporation St and the Dunbar Link. • Installation of new pedestrian and cyclist crossing points to improve accessibility and safety at Corporation St and across the Dunbar Link. • Improved connectivity to key destinations, including Sailortown, City Quays, the emerging residential and amenity opportunities in the Corporation St and Tomb area, including the Under the Bridges project.

3.3	<p>A Consultation drop in event was held on the 23rd October 2025 where members of the City Regeneration and Development team attended and provided feedback in person. The feedback provided has been captured in the attached response (Appendix B of this report).</p> <p><u>Main Report</u></p>
3.4	<p>The draft consultation response is focused on several key points under the following headings that are summarised below;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Context 2. Alignment with emerging development landscape 3. General comments <p><i>1. Strategic Context</i></p>
3.5	<p>The proposed works align with the ambitions and targets set out in The Belfast Agenda, the city's Community Plan and 'A Bolder Vision' therefore Belfast City Council is supportive of the vision and the ambitions set out within the Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements scheme. The scheme would contribute to realising the vision for Belfast as set out in the Agenda, to be 'beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant and being a sustainable city, shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict.'</p>
3.6	<p>A Bolder Vision is an ambitious blueprint for Belfast to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city, developed by Belfast City Council. The Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements proposal will help to support the strategy's vision to 'fundamentally change the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car' and to 'remove severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all' in part by reducing the vehicular spatial allocation of the Dunbar Link.</p>
3.7	<p>The Belfast Cycling Network (BCN) and the Strategic Plan for Greenways are already in place and the Active Travel Delivery Plan aims to add to these existing strategies by providing a plan for active travel infrastructure for the rest of NI. Specifically, it sets out how DfI will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure in the urban and rural settlements over the next ten years. Similar to the BCN, it aims to ensure that infrastructure is designed to be safe, accessible and interconnected, thus encouraging people to build active travel into their travel choices. Given the importance of the provision of an Active Travel Network for Belfast, and the</p>

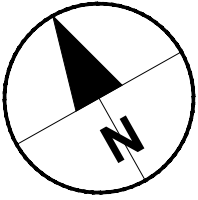
	<p>proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements, it is important that Belfast City Council inputs into this consultation process to ensure alignment with emerging capital developments in the area, including Council's Under the Bridges scheme, the planned housing led regeneration scheme on Corporation St being taken forward through the our Delivery Partner, Grahams and the proposed Sailortown / Titanic Quarter Bridge.</p>
3.8	<p><i>2. Alignment with emerging development landscape</i></p> <p>The proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvement scheme will provide active travel provision along Dock Street, Corporation Street, and the Dunbar Link for pedestrians and cyclists, and will help to re-establish links between communities and the city centre. The proposal is cognisant of the upcoming development landscape in the area, providing improved connectivity links from north Belfast, Sailortown, City Quay's, the Waterfront and the city centre for existing and future residents.</p>
3.9	<p>The landscape of this area of the city is working through a period of transformation with more than 4,000 student units have been constructed within the York Street, Great Patrick Steet and Nelson Street area's since 2015, with a further pipeline of development opportunities including several residential schemes bringing forward c2,000 additional units in the near future. These schemes include Councils Housing Led Regeneration Opportunity site at Corporation St (c280 homes) 39 Corporation Street (895 student), Clarendon Wharf (600 residential) 21-29 Corporation Street (298 residential), Exchange Street (246 residential) and City Quay's 4 (256 residential).</p>
3.10	<p>The Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvement scheme also provides the opportunity to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to the Council's '<i>Under the Bridges</i>' project to improve the connectivity links between the City Centre and City Quays / Sailortown and to provide an enhanced amenity / urban recreation space in the area under the M3 bridges. • Provide a connection between the proposed Sailortown to Titanic Bridge and the Yorkgate Train Station and North Belfast. • Provide a direct link between the city centre and Sailortown/City Quays through the provision of new pedestrian crossings at Dunbar Link and Corporation St. • Address safety and connectivity issues between Sailortown and North Belfast, specifically at the Dock Street Underpasses.

3.11	<p><i>General Comments</i></p> <p>With this in mind Belfast City Council wish to raise a number of specific points in response to the proposed plans as outlined in the consultation response;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with the local communities to address the safety concerns highlighted with the Dock St Underpass arrangement • Continue to engage with the Under the Bridges design team to optimise the key connectivity links that both schemes will bring to the area, including maximising the desire lines between City Quays/Sailortown and the city centre along Gamble Street, • Support the creation of a 2-way cycle lane through the Under the Bridges site to connect Corporation Street with Donegal Quay, • Council welcomes the introduction of the proposed pedestrian crossings to Corporation St and the Dunbar Linl and ask that DfI continue to engage with the Under the Bridges and the Corporation Street Housing Led Regeneration design teams to optimise the locations of these proposed crossings. • Council would ask that the Department takes cognisance of the proposed 'Sailortown / Titanic Quarter Bridge,' to ensure alignment with future active travel provision within the area.
3.12	<p>In conclusion, Belfast City Council is supportive of the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements but requests that the Department for Infrastructure take into consideration when finalising its plans and during their implementation, the matters raised by Council in this response.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Belfast City Council Draft Consultation Response</u></p> <p>Members are asked to provide comment and to approve the Council's draft consultation response submission to the Department for Infrastructure, enclosed with this report at Appendix B.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>Subject to approval at this committee, Belfast City Council will formally submit its draft response (Appendix 1) to the Department for Infrastructure for consideration. Officers will highlight that the submission is a draft response which will be subject to ratification by Council</p>

	on 1 st December 2025 and any further comments or amends at Council will be forwarded to the Department.
4.0	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
4.1	None associated with this report.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	The implications of the Equality or Goods Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessments will need to be undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure in line with their own policy positions and prior to undertaking implementation.
6.0	Appendices
6.1	Appendix A; Sailortown and UU Pedestrian & Cycling Improvements Drawings Appendix B: Belfast City Council Draft response to the Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements Consultation.



- KEY:**
- PROPOSED KERBS
 - PROPOSED TRIEF KERB SEPARATION
 - PROPOSED DELINEATOR KERB
 - PROPOSED ROAD MARKINGS
 - PROPOSED CYCLETRACK
 - PROPOSED FOOTPATH
 - PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY
 - PROPOSED TRAFFIC ISLAND
 - PROPOSED RAISED TABLE
 - PROPOSED GREEN SPACE
 - PROPOSED CONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
 - PROPOSED UNCONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
 - PROPOSED LADDER AND TRAMLINE TACTILES



Based upon the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:1000 Scale Map with the Permission of the Director and Chief Executive.
© Crown Copyright
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

OS Ref: N/A

FOR CONSULTATION		DfI	13/10/2025	P01
Revision Details		By	Date	Suffix
Check				

Purpose of issue

FOR CONSULTATION

Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn
Bonnegair
www.infrastructure.gov.uk

DfI Roads - Consultancy Services
Eastern Division
Hydebank House
4a Hospital Road
Belfast, BT8 8JL
TEL 0300 200 7899 Crown Copyright Reserved

Client

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Designed RM	Drawn RD	Checked JB	Approved JH	Date 13/10/2025
-------------	----------	------------	-------------	-----------------

Internal Project No. N/A	Suitability FOR CONSULTATION
Scale 1:500 @ A1	Original Paper Size A1

Project Title

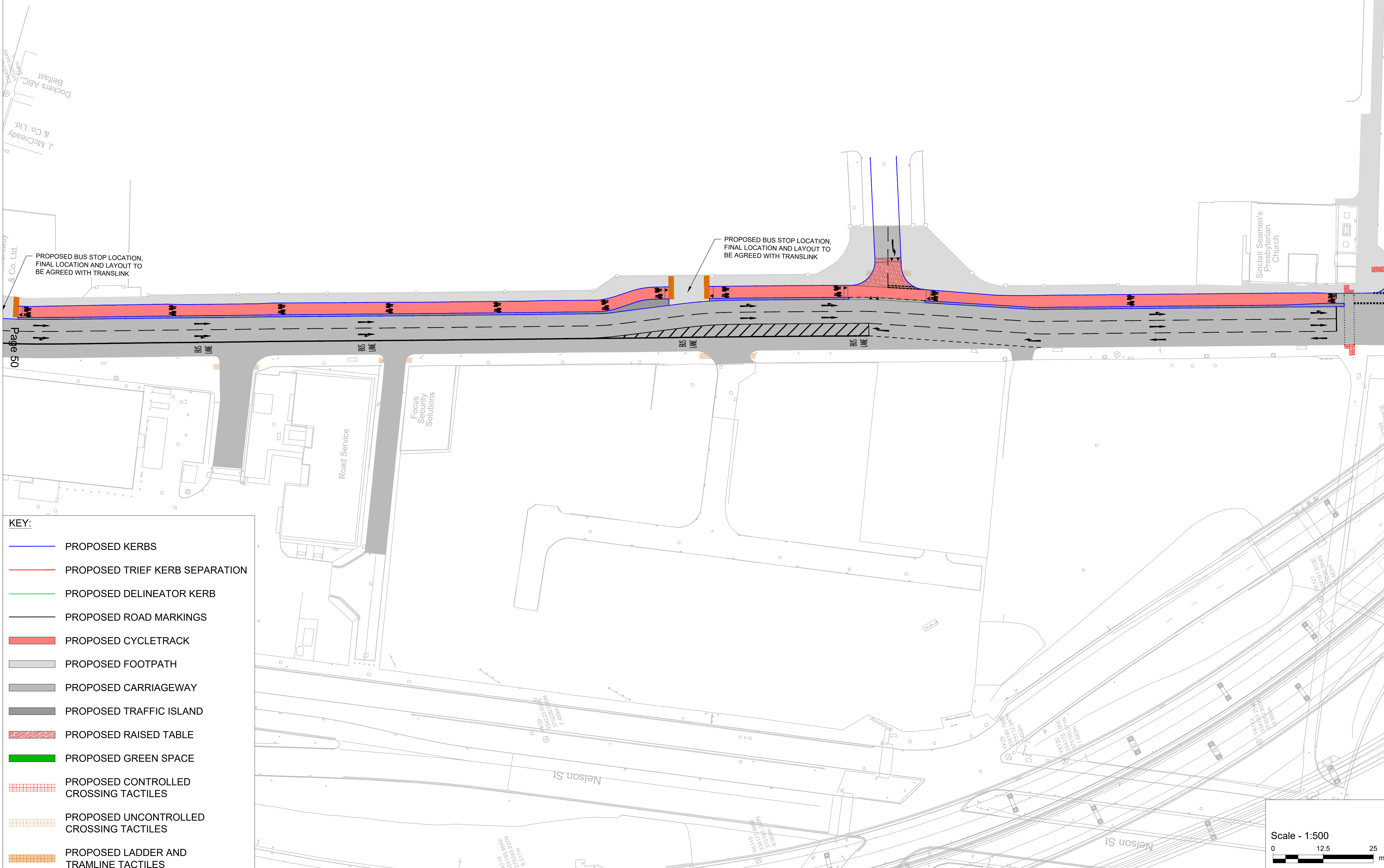
SAILORTOWN PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS

Drawing Title







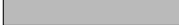






GENERAL ARRANGEMENT SHEET 1 OF 3

Drawing Number DE-24-02-P-0001	Rev P01
--------------------------------	---------

OS Ref: N/A




KEY:

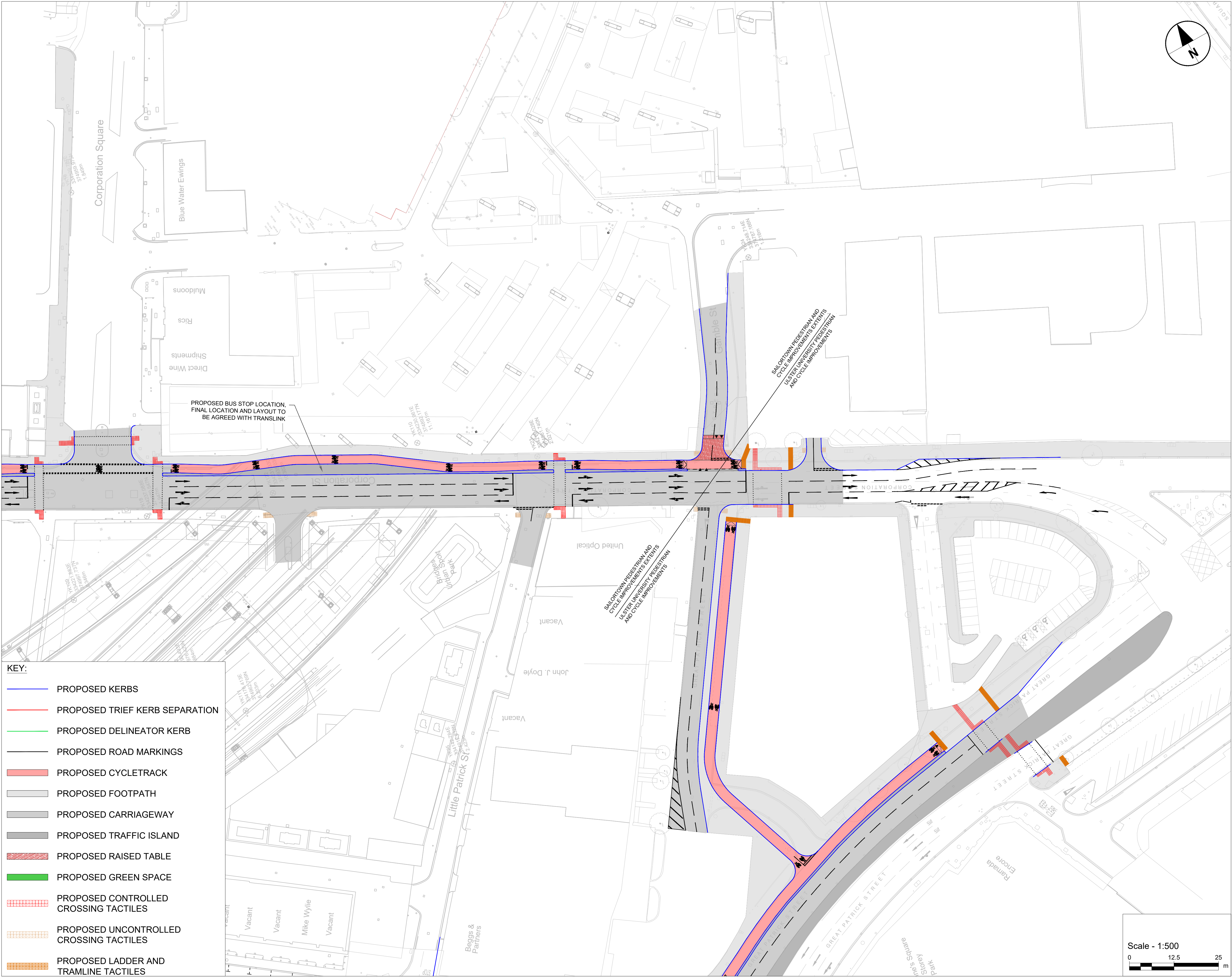
-  PROPOSED KERBS
-  PROPOSED TRIEF KERB SEPARATION
-  PROPOSED DELINEATOR KERB
-  PROPOSED ROAD MARKINGS
-  PROPOSED CYCLETRACK
-  PROPOSED FOOTPATH
-  PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY
-  PROPOSED TRAFFIC ISLAND
-  PROPOSED RAISED TABLE
-  PROPOSED GREEN SPACE
-  PROPOSED CONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
-  PROPOSED UNCONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
-  PROPOSED LADDER AND TRAMLINE TACTILES

Scale - 1:500

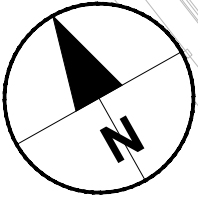
0 12.5 25 m

A horizontal scale bar with alternating black and white segments. It is marked with '0' at the left end, '12.5' at the midpoint, and '25' at the right end, followed by the unit 'm'.

FOR CONSULTATION	DfI DfI	13/10/2025	P01	
Revision Details	By Check	Date	Suffix	
Purpose of issue				
FOR CONSULTATION				
<div><div>Department for Infrastructure An tSeirbhís Bonneagair www.infrastructure-d.gov.uk</div></div>				
DfI Roads - Consultancy Services Eastern Division Hydebank House 4a Hospital Road Belfast, BT8 8JL TEL 0300 200 7899 Crown Copyright Reserved				
Client				
ACTIVE TRAVEL				
Designed RM	Drawn RD	Checked JB	Approved JH	Date 13/10/2025
Internal Project No. N/A			Suitability FOR CONSULTATION	
Scale 1:500 @ A1			Original Paper Size A1	
Project Title				
SAILORTOWN PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS				
Drawing Title				
GENERAL ARRANGEMENT SHEET 2 OF 3				
Drawing Number DE-24-02-P-0002				Rev P01



- KEY:**
- PROPOSED KERBS
 - PROPOSED TRIEF KERB SEPARATION
 - PROPOSED DELINEATOR KERB
 - PROPOSED ROAD MARKINGS
 - PROPOSED CYCLETRACK
 - PROPOSED FOOTPATH
 - PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY
 - PROPOSED TRAFFIC ISLAND
 - PROPOSED RAISED TABLE
 - PROPOSED GREEN SPACE
 - PROPOSED CONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
 - PROPOSED UNCONTROLLED CROSSING TACTILES
 - PROPOSED LADDER AND TRAMLINE TACTILES



Based upon the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:1000 Scale Map with the Permission of the Director and Chief Executive.
© Crown Copyright
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

OS Ref: N/A

FOR CONSULTATION	DfI	13/10/2025	P01
Revision Details	By	Date	Suffix
	Check		

Purpose of issue

FOR CONSULTATION


Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn
Bonneagair
www.infrastructure.gov.uk

DfI Roads - Consultancy Services
Eastern Division
Hydebank House
4a Hospital Road
Belfast, BT8 8JL
TEL 0300 200 7899
Crown Copyright Reserved

Client				
ACTIVE TRAVEL				
Designed RM	Drawn RD	Checked JB	Approved JH	Date 13/10/2025
Internal Project No. N/A			Suitability FOR CONSULTATION	
Scale 1:500 @ A1			Original Paper Size A1	

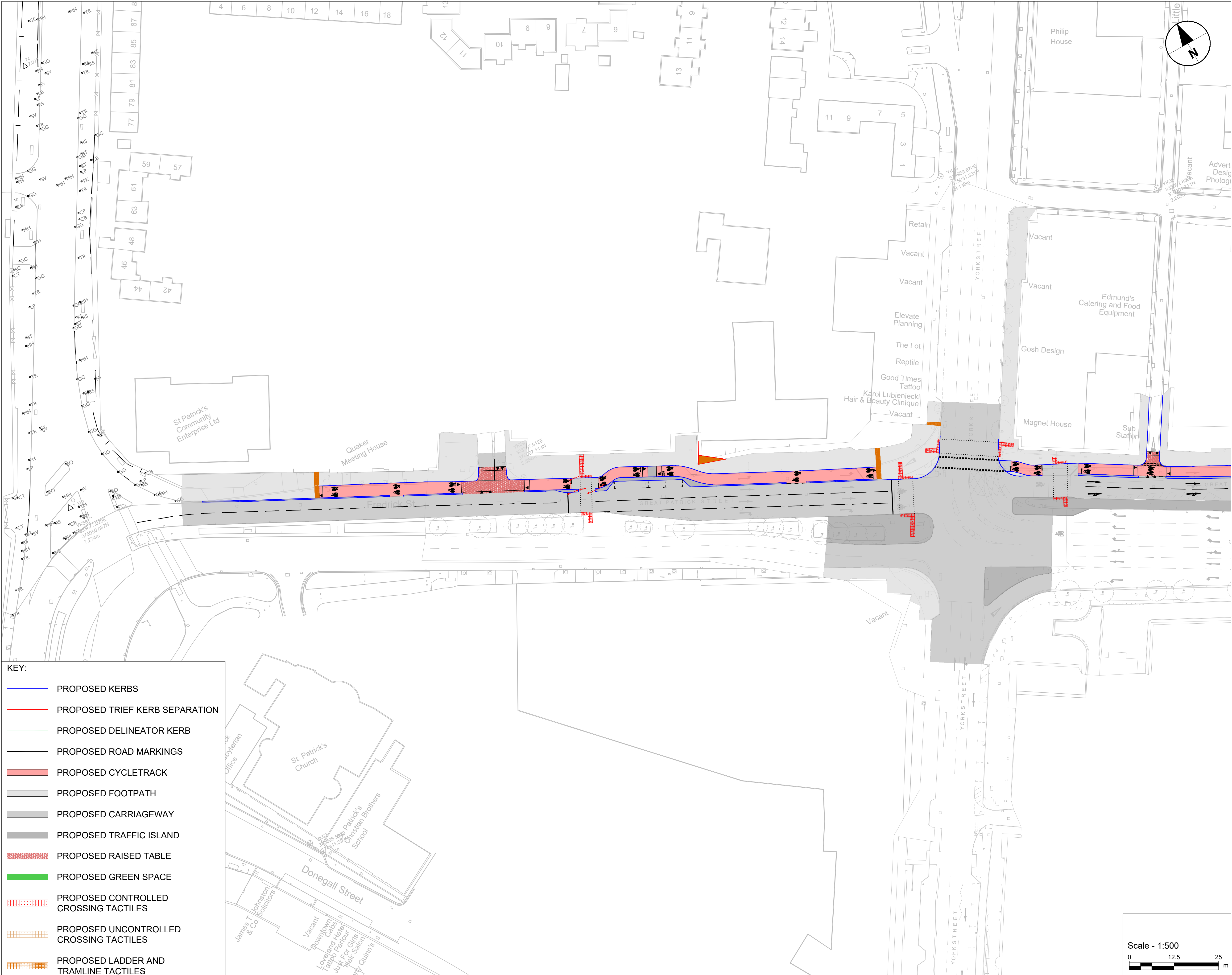
Project Title

SAILORTOWN PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS

Drawing Title

**GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 3 OF 3**

Drawing Number	Rev
DE-24-02-P-0003	P01




Based upon the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:1000 Scale Map with the Permission of the Director and Chief Executive.
© Crown Copyright
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

OS Ref: N/A

FOR CONSULTATION		DfI	13/10/2025	P01
Revision Details		By	Date	Suffix
Check				

Purpose of issue

FOR CONSULTATION


Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn
Bonneagair
www.infrastructure.gov.uk

DfI Roads - Consultancy Services
Eastern Division
Hydebank House
4a Hospital Road
Belfast, BT8 8JL
TEL 0300 200 7899 Crown Copyright Reserved

Client

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Designed RM	Drawn RD	Checked JB	Approved JH	Date 13/10/2025
----------------	-------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------

Internal Project No.
N/A

Scale
1:500 @ A1

Suitability
FOR CONSULTATION

Original Paper Size
A1

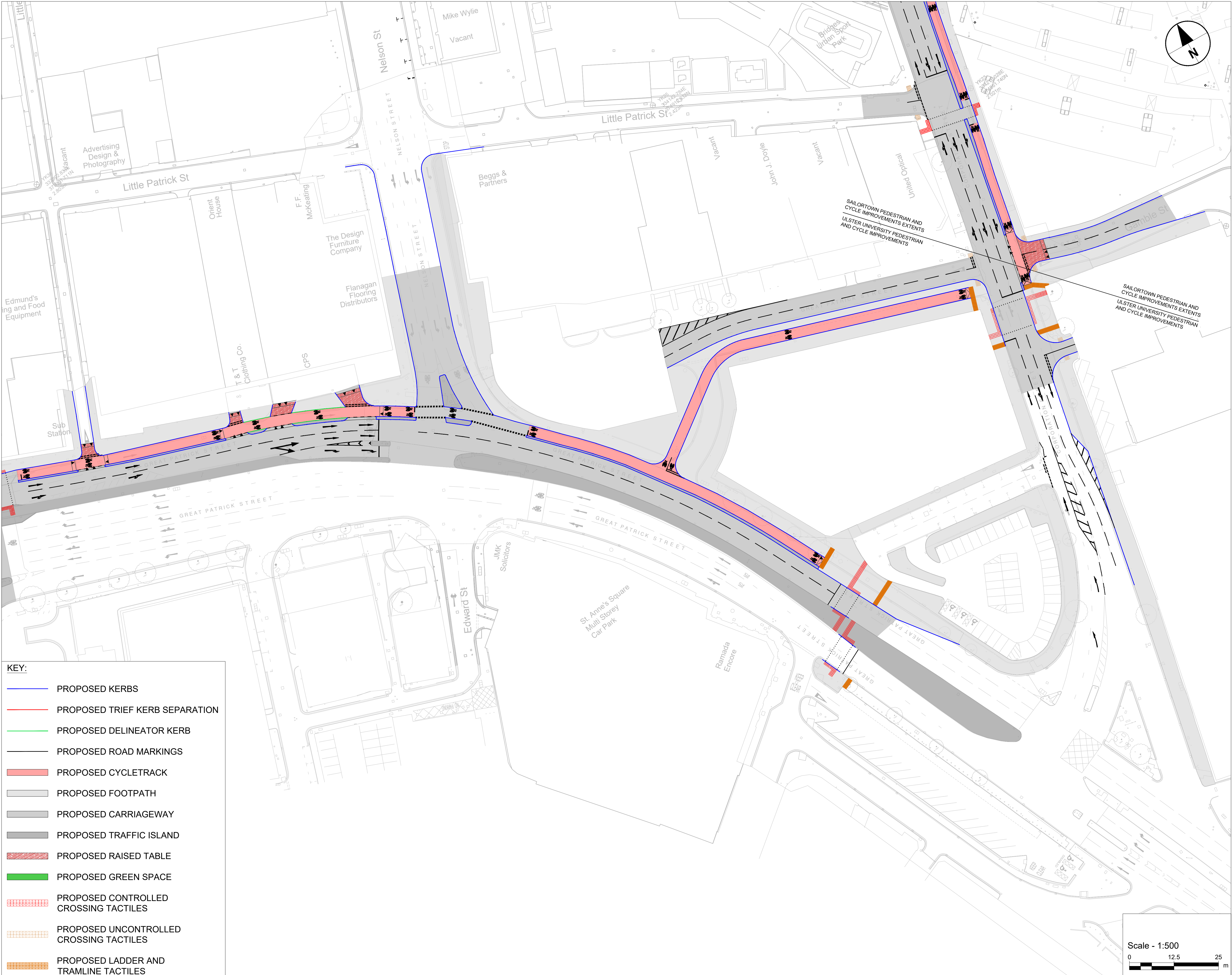
Project Title

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY
PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE
IMPROVEMENTS**

Drawing Title

**GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 1 OF 2
GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 1 OF 2**

Drawing Number DE-24-02-P-0004	Rev P01
-----------------------------------	------------



Based upon the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:1000 Scale Map with the Permission of the Director and Chief Executive.
© Crown Copyright
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

OS Ref: N/A

FOR CONSULTATION	DfI	13/10/2025	P01
Revision Details	By	Date	Suffix
	Check		

Purpose of issue

FOR CONSULTATION

Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn
Bonneagair
www.infrastructure.gov.uk

DfI Roads - Consultancy Services
Eastern Division
Hydebank House
4a Hospital Road
Belfast, BT8 8JL
TEL 0300 200 7899 Crown Copyright Reserved

Client

Client

ACTIVE TRAVEL				
Designed RM	Drawn RD	Checked JB	Approved JH	Date 13/10/2025
Internal Project No. N/A			Suitability FOR CONSULTATION	
Scale 1:500 @ A1			Original Paper Size A1	

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY
PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE
IMPROVEMENTS**

Drawing Title

**GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 2 OF 2**

Drawing Number

DE-24-02-P-0005

Rev

P01

This page is intentionally left blank



Your Reference:
Our Reference:

Being dealt with by: Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development
Date: 5th November 2025

DfI Active Travel,
Hydebank House,
4a Hospital Road,
Ballydollahgan,
Belfast, BT8 8JL

Email: activetravel.eastern@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam,

Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements

Belfast City Council welcomes this opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements. The Council is generally supportive of the vision and the ambitions set out within the Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements scheme. The plans to provide 1.5km of new high quality active travel infrastructure, connecting York Street Station to Ulster University and the Cathedral Quarter, will support the city to achieve the targets set out in 'The Belfast Agenda,' and 'A Bolder Vision.'

The recommendations would contribute to realising the vision for Belfast as set out in the Belfast Agenda, to be 'beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant and being a sustainable city, shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict.' In addition to assisting in meeting the Agenda's targets to 'reduce the city's carbon emissions by 80%' and for 'the economy to support 46,000 additional jobs by 2035.'

This proposal would specifically deliver on the strategic intent to support behavioural change projects that replace car journeys with walking, wheeling and cycling' and the action to 'deliver enhanced cycling infrastructure across the city' within the 'Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel' action plan within the Agenda.

A Bolder Vision is an ambitious blueprint for Belfast to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city, developed by Belfast City Council. The Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements proposal will help to support the strategy's vision to 'fundamentally change the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car' and to 'remove severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all.'

The proposal will also compliment Council's 'Under the Bridges' project to address its aim to improve the connectivity links between the City Centre and City Quays / Sailortown and to provide an enhanced amenity / urban recreation space in the area under the M3 bridges.



The need to improve the connection between the city and the harbour area has been highlighted in previous plans including the Great Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan, A Bolder Vision and the Belfast Waterfront Framework, and is of increasing importance to overcome the long-standing severance to communities and given the growth in population as a result of new residential developments, educational and leisure opportunities within the area. There is fragmentation in the urban form and blight caused by large road infrastructure that generates air and noise pollution and creates a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The sporadic lighting and unoccupied spaces also raise issues in relation to personal safety, which prevents people from taking this route, despite it being a direct link to the city centre and the Sailortown and City Quays areas.

In relation to the design, Council would ask that the Department considers the following;

- Continue to engage with the local communities to address the safety concerns highlighted with the Dock St Underpass arrangement through effective design within the scheme.
- Continue to engage with the Under the Bridges design team to optimise the key connectivity links that both schemes will bring to the area, including maximising the desire lines between City Quays/Sailortown and the city centre along Gamble Street,
- Support the creation of a 2-way cycle lane through the Under the Bridges site to connect Corporation Street with Donegal Quay,
- Council welcomes the introduction of the proposed pedestrian crossings to Corporation St and the Dunbar Linl and ask that DfI continue to engage with the Under the Bridges and the Corporation Street Housing Led Regeneration design teams to optimise the locations of these proposed crossings.
- Council would ask that the Department takes cognisance of the proposed 'Sailortown / Titanic Quarter Bridge,' to ensure alignment with future active travel provision within the area.

In conclusion, Belfast City Council is supportive of the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements but requests that the Department for Infrastructure take into consideration when finalising its plans and during their implementation, the matters raised by Council in this response.

The Council would highlight that this response is being submitted as draft, given the deadline for submissions, it is subject to Council ratification on 1 December 2025. Following the meeting of full Council on 1 December 2025, the Council will follow up to confirm if this response should be treated as final or if there are further addendums which Elected Members have requested.

Yours sincerely,



Belfast
City Council

CATHY REYNOLDS
DIRECTOR OF CITY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT

This page is intentionally left blank



Subject:	International engagement – update on proposed approach
Date:	5 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, EU and International Relations Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	The purpose of this report is to share an updated version of the draft approach to council's engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period following discussion at the August and October committee meetings, and to propose a new framework for engagement, taking account of the comments received.
2.0	Recommendations
	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the amendments to the previous version, set out in section 3.5 of the report • Approve the proposed approach to council activity in international engagement work for the coming three years, as well as the annual action plan for the current financial year.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At the August and October 2025 meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members received draft versions of the proposed International Relations Framework 2025 – 2028 along with an action plan for 2025/26 activity. At both meetings, there was discussion that led to specific proposals for amendments to the draft document. It was agreed that officers would incorporate those amendments into a revised version of both the framework and action plan and that these would be shared at a future meeting.
3.2	At the October 2025 meeting of the Committee, the specific decisions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement to continue Belfast City Council participation in the Eurocities network • Agreement to explore opportunities for collaboration with Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities • Agreement to establish an EU stakeholder group • Agreement to extend invitations to attend international engagement stakeholder groups to Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
3.3	Members also asked that the framework was updated to specifically identify how ethical and environmental considerations were taken into account in international relations activity. Finally, they noted that they wished to defer consideration of the proposed approach to Council international engagement work activity for 2025-28 and the Annual Action plan for 2025/26, to enable an updated draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028 to be

	submitted. The appendices to this report have now been updated to take account of the decisions taken at the October City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting.
3.4	Taking account of the points raised above, the revised draft approach to council-led international engagement activity for the coming three-year period is set out in Appendix 1 and the supporting delivery plan for year one (2025-26) is set out in Appendix 2. The three-year “framework” document is intended to be a supporting document to other key strategies and plans such as the Belfast Agenda, the Corporate Plan and Local Development Plan – setting out how priority objectives and ambitions in those documents can be supported through international connections, networks and opportunities. Its purpose is to identify areas of collaborative advantage and help focus resources on opportunities that can maximise return on investment, in keeping with city priorities.
3.5	<p>Specific changes to the content of the documents since the previous versions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the framework to identify specifically how ethical and environmental considerations will be taken into account in the planned activity. This includes references to “environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth” as part of the vision; additional references to sustainable growth under the key work pillars and commitment to support mission-driven innovation actions focused on addressing social and environmental challenges faced by communities and individuals across the city • Updating the action plan to include agreed deliverables as identified in 3.2 including network participation and exploratory work to develop additional engagement opportunities, including with the NI Executive Office in Brussels.
4.0	Financial and Resource Implications
4.1	The EU and International Relations budget was approved as part of the 2025-26 estimates setting process. Budgets for individual activities are the responsibility of the respective teams.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	No specific equality or good relations implications. Activities will focus on support for Belfast-based organisations and companies.
6.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1: Draft International Relations Framework – 2025-28</p> <p>Appendix 2: International Relations Delivery Plan – 2025-26</p>

Appendix 1: Draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028

Background

For many years, Belfast City Council has been actively engaged in international relations activity – working with and in support of our local partners. The nature of that work has changed over time and in response to changes in the internal and external operating context.

The most recent framework document (2017-2021) set out a strategic approach for engagement, focused on three key pillars, namely:

- Business – investment (including capital), export/trade activity and supporting the development of business-to-business collaboration
- Tourism development and promotion – for both business and leisure markets
- Education – professional development partnerships, research and innovation exchanges, student mobility and global education initiatives.

Global changes in the last number of years have been unprecedented in recent history. This makes long-term planning more challenging – and requires flexibility and responsiveness to adapt to the new ways of working. In response, our proposal is for a three-year framework approach, supported by a series of one-year action plans. We are mindful of the need to remain responsive to opportunities that can help deliver on strategic objectives, in the context of limited resources. We note the need to develop a more rigorous approach to the assessment of emerging opportunities, ensuring that these support the city's inclusive growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda. In that context, we also note the need to ensure that the proposed actions are cognisant of both ethical and environmental considerations, in keeping with council policy.

In addition to external changes, there have been significant internal changes since the previous framework was established. New teams are focused on international engagement activity as part of their day to day working. The EU and International Relations Unit (EUIRU) is likely to remain the focal point for the council's international civic engagement work, coordinating the critical civic engagement activities (alongside the office of the Lord Mayor), managing key sister city relationships and facilitating relevant inward visits. Individual teams will be responsible for leading out on their own areas of work and will be accountable for associated outcomes.

This current framework provides a strategic approach that seeks to focus our financial and staff resources to position Belfast as a globally-connected, forward looking city that is open, inclusive and ambitious, attracting trade, investment, talent and visitors while sharing the city's unique story and values with the world.

Our international partners

As with all International Relations activity, the success of transnational partnership working is dependent on a mutual willingness of partners to reciprocate and support project initiation and development.

Given the resources available (both human and financial), Belfast City Council has strategically focussed a significant element of its international relations activity on its established Sister City relations. However, it remains open to partner with other cities and locations on strategic initiatives where this collaboration fulfils council's objectives as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan and associated plans and frameworks.

Belfast City Council has three established Sister City partnerships:

- Nashville (Tennessee) – council's oldest Sister City relationship signed in 1995
- Boston (Massachusetts) – signed in 2014
- Shenyang (China) – agreed in 2016

The Council has also engaged in other networks such as Eurocities (incorporating more than 200 cities and municipalities across Europe) as well as other sector-specific and issue-based networks that are critical for learning, information-sharing and city promotion. The June 2025 UK/EU Reset along the unique NI trading relationship offered through the Windsor Framework presents new opportunities for European engagement overall – working alongside partners such as the Northern Ireland Executive team in Brussels.

As previously noted, international connectivity is not restricted to the work of the EUIR team and this framework and supporting action plan encompass and profile the international engagement work across other departments and units such as Innovation City Belfast, the City Innovation team, Climate and Resilience team, and the City Regeneration and Development team.

Strategic Context

Belfast City Council's International Relations Framework is not a stand-alone document. It is, rather, a supporting document, creating opportunities for the delivery of city priorities as set out in critical strategies such as the Belfast Agenda and the new Corporate Plan in particular.

Our approach in developing the framework

In developing this new framework, the EU and International Relations team undertook extensive engagement with a range of internal teams involved in this work. They also engaged directly with key city partners such as the universities, Invest NI, Visit Belfast, British Council, TEO and Catalyst. The findings from these engagements have formed the basis of this revised framework, shaping not only the content but also considerations on ways of working and opportunities for data-sharing and resource maximisation, as well as focusing on what specific areas of added value the framework can support.

The vision, purpose and strategic objectives are set out below and delivery against these is to be focused on three key work pillars, namely:

- Trade and investment
- Innovation and knowledge exchange
- City positioning, tourism promotion and cultural development.

Vision

To position Belfast as a globally-connected, forward looking city that is open and ambitious, attracting trade, investment, talent and visitors to support environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth while sharing the city's unique story, culture and values with the world.

Purpose

The purpose of this framework is to identify areas of collaborative advantage and help focus resources on opportunities that can maximise return on investment, in keeping with city priorities.

Council's Role

Belfast City Council will work alongside its strategic partners to :

- Develop and utilise international relationships and connections to generate investment, trade and tourism
- Enhance Belfast's positive global visibility in key markets and communicate its unique assets and attractions
- Coordinate and amplify messaging to maximise return on investment
- Support delivery of priority activities aligned with the Belfast Agenda's vision for environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Our priority work pillars

Building on our work on international relations to date as well as our analysis of emerging market issues and taking account of the discussions through our engagement with internal and external partners, we have identified three core pillars of activity to focus our work under this framework.

Pillar 1: Trade and investment

While FDI investment may have dominated the narrative in more recent years, there is an increasing focus on trade development. An emerging regional entrepreneurship strategy is likely to include a specific focus on high-growth businesses – Innovation Driven Enterprises (or potentially AI Driven Enterprises). These businesses are global by nature and need new sources of capital and international research and business partnerships. There is an opportunity to explore how Belfast's existing civic relationships can support greater business to business collaborations – with a focus on creating jobs; driving productivity and building new joint ventures and partnerships – all while ensuring a focus on sustainable and inclusive growth. This is consistent with the Economy Minister's focus on "good jobs".

Successive economic strategies have noted that export-led growth is a key economic driver. In 2023, external sales by NI companies were estimated to be £33.3 billion, a 15.7% increase from the previous year. The USA is a critical sales market for Belfast-based Invest NI client companies, accounting for more than half of all sales by value (£). Despite the current headwinds, it is likely to remain a strong market for Belfast-based businesses – in particular opportunities aligned to our growth sectors (tech and digital; life and health sciences). New relationships – still in their infancy – with partners in our sister city of Nashville have the potential to generate positive business-to-business connections, particularly in key growth sectors such as life and health sciences.

The need for external capital is not confined to trading businesses. It is also critical for bringing forward key infrastructure and investment projects.. As the council and its city partners double down on the delivery of its high-level ambitions set out in the Belfast Agenda – particularly focusing on job and population growth – developers and project promoters are increasingly exploring opportunities for international mobile, patient capital to support delivery. In the short term, the need to drive investment in sustainable housing is a strategic priority and will be a focus of our efforts in the coming year, following previous progress in relation to Grade A office, Purpose Build Student Accommodation and Hotels.

Pillar 2: Innovation and knowledge exchange

Belfast Region City Deal is a £1billion programme of investment that aims to create more than 20,000 new jobs over the next decade. Digital transformation and sectoral growth are at the heart of many of the Belfast-based projects. These emerging centres of excellence present an opportunity not only to compete globally on collaborative research activities but also to attract additional talent and investment to the Belfast Region. As these centres are established, they will become critical components of the city’s investment narrative, enabling a focus towards higher-value jobs and helping drive productivity in line with city ambitions.

There has been a recent resurgence of work through Innovation City Belfast – a partnership focused on bringing together public and private sector partners along with academia to generate investment; maximise the societal and economic impact of the innovation ecosystem; improve the reach and quality of the city’s digital infrastructure and grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem to support the development of more innovation-driven enterprises (IDEs). Active engagement in global networks to support this work is critical to ensuring that our investments are world-class and that the Belfast offer is heard and understood among key decision-makers. ICB is currently mapping out an engagement plan to take account of critical events and activities. We will work with them to consider shared and consistent messaging and to explore opportunities for participation by relevant of partners. One specific angle that we want to learn from and share learning on is “inclusive innovation” – in keeping with our commitments to support inclusive economic growth. Likewise, there is an opportunity to support our local businesses to engage in mission-driven R&D and innovation activities – using investment to address a range of environmental and social challenges faced across the city.

Belfast has a number of FDI and indigenous companies across a range of growth sectors that are world leading in their field and competing in a global marketplace – as illustrated through the Invest NI trade statistics. Sectors include net zero; life and health sciences and digital technology. The challenge is to

drive more businesses to think and operate globally. We will work closely with Invest NI and sector support organisations to identify opportunities for market access and market engagement activities as well as opportunities to secure capital to support growing businesses in these sectors – including through our sister cities, wider civic connections in the USA, and rebuilding European relations to exploit the unique trading position secured through the Windsor Framework.

Belfast is home to two leading universities – both of whom are extremely active in international markets for the purpose of developing research collaborations, attracting talent and increasing international student numbers. Through this framework, we will explore opportunities to support this work, principally through the civic office and by identifying new opportunities with our partner cities.

Pillar 3: City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development

Belfast is a culturally vibrant destination that attracts growing numbers of visitors each year. It is a UNESCO city of music – one of only 59 across the world and the only one on the island of Ireland. The rich cultural traditions – and the music in particular – are at the core of our unique and authentic tourism product.

Attracting international visitors (either for conferences, other business or leisure) is an important element of any international relations framework. Belfast is the gateway for most visitors to Northern Ireland and the council has already demonstrated its commitment to growing tourism numbers by investing in ICC Belfast – to drive new and high-value business tourism to the city. As a new business tourism strategy emerges, it is critical that the role of Belfast is reinforced. For leisure tourism, the value of large-scale events in attracting visitors – particularly Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann – is likely to present significant opportunities in the coming two years in particular. Early engagement and promotion in key markets – working closely with partners in Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland – will be essential if we are to deliver on the economic regeneration benefits from this large-scale event.

A recurring insight from international partners is the strength of the networks in Belfast and the value of the “Team Belfast” approach in helping them to access key decision-makers and expediting decision-making. A priority for the period of this framework will be to develop a suite of assets that can be shared by all partners involved in international activity, including Belfast Region partners, focusing on the key investment messaging – both the ask and the offer.

The important role of the Lord Mayor and the civic office

In addition to playing a convening and complementary role with our partners, Belfast City Council's civic role in international relations is a critical one. It enables and facilitates access to key influencers and networks. The role of the Lord Mayor, in particular, is a critical asset that can elevate the messaging and create a positive experience of engagement in outward visits and in hosting delegations that visit the city. This factor was widely recognised and acknowledged by our city partners as providing significant added value. Likewise, the ability to involve our elected members in conversations with investors and visitors to the city is seen by our partners as a key part of the "Team Belfast" ethos. We will ensure that our elected members play a key civic leadership role where their involvement supports our strategic objectives and will continue to work with the Lord Mayor and the team to identify opportunities for involvement in critical inward visits and international engagement activities.

How we work

In addition to considering **what** we do, it is equally important to consider **how** we do it. Through our engagement with partners, we have identified a number of key principles that sit behind our activity plan and that, if properly considered, can help make our individual and collaborative efforts more effective. These include:

Objective assessment of opportunity

A recurring discussion during our engagement with internal and external partners was the need to create a consistent approach to due diligence around requests to host inward visits; attend international events and enter into new formal partnerships.

The scale of interest in Belfast from external partners is welcome. In the last year alone, the EU and International Relations Team supported more than 45 inward visits. In the context of constrained resources across all partners, it is clear that a more robust process of evaluating and assessing opportunities presented in order to make recommendations as to how (and whether) these are supported is essential. This due diligence approach is also likely to lead to more collaborative/partnership-based outward missions – thereby reducing the environmental impact and increasing the overall impact of investment. Work has already been undertaken on a new approach and this will be further refined before being introduced across all teams in the coming year.

Measuring and communicating success

Another recurring theme in engagement meetings was the challenge associated with assessing and measuring impact directly related to specific international engagement activities.

Our research into experiences from other locations highlighted that this was not unique to Belfast and it is something that most locations are challenged by. This is because the relationships required to attract capital investment or develop new research or business-to-business partnerships can often take a long time to develop and are reliant on relationship-building – rather than being simple transactions. Likewise, engagement at a single event will rarely deliver an immediate outcome; it may take a number of follow up engagements or it could be that fortuitous connections are made which ultimately lead to outcomes that had not been previously foreseen.

Given that the framework is a supporting document rather than a stand-alone strategy, the outputs and benefits delivered by this framework will support and are aligned to outcomes from the Belfast Agenda and other key strategies highlighted elsewhere in this framework. These are likely to include securing additional investment for local businesses; increasing investment in innovation; supporting delivery of housing targets (through investment attraction) and increasing visitor numbers. The supporting action plan that sits with this framework will identify relevant outputs and performance measures and progress against these will be reported back to Committee on a quarterly basis.

In order to help track outputs and benefits from inward and outward visits, a new CRM system will be introduced. This will enable officers to record support offered and identify outputs and outcomes as a result of that support (where information is available). It will enable us to take a more informed approach to how we deal with requests that have not, to date, generated a return and will support better information-sharing across the various teams involved in this work.

Accountability

While the CRM system will help coordinate and manage data better, it can only be effective if officers can get access to the information they require from other partners. This document and the associated action plan provide an overarching perspective of the council's international engagement activity across a number of teams. Each team is accountable for securing delivery against their stated objectives and associated reporting through committee. The EU and International Relations team may generate connections for businesses and organisations, but the responsibility and accountability for follow-up sits with the individual organisation. Likewise, the EUIR team will endeavour to track

progress and collate information on outputs and outcomes associated with this work, but it is reliant on other parties to secure that information.

Maintaining strong partnerships

Belfast's international focus aligns well with the emerging approach from the NI Executive and that of key city and Belfast Region partners. Recent years have seen a new impetus behind our Sister City agreements in North America in particular as well as China. There has been a revitalisation of support for the work of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and there are numerous opportunities for collaboration with partners along the corridor to support inclusive economic growth, positioning this seamless cross-border corridor in a global context. Likewise, new opportunities to secure external funding to support collaborative activity on areas of shared interest (skills; circular economy; key economic growth sectors) are a focus of the DBEC work for the coming year. Maximising the outcomes from these agreements, rather than developing new partnerships, will be a focus throughout the period of this framework. Complementing their activity and amplifying its impact is both a core role of the Council and a key principle of this framework.

We will work with these partners to ensure our role contributes to theirs for the benefit of the city; our measures of success will be developed in conjunction with these partners to further cement this 'additionality' role and ensure our resources are deployed towards shared outcomes. In practical terms, this will mean continuing to work closely with our partners through formal and informal relationships – including the stakeholder engagement groups and wider engagement mechanisms that provide opportunities for information-sharing and forward planning for collaborative activities.

Appendix 1: Case studies from recent international relations engagement work

Case Study: Nashville Economic and Civic Mission Feb 2025

Objectives:

- Mark 30 years Sister City Relationship
- Meet economic leaders and explore business, partnership and investment opportunities
- Support Queens, Fisk and Belmont Universities' led Peace Summit

Highlights:

- 30 Year Sister City milestone-strengthened long standing civic diplomacy through official LM engagements, including with the Mayor of Nashville, and high level meetings
- Trade and innovation-focused Belfast start-ups, researchers and civic leaders connected with over 40 stakeholders in Tennessee's Life & Health Sciences, Venture Capital, Tech, Sports and Culture
- Education & Research: laid groundwork for bilateral student exchanges, collaborative research and medical education partnerships
- Culture & Heritage: deepened creative and heritage links including connections for 250th Anniversary of the USA, country music programming and Scots Irish initiatives.

Case study: Aflac

"Belfast, the 'city of talent and innovation' became the standout choice for company investment due to its talent pool, digital capability, and alignment with the company's overall strategy. Not to mention the personality of the city felt by the key decision makers on a fact-finding trip.

The start up and ongoing success of Aflac NI has been strongly supported and elevated with the continued backing of Belfast City Hall, which has been greatly appreciated by the company. The council ensures that VIP global visitors from Aflac are given a special City Hall welcome to show how the city values the investment, job creation, and further growth".

Case study: TalentSensus

"The International Relations function is an invaluable asset to Belfast City Council and the businesses it supports. It has been instrumental in driving significant growth for my business, Upskill Enterprise, in the USA.

It has provided invaluable support in hosting numerous high-profile delegations from the United States and played a crucial role in facilitating an important trade mission to Northern Ireland for a delegation from Pennsylvania.

The impact of these visits has been truly remarkable. Thanks to the connections fostered, our company, Upskill Enterprise, and our TalentSensus Technology have gained direct access to key individuals in the US public workforce system. This has resulted in an impressive \$4.2 million in revenue for 2025.”

Case study: Friendship Four

The Friendship Four tournament is the first and only NCAA Division One Hockey tournament to be held outside of the United States. The tournament brings up to 1,000 Bostonians to Belfast for a week over the Thanksgiving period.

The tournament is important to Belfast as it aligns to a number of corporate objectives:

- Economic development: on a number of occasions, a business delegation has accompanied the sports teams, through the office of The Boston Irish Business Association (BIBA)
- Education and skills: in addition to participating student athletes’ mobility, the players also undertake education outreach. Visits to Belfast schools profile how sport can support educational pathways and community cohesion. University partnerships have also spun out of tournament participation e.g. Northeastern University has developed a partnership with Queen’s University Belfast, bringing almost 200 students to study in Belfast for a semester over the last two years
- Tourism development: taking place during the tourism “off-season”, spend by international guests in Belfast during the week of Friendship Four amounts to £500,000 and generates 3,000 bed nights for local hotels. During game intermissions, Belfast is profiled directly into millions of Canadian and American households through a series of promotional messages aired on TV channel NESN.

From 2026, the tournament will encompass four women’s teams – building on the prior success and reach of the female Friendship Series which engaged two colleges - proof that the appetite for these quality experiences for international visitors, and Belfast’s reputation for delivering them continues to grow.

Case study: St Mary's University College

"As a small institution with limited international resources, St Mary's struggled to engage with the US market or make significant connections. Introductions made through Belfast City Council to Nashville Sister Cities changed that.

Positive PR created through undertaking outward and inward visits with Nashville has been priceless - positioning St Mary's University College as an international, outward looking institution with talented students – both domestically across Northern Ireland and in the States. The development of our students' skillset has been phenomenal. The relationship also gave St Mary's the confidence to launch our International Summer school.

St Mary's would like to acknowledge the incredible work of Belfast City Council's International Unit who have been invaluable to the development of a footprint for St Mary's in the US".

Appendix 2: Belfast City Council – International engagement activity: Delivery Plan 2025-2026

Trade and Investment					
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits
New York, New Belfast 2025	Annual event and supporting side programme focused on engaging with key east coast USA economic “champions” and pipeline FDI companies considering investing in Belfast and potential trade opportunities for local companies. Also opportunity to position Belfast’s latest Tourism messaging (Fleadh 2026) and capital assets for investment	EU and International Relations Team (EUIRT)	Event organisers Invest NI US office and Belfast Chamber	June 2025 (<i>now complete</i>)	Investment leads for City assets and trade leads for Belfast businesses Support Invest NI for investment and trade pipeline Promotion of major events
Homecoming 2025	Business conference promoting Belfast to diaspora communities, particularly US-based.	EUIRT	Event organisers	October 2025 (<i>now complete</i>)	Tailored messaging and engagement to focus on capital investment opportunities. Showcase will also draw on cultural engagement, including profiling Fleadh Cheoil
US Sister City collaboration engagement	Development work to explore re-engagement with Boston, using same successful “Team Belfast” model used for Nashville mission. Boston focus will also be Life and Health Sciences including access to innovation partnerships/VCs	EUIRT; Enterprise and Business Growth Team	ICB; universities; Catalyst; individual businesses	Indicative working date – Q4 2025/6 (subject to partner agreement)	Partnerships & access to finance / trade for Belfast businesses, with focus on L&HS Promotion of Belfast as a study and tourism destination

Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits
	Nashville inward trade mission: engagement with VCs and sector bodies to develop and delivery inward (to NI) business mission, focusing on life and health sciences	EUIRT, working with EBG Team	Invest NI; Global Health Connector; HIRANI	June 2026 (indicative date). Preparatory work to commence September 2025	Exploring FDI opportunities in key growth sectors; expanding business base in Belfast for key growth sectors
Developing new EU business connections	Undertaking scoping work with NI Executive Office in Brussels and Invest NI to explore opportunities for additional engagement in EU/Brussels-based activities, with a focus on increasing business engagement in new markets	EUIRT; EBG	NI Executive Office in Brussels, Invest NI	Initial exploratory work completed – November 2025. Action plan agreed and implementation from January 2026	New market engagement opportunities for local businesses
Belfast City and Region Place Partnership	Joint public/private sector-led initiative focused on place positioning to attract investment and deliver on inclusive growth. Key events include MIPIM (France, March each year) and UK ReiiF (Leeds, May each year). Other special/one-off events may also be involved, in line with opportunities. The Partnership also produces resources such as a website and investment prospectus. Will also undertake targeted work to identify and engage with new international investment opportunities, with a focus on supporting priority city investments e.g. new housing	City Regeneration and Development team	Other BRCD councils, Belfast Harbour, Universities, Invest NI, developers, construction companies, legal and financial services	Annual programme of work, with attendance at a number of flagship events	Leads generated in support of investment attracted and developments supported

Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits
Develop and maintain updated Belfast's city proposition messaging and new products	Review and update of existing collateral to focus on key investment messaging for specific target markets – complement innovation proposition (below) and Invest NI collateral	Internal BCC teams (EUIR; Comms; Research; ED; CRD)	Invest NI; universities and colleges; City Deal project leads	Review current: Q2 2025; revised products: Q4	High quality products identifying unique investment opportunities; shared messaging among partner organisations
Inward Delegations: facilitate requests for presentations on Belfast's ED proposition	Facilitating inward visits, and using opportunity to showcase opportunities for investment, trade collaboration and good practice across a range of ED areas (note: will put in place "qualification" process to identify projects with potential for positive impact)	EUIRT (coordinate); input from relevant council and other partner leads	Range of city partners – depending on area of priority	Ongoing	Follow up engagement leading to more specific plans for investment /trade or collaboration (e.g. meeting with President of Babson College)
Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor	Work in collaboration with 8 councils along the corridor to take forward collaborative projects across several areas including sector development; research and innovation; skills development	Enterprise and Business Growth team	EUIR Team; other DBEC council partners; universities; NI/ RoI government depts	Ongoing work programme agreed with partner councils	Funded project activity in priority areas (circular economy; sector development; skills development). Note: decision on skills development project due November 2025

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange					
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits
Belfast Innovation value proposition	Developing a shared investable value proposition for the Belfast innovation ecosystem – including the City Deal funded investments	City Innovation Office	Innovation City Belfast partners	Draft proposition to be tested at Smart Cities World Congress (November 25)	Greater coherence and clarity of messaging to priority market segments
Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025 Mayors Challenge	A two phase, 12-month programme with 50 other cities to deliver urban innovation solutions. Will include learning visit to to Columbia	City Innovation Office	Innovation City Belfast and challenge partners	First workshop planned for late Spring 2025	Collaborative proposals for solving urban innovation challenges
Smart City World Congress (Barcelona)	Promotion of city messaging, focusing on opportunities for partnership, investment, research and trade in relation to digital innovation	Innovation City Belfast	ICB Partners	Q3	Leads in relation to partnerships, investment, research & funding opportunities
Upsurge Initiative	EU Funded climate demonstrator project linking Belfast to Maribor, Budapest, Breda, Katowice including officer visits to each partner city	Climate Team	CNS Team; Neighbourhood Services; QUB; EU Partners; Community orgs	Netherland visit – October 2025	Inform and evidence viability of nature-based solutions for sustainable food production
Support education partners' activity (focus on sister city links)	Use civic linkages to enhance international collaborations in innovation, research and attraction of international talent	EUIRT, City Innovation, ICB	Third level education partners	Ongoing	Education partners secure research £; attract international students
Network engagement	Developing opportunities to profile Belfast and support knowledge exchange through active participation in key networks and attendance at events such as European Week of Cities and Regions	EUIRT, City Innovation, Culture, Climate	NI Executive Office, Brussels	Ongoing network engagement; EU Week of Regions and Cities takes place in October each year	Identification of key profiling/ showcasing/ learning opportunities and sharing outcomes with teams/ committee

City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development					
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits
Supporting strategic tourism stakeholders in attracting and promoting major tourism and cultural events	Collaborating with Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI to drive sectoral growth and positioning Belfast as a host city for major events and international exhibitions – focus on Fleadh Cheoil for coming year	Tourism and Fleadh teams	Visit Belfast Tourism Ireland Tourism NI	Engagement plan finalised – October 2025; marketing and comms campaign implementation starts Jan 2026	International positioning and profiling opportunities; increasing visitor numbers
Friendship Four – Men and Women’s Tournaments	US College Ice Hockey Tournaments linked to Boston Sister City; associated STEM Festival and promotion of city via US TV airtime	EUIRT Tourism team	Odyssey Trust NI Connections DfC Tourism NI	Q3	Economic impact on city – bed nights, Arena venue, US and global press coverage value, socially and impact on schools and community groups making US ice hockey links for future cooperation
Your Roots Are Showing	Folk music conference and trade fair which attracts over 100 artists – scheduled for January 2026	Culture Team	Visit Belfast ICC Belfast	January 2026	Improved city positioning (focusing on music/culture)
Celebrate Chinese New Year	Participation in city partner events to mark New Lunar year	Civic Offices (esp. Lord Mayor) EUIRT	Good Relations Team; Chinese Welfare Association; Chinese Chamber; Chinese Consulate, Confucius	Q4	Enhances civic relations with Chinese players locally and internationally at civic, business and community level
UNESCO City of Culture	Ongoing collaborative exchanges and investment in local music sector – as one	Culture Team	Cultural sector	Ongoing programme of	Support development of local music sector;

	of 59 international cities of culture (music). International activities include October 2025 visit to South Korea			activity (approved annually via CGR)	profile sector on international stage; present opportunities for international engagement by local artists
--	---	--	--	--------------------------------------	--

In addition to above workstreams, Council teams currently participate in strategic thematic networks aligned to the above themes including:

Council for Global City CIOs	Information and opportunity exchange between innovation cities across the world including virtual speaking opportunity at UN Global Health Connector event for Belfast Innovation Commissioner and attendance and participation at the Connector Innovation Summit in Las Vegas
European & UK Learning Cities Networks	Exchanging best practice and developing initiatives to support community learning including officer engagement in Learning Cities network events in Paris and Shenyang, promoting Belfast's best practice programmes., including the role of lifelong learning in aging societies. (fully paid by network)
UNESCO City of Music	Active participation in UNESCO cultural networks with reciprocal benefits between the cities including but not limited to partnerships with UCoM cities Kansas City (US) Hannover (Germany) Daegu (South Korea), Conde (Brazil), Ghent (Belgium) and Bologna (Italy). This year an officer will travel to each partner city (fully paid by network)
IETM	International cultural network representing over 500 member organisations and individual professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide. Belfast City Council and several of its cultural partners locally are members of the network
Eurocities	The Eurocities network comprises more than 200 large cities from within and outside the European Union, representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries. It focuses on policy influence and shared learning opportunities across a range of work areas including innovation; culture and social affairs.



Subject:	Major Events Update – Christmas Animation Programme 2025
Date:	5 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture & Tourism Pièr Morrow Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide a programme update on the 2025 Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On & additional animation throughout the festive period.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note the contents of the Switch On Programme and additional Christmas animation.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On

	<p>Planning is well advanced for the Switch On event to be delivered on Saturday 15 November 2025. Officers continue to work with internal and external stakeholders on a range of matters to ensure the successful delivery of this signature project.</p> <p>The Christmas Lights Switch On event will be a free of charge ticketed event, with the stage providing family-oriented entertainment including local musicians and performers culminating in the switch on of the lights by our Lord Mayor.</p> <p>Members will be aware that a report to committee in June 2023 recommended several adjustments to the Christmas light switch on to mitigate identified health and safety risks - these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event build in the early hours involving staggered road and lane closures - The careful co-ordination of deliveries of equipment and stock of the Christmas market to facilitate an appropriate cut off to allow for the build of the stage and rig. - The stage and all associated equipment and infrastructure should remain in situ following the event to allow roads to reopen immediately after the event. This will allow of a de-rig to take place on Sunday morning during a less busy period. <p>Members should be aware that the mitigation outlined above has increased some costs related to equipment rental and security. Any expenditure will be found from existing corporate budgets.</p> <p>This year's Switch On programme will be presented by Cool Fm on Saturday 15 November 6.00 -7.30 pm. Donegall Road Primary School will open the show, leading into festive performances from local acts that include Avenue Arts Academy, The O'Hara Sisters and St Agnes's Choral Society to name a few. Two local inspirational personalities will be appearing, champion boxer Lewis Crocker and West End/TV actress/singer Rachel Tucker. The evening guarantees a great show for the City of Belfast.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Additional Christmas Animation Programme</p> <p>As in recent years, 2 Royal Avenue will provide a programme of Christmas themed activities across the six weeks of Christmas to supplement the Switch On and provide a focus throughout the festive period. The programme will be delivered by the operators of the venue, MayWe Events.</p> <p>The Winter Den programme, hosted at 2 Royal Avenue, offers a diverse array of festive events and activities for all ages, running from Saturday, 15 November, through to New Year's Eve on Wednesday, 31 December. Highlights include musical performances, craft workshops, storytelling, a seniors tea dance, and special events tailored to different audiences, beginning with a "Quiet Christmas Tree Switch On" for those with sensory needs. While the programme encompasses classic Christmas celebrations sustainability and inclusivity themes are</p>

	<p>addressed. The annual Santa's Post Office is available throughout, and the programme culminates on New Year's Eve with a festive "NYE Ceili" celebration. The programme provides a comprehensive schedule of holiday entertainment and community engagement throughout the winter season.</p> <p>Officers have, through a competitive procurement process, engaged two organisations to curate and programme further animation throughout the festive period in the City Centre; one programme has a live music focus, whereas the second specifies other types of animation such as street performance. These programmes will ensure that a full range of animation is showcased throughout the city centre during the busy festive shopping period.</p>
3.3	<p>Marketing and Communications Activity</p> <p>Council will operate a digital campaign with online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 15 November, as well as festive animation across the city centre after the switch-on and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. There will also be a post-switch-on digital campaign with a slight variation on artwork to highlight the fact that other activities are taking place across the city throughout the Christmas period.</p> <p>For the switch-on ad campaign, council will be directing people to the Visit Belfast website where tickets will be available from 4 November. For all press and social media activity and post-switch on promotion, council will be directing people to the www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL. This URL will display all Christmas activity and the switch-on event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.</p> <p>Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before ticket release details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight the switch-on date and other Christmas activity including Winter's Den at 2 Royal Avenue, the Christmas Market and post switch-on animation. The winter edition will be circulated to just under 160k homes throughout the first week of November. A press release will also be issued to promote the ticket release and the confirmed details of the event schedule.</p> <p>Members should note that the ticketing of the event involves two releases – one at 10am and a second at 7pm.</p>
4.0	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p> <p>Financial resources will be met from within existing departmental budgets.</p>
5.0	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications / RCG Needs Assessment</p>

	The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.
	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.



Subject:	Supporting local businesses – update report		
Date:	5 November 2025		
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development		
Contact Officer:	Nial Borthistle, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager Cathy Keenan, Programme Lead, NIESS		
Restricted Reports			
Is this report restricted?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?			
After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	
After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Some time in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Call-in			
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.0	Purpose of Report		
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that is being led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils as well as sector-based activities being supported by the Enterprise and Business Growth team.		
2.0	Recommendations		
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the update on progress at regional and Belfast level on the Enterprise Support Service Note the current funding challenges to the service post-March 2026 and agree to receive a further update report in the coming months to identify potential next steps 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to provide funding of £25,000 to HIRANI to support delivery of the year two programme of work under the Launchpad initiative.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the April 2025 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with a performance update on the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed). The service began operation in November 2023 and has supported thousands of potential entrepreneurs and existing businesses across Northern Ireland in that time.
3.2	By way of background, members will recall that Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to the UK Government's Ministry for Community, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) for UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies (SPF) to support delivery. This provided £17 million of support for the period to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants.
3.3	Belfast City Council, as lead for the service, subsequently secured a further tranche of funding via an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) of £9.2 million for the 2025/2026 financial year, ensuring continuity of the service. The focus of our activity for this year has been on ensuring the effective delivery of the service, while also exploring a more sustainable financial model beyond the March 2026 date. The current financial year is considered a "transition" year for Shared Prosperity Fund and the 11 June 2025 budget statement included high level details of a new approach to funding in the form of the "Local Growth Fund", to take effect from March 2026.
3.4	The service aims to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represents the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses can access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development. The concept is that the service will help people get the right support at the right time – and will also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.
3.5	The service has been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions. In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £3,000 (up to 50% of capital costs) are available to

	entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.
3.6	<p><u>Regional Performance Update</u></p> <p>Performance in the first two quarters of this financial year across the region includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 4,000 individuals 'reached' through community outreach activities • More than 2,200 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • More than 1,800 businesses supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • More than 380 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants, attracting around £2million in support which is matched by a similar contribution from the businesses themselves. Note that the final call for grant funding in this year is currently live and will close on 5 November 2025.
3.6	<p><u>Belfast Performance Update</u></p> <p>At a Belfast level, activity planned for the coming financial year includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant programme of outreach and engagement support covering under-represented groups. Examples of activities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sector specific events for those in the hair and beauty industry including delivery of aspirational workshops and a masterclass with successful entrepreneurs from the sector ○ Hosting a female-focused 'Inspiring Entrepreneurship Conference' event for over 300 school-aged emerging female leaders on the regional SistersIN mentorship programme and providing practical support to starting or growing their enterprise ○ Working with apprenticeship providers across Belfast to deliver aspirational workshops to 100s of 16–18-year-olds encouraging entrepreneurship (especially in trades) as a very real and achievable pathway ○ Facilitation of the 'Young Entrepreneurs to Watch' initiative, designed to unearth, recognise and fast track 20 exceptional potential entrepreneurs ○ Planned conference on disability and entrepreneurship to take place in February 2026 advocating for disability inclusion in business whilst sharing entrepreneurial journeys and insights and providing aspiring disabled entrepreneurs with tangible support at each stage of their journey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting those who are economically inactive to access specialist support alongside financial incentives to address barriers to starting a new business • 360 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 346 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 48 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £1 million. These grants have enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.
3.7	<p>Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of local businesses. In Belfast, key areas of focus in the current year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups • Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, including driving investment to support the acceleration of new social enterprises • Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment • Developing a programme of support to businesses to raise awareness of opportunities arising from major events such as Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and helping them to maximise revenue generation through these events • Building strong local supply chains through Meet the Buyer events, including working with the construction sector (public housing focused opportunities) and food to go sector. Companies will be directed to targeted support to improve their chances of accessing public sector procurement opportunities as well as access new supply chain opportunities with private sector partners.
3.8	<p>Given the substantial interest in and uptake of the service, there is some concern at recent commentary from UK Government that the Local Growth Fund is likely to be heavily capital-focused (likely split 66% capital; 34% revenue funding). This will, undoubtedly, have a significant impact on any future allocation to support this type of activity, given that the current funding breakdown is 24% capital (mainly for grants) and 76% revenue funding.</p>

3.9	Officers have been seeking to engage with officials from MHCLG, NIO and the regional government departments to understand the likely impact of these changes on the support for local businesses. At this stage, there has been very limited formal communication from any of the agencies although it is understood that the NIO team is planning a series of engagement sessions in November 2025 (no details forthcoming currently). We have also made all councils aware of the current situation and have been looking at a range of scenarios to minimise the impact on service delivery including leveraging resources from elsewhere (DfE, Local Economic Partnerships etc.). In reality, it is very difficult to plan with any degree of certainty given both the lack of official information being circulated and the potentially endless range of scenarios, depending on the final funding decision from the UK Government. The added complication is that the delay in any formal communication makes it difficult to manage customer and stakeholder expectations as well as creating operational challenges for the Programme Management Office, given that roles are fixed-term and therefore reliant on funding availability.
3.10	Officers will continue to seek clarity from the various government agencies and departments with a view to maximising the overall resources available to support enterprise and local business growth. A report will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee to update on progress and to set out the likely approach at a Belfast and regional level.
3.11	<u>Sector support activities</u> In addition to the “core” business support interventions through Go Succeed, the Council’s Enterprise and Business Growth Team also works with partner organisations to support targeted activities across a range of key business sectors that are critical for the city’s economic growth.
3.12	One of the key growth sectors in Belfast is life and health sciences. At a regional level, the sector supports high value roles in companies such as Almac. In Belfast, the universities are driving sectoral excellence in areas such as diagnostics, clinical trials and medical instruments and City Deal investments such as Ulster University’s Centre for Digital and Healthcare Technology at the City Hospital and QUB’s iREACH Centre at City Hospital will support the further development of this sector – along with the associated societal and health-related benefits for the local population and beyond.
3.13	In May 2024, this Committee agreed to support the life and health sciences cluster organisation HIRANI, providing a financial contribution of £25,000 towards a new ‘Health and

	Life Sciences Launchpad' in Northern Ireland. The Launchpad is a mentoring and investment initiative for small businesses in the health and life sciences sector, focusing on helping them to commercialise investments, attract funding and explore new market opportunities. It is a two-year project, and the principal funders are Invest NI and Innovate UK.
3.14	To date, the Launchpad has provided funding to 14 projects (12 SME-led and 2 collaborative R&D), and an additional 18 SMEs have received direct financial support to facilitate help progress product commercialisation work. Planning for year two activities is well advanced. It will involve the recruitment of at least 40 new participants who will avail of support such as matching them with mentors from clinical, academic, industry, and investment backgrounds, accelerating innovation readiness and commercialisation. A specific area of focus this year will be include artificial intelligence (AI) applications in health, digital transformation, and regulatory readiness, given the advances in this space. In keeping with the commitments in year one, it is proposed that a budget allocation of £25,000 is made towards the operation of the Launchpad in Year 2. Officers will work closely with HIRANI in the course of the year to maximise referrals from other council support and engagement activities. We will also explore the "exit strategy"/next steps following the launchpad, with a particular focus on understanding implications for the new City Deal projects in this sector.
4.0	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>NISS: Belfast City Council is currently acting as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we have established a delivery and management team which is fully resourced through the SPF funding. The overall indicative SPF budget for the 2025/26 financial year is in the region of £7.2 million revenue, with around £2 million in capital funding available across the funding period for grant support.</p> <p>HIRANI: Funding request is for a contribution of £25,000 to year two activities as part of the Launchpad initiative.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.</p>
6.0	Appendices
	N/A



Subject:	City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan 2025/26 (6-Month Update)
Date:	5 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="text"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper provides a mid-year progress update on the key actions and Key Performance Indicators contained in the 2025-26 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee at its meeting on the 4th June 2025 .

2.0	Recommendations						
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the content of the mid-year report and progress against the agreed actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the 2025-26 CG&R Committee Plan. 						
3.0	Main Report						
3.1	<p>The 2025-26 CG&R Committee Plan was developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-28, annual Delivery Plan 2025-26 and the refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-28. In addition, the Plan responds to feedback from the committee workshop on 27th March 2025, where Members requested that consideration be given to measuring progress and reporting performance with the addition of annual targets for agreed KPIs. In summary, the Plan includes 96 actions for 23 strategic priorities that make a contribute to the Our Economy and Our Place themes set out in our Corporate Plan. The success of our delivery is also measured by 27 KPIs with corresponding targets.</p>						
3.2	<p>While the Committee receives regular updates on progress with the delivery of specific programmes and initiatives this report provides a summary overview at the mid-year point. Appendix 1 outlines progress of each of the in-year deliverables over the six month period, 01 April – 30 September 2025. It should be noted that many of the commitments will continue to be delivered over the course of the year and the Committee will be kept informed of progress. Furthermore, due to the monitoring mechanisms in place and subsequent measurement methods, some KPIs will only receive an update position at year-end. Progress has been assessed using the following RAG status:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>R</td><td>Action not progressing as planned and at risk of actually being delivered. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (greater than 5% tolerance).</td></tr> <tr> <td>A</td><td>Action partially achieved or at risk of not being delivered / change required. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (generally within 5% tolerance)</td></tr> <tr> <td>G</td><td>Action progressing as planned. KPI target on track to be achieved.</td></tr> </table>	R	Action not progressing as planned and at risk of actually being delivered. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (greater than 5% tolerance).	A	Action partially achieved or at risk of not being delivered / change required. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (generally within 5% tolerance)	G	Action progressing as planned. KPI target on track to be achieved.
R	Action not progressing as planned and at risk of actually being delivered. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (greater than 5% tolerance).						
A	Action partially achieved or at risk of not being delivered / change required. KPI target unlikely to be achieved (generally within 5% tolerance)						
G	Action progressing as planned. KPI target on track to be achieved.						
3.3	<p>The charts below highlight a summary position of progress at the mid-year stage, where the majority of actions (64%) are progressing as planned and KPI targets (52%) are on track to be delivered.</p>						

	<div><div><h3>Actions</h3><table><thead><tr><th>Category</th><th>Count</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Green</td><td>61</td><td>(64%)</td></tr><tr><td>Amber</td><td>32</td><td>(34%)</td></tr><tr><td>Red</td><td>2</td><td>(2%)</td></tr></tbody></table></div><div><h3>Key Performance Indicators</h3><table><thead><tr><th>Category</th><th>Count</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Green</td><td>15</td><td>(52%)</td></tr><tr><td>Amber</td><td>11</td><td>(38%)</td></tr><tr><td>Red</td><td>3</td><td>(10%)</td></tr></tbody></table></div></div>	Category	Count	Percentage	Green	61	(64%)	Amber	32	(34%)	Red	2	(2%)	Category	Count	Percentage	Green	15	(52%)	Amber	11	(38%)	Red	3	(10%)
Category	Count	Percentage																							
Green	61	(64%)																							
Amber	32	(34%)																							
Red	2	(2%)																							
Category	Count	Percentage																							
Green	15	(52%)																							
Amber	11	(38%)																							
Red	3	(10%)																							
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.</p>																								
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Unit and are subject to appropriate equality screening and rural needs assessment.</p>																								
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>																								
	<p>Appendix 1 - CGR Committee Plan 2024-25 – Mid-Year Performance report</p>																								

This page is intentionally left blank

FRONT COVER

Image from Alex H. Commis (taken from City Matters)

City Growth & Regeneration

2025/26 Mid-Year Performance Report

Belfast

Looking Back – Some of what we have achieved so far this year

239 Belfast businesses supported to grow through Go Succeed

24 Vacant Properties brought back into use by the Vacant to Vibrant programme

547 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through Go Succeed start-up activity

Culture Night delivered on 19th September – evaluation underway

Strategic Partnership Agreement signed with Private Sector Partner

allocated to Belfast businesses through the Digital Transformation

282 places in employment academies allocated

41 funding awards made through the £250k Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme

255 attendees at seven local jobs fairs

Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival delivered with an audience of 57k

Oversaw the successful implementation of the new Belfast Bikes operating model

Almost 400k visitor servicing enquiries by Visit Belfast

571,000 visitors to St George's Market

248 conferences, weddings or events at Belfast Castle and Malone House

Gateway to Choices service delivered to 606 participants (offering independent advice and guidance)

Belfast ranked 9th as a globally sustainable destination for tourism

Performance Summary

Page 97

76

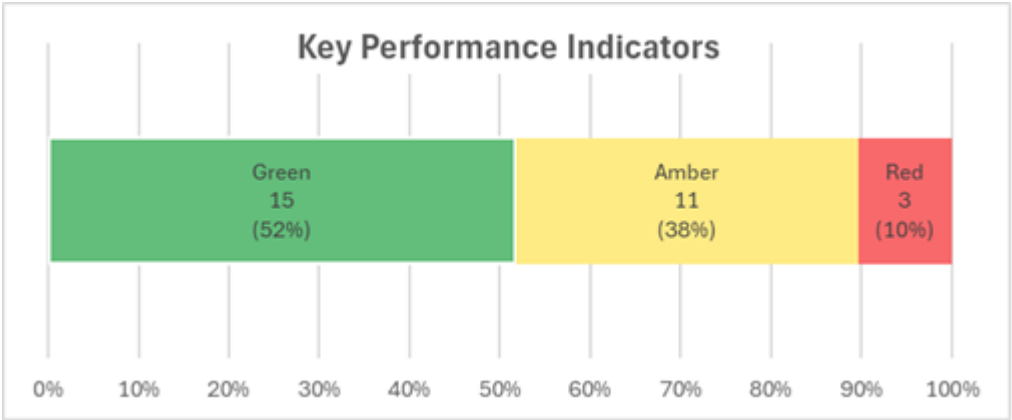
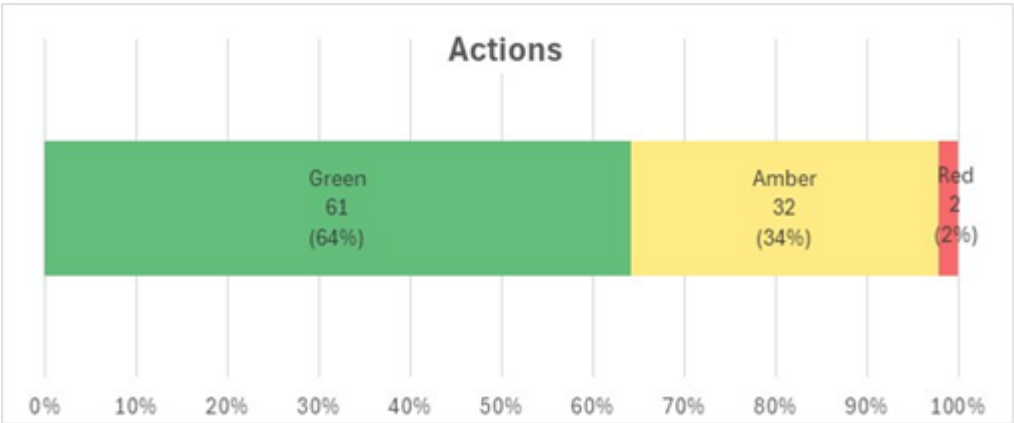
76 Measures - Action progressing as planned; or KPI target on track to be achieved.

43

43 Measures - Action partially achieved or at risk of not being delivered; or KPI target on track to be achieved.

5

5 Measures - Action not progressing as planned or at risk of not being delivered; or KPI target on track to be achieved.



Our Economy Priorities

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
Support business start-up and growth by managing and overseeing the delivery of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NISS) and deliver targeted support in Belfast to meet funder and statutory targets.	Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on NISS, managing the delivery of £9.2 million to foster enterprise across the region, in line with funder obligations and work to secure a more permanent funding source.	£9.2 million secured to ensure the delivery of NISS to the end of March 2026. On track to deliver as per profile. Ongoing engagement with UKSPF and DfE on future funding position expect further information on next steps in October.	Green
	Deliver a flexible menu of support through the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) for Belfast entrepreneurs wishing to start a business; tailored support for existing businesses wishing to grow or scale including grant assistance to support their growth.	We have seen a significant uplift in business start-up activity during Q2. Planned activity including workshops and events have been confirmed to recruit more participants. There are 239 businesses supported through Go Succeed support for growth-focused companies.	Green
	Support 30 SMEs to access finance to support investment and growth through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF).	Call 6 opened - this was the 2nd call of the DTFF in 2025 which was launched in September with a closing date of 24th October. Over £300k allocated to Belfast businesses to date.	Green
Support the development of the social enterprise sector	Develop the social economy sector, encouraging more social enterprise/ cooperative start-ups, through (Go Social) the provision of mentoring, workshops and upskilling; facilitate three best practice knowledge sharing events and deliver six outreach sessions.	On target to deliver against KPIs: 8 outreach sessions have been completed to date. Review under way (October) to identify future approach for this support	Green
	Deliver the Social Economy Incentive Fund, with a renewed focus on establishing new social enterprises addressing barriers in areas of deprivation across Belfast.	Social Economy Investment Fund will open for applications during Q3 (15th October). Criteria have been changed from previous years to pivot additional support towards early-stage businesses.	Green
Maximise the benefits emerging from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD and Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC))	Support delivery of the benefits of first phase of BRCD delivery by integration and alignment with economic development and skills programmes.	Working with City Deal to support delivery of benefits realisation activity, with a focus on SME access and skills development (particularly creating inclusive pathways)	Green
	Establish the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), building on the Labour Market Partnership in the first instance.	Currently scoping out projects for Belfast with go live December 2025	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Agree priority projects for (LEP) financial support and draw down year one funding to mobilise activity	Proposal made to LMP about the scope of work to be completed as part of Belfast's LEP focus. The aim is to focus on developing skills capabilities around certain sectors such as film and production i.e. Studio Ulster	Green
Establish Local Economic Partnership to support delivery of sub-regional economic development fund priority actions.	Establish the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), building on the Labour Market Partnership in the first instance.	Currently scoping out projects for Belfast with go live December 2025	Green
	Agree priority projects for (LEP) financial support and draw down year one funding to mobilise activity	Proposal made to LMP about the scope of work to be completed as part of Belfast's LEP focus. The aim is to focus on developing skills capabilities around certain sectors such as film and production i.e. Studio Ulster	Green
Develop and maximise international linkages to support inclusive economic growth	Engage and collaborate with city partners on outward business missions explore the potential for developing business-to-business opportunities, investment in capital and innovation programmes, and facilitating cultural/ tourism and educational linkages with partner organisations in host cities.	Ongoing work in relation to outward business missions and promoting investment opportunities and facilitating linkages with partner organisations and to finalise detail of International Relations Framework and year 1 action plan - subject to CG&R approval	Amber
	Complete a review of the council's international engagement activity and develop a new approach to international engagement activity to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the world stage and that collaborative opportunities for promoting economic development are maximised.	Review completed and outline framework and action plan presented to Committee in August - revisions requested - to be submitted to a future Committee meeting.	Amber
Support the development and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise scheme	Undertake a review of the pilot phase of the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) programme to inform the future approach of the scheme.	Review meetings and consultations completed end September with final recommendations to be confirmed October. Working on transition plan October 2025-March 2026	Green
	Deliver six Belfast Business Promise Learning Days for existing member organisations.	There has been 4 Peer Support Networks with 2 more planned by the end of December 2025. There were 2 Promise Learning Days since April with 2 more planned by end of the financial year.	Green
Oversee the management of the Innovation Factory to maximise occupancy levels and optimise	Support the operation of the Innovation Factory, in line with the agreed Annual Service Plan obligations.	Currently confirming Annual Service Plan (ASP) for year-end delivery and terms for ASP 2025/26. Review of agreement / reprioritisation plan undertaken and revised KPIs and financial profile to be finalised	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
inclusive growth opportunities for existing tenants.			
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups	Delivery of Employment Academies (into work) within sectors with high job demand such as caring professions, customer service sectors and professional services, in line with business demand.	Note: Programme delivery typically accelerates starting in September each year. However, 282 places have been allocated by sector, based on a critical analysis of the Labour Market (growth sectors, impending technological changes, skills, requirements etc.) as well as identifying opportunities for self-employment, which is blended with Go Succeed. The team have also been developing Inclusive Pathways to Apprenticeships in partnership with DfE and Belfast Met within Tech/Business Services. Other specialist highlights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A blended employment/ upskilling academy for ten people with hearing loss who will be qualified to work as a classroom assistant supporting deaf children. - Bespoke Health & Social Care Employment Academy for Looked After Children which includes Level 2 NISCC qualification and trauma-informed practice for ten people. - Support for migrants via our Health & Social Care academies incorporating sector-specific English where we have seen an increase in the % of migrants moving into employment as a result. 	Green
	Work with partners to deliver Upskilling Academies targeting those working in low paid sectors to achieve higher level qualifications and gain a better job, in line with business demand.	A total of 13 Upskilling Academies are being delivered in low-paid (female-dominated) sectors where Level 3-Level 5 can assure a better job, such as Childcare, Classroom Assistants, Health & Social Care. We have allocated fewer than a quarter of the places compared to last year as we are actively transitioning this intervention to partner stakeholders (especially Belfast Met) who are executing mainstream provision (i.e., Skills Focus, Skills Up etc.).	Green
Support the management and development of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership.	Convene and chair up to six Labour Market Partnership meetings, to identify key labour market challenges and co-design solutions and co-ordinate delivery of agreed programmes of work.	Strategic Assessment identifying key Labour Market intelligence, challenges, etc., completed. LMP Action Plan developed for 2025-2027; 3 LMP meetings held to date.	Green
	Deliver the Gateway to Choices service, providing independent advice and guidance and encouraging informed decision making to find the right provision for people.	The Gateway to Choices service has been delivered to 606 participants. A review is underway to critically examine strategic fit in light of a changing ecosystem and developments within other interventions (e.g. Career Service)	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Deliver the Bridges to Progression service and work in partnership to scope the need for additional supports for young people under 24 years old to manage positive transitions.	Procurement completed in Sept 2025 following scoping exercise. Extern appointed to support up to 120 young people with significant barriers (e.g. care experienced, justice leavers, homelessness etc.)	Amber
	Host localised jobs fairs in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events.	255 attendees at 7 localized jobs fairs (held by JBOs with BCC support) and 11 Employment Academy roadshows.	Green
	Expand the Labour Market Partnership to encompass the work of the Local Economic Partnership, developing priority projects aligned to funder criteria and overseeing delivery	New Terms of Reference and guidance developed with 2 LMP/LEP meetings held (1 with full LEP/LMP membership and 1 pre-LEP formal incorporation)	Green
Deliver social value while supporting the wider employability and skills ecosystem	Expand and consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network including organisations representing target groups for people with a disability, women, young people, justice leavers, ethnic minorities and care leavers.	431 members across 148 organizations including JBOs, community organizations, SPF projects, women's groups, disability support organizations, ethnic minority/migrant groups, youth projects etc.	Green
	Ensure Employability and Skills considerations are included within Developer Contributions by providing statistical data and analysis on labour market shortages. Review and recommend interventions regarding Skills Plans where applicable.	Two skills assessments undertaken for Dublin Road PBMSA and Norwich Union House. Six E&S Plans from developers reviewed, including Knockbreda PS, The Oval, Lanyon Place, Apollo and UU Digital Hub.	Green
	Support contractors to meet their Social Value job requirements and support inclusive recruitment practices on current labour market issues such as visa requirements, employing people with disabilities.	270 SV points incurred through E&S contracts.	Green
Improve the visitor experience at St George's Market to drive footfall and enhance customer satisfaction and	Develop a programme of customer insights based on new footfall tracking technology, regular customer surveys and introduction of additional customer feedback loops.	Footfall cameras are now installed and operational - Six monthly visitor insights being conducted.	Green
	Benchmark St George's Market with other comparable visitor attractions in terms of customer experience and visitor feedback.	Tourism NI have paused the Visitor Attraction rating scheme.	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
provide support for city markets.	Manage and promote the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market and additional market events such as Twilight Markets.	The Spring Twilight Market went well, attracting 18,000 visitors on 20 and 21 May; there are plans for an additional Twilight Market on 24 and 25 November. Finalising detail on Christmas market, from 15 December	Green
	Review the markets rights policy to ensure that it supports the operation of independent markets across the city, to enhance animation and vibrancy.	Markets Rights policy reviewed and approved by September City Growth and Regeneration Committee.	Green
	Review existing storage policy at the market to increase opportunities for additional rental income/ income generation on non-market days.	Draft storage policy produced - decision deferred at September Committee to enable additional engagement. Planned date for re-submission in Q3.	Green

Our Place Priorities

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
Support and work with partners to address housing challenges and delivery high quality housing-led regeneration and place-making	Establish and oversee governance arrangements across the Private Sector Partner indicative work streams ensuring alignment and linkages to the established council governance structures.	Governance arrangements across the Private Sector Partnership were agreed through the Competitive Dialogue procurement process. An update in respect of this was provided to the CG&R Committee in June 2025. This update included that the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) was signed at the start of April 2025 and that this Agreement contractualises the initial Overarching Business Plan (OBP) and the Joint Venture (JV) project governance structures negotiated and agreed through the Competitive Dialogue procurement process. These establish the structure to bring forward housing led regeneration, initially for the four seed sites identified in the procurement (Corporation St/Exchange St, Ormeau Ave, Gloucester St and INW Smithfield), but also further Additional Opportunity Sites introduced over the duration of this 15yr (potential to extend to 25yr) partnership. Cognisant of the requirement for Council to interface effectively with GRAHAM through the project governance arrangements and utilising existing Council structures, an appropriate internal governance structure has been established that seeks to expedite the information sharing, requisite processes and decisions required to meet contractual commitments of the SPA. This included agreement around the use of the City Regeneration Members Working Group as the basis for Member engagement on the PSP housing led regeneration programme prior to matters being forward for approval by Committee. GRAHAM also attended PLCF in August by way of an introductory meeting with a follow up site visit scheduled for December 2025.	Green
	Work in partnership with the Private Sector Partner to take forward development of the initial four strategic sites (Corporation Street / Exchange Street, Gloucester Street, INW Smithfield, Ormeau Avenue) in line with the contractual timelines and development programmes (to be agreed by Council).	In line with the Strategic Partnership Agreement, GRAHAM submitted the proposed Development Programme for these sites on 7th July 2025, meeting the required three-month submission deadline. An update on the PSP governance process for approval of the Seed Site Development Programme was presented to CG&R Committee in September 2025, and the Committee agreed the Prioritisation of the Seed Sites as set out in the report to Members.	Green
	Agree and progress the delivery route for delivery of housing-led regeneration in respect of Tranche 1 sites from the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 (as agreed via CGR/SPR)	As reported to the CGR Committee in June 2025, the detail of SSA Phase2 Tranche 1 sites (incl planning assessments) are currently under consideration by the PSP who are also engaging with Housing Associations. These discussions are ongoing and at an early juncture; however political engagement on this via the City Regeneration Members Working Group will take place with	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
		further updates to be brought back to Committee as appropriate to progress delivery.	
	Progress Tranche 2 sites (from the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2) through feasibility and development options for subsequent consideration by CGR/SP&R.	Feasibility options completed for Tranche 2 SSA Phase 2 Sites, including planning appraisals, investigative surveys and concept topo plans. Full review of all assets undertaken, and additional sites now currently under consideration. Whilst there is progress on work to understand how to overcome barriers to development, this is complex involving additional investigative surveys which could potentially identify solutions for delivery.	Amber
	Working in partnership with the Department for Communities, and Clanmil Housing Association, oversee delivery of a housing led regeneration scheme on the Inner North West lands (following award of the Inner North West Development Brief).	The award of the Development Brief was subject to terms to be agreed with the Director of City Regeneration and Development and the City Solicitor and subject also to the approval of the Department for Communities (as joint landowner) through their own governance processes. Legal colleagues are currently progressing the suite of legal documents through engagement with the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO), in line with DfC's governance structures. Appropriate governance between BCC, DfC and Clanmil has also been established to support effective oversight and delivery. An update on the INW Development Brief was provided to the CGR Committee in September 2025.	Amber
	Develop Placemaking Action Plan for lands at Joy Street/ Cromac Street/ Stewart Street.	Progressing work with partners in respect of developing a Placemaking Action Plan for lands at Joy St / Cromac St / Stewart St, including stakeholder engagement. This includes land assembly subject to necessary approvals. Note: SP&R approval in September 2024 on the targeted acquisition of property in the area work in Q1 and Q2 has been on the completion of this acquisition which is awaited; June 2025 SP&R agreed a further acquisition to support the land assembly, work is focussed on completing this acquisition which is ongoing.	Amber
	Work with partners in relation to developing Placemaking Action Plans for Cregagh Green, Shankill / Glencairn and Tullycarnet.	Officers are continuing to work in partnership with the NIHE around the Cregagh Green placemaking opportunity. Given the interdependency in this area to the NIHE Tower Block Strategy a lot of the focus has been on influencing the NIHE in terms of a potential delivery route. Note: title issues within the area being progressed via Legal Services. In respect of the Shankill Placemaking opportunity, officers have continued to engage via the DfC led Oversight Group and Local Advisory Group, which has developed an action plan "Greater Shankill: A Plan to Grow". Officers continue to support and engage around the implementation of the Tullycarnet Place Shaping Plan 2035. The plan was	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
		recently recognised at the Irish Planning Institute Awards under the Plan Making category.	
Support the delivery of strategic regeneration and investment programmes	Progress options for vesting and/or acquisition by agreement of the Tribeca site in whole or in part, including the Assembly Rooms, including potential development / funding options, and development of Strategic Regeneration Framework to underpin future development.	Council in September 2025 agreed to purchase the Assembly Rooms and associated adjoining lands and buildings from Castlebrooke Investments, as part of its continued focus to drive forward the regeneration of the city centre. In addition to the Assembly Rooms, adjoining lands and buildings to be purchased by the council include part of the Donegall Street car park, 5-9 North Street (former Laffin Travel building) and Braddell's Building, a Grade B1 listed building at 11 North Street - progressing via due process, noting legal and commercially sensitive nature. Future and development uses engagement planned in the first instance with elected members.	Amber
	Develop future use /development proposals for Regeneration Assets including 2 Royal Avenue and 35-39 Royal Avenue.	The EOI process has concluded and reported to CG&R Committee. A further report will be presented to the SP&R committee on finance and asset related implications. Immediate health and safety building works have completed at 35-39 Royal Avenue, and the property is currently being actively marketed to let.	Amber
	Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant City Wide capital grant scheme to support the reduction of vacancy and promote the revitalisation of the city.	The City Wide Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme is fully expended as reported to the CG&R Committee in September 2025. This has resulted in £500k (funded by DfC and UKSPF) capital investment of grant awards to 24 applicants; creating 83 direct employment opportunities; est rates return of £911,777.69 over the course of the lease & subject to LPS valuation; and a return of £1.79 on every £1 invested. An application for further funding has been to DfC, subject to funding availability and Ministerial approval	Green
	Progress outputs from the Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (H.O.U.S.E) Expression of Interest process and scope funding opportunities aimed at bringing vacant upper floors into residential use.	Development phased work is ongoing which includes research into the level of vacant upper floor spaces; models / model for delivery of the H.O.U.S.E programme; engagement with a range of stakeholders to try to unlock some of the challenges to bringing vacant spaces forward for residential development; exploratory work to understand and scope funding opportunities, will require further work to unlock funding.	Amber
	Undertake a scoping study on vacant offices, to include financial, economic and regeneration implications and future use and funding options.	Work has commenced on a scoping study on vacant offices which has involved desktop research and engagement with the office market. Further work is required to develop a future paper.	Amber
	Deliver the Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme, administering Department for Communities funding in the Sandy Row area to support	The Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme (£250k DfC funding) was launched on 18 March 2025 and closed to applications on the 31 August 2025 (extension on grant period agreed by CG&R Committee). As of end of September 2025 41 applications have been awarded funding and the marcomms branding	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	eligible businesses and the wider revitalisation of the area.	workstream has commenced with engagement ongoing in the local area to design the outputs. A contract for funding was also secured in August 2025 for £200k for a Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Scheme. The application period opened on 1st September and will close on 31st December 2025. An open engagement evening was held on 3rd September 2025 at Grosvenor Road Community Centre, with further sessions organised in mid - end September. Note: September CG&R Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request that consideration be given to the provision of support for independent businesses on Great Victoria Street impacted by the works associated with Belfast Grand Central Station, at the time of preparing updates call in period was awaited to allow the issue of this correspondence.	
	Progress the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme (including BCC lands and private sector assets) and bring forward an action plan and route map to deliver a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the combined lands assets.	An update on the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme was presented to the CG&R Committee in September 2025 this included that a comprehensive regeneration approach was being taken through joint master planning of the overall strategic land holdings, with private landowners in the area. This master-planning work is currently ongoing, and it is proposed that potential comprehensive regeneration options, comprising mixed use development options, are tested via Pre-Application Discussions. This would inform an overall Concept Regeneration Plan and proposed delivery roadmap.	Amber
	Ensure City Regeneration and Development considerations are included within Developer Contributions to maximise the regeneration benefits.	Ongoing engagement with Planning Service to ensure city regeneration and development consideration are included within developer contributions to maximise regeneration benefits, this includes ensuring an internal way of working that enables opportunities for developer contributions, progress has been made, however there is further work required.	Amber
Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel & Net-Zero	Refresh A Bolder Vision strategy in line with the Eastern Transport Plan. Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and publish final documents with a Delivery Prospectus.	Work is ongoing to complete ABV as a Council - led strategy alongside a delivery prospectus setting out the Council's corporate position distinct but complementary to the ETP.	Amber
	Progress the Under the Bridges project to design development RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination).	Designs have progressed for the Under The Bridges project with a Pre-Application Discussion public consultation event scheduled to be held in the AC Hotel by Marriott on 9th October, followed by an online event to follow on Tuesday 14 October 2025, to inform the emerging designs.	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
Page 107	Progress the Sailortown/Titanic Quarter (TQ) bridge project to design development RIBA Stage 2 (Concept Design).	Funding has now been secured from DfI, BCC and BHC. Procurement has progressed and a design appointed in September 2025 (ARUP with Knight Architects) to develop the bridge design up to RIBA Stage 2. Community and stakeholder engagement is planned throughout the process to ensure optimum design and route for the area.	Green
	Progress public realm improvements through design development and statutory approval at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square & Environs.	Little York Street - Little Patrick Street: Officers have been working closely with DfI to navigate the Traffic Road Order process, to support the delivery of the scheme. 5Cs and Blackstaff: ongoing work through DfC governance on public realm schemes at various stage of design and planning.	Amber
	Deliver the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework (NZNF).	"There has been engagement with communities and wider city partners across qtrs 1 and 2. This included final sense checking workshops with communities and with Members in May and June 2025 in order to ensure the Framework captured the issues identified, prior to the final drafting. During August and September 2025 focus has been on finalising the framework for submission to Horizon Europe. Work is at an advanced stage on the draft final text of the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework. A presentation on the final framework is scheduled for the Special meeting of the CG&R Committee in November with elected Members from Climate and Resilience Committee to be invited for this item, followed by completion of the Framework in December.	Green
	Support the delivery of relevant priorities in the Climate Action Plan for 2025/26	Officers have been engaging with the council's Climate Team to support relevant actions within the Climate Action Plan for 2025/26	Green
Positioning the City to Compete	Support the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership, taking a joint public-private approach to promote and position the city and city region as a priority location for investment, underpinning the regeneration, development and infrastructure required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions.	The 2024/25 BCRPP programme was concluded in May 2025, which included: Ministerial advocacy and engagement with BCCRIS stocktake findings and the place-based growth proposition in April 2025; and attendance at UKREiIF in Leeds. CG&R Committee in June 2025 approved that officers continue to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the BCRPP Taskforce, and in line with Council procurement processes. progress around the continued support has included a tender process for the BCRPP Framework which concluded in August 2025. an initiation meeting has taken place with the contractor from the framework and plans are in place to move forward on the 25/26 programme including the establishment of a Community Forum / Reference Group with representation from the VCSE panel.	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Undertake a strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, working with city, regional and national government partners to seek to secure place based and regeneration investment funding.	Work is advancing on the full five-part business case to underpinning the ask in the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, which is aligned to both corporate and Belfast Agenda priorities, and the BCCRIS stocktake findings. It is expected the business case will be finalised in October 2025. engagement to advance the asks and lobby for the case for Belfast is ongoing, and where appropriate has involved engagement in conjunction with the BCRPP. a Joint Ministerial meeting with Minister for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities was held in September 2025, this followed engagement with the Minister for Infrastructure in April 25. engagement has progressed across Q1 and Q2 at a UK government level which has included the MHCLG, Treasury and institutional investment houses in London as well as attendance at the Labour Party Conference at the end of September 25.	Amber
	Facilitate investment and development related follow ups aimed at positioning the city to compete and promote inclusive development for the city.	Ongoing reactive and proactive engagement.	Green
	Manage and maintain the Invest in Belfast website and complimentary digital platforms and collateral.	Ongoing management and maintenance of the invest in Belfast website, including updating digital platforms and collateral.	Green
Future City Centre Programme	Working with internal and external partners, deliver agreed priorities in the Future City Centre Programme to reimagine the city centre by addressing the five priority pillars (Regeneration and connectivity; business and investment proposition; animation and distinctive offering; creating a clean, green, inclusive & safe place; and supporting those who are vulnerable).	SP&R approved refreshed governance for the city centre in June 2025. following this officers have worked internally and externally through community planning structures on the establishment of the City Centre Leadership Coordination Group. An initial meeting the CCLCG took place in June, with a follow up workshop in September. the focus externally is identifying the opportunity areas for partnership working which can contribute towards the future success of the city centre.	Amber
Deliver Year 5 of A City Imagining, Belfast's 10-year cultural strategy.	Deliver Core Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG) funding to sustain accessible cultural activity (Festivals and events grants) and infrastructure (arts and heritage grants) within Belfast.	All 25/26 contracts issued and first payments made with mid-year monitoring due to be returned in November 2025. The application process for the next round of CMAG covering 26-28 was launched and closed on 10th October, with officers due to score, moderate and bring final recommendations to committee in February 2026.	Green
	Provision of Community Festivals Fund small grants (in partnership with the Department for Communities) to assist 15 Community and	All 25/26 contracts issued and first payments made with mid-year monitoring due to be returned in November 2025. The application process for the next round of CFF covering 26-27 opening in October and closing in January 2026.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Voluntary organisations to celebrate their identity, enhance community relations by delivering community festivals.		
	Provision of arts and heritage small grants to a minimum of 15 cultural projects to support the outcomes identified within City Imagining.	All 25/26 contracts issued and first payments made with mid-year monitoring due to be returned in November 2025. The application process for the next round of A&H covering 26-27 opening in October and closing in January 2026.	Green
	Support Belfast based artist studios and creative spaces through targeted investment and work in partnership with Arts and Business NI to deliver a capacity building programme.	Artist Workspace grant of 150k awarded to 11 artist studios complete. Letters of offer issued in October. Capacity Building programme with Arts and Business completed from May to September, supporting 15 organisations with 8 events covering financial and governance advice. Stage 2 to launch in January 26 focusing on more tailored mentoring rather than events.	Green
	Strategic Partnerships to enhance skills and development across specific art forms, support audience development and enhance accessibility provision including delivery of the Gig Buddies programme.	All contracts awarded to 6 out of 7 strategic partners and final contract with Arts and Business NI currently being progressed.	Amber
	Deliver 'Bank of Ideas', a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.	The Bank of Ideas project was delivered in June 2025 with contracts awarded and final monitoring due during Q3. There were 97 applications received with support of up to £2k each, provided to 34 projects across the city. Delivery of Participatory Budgeting (PB) voting day on 29th June, with over 1,200 votes cast as part of process.	Green
	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified.	Pilot projects launched and delivery of new Belfast Culture social channels.	Amber
	Sectoral development initiatives, including research, support for sectoral forums and establishment of a cultural compact.	Support for Forums including Festivals Forum, Visual Arts Forum and Green Arts Forum under way. Cultural compact under review against resources.	Amber
	Deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme, a city wide, venue based open call event including supporting marketing activity.	Culture Night delivered on 19th September. Full evaluation report due on 6th December.	Green
	Deliver phase two of the Heritage Audit and Roadmap, including the development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes. Work in partnership with Belfast	Quotations for organisational support, heritage forum and community programmes issued to the market. An appointment is anticipated in November for completion in January 2026.	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Stories, the Climate Team and Brink to deliver a pilot programme entitled “Growing a Museum” which will deliver heritage skills-sharing, training and participative public activities across Belfast.		
Deliver Year 2 of the music strategy, Music Matters – a roadmap for Belfast	Delivery of UNESCO City of Music activity including programmes to support artists, the music sector and venues, including working internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.	<p>Delivery on music plan on track with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support provided for Crescendo project with Ulster Orchestra, supporting 70 pupils who would not have the means to own an instrument or have tuition beyond primary education from July 25 to March 26 • Delivery of Output, Irelands largest Music Conference welcoming over 350 delegates • Delivery of two City of Music Industry sessions • Continuation of the Music Connections website and online directory and support service for musicians • Continuation of the “OurBelfastMusic” social channels • a partnership with BLAKMEX, that develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres • Strategic Partnership with the Music Venue Trust to support the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast • Phase one complete for Music Sustainability Toolkit for music sector • UNESCO exchanges with South Korea and Germany plus Belfast representation at UNESCO AGM in June. <p>Other work on track to be delivered includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast taking place in November 2025 • Teenage Kicks Grant programme to launch in Jan 26 • Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme to launch in Jan 26 • CQAF bursary scheme to launch in Dec 25 • Music Business Accelerator Programme to launch in Dec 25 	Green
	Deliver the NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast, an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music.	Contract and first payment issued. Event due to take place in Nov 2025	Amber
	Output Belfast – Work in partnership with Score Draw Music to deliver Output Belfast, Ireland’s	Event delivered on 24 th September.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase.		
Deliver Year 4 of Make Yourself at Home, the 10-year tourism plan for Belfast.	Position and promote Belfast in national and international markets through investment in Visit Belfast, the city's destination marketing and visitor servicing organisation to increase the value of tourism to the local economy.	We have worked extensively with Visit Belfast for the Maritime Festival including a significant out of state campaign.	Green
	Deliver the Belfast and Northern Ireland Conference Support Scheme in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast, to enable Belfast to compete and win national and international conferences.	Completed Service Level agreement now in place, with £200k from BCC and £200k from TNI. Visit Belfast are working on bids for conferences and a full update on conferences won will be provided as these are fully secured.	Green
	Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme including management of awards to support new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism visitor experiences.	Development of 5 tourism experiences being supported - Arts Across Belfast Tour, Linen & Queen's Quarter Trail, Clifton House self-guided audio tour, walking tour of Donegal Pass and enhancement of George Best Trail	Green
	Deliver the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme.	Working with the industry and delivering workshops and information sessions to the tourism industry to encourage them to be more accessible and inclusive as they welcome visitors	Green
	Deliver the Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme.	Belfast Flavours Food Network action plan being finalised and Food and Drink Conference in planning for delivery in Feb 2026	Green
	Visitor Signage, Wayfinding and Street Dressing and Signage Upkeep.	There has been additional investment in signage & wayfinding at the Maritime Festival	Green
	Enhance the visitor experience within Belfast, including enhancement of visitor experiences at Council owned assets.	Assets Report developed by CHL – final report received and considered internally by officers. Next steps and implementation to be agreed during Q3.	Green
	Develop an electronic dashboard for Belfast based tourism data to measure the impact of tourism in Belfast and its contribution to the Northern Irish economy.	Belfast Visitor Attitude Survey currently being undertaken by Cognisense, an independent research company, to establish baseline data for Belfast from tourists.	Green
	Deliver the Environmental Impact Audit, in partnership with Visit Belfast and the Climate team to improve Belfast's performance in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index	The carbon baseline has been completed and recommendations from that work has been shared with industry - GDS Index application was submitted and announcement that Belfast is 9th position in the index for 2025 out of over 80 cities	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	and maintain its place as a sustainable tourism destination within the GDS Index of 100 cities.		
Delivery of the annual City Events programme of large-scale public city events and activities attracting local audiences and out-of-state visitors	Lord Mayors Day - Delivery of a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House.	Family friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall and other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House. Delivered in partnership with LM charities and key Council venues. Focus on musical performance and workshops, aimed at youth / families. Estimated audience across all venues 6-7,000. Positive feedback with no complaints received.	Green
	St Patrick's Day 2026 - build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations.	Planning underway. The 2026 event will involve an house delivered parade, using external contractors to support parade and community content. Additionally support for other projects under this umbrella, procured previously, including Trad Trail, City Centre Music Festival, Seachtain na Gaelige and other smaller programme elements. Within the specific timeframe, all contractors have been engaged to discuss 2025 feedback and future planning issues. (Should be green)	Green
	Christmas - delivery of the Christmas event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall and supplemented by city centre animation.	Planning well advanced. Traditional delivery as per last few years focused on central stage at City Hall showcasing a variety of local talent. Accessible arrangements include accessible platform and audio description. The programme is supplemented by a 6-week programme at 2 Royal Ave 'Winters Den' and new for 2025, there will also be a 5-week programme of both music and street theatre throughout the city centre during the busy Christmas period.	Green
	Deliver the Festive Lighting programme.	Planning well advanced. Working with a new supplier.	Green
	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Deliver the 2025 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.	Festival successfully delivered, audience of circa 57,000. Poor weather affected day 2 of the event. Delivered in-house with support from Maritime Belfast Trust and Belfast Harbour, and other partners. Many new elements for 2025 included an Accessible and Inclusive Zone and incorporating the Festival of Fools into the festival. An evening concert was held on the Slipways. Council was successful in securing £30k of Tourism NI support. Feedback was positive and given the audience figures, remarkably no complaints were received.	Green
Support delivery and maximise benefits from international and major events	Host Oireachtas na Samhna, Ireland's oldest Irish language and arts festival, from October 29 to November 2, 2025	Planning well advanced). Event will take place at the ICC, with other venues including the City Hall (hosting media awards) Ulster Hall and Europa. Council, as a key funder, will have particular profile at this event, with the Deputy Lord Mayor speaking at the opening ceremony,	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
	Work with city partners to plan for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.	Outworking of events action plan.	Green
	Develop an Events Action Plan for the city, incorporating an ongoing approach to bid for events.	FEI appointed to develop a 5-Year Events Action Plan for City Events underpinning both A City Imagining (10-year Cultural Strategy) and Make Yourself at Home (10-year Tourism Strategy) enabling Council to consider options and make recommendations for the identification, securing, funding and delivering of events and festivals in Belfast.	Green
	Develop options for enhanced city animation during the summer.	Options developed but didn't proceed in 2025- linked to decision on Sunday Trading pilot.	Red
	Engage with NI partners on maximising Belfast's position in Euro 2028.	Tourism NI leading on this and further updates to be provided	Red
Delivery of Fleadh Cheoil	Planning and preparation to host the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann 2026 in Belfast, including establishment of Fleadh team, development of agreements with partners, commencement of volunteer recruitment and delivery of engagement programme.	Core Fleadh Team recruited, budget and financial plan approved and final governance arrangements being put in place. Venue mapping complete, traffic management plan under development, footprint developed and workstreams on accommodation and licensing being progressed. Agreements are in place with key partners such as Volunteer Now and under development with other such as Visit Belfast. Programme approach being presented to committee in October and volunteer recruitment campaign will be launched at the beginning of Q3 with a PR drive and 'call to action'. Website launched and engagement programme developed - 4 Engagement dates being held in November.	Amber
	Development of Outline Business Case and implementation of governance structures and arrangements including establishment of a Fleadh Executive Committee.	Core governance structures in place and Outline Business Case currently with Tourism NI / Department for Economy for consideration.	Amber
	Develop and deliver the event Programme Plan and Operational Project Plan and initiate event procurement exercise.	Weekly meetings are ongoing, with procurement pathways mapped across the majority of workstreams now with phasing included. CPS are in attendance at these weekly meetings and have a dedicated resource now assigned to Fleadh. There is some concern around the volume of procurement required at the current time, which may require further support in coming weeks and months to ensure all is in place for Fleadh 2026.	Amber
Commercial Assets (Belfast Castle,	Effective management and operation of Belfast Castle and Malone House providing a safe,	Belfast Castle in particular has been seeing positive volumes in relation to events and usage of cafe/restaurant. Malone House is quieter, with an ongoing	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Mid-Year Progress Update	Status
Malone House, Belfast Zoo and Belfast Bikes)	welcoming and attractive venue for all visitors; Promoting both venues as premier conference, event and wedding venues and progressing options to ensure long-term value for money.	trend of welcoming 'short lead' event bookings. High operational costs for security and cleaning continue to be analysed with cost savings measures to be introduced later this year. Both venues are operating on profit-share models with the catering partner, however, these are likely to require review for the next financial year.	
	Efficient and effective management and operation of Belfast Zoo with a focus on enhancing the visitor experience, safety, conservation, education and animal welfare; and develop proposals to deliver long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo.	Various events and promotions took place during Q1 and Q2 to encourage footfall, and further planning has taken place for promotions in the following quarters. Health and Safety improvements have continued to be a major focus for improvement during the first part of the year. A range of improved measures and documentation are now in place and being followed by zoo staff.	Amber
	Oversee the implementation and mobilisation plan for changing to the new Belfast Bikes operator/ operating model in September 2025.	New operator commenced in September 2025.	Green
	Oversee the delivery of the Belfast Bikes public bike hire scheme, maximising revenue and reducing vandalism costs.	The former operation was in place until mid-September. As the scheme was winding down, bike availability was reduced. Vandalism remained on a similar level as before. The new operation commenced in mid-September and showed positive signs of usage in the initial period. The new scheme has a highly reduced vandalism fee for the Council. A launch event and PR activity took place in September, and planning continues for future marketing activity to promote the scheme, particularly ahead of Spring seasons.	Green

Performance Monitoring

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets are used to monitor performance.

Theme	Key Performance Indicator	2025/26 Target	Q2 Actual	Status	Notes (if applicable)
Our Economy	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity. (Statutory indicator)	325	124	Amber	
	Number of Regional individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	4,300	3,363	Green	
	Number of Belfast individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	839	547	Green	
	Number of Regional businesses supported through business growth activity.	2,000	1,190	Green	
	Number of Belfast businesses supported through business growth activity.	380	239	Green	
	Percentage of Regional Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%	52.5%	Green	
	Percentage of Belfast Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%	34%	Red	
	Percentage of participants who move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.	75%	No Data	Green	First academy completions expected at end of Q3
	Number of participants on Employment and Upskilling Academies	675	295	Green	
	Number of organisations accredited as Belfast Business Promise Supporters	100	70	Green	
	Occupancy levels at Innovation Factory	70%	69%	Amber	
	Number of social enterprises and co-operatives supported	110	51	Amber	
	Total number of previously vacant city-wide properties that are occupied as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.	20	24	Green	
Our Place	Number of visitor servicing enquiries (Visit Belfast)	805,000	399,014	Green	As of 19/09/2025
	GDS-Index ranking	Top 10	9th	Green	
	Number of people attending the annual programme of large-scale public city events	111,000	63,500	Green	Maritime Festival attendance = 57,000 Lord Mayor's Day attendance = 6,500

Page 116	Number of attendees at major Cultural Festivals	410,000	No data yet available	Amber	Data available upon receipt of year-end CMAG reports
	Number of people engaged at engaged at arts and heritage organisations	Establish baseline	No data yet available	Amber	
	Number of citizens engaged through participatory budgeting and cultural interventions.	Establish baseline	No data yet available	Amber	
	Number of visitors to St. George's Market	1,000,000	571,000	Green	
	Number of external events at St. George's Market	16	6	Amber	
	Number of Belfast Bike journeys	142,000	39,315	Amber	As of 31/07/2025
	Number of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Belfast Castle	342	154	Green	
	Number of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Malone House	202	94	Green	
	Number of visitors to Belfast Zoo	208,984	121,435	Amber	As of 31/08/2025
	Total revenue generated from Belfast Bikes scheme	£126,000	£65,117	Red	
	Total income generated by Belfast Castle	£282,675	£137,451	Amber	
	Total income generated by Malone House	£130,848	£53,036	Red	
	Total income generated at Belfast Zoo	£1,894,716	£1,456,408	Amber	

Belfast Stories Working Group

Thursday, 18th September, 2025

MEETING OF THE BELFAST STORIES WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland;
Councillors Maghie and McKeown.

In attendance: Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. E. Henry, Creative and Strategic Lead;
Mr. M. Doherty, Contracts Manager;
Ms. M. Lynch, Belfast Stories Development Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Member Services and Digital
Support Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th June, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Update of RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design – Presentation from Integrated Design Team

Councillor Smyth welcomed to the meeting Mr. S. Gallagher, Associate Director, and Mr. P. McShane, Architect, from TODD Architects Ltd. and, together they provided the Members with an update on the RIBA stage 2 designs, including a flythrough of the proposed development, commencing with the external view and demonstrating the various approaches and journey through the proposed building.

Several of the Members expressed their appreciation for the fact that the former Bank of Ireland building felt integrated a part of the development as opposed to being a stand-alone building.

Following a query, the Architects confirmed that the proposal would be accessible from entrance points on Upper North Street and Kent Street. A Member emphasised the

need to ensure that it did not feel cut off from the rest of the city and was a welcoming place for local people and visitors. Discussion also ensued regarding the building being adequately signposted and mapped to ensure that people did not lose their orientation when moving through it.

The Creative and Strategic Lead detailed how the project was responding to consultation feedback and noted that the design was still subject to change and planning consultation. She highlighted that feedback would also be taken forward into the next design stage RIBA stage 3 and that there would be a further public consultation as part of the planning process at the end of 2025, with regular updates at key stages provided to Party Group Leaders and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Chairperson and several of the Members praised the RIBA stage 2 design proposal presented and commended the Architects on the design.

The Members acknowledged the need for regular updates and reiterated the need for the public to be informed of the project's progress.

The Working Group noted the update.

Programme Update on Key Milestones - Verbal Report

The Working Group was provided with an update on the delivery timetable and highlighted key milestones for 2025 including:

- Consultation on the RIBA stage 2 emerging concept designs, November 2024 - March 2025 – Complete;
- Completion of the OBC for Strategic Policy and Resources approval, April 2025 - Complete;
- Council approval and submission of the OBC for BRCD funding, May 2025 -Complete;
- Public Consultation 2 Report, May 2025 – Complete;
- RIBA Stage 2 concept designs and report, May 2025 - Draft Received;
- Set up of Stories Panel/Curatorial Oversight Group – Q4 2025;
- Further site surveys and investigations – underway Q3 2025;
- Further legal and financial input to the Operator model options – Q3 2025;
- Procurement document preparation for Main Contractor and Experience Design Team – Q3/Q4 2025;
- Inclusive Growth Strategy and Plan for RIBA stage 3 and 4 – Q4 2025;
- Commence RIBA stage 3a spatial designs – Q4 2025; and
- Assessment and approval of the OBC – Q3/Q4 2025.

The Contracts Manager provided an update on the site investigation works and the surveys that had been conducted.

The Working Group was advised that the pre-application community consultation would be taking place in November and December, prior to the submission of the planning application in February 2026. Members were encouraged where possible to attend and publicise the consultation events.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

**Inclusive Growth – Discussion on
Developing the Plan - Verbal Update**

The Programme Director provided the Working Group with an overview of the opportunities for change, as well as the significant benefits and outcomes that could be achieved through the project. This included those opportunities at preconstruction and construction stage, upon the completion of the Project in 2023, and details regarding the longer-term benefits and outcomes for the city. An update was also provided on the social value delivery to date, recognising the opportunity that the construction process brings.

The Working Group was advised on the approach to the development of the draft Inclusive Growth Plan which would be informed by data and link to the Benefits Plan. It was proposed that the draft plan would be tested initially with the Members, brokers and communities during consultation. It was noted that there would need to be adequate monitoring and evaluation systems in place for reporting.

The Working Group noted the update and that the final Inclusive Growth Plan would be presented to the Working Group Q1 2026. The Members were also advised that input to the draft plan was welcomed.

Noted.

Screen Working Group Update- Verbal Update

The Creative and Strategic Lead advised that, as previously agreed, a Screen Reference Working Group was currently in the process of being established. This would be made up of a group of advisors on a voluntary basis and there was an open call for expressions of interest until Sunday 21st September. The purpose of the Group would be to determine how the development would support the screen industry.

Noted.

Stories Engine – Verbal Update

The Creative and Strategic Lead informed the Working Group that five strands had been created to determine how the stories would be collected. She reported that two of the strands required further work, but officers would be recommending to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that three of the strands be progressed. An update on these would be provided to the Committee for approval in due course.

Noted.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

City Regeneration Members' Working Group

Monday, 13th October, 2025

MEETING OF THE CITY REGENERATION MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillor R. McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager
Mr. A. Ferguson, Senior Development Manager
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;
Ms. E. Watts, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator;
Ms. P. Conway, Development Manager;
Ms. B. Farren, Regeneration Project Officer; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th August, 2025 were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Housing-Led Regeneration – Private Sector Partner (PSP) Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the actions following the last meeting of the Working Group which included that, in August, Party Group Leaders had received a briefing from the Council's housing-led regeneration private sector partner (PSP), and that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee had received a presentation from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the 'City Centre Waiting List'.

The Working Group was then presented with an overview of the following strands of the housing-led regeneration programme of work:

- Seed Site Development Programme;
- Initial Site Specific Business Plan;
- Viability;
- Total Cost Indicators;

- Joint Targeted Acquisitions;
- Branding; and
- Off-Street Parking.

During discussion, in response to Members' questions, the officers provided further detail in relation to the potential for future joint acquisitions with the PSP.

The Working Group was advised that Party Group Leaders would undertake a site visit to Loftlines in December, which would be hosted by the PSP.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the presentation, the immediate next steps and that future meetings would align with key decisions in the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Chairperson