

# Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

## **MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** **REPORTS TO FOLLOW & ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 19th December, 2025 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **2. Restricted Items**

- (c) Boxing Strategy (Pages 1 - 32)
- (d) Belfast City Innovation Programme Update (Pages 33 - 38)
- (e) Bad Debt Write Off (Pages 39 - 40)

#### **3. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (c) Planning Information (Pages 41 - 56)
- (e) Draft Amenity Byelaws (Pages 57 - 158)

#### **4. Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Physical Programme (Pages 159 - 166)
- (b) Asset Management (Pages 167 - 188)
- (c) Area Working Update (Pages 189 - 234)

5. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

(c) Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 24/25 (Report to follow)

7. **Operational Issues**

(a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th December  
(Pages 235 - 240)

(c) Minutes of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 5th December,  
2025 (Pages 241 - 244)

(d) Minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 18th  
November, 2025 (Pages 245 - 250)

# Agenda Item 2c

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

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# Agenda Item 2d

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6  
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# Agenda Item 2e

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

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<b>Subject:</b>	Planning Information
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer(s):</b>	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision <input type="checkbox"/>	
After Council Decision <input type="checkbox"/>	
Sometime in the future <input type="checkbox"/>	
Never <input type="checkbox"/>	

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To provide an update on Major planning applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The report is for notation.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>

	<b><u>Background</u></b>
3.1	The Committee received an update on Planning Performance at its meeting on the 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2024. At that meeting and previously, the Committee sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice has yet to be issued.
3.2	All Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice ("Green Form") is issued. This means that any delays either pre- or post- committee will impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application is 30 weeks.
	<b><u>Major applications</u></b>
3.3	Appendix 1 sets out the Major applications that are currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30 week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.
	<b><u>Applications determined by Committee</u></b>
3.4	Appendix 2 sets out the applications that have been determined by Committee since February 2022 which are yet to issue. For completeness information is also given on those applications determined by Committee which have had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information is given relating to the main reason for the delay.
3.5	Following further discussion at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2025, this table has now been amended to include a new non statutory target date and to give more detailed reasons for any delays in determination.
	<b><u>Conclusion</u></b>
3.6	This report will be brought to each Planning Committee and to each Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for information on an ongoing basis.
	<b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b>
3.7	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
3.8	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 – Major planning applications at December 2025
	Appendix 2 – Applications determined by Committee at December 2025

## Live Major Applications not previously considered by Committee @ 02.12.25

Number	Application No.	Category	Location	Proposal	Date Valid	Target Date	Status
1	LA04/2023/2633/F	Major	St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights, Belfast BT11 8ER	Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 4G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities.	14-Mar-23	10-Oct-23	Under Consideration
2	LA04/2023/3799/F	Major	Vacant lands (partial site of the former Wolfhill Flax Spinning Mill) located to the south, of Wolfhill Manor, north of Wolfhill Grove and west of Mill Avenue, Ligoniel Road, Belfast, BT14 8NR	New single storey 10-class based primary school, separate nursery school accommodation and school meals accommodation to facilitate the relocation of St. Vincent De Paul Primary School and Nursery from existing site on Ligoniel Road, Belfast. Proposal includes new pedestrian and vehicular accesses onto Mill Avenue, car parking, covered cycle storage area and hard play areas. Hard and soft landscaping including wildlife walkway, fencing, retaining walls, underground drainage system to include the reinstatement of underground storm sewer and headwall into adjacent DFI River wayleave. Includes temporary contractors compound and all associated site works.	09-Oct-23	06-May-24	Under Consideration
Page 43	LA04/2023/4181/F	Major	Lands comprising the existing Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station west of Park Avenue, Connswater River and King George V Playing Fields, to the south of the Sydenham By-Pass, east of The Oval football stadium, north and east of Parkgate Gardens and north of Parkgate Crescent, Parkgate Parade and Mersey Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) with reinstatement of site as a landscaped area. Construction of a replacement WwPS including associated control building and hardstanding, the raising of site levels, in-channel works, provision of new rising main, other ancillary buildings, the creation of an access road on lands within the King George V Playing Fields to serve the facility, landscaping and other ancillary works. Provision of a temporary working area on lands within the King George V Playing Fields, the creation of a temporary access road from Mersey Street to facilitate construction traffic on lands to the rear of 1-35 Parkgate Gardens, the creation of a temporary footway adjacent to 88 Park Avenue and other ancillary development and landscaping restoration works.	14-Nov-23	11-Jun-24	Under Consideration
4	LA04/2024/0015/F	Major	Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4	Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (amended description and plans).	22-Dec-23	19-Jul-24	Under Consideration
5	LA04/2024/0570/F	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent property 37-39 Summerhill Park, Belfast.	Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
6	LA04/2024/0569/O	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castleview Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39) and rear of 160 Barnetts Road, Belfast (amended address)	Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C1) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C3), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castleview Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration

7	LA04/2024/0910/F	Major	70 Whitewell Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7ES Site at Hazelwood Integrated College	Redevelopment of Hazelwood Integrated College to include demolition of existing building and development of new school campus, new sports pitch, outdoor play areas, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention and refurbishment of the Listed Building (Graymount House) and other associated site works including a temporary mobile village during the construction process.	23-May-24	19-Dec-24	Under Consideration
8	LA04/2024/1836/F	Major	Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent, Belfast Co. Antrim BT13 3QZ	Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works.	25-Nov-24	23-Jun-25	Under Consideration
9	LA04/2024/2024/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	18-Dec-24	16-Jul-25	Under Consideration
PAGE 42	LA04/2024/2145/F	Major	Lands at North Foreshore / Giant's Park Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9LZ	Creation of a new Adventure Park comprising a community / visitor hub building including café, creche, flexible exhibition / community space, ancillary office space and maintenance yard. Development includes community gardens, bmx track, crazy golf, dog park, walking/running/cycle paths, outdoor amphitheatre, bio diversity zones, and recreational facilities. Associated landscaping and infrastructure (drainage, lighting, car / coach parking, WC block etc).	15-Jan-25	13-Aug-25	Under Consideration

Page 43	11	LA04/2025/0012/F	Major	<p>Lands at the Waterworks Park, located off the Cavehill Road; and lands at Alexandra Park, located between Castleton Gardens and Deacon Street; extending along Castleton Gardens and Camberwell Terrace to the road junction approximately 30 metres to the north west of 347 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2HF</p>	<p>Refurbishment and safety work to the Waterworks upper and lower reservoirs, and Alexandra Park Lake reservoir, to be complemented with wider environmental, landscape and connectivity improvements.</p> <p>The reservoir works comprise of a new overflow structure with reinforcement and protection of the return embankment parallel to the by-wash channel at Waterworks Upper reservoir. Repairs to the upstream face of Waterworks Lower reservoir with the addition of wetland planting to reduce the overall capacity of the reservoir. Removal of an existing parapet wall and embankment reinforcement at the Alexandra Park Lake reservoir.</p> <p>Improvements at Waterworks Park comprise the demolition of the existing Waterworks Bothy and replacement with a new building to include public toilets, Changing facilities, multi-purpose community room and kitchenette. Extension to existing Cavehill Road gatehouse building. Entrance improvements, new events space including multipurpose decking; resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; a dog park; replacement platforms and viewing area. New 3-on-3 basketball court; replacement surface to existing small sided 3G pitch; and upgrades to existing Queen Mary's playground.</p> <p>Improvements at Alexandra Park include the resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; new reinforced grass event space; new lake viewing area; new public toilets and changing places; entrance improvements. 2no existing bridges replaced; new pedestrian entrance; reimagined peace wall; new multi-sport synthetic surface with cover; and upgrades to existing play parks.</p> <p>Streetscape improvements along Camberwell Terrace and Castleton Gardens include resurfacing of footways with new kerbs; resurfaced carriageways and new tactile paving at pedestrian crossings; and all associated works.</p>	20-Dec-24	18-Jul-25	Under Consideration
	12	LA04/2024/2134/F	Major	<p>Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive, Dunmurry.</p>	Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 37no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works.	21-Dec-24	19-Jul-25	Under Consideration
	13	LA04/2025/0088/F	Major	<p>Lands adjacent and south west of Monagh By-pass, north west of Nos. 17, 19 and 22 Black Ridge Gardens and c.150 metres south east of Nos. 38 to 70 (evens) Black Ridge View (part of the wider Glenmona mixed-use development), Belfast</p>	Proposed mixed use development (in lieu of the previously approved employment zone under LA04/2020/0804/F) comprising a three storey building of 36 no. Category 1 (over 55's) social housing apartments and 7 no. single storey Class B1/B2 Business/Light Industrial Units. Development includes 2 no. access points, car parking, landscaping and all associated site works	17-Feb-25	15-Sep-25	Under Consideration
	14	LA04/2025/0184/O	Major	<p>38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA</p>	Seven storey building (39.3m AOD) mixed use development comprising of Use Class B1 (c): Business, Research & Development and Use Class, D1: Community and Cultural Uses, including landscaping, parking, and servicing (Amended Description).	10-Feb-25	08-Sep-25	Under Consideration
	15	LA04/2025/0574/F	Major	<p>Surface level car park at lands to east of Lanyon Place Station Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3NR</p>	Erection of eight storey building comprising seven floors of grade A office accommodation, ground floor retail / business units together with car parking (15 no. spaces), cycle parking and plant areas; and public realm improvements including dedicated drop-off area to front of building	17-Apr-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration

16	LA04/2025/0974/F	Major	Site to the south of the former Knockbreda High School. Lands bounded by the A55 Upper Knockbreda Road to the south and south-east, Wynchurch Road to the north-east, Knockbreda Primary School to the north and Knockbreda Park to the west.	Development of a new primary school building for Forge Integrated Primary School. including development of a nursery unit, hard and soft play areas, landscaping, car parking, internal drop-off areas and new access arrangements onto the A55 Knockbreda Road via a new signalised junction; demolition of no. 138a Knockbreda Park and associated site works	04-Jun-25	31-Dec-25	Under Consideration
17	LA04/2025/1272/F	Major	Harberton North Special School 29a Fortwilliam Park, Belfast, BT15 4AP	Erection of temporary mobile classroom village to facilitate future refurbishment and extension of existing Harberton North Special School, comprising 3 no. 2-storey blocks of temporary classroom accommodation, temporary hard play areas, temporary staff and visitor parking areas, tree removal and landscaping. (Amended Plans)	31-Jul-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration
18	LA04/2025/1525/F	Major	Units 2a and 2b 38 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6HR	Removal of condition 9 of LA04/2024/0714/F (Removal of fuel storage tanks)	09-Sep-25	07-Apr-26	Under Consideration
19	LA04/2025/1716/F	Major	Santander House, 1 Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3PH	Proposed change of use from class B1(a) office to short term Transitional Care Unit (Use Class D1 Medical) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works.	05-Nov-25	03-Jun-26	Under Consideration
Page 28	LA04/2025/1896/F	Major	Former Belfast Metropolitan College Campus Whiterock Road, Belfast, BT12 7PH	Proposed mixed use development comprising of 77 No. social housing units (mix of 26 dwellings and 51 apartments) and a new children's centre, car parking, landscaping, open space, access and all associated site works including the installation of a new substation.(amendment to planning permission ref: LA04/2024/0122/F).	06-Nov-25	04-Jun-26	Under Consideration

# Planning Applications Discussed at Committee Between 01 Apr 2019 and 02 Dec 2025

Decision Description	Totals
	17
Application Withdrawn	
Consent Granted	1
Consent Refused	
Permission Granted	5
Permission Refused	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Date Valid</u>	<u>Statutory Target Date</u>	<u>Statutory Target Weeks</u>	<u>Current number of Weeks</u>	<u>Committee Date</u>	<u>Weeks between Valid date and Comm date</u>	<u>Weeks Since Committee</u>	<u>Previous New Non-statutory Target Date</u>	<u>New Non-statutory Target Date</u>	<u>Reason decision not issued</u>
LA04/2022/2059/F  <b>Page 48</b>	Lands south of 56 Highcairn Drive Belfast BT13 3RU Site located at junction between Highcairn Drive and Dunboyne Park Belfast.	Social Housing Development comprising of 12 no. 3p/2b semi-detached dwelling houses with incutilage parking and associated site works. (amended description and site location plan)	LOC	04-Nov-22	17-Feb-23	15	161	29/06/2023	33	126	31/12/25	31/01/26	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - land ownership issues on the applicant's side
LA04/2021/2016/F	21-29 Corporation Street & 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast.	Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received).	MAJ	26-Aug-21	24-Mar-22	30	223	16/01/2024	124	98	30/11/25	31/12/25	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - wording of clauses and CoT finally agreed. S76 sent to applicant for signing

LA04/2024/0483/F	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works.	MAJ	19-Mar-24	15-Oct-24	30	89	15/10/2024	30	59	Unknown	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - issues to be resolved on the applicant's side
LA04/2024/0480/DCA	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Part demolition of existing buildings (stripping back of roof, shopfront and other external alterations to facilitate change of use and extension of buildings to hotel use.	LOC	29-Mar-24	12-Jul-24	15	88	15/10/2024	28	59	Unknown	Unknown	See above
LA04/2024/0369/F	Lands at Former Monarch Laundry site, and Broadway Hall Site, No's 451 - 457 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6HD.	Proposed Specialist Nursing and Residential Care Facility comprising approximately 158 no. beds, day/dining rooms, treatment rooms, staff rooms, office/store rooms, including car parking provision, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping, and associated site and access works.	MAJ	08-Feb-24	05-Sep-24	30	95	12/11/2024	39	55	31/10/25	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement and new contamination issues - development commenced without planning permission and updated contaminated land survey submitted by applicant. Currently being reviewed by Environmental Health

LA04/2023/2557/F	Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove. Belfast.	260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works.	MAJ	24-Feb-23	22-Sep-23	30	145	10/12/2024	93	51	Unknown	Unknown	Clauses in s76 agreed following specialist legal advice and discussion with applicant. Certificate of Title to be resolved
LA04/2024/0675/F	The Arches Centre 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue / 387-389 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT5 5AA	Change of Use of first and second floor to 39 No. apartments; extension to second floor for 6 No. apartments and erection of new third floor for 19 No. apartments (all social housing dwellings, 64 No. in total), and ancillary/associated works. Solar panels on roof (amended plans and description).	MAJ	13-May-24	09-Dec-24	30	81	15/04/2025	48	33			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/0058/F	68 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AS	Demolition of existing 31 no. bed private nursing home and erection of 20 no. sheltered housing units (3 storey building) for the elderly; warden accommodation; communal facilities; landscaping; car parking and site works.	LOC	20-Dec-23	03-Apr-24	15	102	13/05/2025	72	29			Permission Granted

LA04/2023/4543/F	885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH	Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	LOC	01-Feb-24	16-May-24	15	96	17/06/2025	71	24	Unknown	Unknown	DAERA NIEA recently provided its consultation response - advising that bat surveys required
LA04/2024/1036/F	Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA.	Lagan Gateway Phase 2 – Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works	LOC	10-May-24	23-Aug-24	15	82	17/06/2025	57	24	Unknown	Unknown	Further information requested from applicant following request from DAERA NIEA
LA04/2024/0267/F	11 Friendly Way, Belfast, BT7 2DU	Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO (amended description)	LOC	15-Feb-24	30-May-24	15	94	17/06/2025	69	24			Permission Refused

LA04/2025/0535/F	Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast	Variation of conditions 1, 2, ,3, 4 ,5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location.	MAJ	27-May-25	23-Dec-25	30	27	17/06/2025	3	24	30/11/25	31/01/26	Awaiting final DFI Roads response and conclusion of S77 agreement (amendment to S76 agreement)
LA04/2024/1654/F	432 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6EN	Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis)	LOC	21-Oct-24	03-Feb-25	15	58	12/08/2025	42	16	31/10/25	30/11/25	Preparing decision notice for issuing
LA04/2024/1865/O	Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road, Belfast.	3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans)	LOC	28-Oct-24	10-Feb-25	15	57	12/08/2025	41	16	30/11/25	31/01/26	Late objections received. Planning Service requested additional information from applicant in respect of land instability issue

LA04/2024/2077/F	Adelaide Business Centre 2-6 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP	Proposed change of use from office space (B1) and storage or distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant, Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone & Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking and Associated Site Works. Proposal includes changes to elevations. (Amended Plans Received).	MAJ	29-Jan-25	27-Aug-25	30	44	12/08/2025	27	16	30/12/25	31/01/26	Late objection received from neighbouring premises. Officers working through issues. Application will need to be reported back to the Committee for reconsideration
LA04/2024/0948/F	Derelict lands at and to the rear of no.s 34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Redevelopment of listed buildings and lands to the rear for a residential development comprising 20no. townhouses and 6no. apartments with associated landscaping, parking and site works	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	78	16/09/2025	67	11			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/0955/LBC	34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Restoration of external features with a new rear projection to no. 34 The Mount and new partitioning walls in both buildings to facilitate use for 6no. apartments	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	78	16/09/2025	67	11			Consent Granted
LA04/2025/0607/F	5 Squires Hill Road, Belfast, BT14 8FJ	Amendments to previously approved application(LA04/2023/4093/F). Proposal includes raising of ridge, fenestration changes to side and juliet balcony to front.	LOC	09-Apr-25	23-Jul-25	15	34	16/09/2025	22	11			Permission Granted

LA04/2025/0613/F	23 Everton Drive, Belfast, BT6 0LJ	Single storey rear extension with fenestration changes. Creation of new patio areas and garden studio. Attic conversion and the creation of a rear dormer. Partial demolition of existing side and rear elevations. Demolition of existing patio areas and shed. Removal of existing rear roof to facilitate attic conversion.	LOC	15-May-25	28-Aug-25	15	29	14/10/2025	21	7		Permission Granted
LA04/2022/0809/F	Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews Belfast.	Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated ancillary works.	MAJ	21-Apr-22	17-Nov-22	30	189	14/10/2025	181	7	30/11/25	31/01/26
LA04/2025/0556/F	Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry) BT1 4EF	Proposed change of use from restaurant, public house, 2 no retail units and office use to public house, 2 no. restaurants, hotel with an additional 2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all external façade alterations (change of description and amended plans).	LOC	27-Mar-25	10-Jul-25	15	36	11/11/2025	32	3	N/A	31/01/26

LA04/2025/0557/DCA	Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry)	Demolition to include; ground floor facades remodelling, removal of window detailing to upper floors, removal and replacement of windows and doors, creation of new door and window openings, removal of roof to rear return and internal wall and roof demolition to accommodate reconfiguration of buildings and associated development for proposed change of use.	LOC	27-Mar-25	10-Jul-25	15	36	11/11/2025	32	3	N/A	31/01/26	Application to be reported back to Committee as amended plans received
LA04/2024/1576/F	733-735 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 4EL	Demolition of existing buildings at no. 733 & no. 735 Antrim Road to facilitate proposed residential social housing development comprising of 2no. buildings containing 34no. units with associated in-curtilage parking and landscaping (Amended description)	LOC	18-Sep-24	01-Jan-25	15	63	11/11/2025	59	3	N/A	31/12/25	Awaiting execution of s76 agreement; reviewing final conditions in discussion with applicant

LA04/2024/0626/F	1 Havelock House Havelock Place, Ormeau, Belfast, BT7 1EB .	Erection of 104no. social rented residential units (comprising a mix of General Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation) across two detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys], landscaping, communal and private amenity space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision, and other associated site works	MAJ	17-Apr-24	13-Nov-24	30	85	11/11/2025	81	3	N/A	31/01/26	Completion of s76 agreement delayed due to Certificate of Title issue
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<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Amenity Byelaws
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nora Largey, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input type="text"/></p> <p>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</p>	
<p><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></p> <p>After Committee Decision <input type="checkbox"/>  After Council Decision <input type="checkbox"/>  Sometime in the future <input type="checkbox"/>  Never <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p><b>Call-in</b></p>	
<p><b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

1.0	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide members with an opportunity to further consider;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,</li> <li>the revised draft byelaws which were presented to SP&amp;R Committee last month.</li> </ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>note the contents of this report and appendices;</li> <li>authorise officers to engage with DfC in relation to the revised draft byelaws to understand which aspects could be approved in the coming months.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>Members will be aware a report was previously presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2025, updating members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement. In addition, the report sought members approval of the draft byelaws.</p> <p>At Full Council meeting held on 1 December 2025, members agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21 November 2025 be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.</p> <p>Following on from some concerns previously raised, members will note that the proposed bye laws do not set a level for fixed penalty notices. £500 is the maximum fine which can be imposed by a Magistrates Court for breach of bye laws. This maximum fine is set by Section 92 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The fixed penalty level would be considerably lower than the maximum fine which the Court can impose, typically this is approximately 10% of the maximum fine. The level of fixed penalty would be subject to engagement with DfC and would require Committee approval in due course. Members will note that officers have proposed that the reference to continuing offences is removed as it is not considered that this is applicable to the types of behaviour which these bye laws seek to regulate.</p> <p>Members will recall that some provisions in the draft bye laws relate to arrangements for special events such as the Fleadh. Therefore it is important that there is early engagement with DfC in relation to these proposals.</p> <p>Committee is asked for its further views in relation to the revised bye laws which were presented to Committee last month. It is also requested that Committee authorises officers to carry out engagement with DfC in relation to the revised bye laws.</p>

	<p>Members are asked to note that correspondence has been issued to PSNI and DoJ seeking;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the requirement for an additional class of offenses, noting that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough.</li> <li>- clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.</li> </ul> <p>When responses are received, officers will bring a report back to Committee with further proposals in relation to the issues of graphic imagery and alleged hate speech in the city centre. Dependent upon responses being received, it is anticipated that these proposals will be brought to Committee in early spring 2026.</p>
3.2	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. As outlined in the report tabled on 21 November 2025, there will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.</p>
3.3	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p><b>Appendix 1:</b> SP&amp;R Report – ‘City Centre Byelaws - 21 November 2025’</p> <p><b>Appendix 2:</b> Revised Byelaws December 2025</p> <p><b>Appendix 3 (a):</b> Consultation report CAJ Response</p> <p><b>Appendix 3 (b):</b> Consultation Report</p> <p><b>Appendix 4:</b> Survey Report for 2 December 2020 – 26 March 2024, outlining high level quantitative survey results</p>

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<b>Subject:</b>	City Centre Byelaws
<b>Date:</b>	21 November 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nora Largey, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<p><b>After Committee Decision</b></p> <p><b>After Council Decision</b></p> <p><b>Sometime in the future</b></p> <p><b>Never</b></p>	

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

1.0	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
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1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>update Members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,</li> <li>provide Members with revised draft byelaws for approval</li> </ul>
2.0	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>note the contents of this report and appendices</li> <li>approve the revised draft byelaws</li> </ul>
3.0	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>Members will be aware of ongoing issues caused by noise and the display of graphic imagery in the city centre and the negative effect that this can have on social and economic activity. This primarily impacts the primary retail core but also extends more widely to those who work, live in and visit Belfast.</p> <p>The Council is empowered to draft byelaws under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the “Act”) and in the absence of primary legislation to enforce such a nuisance, officers agreed to draft byelaws to address these issues.</p> <p>On 26 June 2023, Committee agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on a set of draft byelaws. This followed formal consultation and engagement with the Department for Communities and receipt of a legal opinion that addressed issues on human rights considerations that were raised by DfC.</p>
3.2	<p><b><u>Consultation and Engagement</u></b></p> <p>A public consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council’s online engagement platform YourSay Belfast. The consultation ran for a period of 14 weeks and ended on 4 March 2024.</p> <p>At the request of Elected Members, further workshops were held with stakeholders in May 2025.</p> <p>Party briefings have been carried out in the past few months.</p> <p>This report will give Members a high-level summary of the results of the public consultation and the workshops.</p>

	<p>The proposed draft byelaws are attached to this report as <b>Appendix 1</b> and the detailed Consultation Report is attached as <b>Appendix 2</b>.</p>
3.3	<p><b><u>Consultation Format</u></b></p> <p>The online survey contained a series of questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre</li> <li>• Level of usage of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre and for which purposes</li> <li>• Experience of the use of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre (positive, neutral or negative)</li> <li>• Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices and promotional literature (including graphic imagery) in the city centre</li> <li>• Extent of agreement or disagreement with standard conditions for a permit as listed in the draft byelaws</li> <li>• Extent of agreement or disagreement with the proposal that the Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited</li> </ul> <p>Respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they lived, worked, studied in Belfast, if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity or good relations issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.</p> <p>Standard monitoring questions for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependency status were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Just under three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would be happy to answer these questions.</p>
3.4	<p><b><u>Further Engagement</u></b></p> <p>At Members' requests, two further workshops with a range of stakeholders were held on 12 and 14 May 2025.</p> <p>These sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant and were attended by Elected Members from the DUP, the UUP, the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the TUV as well as representatives from the following organisations: The Committee on the Administration of</p>

	<p>Justice; Belfast Chamber; Linen Quarter BID; Crown Jesus Ministries; Socialist Party NI; TUV; PSNI; Belfast One and the Free Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>These sessions provided useful feedback, with general consensus being reached that there is nuisance created by amplified noise in the city centre.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Consultation results and analysis</u></b></p> <p>There was a total of 3,571 responses to the survey, with a combined total of 14,878 written comments.</p> <p>There was an extremely high level of engagement from varied sections of the public, who had a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.</p> <p>Many of the written responses were nuanced, thoughtful, detailed, reasoned and complex. They provide a rich source of data in terms of how the city centre is experienced by individuals and groups from a wide range of backgrounds. Respondents stated in detail how amplified noise and /or the content of that amplified noise, as well as the display of graphic imagery have affected them personally, whether positively, negatively or both.</p> <p>An overriding theme amongst respondents' written answers is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Consultation Report explores other themes in responses in more depth. Written submissions were received from a diverse selection of interested groups and organisations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast &amp; District Trades Union Council</li> <li>• The Committee on the Administration of Justice</li> <li>• HERe NI</li> <li>• Free Presbyterian Church</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions</li> <li>• NIPSA</li> <li>• UNISON NI</li> <li>• Rainbow Project</li> <li>• Socialist Party</li> <li>• Traditional Unionist Voice</li> <li>• WRDA</li> <li>• A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations</li> </ul> <p>A summary of these submissions is included as Appendix 3 to the Consultation Report.</p>

	<p>A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, which all expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws.</p> <p>High-level quantitative results from the public survey in the form of pie charts and bar charts are attached to this report as <b>Appendix 3</b>.</p>
3.6	<p><b><u>Summary of Content of Draft Byelaws</u></b></p> <p>The draft byelaws that were published for public consultation aimed to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the need to tackle the nuisance that can result when multiple individuals or organisations come together in busy pedestrian areas to share their views, ideas or performances, often using amplification devices.</p> <p>The draft byelaws contained a requirement for a permit for anyone wishing to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core. This related to any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances. The same rules applied for anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.</p> <p>The draft byelaws further provided that a modest annual fee (to be determined) would be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme.</p>
3.7	<p><b><u>Proposed Changes to Draft Byelaws Following Consultation</u></b></p> <p><u>Permits</u></p> <p>Feedback from the public survey and further engagement has indicated that whilst most respondents are in favour of regulating amplification in the city centre, a permit system is not considered to be the optimal way to achieve such regulation.</p> <p>Reasons for disagreement with a permit system ranged from concerns around any fee to be charged, potential interference with freedom of expression and the ability to undertake spontaneous performances, and the administration and enforcement of such a scheme. These are explored in more detail in the consultation report.</p> <p>Officers have therefore removed a permit system from the draft byelaws.</p> <p><u>Decibel limit</u></p> <p>The revised byelaws now provide for a maximum decibel limit of 70dB for performers wishing to play music or operate amplifiers and similar devices in the city centre. This decibel limit is slightly louder than the ambient street noise and should ensure that performers can be heard, whilst not being excessively loud or intrusive.</p> <p><u>Graphic Imagery</u></p>

	<p>The draft byelaws presented for public consultation included provisions around the regulation of graphic imagery. Feedback from the public consultation indicates that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents in the public consultation indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.</p> <p>Officers are aware that enforcing a ban on certain graphic images is difficult given the current lack of legislative framework in this area. It is therefore suggested that the provisions on graphic imagery are removed from the current draft of the byelaws and that a separate report is brought back as this issue is further considered.</p> <p><b><u>Special Events</u></b></p> <p>The revised byelaws now contain provisions relating to Special Events to be held in the city centre.</p> <p>Provision is made (i) for the restriction or prohibition of amplification in the city centre during Special Events and (ii) for the suspension contained within applicable Council byelaws for prohibition of consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre.</p> <p><b><u>Alcohol</u></b></p> <p>Whilst not directly addressed in the draft byelaws, the issue of on-street drinking was raised in the written comments during the public consultation and subsequently in the workshops.</p> <p>Members will note that a report on the Council's view of the proposed commencement of Articles 68-72 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was presented at the People and Communities Committee on 9 September 2025 and subsequently ratified at Council on 1 October.</p> <p>The proposed commencement of these Articles would effectively extend the powers conferred on police officers requiring individuals to stop drinking alcohol in a designated area, and surrender any alcoholic drinks in their possession, to council officers. Anyone refusing will be committing an offence and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This is an 'opt in' power that the Council may choose to avail of.</p> <p>The Council has indicated broad support of the commencement of these provisions to DfC and has noted that they would complement the proposed byelaws to make Belfast a safe and welcoming place for all, in line with the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.8	<p><b><u>Enforcement Mechanisms</u></b></p> <p>The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides a mechanism for officers to issue abatement notices in relation to noise, however, the current</p>

	<p>issues around noise in the city centre for the most part do not meet the threshold of a statutory nuisance.</p> <p>Members may be aware that Section 92 of the Act provides that penalties for the contravention of byelaws shall be in the form of a fine payable on summary conviction. The draft byelaws contain a provision whereby an authorised officer may issue a fixed penalty notice for an offence committed under the byelaws.</p> <p>Whilst the issuance of a fixed penalty notice via byelaws is not usual practice, the Department has indicated that it will consider the fixed penalty enforcement mechanism currently included in the draft byelaws.</p>
3.9	<p><b><u>Suggested next steps</u></b></p> <p>After considering feedback from the public consultation and workshops, officers have revised the draft byelaws that reflect the changes noted above. These are attached as <b>Appendix 1</b> for Members' consideration and approval.</p> <p>Members are also advised that officers will continue to log and monitor all complaints about busking, preaching, or any other kind of street performance. Current statistics are included in the consultation report.</p> <p>Members will be aware that Section 91 of the Act requires byelaws to be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be adopted. Therefore, any revised draft byelaws will be subject to this process.</p>
3.10	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. There will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.</p>
4.0	<p><b><u>Appendices - Documents Attached</u></b></p> <p>Appendix 1: Proposed draft byelaws  Appendix 2 &amp; (a): Consultation report  Appendix 3: High level quantitative survey results</p>

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## **BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

### **BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

**Made by Belfast City Council :**

**Confirmed by Department for  
Communities :**

**In operation on and from :**

**BYE – LAWS  
BELFAST CITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE  
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the \_\_\_\_\_ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERPRETATION**

**1. In these Bye-Laws -**

‘Authorised Officer’ means any person employed by the Council or any other person authorised by the Council to carry out functions under these Bye-Laws for purposes of Section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

‘City Centre’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

‘Council’ means Belfast City Council.

‘Perform’ means to engage in any type of public performance or exhibition with the reasonable expectation of attracting bystanders and / or receiving donations, and includes but is not limited to the playing of musical instruments, singing, circus-based skills, street theatre, reciting and public speaking and any other type of performance or exhibition not specifically listed but which would be similar in character. For the purposes of this Bye-Law this also includes preaching.

‘Performer’ means a person who engages in any activity described in the preceding paragraph in a Public Place.

‘Public Place’ means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

‘Special Event’ means a large scale event which is to take place in Belfast which is exceptional in nature and will attract a significant number of visitors to the city.

**General Provisions**

- 2. These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.**
- 3. Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.**

- a. No person shall, after being requested to desist by an Authorised Officer cause or permit any noise to be made above 70 decibels by
  - i. Playing a musical instrument; and/or
  - ii. operating or permitting to be operated any audio device, speaker, amplifier, or similar equipment of a similar type
- 4. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 3, where there are 2 or more Performers within 100 metres of each other and it appears to an Authorised Officer that there is a cumulative effect of the noise which is so loud or continuous as to give reasonable cause for annoyance to other persons either within places of work or in a Public Place, an Authorised Officer may ask the Performers to reduce their volume and/or to relocate to another place to perform.

### **Behaviour and Conduct of Performers**

- 5. A Performer must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.
- 6. A Performer must comply with any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended from time to time.

### **Exemptions**

- 7. These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:
  - (a) Those activities taking place in a public place pursuant to an entertainment licence;
  - (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
  - (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
  - (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008; and
  - (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

### **Offences**

- 8. A person who fails, without a reasonable excuse, to comply with a reasonable request from an Authorised Officer pursuant to Paragraphs 3 or 4 will be guilty of an offence
- 9. Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 of the standard scale.
- 10. Where an Authorised Officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under the preceding Bye-Law, the Authorised Officer may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is refused or the person gives a name and address which is false or misleading,

that person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

### **Fixed Payment Notice**

- 11.** Where an Authorised Officer has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under these Bye-Laws, the Authorised Officer may give that person a notice offering the person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for that offence by payment of a fixed penalty to the Council.
- 12.** Where a person is given a fixed penalty notice under these Bye-Laws:
  - (a) no proceedings shall be instituted for that offence before the expiration of the period of 14 days following the date of the notice; and
  - (b) the person shall not be convicted of that offence if the person pays the fixed penalty before the expiration of that period.
- 13.** A notice under this section must give such particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information of the offence.
- 14.** The Fixed Penalty Notice shall specify the name and address of the alleged offender and in general terms the nature of the contravention alleged to have been committed and the date and place of the alleged contravention.

### **Miscellaneous and Supplementary**

#### **Special Events**

The Council may restrict or prohibit the use of amplification by Performers in certain areas of the City Centre when there is a Special Event due to take place in the city but only where it is considered necessary to do so for the purposes of facilitating or delivering the event. Any such restriction or prohibition may only be for the duration of the Special Event.

Where the Council proposes to restrict or prohibit the use of amplification for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice in 2 newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

The Council may suspend the prohibition contained within the applicable Belfast City Council Bye-laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for Special Events. Any such suspension may only be for the duration of the Special Event and will be subject to consultation with PSNI and any other relevant stakeholders.

Where the Council proposes to suspend the prohibition contained within the Bye- Laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice of the proposed restriction or prohibition in 2 local newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

#### **Surrender of alcohol in designated places**

After Paragraph 4 of the Belfast City Council Bye-laws prohibiting the consumption of intoxicating liquor in designated places dated September 2012, insert:

5. (1) If an Authorised Officer reasonably believes that a person is, or has been, consuming intoxicating liquor in a designated public place or intends to consume intoxicating liquor in such a place the Authorised Officer may require the person concerned—

- (a) not to consume in that place anything which is, or which the constable reasonably believes to be, intoxicating liquor; and
- (b) to surrender anything in his possession which is, or which the constable reasonably believes to be, intoxicating liquor or a container for such liquor.

(3) The Authorised Officer may dispose of anything surrendered to him under paragraph (b) in such manner as he considers appropriate.

(4) A person who fails without reasonable excuse to comply with a requirement imposed on him under paragraph (1) is guilty of an offence.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

These Bye-Laws will not prejudice the Council's ability to pursue enforcement action under Part 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, if appropriate.

**SEALED** with the Corporate Seal  
of the **CITY OF BELFAST** in  
the presence of:-

## LORD MAYOR

---

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The foregoing Bye-Laws are hereby confirmed by the Department of Communities for Northern Ireland this day of 20X.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
[job title]

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**Submission to Belfast City Council consultation on draft city centre Bye-laws  
'for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and  
suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre'**

**Consultation 27 November 2023 → 04 March 2024**

1. The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is an independent human rights organisation with cross community membership, established in 1981, that works to ensure public authority compliance with obligations under international human rights law.
2. This is a response to the consultation by Belfast City Council on Bye-laws 'for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre' which would introduce a Permit system in two designated areas of the City Centre, requiring a Council-issued Permit for 'any amplified performance', any use of 'amplification devices' and any non-commercial stand or stall.
3. The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10) on which CAJ has a significant body of work. ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA)
4. In summary, whilst understanding the issues the Council is seeking to address, CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented de facto 'authorisation' regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised. Take the following examples:
  - An offence would be committed by organising a static protest in the City Centre retail area using a loudhailer without first applying for a permit from the Council. This would constitute a de facto 'authorisation' regime for such protests (there are no notification requirements for such protests under NI law, there are notification, but not authorisation, requirements for parades).
  - The standard conditions envisaged for a Permit will not allow any such protests to take place before 11am on any day, and no such protest would be allowed to take place for more than two hours, with a 24hr ban on returning to the same location.
  - It would not be possible to hold any spontaneous static protest in the city centre retail area in response to a local or international event or atrocity, as first protest organisers would have to submit and await for approval from the Council for a Permit.

5. This submission will cover:

- Outline of Human Rights Framework.
- The issues the Council is seeking to address.
- The proposed bye-laws.
- Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

#### **Outline of Human Rights Framework**

6. As alluded to above, ECHR Article 11 protects the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as a fundamental right in a democratic society. Article 11 rights are closely linked to the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9). There are also similar obligations under UN treaties.

7. The Council may find useful the following detailed guidelines on the scope of these rights:

- European Court of Human Rights: Guide on Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Freedom of assembly and association (2020).<sup>1</sup>
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (3rd edition).<sup>2</sup>

8. None of the above rights are absolute and can be subject to restrictions under certain circumstances, when certain tests are met. In summary these are:

- **Legal Certainty:** restrictions must be “prescribed by law” which means not only a legal basis in domestic law, but also that the law is formulated with sufficient precision to be foreseeable, and hence avoid arbitrary application.
- **Legitimate Aim:** restrictions can only be made in pursuance of one of a number of listed legitimate aims, namely, “the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”
- **Necessary in a Democratic Society (proportionality):** restrictions must answer a “pressing social need” and be proportionate to the “legitimate aim” pursued.

9. It is clear that the Council permit proposals engage and can interfere in the above ECHR rights, it is these tests that therefore would need to be met for that interference to be considered justified and hence lawful.

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<sup>1</sup> [Guide on Article 11 - Freedom of assembly and association \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/eu-human-rights/article-11-freedom-of-assembly-and-association)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2019\)017rev-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2019)017rev-e)

10. Most of the permitted legitimate aims are not relevant to the aims of the Council's policy aim of preventing 'nuisance.' The legitimate aim likely to be relevant is that of "protection of the rights of others". It should be noted that 'rights' of others is in reference to ECHR rights and other *rights* for which there is an imperative to include.
11. Other ECHR rights would include the positive obligations under Article 8 to protect persons from racist expression. The UN and Council of Europe have both held that sectarianism in NI is to be treated as a form of racism, and the European Court of Human Rights has also held that sexual orientation is also protected by Article 8.<sup>3</sup> The duties under the ECHR, given further domestic effect by the HRA, therefore empower and place positive duties on Northern Ireland public authorities to take steps to tackle hate expression. These provisions should be read and interpreted in line with other relevant human rights standards. This would include Article 6 of the Framework Convention for National Minorities which obliges public authorities to: '*take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity*'.
12. Article 20 of the (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides that: "*Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law*". Incitement to hatred should be considered as a subset of and as the most serious type of hate expression, to be criminalised on the basis that it incites racial discrimination, hostility or violence in a public context. The ICCPR duties are further interpreted by the UN Rabat Plan of Action (on combatting incitement to hatred). Rabat sets out general principles that distinctions should be made between:
  - 1) Expression that constitutes a criminal offence.
  - 2) Expression that is not criminally punishable but may justify a civil suit or administrative sanctions.

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<sup>3</sup> The increased codification of Article 8 ECHR rights as providing for positive obligations for intervention to protect against actions that include being subjected to racist expression has been a feature of Strasbourg jurisprudence (see for example *Asku v Turkey* (app no 4149/04, 41029/04) 15 March 2012, and *Király and Dömötör v Hungary*, 2017). In relation to sexual orientation and gender identity falling within the ambit of Article 8, see *Bensaid v UK* (Application no. 44599/98) [47]. In 2011 the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination made clear that "Sectarian discrimination in Northern Ireland [...] attract[s] the provisions of ICERD in the context of 'intersectionality' between religion and racial discrimination" (para 1(e) UN Doc CERD/C/GBR/18-20, List of themes on the UK). Later in the same year, the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for National Minorities directly addressed the approach in the predecessor draft strategy, raising concerns that the Committee "finds the approach in the CSI Strategy to treat sectarianism as a distinct issue rather than as a form of racism problematic, as it allows sectarianism to fall outside the scope of accepted anti-discrimination and human rights protection standards". AC FCNM, Third Opinion on the United Kingdom adopted on 30 June 2011, ACFC/OP/III(2011)006, para 126. The UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination stated its position following representations from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The Commission had raised concerns that "policy presenting sectarianism as a concept entirely separate from racism problematically locates the phenomenon outside the well-developed discourse of commitments, analysis and practice reflected in international human rights law" and hence was not harnessing this framework to tackle sectarianism.

3) Expression that does not give rise to criminal, civil or administrative sanctions but still raises a concern in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.<sup>4</sup>

13. The duties to outlaw incitement to hatred are currently provided for under the 'stirring up hatred' and 'arousing fear' criminal offences in the Public Order (NI) Order 1987.<sup>5</sup> This covers hate expression of a sectarian, racist, disablist or homophobic nature that reaches an incitement to hatred threshold. Reform and strengthening of this legislation has been recommended by the *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*.<sup>6</sup>

14. The boundary between protected freedom of expression on one hand and prohibited advocacy of ethnic and religious hatred on the other has been debated internationally and locally for some time. ECHR jurisprudence has established that free expression is protected even when it "shocks, offends or disturbs"<sup>7</sup> or is capable of "creating a feeling of uneasiness in groups of citizens or because some may perceive them as disrespectful".<sup>8</sup> It does draw a distinction however between this and expression which "spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance"<sup>9</sup> or matters such as "the promotion of discrimination or ethnic division".<sup>10</sup>

15. As alluded to below, part of the aim of the policy is to prevent the display of graphic materials. Should the Council wish to rely on the legitimate aim of 'morals' it should be noted that this has been interpreted narrowly.<sup>11</sup> Some 'graphic' material is of course already regulated by law.

16. In relation to a requirement for an authorisation procedure for a protest, it should be noted that this has only been held to be in keeping with the requirements of Article

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<sup>4</sup> *Rabat Plan of Action*, para 20, recommendations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/outcome-documents/rabat-plan-action>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/III>

<sup>6</sup> *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*, final report 2020.

<sup>7</sup> *Handyside v UK* 1976[49]

<sup>8</sup> *Vajnai v Hungary* (2008) [57].

<sup>9</sup> *Erbakan v Turkey* (1999) [57].

<sup>10</sup> *Vona v Hungary* (application no. 35943/10) (2013) [66]

<sup>11</sup> OSCE/Venice Commission guidelines paragraph 142: *Protection of morals. On the face of Article 21, ICCPR and Article 11(2) ECHR the protection of morals may be invoked by States as a ground for imposing restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. In practice, however, the protection of morals should rarely, if ever, be regarded as an appropriate basis for imposing restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly. As the UN Human Rights Committee has noted, 'the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations [...] for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition [...] Any such limitations must be understood in the light of universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination. Any restrictions based on a narrow or exclusive conception of morality will thus be incompatible with relevant standards governing non-discrimination (at paragraphs 101 et seq. above) and content-based regulation (see paragraph 30). Moreover, States may not legitimately invoke morality as a ground for restriction in cases which concern facets of an individual's existence and identity (in particular, because these constitute the very essence of the right to freedom of expression).*

11(1) ECHR where required to ensure the peaceful nature of a meeting.<sup>12</sup> This limited exemption is therefore not applicable to the current Council policy.

17. It should be noted that there is a difference between an ‘authorisation’ requirement (whereby permission must be given before a protest takes place) and a ‘notification’ requirement whereby authorities must be *notified* in advance, but an ‘authorisation’ is not to be awaited. With or without a notification requirement, there can still be powers to impose restrictions on a protest. There are currently no authorisation requirements for protests in Northern Ireland.
18. Under the law in Northern Ireland at present, static protest (in law ‘open air public meetings’) have no notification requirements (with the exception of counter protests to parades). The legislation (Part II of the Public Order NI Order 1987) provides for a senior police officer to impose restrictions where there is a risk of ‘serious public disorder, serious damage to property, serious disruption to life of the community’ or when the purpose of the protest is for the intimidation of others from legitimate activity.<sup>13</sup>
19. Under Parades legislation (Public Processions NI Order 1998), there is a notification requirement for parades of 28 days, which can be waived where not ‘reasonably practicable’ (for example a moving protest called at short notice in response to a local or international event) in which case notice is to be given as soon as possible. Counter protest to parades have a similar 14 day notification requirement. The Parades Commission may then impose restrictions.<sup>14</sup>
20. More recent legislation has made provision for Safe Access Zones for premises providing abortion services to prevent the harassment or impeding of persons accessing abortion services within a designated zone in the vicinity of the premises.<sup>15</sup>

#### **The issues the Council is seeking to address**

21. The consultation document alludes to (but does not elaborate on) the issues the policy is seeking to address as follows:

The council has encountered issues in recent years relating to loud busking, religious preaching and various other activities involving the use of amplification devices and/or the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.<sup>16</sup>

22. The Equality Screening produced with the consultation sets out the objectives of the policy as follows:

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<sup>12</sup> [Zilibertberg v. Moldova](#)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/II>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/2/contents>

<sup>15</sup> Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023 see [Safe Access Zones | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> <https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/consultation-on-city-centre-byelaws>

Significant issues have been raised over the past number of years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, mainly within the primary retail core. Officers recognise that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, it is important to consider the context within which these activities are being considered, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

The proposed bye-laws will introduce rules and regulations around participation in amplified performances, public speaking, meetings and events, and the display of promotional literature or other information in the City Centre. The bye-laws are not intended to prevent street preaching or the promotion of any public interest causes. Rather, they are intended to reduce the overall ambient noise and unacceptable nuisance which is caused by the cumulative impact of these various activities in the City Centre.<sup>17</sup>

23. In recent years CAJ is aware of complaints alleging that some preachers have engaged in homophobic expression, and a stall by anti-abortion protestors has carried graphic images of aborted foetuses that have caused alarm and distress.
24. In order to demonstrate compliance with the 'pressing social need' test of restrictions on rights to freedom of assembly and expression, the Council would need to provide an evidence base to justify its proposed measures.

#### **The proposed bye-laws**

25. The proposed bye-laws would introduce a Permit system for particular activity in the City Centre. They create two zones – one an (outer) City Centre covering the whole City Centre and a second a more limited (inner) City Centre ("Primary Retail Core"). The main bye laws provide that:
  - A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
  - A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
  - A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/City-Centre-Bye-Laws-Equality-Screening>

provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.<sup>18</sup>

26. Permits will be available from the Council for a fee (to be determined).
27. An offence is created for contravening the bye- laws punishable by a fine of up to £500. The Council has powers to revoke a permit when conditions are not being abided by (with a right of appeal to a magistrates court), and powers to remove unattended stalls and stands.
28. The “Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate” with a number of ‘standard conditions’ listed that may be specified in permits namely:
  - Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
  - A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
  - A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
  - A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
  - A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
  - The maximum performance periods set out in these bye-laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.
  - The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.
  - A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.
29. A number of exemptions are listed to the bye-laws. In summary these are:
  - Activities in a public place organised by the Council, or with the consent of the Department of Infrastructure or other relevant landowner.
  - A parade “authorised” [sic] by the Parades Commission.
  - Cash collections authorised by PSNI under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Bye-laws-for-the-good-governance-of-Belfast-city-c>

- Trade union pickets, under Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

#### Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

30. There are a number of significant concerns that the bye-laws will infringe ECHR rights, the most prominent is the risk for static protests.
31. It is not entirely clear if the aim of the policy is to capture protests and related protected expressive activity, reference is made, without elaboration, to 'meetings' in the equality screening of the policy aims. It appears the bye-laws are not intended to capture protests, as only those using loudhailers or amplification equipment will fall within scope.
32. However, many such protests rely on such equipment and take place in the vicinity of the inner city centre and often City Hall. The bye-laws provide an exemption for parades and trade union *pickets* (presumably as already otherwise regulated) but not for static protests ('open air public meetings'), regulated by public order legislation.
33. In conflict with the ECHR, the bye-laws essentially constitute a de facto authorisation process for any static protest in the designated zone in which a loudhailer or similar equipment is used. Furthermore, they would preclude any spontaneous such protest as a permit would have to be applied for in advance.
34. It would also require a prior-authorisation for anyone erecting a table or stand with promotional literature or information for a non-commercial purpose, raising similar issues.
35. No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions. This is also expressly the case in relation to the 'conditions' which make general reference to proportionality, but do not cite a legitimate aim.
36. The 'standard conditions' for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc). For example, the stipulation that no protests can be held before 11am or last for more than two hours in the same place.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 146. **Restrictions on 'time' or 'duration'.**

Restrictions imposed on the time or duration of an assembly must be based on an assessment of the individual circumstances of each case. The touchstone established by the European Court of Human Rights is that demonstrators ought to be given sufficient opportunity to manifest their views. In some cases, the protracted duration of an assembly may itself be integral to the message that the assembly is attempting to convey or to the effective expression of that message.

OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 147. **Restrictions on 'place'.** At the core of the right to freedom of assembly is the ability of the assembly participants to choose the place where they can best communicate their message to their desired audience.<sup>282</sup> It would be disproportionate if authorities categorically excluded places suitable and open to the public as sites for peaceful assemblies. The use of such suitable sites must always be assessed in the light of the circumstances of each case. The fact that a message could also be expressed in another place, is by itself insufficient reason to require an assembly to be held elsewhere, even if that location is within sight and sound of the target audience....

37. Any reliance on the rights and freedoms of others as a legitimate aim should specify which rights of others are engaged in relation to restrictions.<sup>20</sup>
38. If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions. Such alternative methods may include monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
39. In relation to 'graphic images' other areas of legal regulation may also be relevant.
40. It should be noted that content-based restrictions on assemblies are not permitted where *protected expression* is concerned.<sup>21</sup>
41. The requirements for a permit regulating 'amplified performances' appear more designed to regulate cultural activity and in general are less of a concern in ECHR terms than the other bye-laws. There is a risk, however, that this provision may capture expressive activity on a protest and in other formats in the absence of any exemption.
42. Overall, we are concerned that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. In a practical sense, should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive

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<sup>20</sup> OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 143. **Protection of the rights and freedoms of others.** Assemblies potentially impact on the rights and freedoms of those who live, work, shop, trade and carry on business in the same locality. However, balancing the right to assemble and the rights of others should always aim at ensuring that assemblies may proceed, unless they impose unnecessary and disproportionate burdens on others. Rights that may be claimed by non-participants affected by an assembly include, among others: the right to privacy (protected by Article 17 of the ICCPR and Article 8 of the ECHR), the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's possessions and property (protected by Article 1 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR), the right to liberty and security of person (Article 9 of the ICCPR and Article 5 of the ECHR), and the right to freedom of movement (Article 12 of the ICCPR and Article 2 of Protocol 4 to the ECHR). Some degree of disruption with respect to these rights must be tolerated if the essence of the right to peacefully assemble is not to be deprived of any meaning. Furthermore, as also noted at paragraphs 48 and 62, neither temporary disruption of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, nor opposition to an assembly, are of themselves legitimate reasons to impose restrictions on an assembly. Where a State restricts an assembly for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others, the relevant public authority should explain in detail:

- which specific rights and freedoms of others are engaged in the particular circumstances;
- the extent to which the proposed assembly would, if unrestricted, interfere with these rights and freedoms;
- how any restrictions on the proposed assembly would serve to mitigate these interferences, and why less restrictive measures would not lead to the envisaged success.

The authorities should be allowed a margin of appreciation when assessing these issues. In particular, despite the fact that no violent act or crimes have occurred during an assembly, the intimidating character of the rallies may be taken into account by the authorities. What matters is that the repeated organisation of the rallies was capable of intimidating others and therefore of affecting their rights, especially in view of the location of the parades.

<sup>21</sup> See para 30 OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance.



Committee on the  
Administration of Justice

activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws.

**February 2024**

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)  
1st Floor, Community House, Citylink Business Park  
6A Albert Street, Belfast, BT12 4HQ

Tel: +44 (0)28 9031 6000

Website: [www.caj.org.uk](http://www.caj.org.uk)

# Consultation Report

## Proposed City Centre Byelaws

November 2025

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## Appendices

- 1. Draft byelaws**
- 2. CAJ submission**
- 3. Summary of written responses**



## 1. Executive Summary

On 26 June 2023, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to begin the formal public consultation process on draft byelaws for the city centre.

A consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation platform, YourSay Belfast, on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks until 4 March 2024. This report sets out the findings from the online consultation survey and the various submissions that were received during the consultation period.

This report presents:

- the consultation background
- the process for developing and launching the consultation
- a quantitative report of the consultation survey responses and a qualitative analysis of text responses

The aim of this report is to give Elected Members as clear a picture as possible of the public response and issues raised in relation to the proposed byelaws. This will allow Elected Members to make an informed decision based on this evidence.

## 2. Background on the draft byelaws

The Council's power to make byelaws arises from Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the "Act"). Section 90 sets out the purposes for which the Council may make byelaws, which are:

- "(a) For the good rule and government of the whole or any part of its district;*
- (b) For the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its district;*
- (c) For any purpose for which bye-laws may be made by it under any other transferred provision."*

Section 91(1) of the Act confirms that byelaws made by the Council shall not have effect until they are confirmed by the relevant Department. Departmental guidance on drafting byelaws was issued in February 2015 and account of that has been taken in the development of the draft byelaws.

On 18 February 2022, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to undertake an initial informal consultation and engagement exercise with the Department for Communities (DfC). DfC subsequently highlighted a number of issues for further consideration:

- DfC observed that there may be the potential for the byelaws to interfere with rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the subsequent possibility for challenge.
- DfC commented that the power to confiscate property and dispose of it how they see fit is very powerful and may be better suited to primary legislation rather than Council byelaws. Save for the purposes for which bye-laws can be made, as set out in Section 80 of the 1972 Act, there is no restriction on the content of bye-laws, other than that "byelaws should not be made in respect of matters which are already dealt with in legislation". Ultimately, it is for the Council to decide if the existing law deals sufficiently with the matter at hand.
- DfC recommended that an exemption may need to be included for an official picket organised by a Trade Union under Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 ('the 1995 Order') which provides for peaceful communication of information.

A legal opinion was sought on the draft byelaws and an opinion was received on 10 March 2023. The opinion provided an analysis of Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel advised that the draft byelaws may have an impact upon the right to freedom of expression pursuant to Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel noted that this is not an absolute right, and interference with this right may be justified if the Court were to find there was a legitimate aim in doing so. Counsel also advised that it would be prudent to include reference to a peaceful picket organised pursuant to Article 98 of the 1995 Order in the language of the exemption.

After consideration of both the feedback from DfC and the legal opinion, the byelaws were amended to include an exemption for an official picket organised by a registered Trade Union (pursuant to authorisation granted in Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995). The title of the byelaws was amended to include "*And for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast City Centre*".

Draft byelaws were brought to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 26 June 2023 and the Committee authorised those draft byelaws to be issued for public consultation. These draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

A draft Equality Screening was conducted in relation to the draft byelaws, which was published alongside the consultation on the YourSay platform. The screening did not find there to be any likely impact of the draft byelaws on the nine grounds included within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependants).

### Summary of Content of the Draft Byelaws

The draft byelaws provide that anyone who wishes to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core, would require a permit from the Council. This would include any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances.

The same rules would apply to anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.

The byelaws provide that a modest annual fee will be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme. This fee is yet to be determined.

#### **European Convention on Human Rights**

The articles potentially engaged by these draft byelaws are as follows:

- Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 10: Freedom of expression
- Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association

These rights and freedoms provided are qualified rights; they may be interfered with or restricted in certain circumstances if necessary and for a legitimate aim.

Restrictions can be imposed provided any such restriction is:

- prescribed by law
- in pursuit of one or more legitimate aims specified in paragraph 2 of the Article in question
- necessary and
- proportionate

The 'legitimate aims' specified for each Article are as follows:

#### **Article 9:**

*'in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'*

#### **Article 10:**

*'in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.'*

#### **Article 11:**

*'in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This Article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions'*

*on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.'*

### 3. The Context of the Consultation

#### 3.1 Belfast City Council Context

Belfast City Council recognises that it is important to support the role of the City Centre as a focal point of social and economic activity and protect the amenity of the area for those who visit, live and work there.

Significant issues have been raised over the past few years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, primarily within the primary retail core. The Council recognises that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, the Council must consider the context within which these activities are being undertaken, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

Street preaching using significant amplification is occurring on a regular basis throughout the Primary Retail Core. This in turn attracts counter protests, usually but not exclusively at the weekend. In addition, protestors are regularly displaying images which cause significant distress to a variety of people for different reasons. For example, graphic images or abortions, animal experimentation and factory farming conditions. Since there are no restrictions on these activities, those protesting frequently use significant amplification to compete with each other. This in turn also appears to drive away those buskers who do not use amplification but may add to the vibrancy of the area.

Whilst the proposed byelaws would apply to the district as a whole, it is envisaged they will have a particular relevance to the city centre.

The Council has collated statistics on how many complaints have been received in recent years. Table 1 below demonstrates that whilst the total number peaked in 2020, the Council continues to receive complaints on the issues of loudspeakers and street performers in Belfast and in the city centre:

Table 1

	Loudspeaker Complaints in Belfast	Loudspeaker complaints in City Centre	Street performer complaints in Belfast	Street performer complaints in City Centre
2018	10	8	76	76
2019	17	14	78	78
2020	62	51	29	27
2021	24	22	34	34
2022	45	41	53	53
2023	29	27	22	20
2024	31	30	39	38
2025 (up to 11/11/25)	30	30	53	52

#### 4. Consultation Design Process

Council officers within the Legal & Civic Services Department along with colleagues from Strategic Policy & Performance discussed the approach to be agreed for consultation and engagement.

Officers recognised that qualitative feedback was important to understand how the draft byelaws would be received, and therefore open-ended text response questions relating to various aspects of the draft byelaws were included in the online survey.

Recognising the importance of knowing who was contributing to the survey, respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they

lived, worked, studied in Belfast or if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity, good relations and rural needs issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.

Standard monitoring questions were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependency status.

## 5. Methodology

The public consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation online platform, YourSay Belfast on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks, concluding on 4 March 2024. This online engagement platform provides the Council with several tools to support early, transparent and ongoing dialogue when undertaking consultation and engagement exercises and for reporting back on evidence received both in terms of quantitative and qualitative information. A hard copy format of the survey was made available upon request and responses received via hard copy have been read and considered for this report.

### 5.1 Pre consultation engagement sessions with stakeholders in relation to the draft byelaws

Relevant stakeholders from the city centre business community had attended the Strategic and Policy Resources Committee on 18 February 2022 to present their concerns about how persistent disruptive on-street activity, in the form of protests, street entertainers, preaching and lobbying, often involving the use of amplifiers, was increasingly creating difficulties for retailers and businesses operating in the general area of Cornmarket. It was noted that the impact of these activities was creating difficulties for retailers and businesses as well as having a detrimental effect on staff mental health and wellbeing.

## 6. Consultation Responses

### 6.1 Collation of statistics from surveys

As stated above, Council officers felt it appropriate to ask a series of open-ended questions to gauge opinion on various aspects of the draft byelaws. This quantitative feedback is summarised in Section 7 of this report. Statistical breakdowns of general sentiment in terms of level of agreement or disagreement is also included.

The combination of qualitative information and statistical information will give as comprehensive a picture as possible of the responses. It should be noted, however, that like other surveys conducted on the YourSay platform, no guarantee can be given that individual respondents have not filled in the survey multiple times. This is a known limitation in the analysis of public consultation data that is provided anonymously.

In the online survey, respondents were presented with questions based on various sections of the draft byelaws and were asked to state if they definitely agreed, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed or definitely disagreed. Percentages in relation to each question are given in tabular format with a discussion with some of the commentary and themes in written answers following on from this.

### 6.2 Consultation analysis

In addition to the statistical analysis of the responses to the survey, officers have reviewed written commentary submitted by the respondents. In many cases, comments were very complex with mixed feelings towards buskers, religious preaching and graphic imagery. General recurring themes have emerged from the comments and those are discussed in the analysis of the text comments for each question.

### 6.3 Written submissions

A number of written submissions were made during the period of the consultation. A substantial written response was submitted by the Committee for the Administration of Justice, which laid out concerns as to how the proposed byelaws could conflict with rights set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights, the most prominent issue being the risk that it would be an offence to have static protests in the city centre. A copy of this submission is included as **Appendix 2**.

Written responses were also received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations

Several of these organisations endorsed the CAJ submission. A summary of these written submissions is attached to this report as **Appendix 3**.

#### **6.4 Petitions**

No petitions were received.

#### **6.5 Email responses**

There was a total of 5 emails received that commented on the consultation. These touched on various aspects of the draft byelaws and included criticism that the terms and conditions are ill defined and are arbitrary, and that whilst the city centre benefits from music and the ability to protest, hate speech that constitutes bullying and harassment is unacceptable.

#### **6.6 Letter Response**

One letter response was received, which cautioned against enacting the byelaws.

The respondent felt that they would breach human rights by removing the opportunity to protest, gather, inform and peacefully campaign.

#### **6.7 Responses to the survey (hard copy submissions)**

A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, all of which expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws. These respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression in relation to the heritage of open-air preaching (in particular by the evangelical Christian / Protestant community) and supported the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.

## 7. Breakdown of Responses

### 7.1 Overall responses to the online survey

There were 3,571 responses to the online survey and a combined total of 14,878 written comments.

The analysis of the written comments clearly shows that there is considerable strength of feeling and demonstrates that respondents took time to compose responses that in many cases were thoughtful and reasoned.

### 7.2 Responses to the Consultation Questions on the draft byelaws

The consultation presented a series of questions to allow respondents to give their opinion on the substance of the proposed byelaws. The consultation also collected monitoring data on respondents' age, gender, religious background (regardless of whether or not they practice), their national identity, whether or not they were impacted by a disability, their ethnic origin and whether or not they have dependants.

Respondents could fill in the questionnaire as many times as they wanted. None of the questions in the questionnaire was mandatory. There is not, therefore, an equal number of responses for each question.

**Q1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?**

This question had a total of 3,540 responses (31 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
<b>Definitely agree</b>	39.7	1,404
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	4.8	171
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	1.0	36
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	3.8	133
<b>Definitely disagree</b>	50.7	1,796
<b>Total</b>	100	3,540

It is immediately apparent that the majority of respondents to this question (54.5%) either definitely disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the proposal to introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre. Only 1% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Q2: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

This question had a total of 2,215 written responses and allowed respondents to express why they agreed or disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations as set out in Question 1.

This was a very broad and general question and it therefore elicited many broad and general responses. However, general themes were evident and are discussed in further detail below:

**Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree**

**Too loud**

Respondents who were in favour of the introduction of rules and regulations simply stated that the city centre is ‘too loud’, an ‘aural nightmare’ and that the noise of amplified voices and instruments is ‘intrusive’ and ‘unbearable’.

**Cumulative Impact**

A theme that emerged from the analysis of these comments is that the cumulative impact of amplification and ‘noise pollution’, can be ‘very very annoying to be bombarded by numerous buskers and preachers’, feels ‘out of control and unmanaged’ and has ‘ruined the experience’ of being in the city centre.

**Negative Impact on City Centre**

Respondents commented that current noise levels in the city centre from buskers and preachers does not create a ‘welcoming environment’ for both residents and tourists, makes the city centre feel ‘unsafe’, makes them feel ‘anxious’ and ‘annoyed’ and that they ‘avoid going to the city centre’.

**Content of Speech**

Some respondents noted that the content of some of the religious preachers’ speeches is ‘oppressive’, ‘hateful’, ‘hurtful’ and ‘damaging’. Respondents commented that buskers are sometimes ‘very loud’ and ‘intrusive’ and that there is ‘no need’ for amplification at all.

**Decibel Limit**

A suggestion that speakers should be kept at a ‘reasonable level’ and the imposition of a ‘decibel limit’ for any amplification was a further recurring theme.

### Disability

Respondents commented that amplification makes the city centre ‘extra difficult’ for those with disabilities and neurodivergency disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and is ‘harmful to wellbeing’.

It was also noted that unregulated speakers and performers who ‘take up so much space’ make the city centre ‘less accessible’ to those with physical disabilities who require a wheelchair or rollator.

### Graphic Imagery

Respondents commented that images displayed by pro-life / anti-abortion groups are ‘medically sensitive’, ‘highly triggering’, cause ‘stress’, are ‘disturbing’, ‘hugely traumatising for anyone that has been through a ‘pregnancy loss’ and ‘should not be seen by children’. It was suggested that the use of ‘very graphic images / contentious campaigns should only be used after 9:30 pm / similar to TV watershed’, which would ‘help balance equality with freedom of speech’.

## Themes in Responses – Somewhat disagree / Definitely disagree

### Freedom of Expression

Those respondents who disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations stated that this was a ‘blatant attack’ on ‘the fundamental right to free speech’ and ‘rights of assembly’, that the byelaws would ‘severely restrict the vibrancy’ of the city centre and would ‘silence the gospel message’. It was noted that the byelaws would constitute ‘discriminatory behaviour’ towards Christians and that ‘religious liberty’ is of ‘vital importance’, given the ‘rich heritage of preaching’ in Northern Ireland.

### Questioning the Need

Respondents noted that the introduction of these byelaws should be as a ‘measure of last resort’, that they should be ‘proportionate and reasonable’, that there ‘already laws’ in relation to hate speech and that it’s ‘up to police’ to deal with these issues. Respondents commented that the draft byelaws breach the Good Friday Agreement where it states that *‘The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the*

*civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion'. Respondents stated that existing legislation, for example, The Public Order Act, should 'suffice' to address these issues. It should be noted that respondents in some cases incorrectly cited legislation that does not apply in Northern Ireland.*

### Other City Centre Issues

Respondents commented that the Council should address 'way bigger issues' in the city centre such as 'drug paraphernalia', 'homeless sleeping in doorways', 'anti-social behaviour' and 'shoplifting' and that it should 'focus on cleaning the streets' before introducing these types of byelaws.

### Council Process and Fee

Questions were raised about the Council process for granting permits citing 'huge concerns as to how this will be fairly and correctly monitored' and whether this could lead to 'subjective decisions' being made about who would or would not be granted a permit. Respondents were critical of the introduction of a fee, saying that this could be a 'barrier' that could disproportionately affect individuals.

### **Q3: In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?**

This question had a total of 3,525 responses (46 skipped)

- Yes: 144 (4.1%)
- No: 3,381 (95.9%)

### **Q4: If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities):**

This question had a total of 141 responses (3,430 skipped)

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Busking</b>	17.7	25
<b>Street performance</b>	14.9	21
<b>Street preaching</b>	57.4	81
<b>Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery)</b>	23.4	33

<b>Other (please specify)</b>	31.9	45
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There were no written comments that addressed or specified the 'other' activities.

**Q5: In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?**

This question had a total of 3,529 responses (42 skipped)

- Yes: 164 (4.6%)
- No: 3,365 (95.4%)

**Q6: If the answer is yes please provide a description of the promotional literature or other information displayed (to include a description of any graphic imagery).**

This answer had 154 text responses, which included the following descriptions:

- Anti-abortion / right to life imagery
- Vegan charity
- Prayer cards
- Religious literature including gospel tracts
- Environmental information
- Animal rights information
- Political causes e.g. Free Palestine, Gaza, support for refugees and asylum seekers
- LGBTQ+ information / Pride placards

**Q7: What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound). You may select more than one option.**

This question had a total of 3,512 responses (59 skipped)

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Very positive</b>	32.0	1125
<b>Positive</b>	20.8	731
<b>Neutral</b>	12.8	448
<b>Negative</b>	13.3	466
<b>Very negative</b>	30.5	1071

**Q8: Please explain your answer in the space below.**

This question had a total of 2,690 written responses. It should be noted that many respondents wrote text responses which were partly positive and partly negative, for example in favour of music and busking but not in favour of the content of certain religious preaching, such as the following comment: "Very positive in terms of buskers/musicians. Very negative in terms of preachers and those using PA systems and megaphones to spread hatred in what is a growingly diverse city." Another example of this viewpoint was a respondent who commented that their experience of amplification in the city centre has been 'mixed' and who stated that 'the use of amplification must respect the views within our community, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance'.

However, as can be seen from the statistics, the majority of respondents have a 'very positive' or 'positive' experience of amplification in the city centre. Those responses are analysed in more detail below:

**Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses**

**Positive Impact**

Those who had a positive experience noted that they were 'uplifted' from listening to preachers and were 'educated and informed' by 'organisations and demonstrations'. Respondents noted that amplified activities add to the 'atmosphere and buzz' and 'vitality' of the city centre.

**Tradition of Preaching**

Respondents noted that open air preaching has been a 'force for good' in society, that public preaching has a 'long tradition' in Belfast that is 'part of our diverse culture' and that to restrict it 'would interfere with a long-term religious practice'. It was noted that freedom of expression is 'paramount in a modern and free society', that preachers are a 'huge part of our culture which should be heard' and 'to shut that down is to oppose freedom of speech'.

**Mix of Content**

Respondents noted that amplification devices and buskers are a 'welcome addition' to the city centre and add to Belfast's 'atmosphere and character'. It was noted that

music adds to the ‘vibrancy’ of Belfast ‘especially as a UNESCO City of Music’ and is a ‘traditional part of our culture and heritage, as well as something which can unite communities.’ The ‘diversity’ of the city was commented upon in terms of a mixture of ‘a busker in one corner and a street preacher in the other’.

### **Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses**

#### **Too Loud / Negative Impact on City Centre**

A strong theme for those whose experience is negative is that the amplification is ‘too loud’, an ‘assault’ and ‘out of control’ for those visiting and working in the city centre and that the noise is ‘off putting’ which creates a ‘disincentive to visit the city centre’. The cumulative impact of a lot of amplification was described as ‘ridiculous’, creating ‘a very difficult atmosphere’ and ‘making the shopping experience unpleasant’.

The impact of high levels of noise was described as a ‘cacophony’ which is ‘stressful’ and it was stated that there is ‘no need’ for amplification devices, which were ‘not designed for city streets’.

#### **Disability**

For those who declared themselves to be autistic or declared that they have dependants who are autistic, noise levels were described as ‘painful to cope with’, ‘overwhelming’ and ‘overstimulating’.

#### **Content of Speech**

Respondents commented on experiencing amplified ‘hate speech’ and described this as being ‘homophobic’, ‘transphobic’, ‘overtly offensive to the LGBT community’, ‘upsetting’ and has ‘no place in a modern society’.

#### **Quality of Content**

Respondents commented on the ‘quality’ of the content of what it being amplified’, noting that there is ‘no quality control’, ‘no standard in terms of quality of the performance’ and that a performance can become an ‘annoying nuisance’.

**Q9: What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.**

This question had a total of 3,517 responses (54 skipped)

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Very positive</b>	29.3	1029
<b>Positive</b>	18.9	664
<b>Neutral</b>	21.5	755
<b>Negative</b>	12.9	452
<b>Very negative</b>	24.8	867

**Q10: Please explain your answer in the space below.**

This question had a total of 2,342 text responses.

#### **Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses**

##### **Expression of Views**

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was positive commented that it is 'important that Belfast is a space for inclusive views which allows everyone to express and share them freely and openly', that it 'offers a diverse range of information' and that 'it helps people understand'. Respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression, noting that 'people should be free to promote or protest whatever images they want'.

##### **Look Away**

Respondents commented that if people don't like certain imagery, 'they don't have to look at it'. Although respondents acknowledged that some graphic imagery 'might be difficult to look at', it should not be 'censored' and that it is important for 'raising awareness'. It was also noted that such imagery is less 'intrusive' than loud noise.

#### **Themes in Neutral Comments**

Respondents noted that there is a 'variety of promotional literature' given out and questioned the 'criteria' for judging it. It was noted that 'a challenge lies in

establishing a fair and transparent process for determining what constitutes “graphic” content.

### **Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses**

#### **Upsetting**

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was negative commented with regard to anti-abortion imagery that it is ‘disturbing’, ‘distressing’ ‘distasteful’, ‘triggering’, ‘upsetting’, ‘insensitive to those who have lost a child’, ‘grotesque’, ‘aggressively graphic and shocking’ ‘inappropriate in a shopping area’ and ‘offensive’.

#### **Children**

Respondents commented that this type of imagery ‘should be age appropriate’, that it is ‘inappropriate when children are present’ and ‘difficult for parents to explain’. It was further stated that some of the graphic abortion imagery would be ‘subject to age restrictions when in film and TV’ and that they ‘would be rated 18 in a movie’.

#### **Tourists / Visitors**

The impact of graphic imagery on tourists to Belfast was noted as ‘horrendous’, ‘uninviting’ ‘deeply embarrassing’ and ‘creating an unwelcome backdrop to their visit’.

### **Questions relating to the Permit Scheme**

**Q11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?**

This question had a total of 3,443 responses (128 skipped)

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Definitely agree</b>	31.9	1099
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	9.6	331
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	3.1	108
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	5.3	181
<b>Definitely disagree</b>	50.1	1724

**Q12: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

This question had a total of 1,894 text responses (1,677 skipped).

### **Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree**

## Council Process / Fee

Those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system commented that it may lead to 'unintended consequences' such as 'subjectivity' in the issuance of permits and a 'financial barrier' for those who do not have the means to pay for a permit, which could 'silence important voices in the public sphere'. Concern was expressed that such a system could negatively impact the arts community if it was overly complicated or expensive.

## Freedom of Expression

The theme of freedom of expression was once again apparent in the responses to this question. Respondents commented that the requirement of a permit 'conflicts with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression (Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act), and the right to religious liberties (affirmed in the Belfast Agreement)', 'puts barriers up to free speech in the city' and would 'be seen as censorship by the back door'.

## Administration and Enforcement

The process of how a permit system would be managed and administered was described as 'cumbersome regulations' that would 'divert public resource', 'costing the public purse in administration costs'. Queries were raised about the criteria for the issuance of permits, how this 'would be open to political influence and abuse' and that it would be 'very hard to police and make fair decisions on who does and who does not receive a permit.'

## Ban Amplification

Respondents commented that instead of introducing a permit system, the Council should 'ban amplification' in the city centre.

## Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree

### Ban Amplification

Those who were in agreement with a permit system for amplification commented (similarly to those who disagreed with the permit system) that an overall ban on amplification 'full stop' would be preferable for 'acoustic buskers only please', stating that there should be 'no amplification' as 'there is no requirement for it', particularly

for small groups but instead allow amplification where it is 'necessary' for larger crowds.

#### Manage Amplification

Respondents commented that a permit system would help to 'limit' the 'out of control volume' and could specify a 'maximum level of amplification'.

#### Support for Buskers

It was noted that any fee for buskers should be 'reasonable' or 'low' so as not to 'deter' or 'discourage' them and concern was expressed that if a permit is 'overly complicated or expensive' to obtain, Belfast could lose a 'fantastic array' of buskers.

#### Comments on Process

Queries were raised about the process for rescinding a permit if its conditions were broken. Respondents also noted that such a system 'will be difficult to police' and queried 'how well will it be monitored?'

**Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?**

This question had a total of 3,526 responses (45 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
<b>Definitely agree</b>	29.7	1047
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	9.0	318
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	6.2	219
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	6.1	215
<b>Definitely disagree</b>	49.0	1727

**Q14: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

This question had a total of 1,612 text responses (1959 skipped).

#### Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree

The majority of written comments were from those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system for the display of promotional literature or other information, including graphic imagery.

#### Censorship

Respondents commented that the Council should not act as a ‘censor of content’ and that any regulations should be ‘clear, transparent and applied equally to prevent any form of discrimination or bias’. Respondents raised concerns about the Council ‘shutting down’ those with whom they disagree and noted that this is an ‘overreach of authority’, ‘draconian’, ‘an attempt at censorship’, ‘partisan’ and an ‘infringement of freedom of speech and civil liberties’. It was also suggested that such a system would ‘introduce a level of bureaucracy that would hinder those who want to preach in the city centre’.

#### Permit Hours

It was noted that a permit would not be granted before 11am, which would put a restriction on handing out literature to commuters coming into work. It was noted that there is a ‘long standing tradition’ of handing out literature in the city centre.

#### Subjective

In determining what constitutes ‘graphic content’, it was noted that decisions made by the Council must be ‘guided by clear, objective criteria’ and that this subject is generally ‘subjective’. Respondents queried the ‘unclear’ term of ‘graphic’ and asked how that will be determined or defined by the Council.

#### Barrier

Concern was expressed that a permit system would ‘slow down solidarity actions for international events’ and would create ‘barriers’ for ‘grassroots initiatives and community -led projects.’

#### Existing Legislation

Respondents suggested that existing legislation around harassment and anti-social behaviour may be ‘sufficient’ to deal with issues that may arise.

### **Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat Agree**

#### Regulate Content

Respondents in favour of a permit commented that this would be a ‘positive step’ to ensure that content displayed in public places would be ‘appropriate and sensitive to the diverse audience’ in the city centre (including children) but queried how it would be enforced. It was noted that ‘images that are designed to shock, upset or

discriminate are not acceptable' and that having regulation around what can be displayed will 'create much more of a welcoming environment' in the city centre.

### Children

Concern was expressed for certain images relating to abortion that children may see in the city centre. It was stated that it is 'not appropriate' for children to see those images and that 'subjecting them to images like that shouldn't be permitted'.

Respondents noted that 'forcing graphic imagery' on people is 'completely unacceptable' and that the people sharing images 'can't control the age of the people who will see them.'

It should be noted that these comments seemed to assume that the content of graphic imagery would be regulated by the Council, but this is not the intention.

**Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)**

<b>PERMIT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1521
Somewhat agree	191
Neither agree nor disagree	226
Somewhat disagree	284
Definitely disagree	1245

<b>PERMIT IS VALID FOR 1 YEAR</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1614
Somewhat agree	294
Neither agree nor disagree	353
Somewhat disagree	465
Definitely disagree	697

<b>PERMIT NOT NORMALLY GRANTED FOR 11PM – 11AM</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1272
Somewhat agree	209
Neither agree nor disagree	342
Somewhat disagree	390

Definitely disagree	1261
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<b>PERMIT APPLIES TO SPECIFIC LOCATION AND DURATION</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1557
Somewhat agree	226
Neither agree nor disagree	233
Somewhat disagree	392
Definitely disagree	1063

<b>PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 2 HOURS IN SPECIFIC LOCATION</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1599
Somewhat agree	300
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	457
Definitely disagree	839

<b>PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 1 HOUR IN PRIMARY RETAIL CORE</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1658
Somewhat agree	290
Neither agree nor disagree	282
Somewhat disagree	345
Definitely disagree	902

<b>MAX 1 PERFORMANCE TIME INCLUDES SETTING &amp; PACKING UP</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1851
Somewhat agree	359
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	207
Definitely disagree	785

<b>PERMIT HOLDER MUST RELOCATE TO A DIFFERENT PLACE NOT WITHIN 100M OF PREVIOUS LOCATION</b>	<b>Number</b>
Definitely agree	1717
Somewhat agree	296
Neither agree nor disagree	347
Somewhat disagree	336
Definitely disagree	781

**Q16: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

This question had a total of 1,531 text responses (2040 skipped)

The responses to this question were extremely broad ranging, given the various proposed permit conditions in the draft byelaws.

**No Need**

A general theme that emerged was that there should be 'no need' for a permit and that this was 'authoritarian', 'bureaucratic' and would 'impinge on human rights and freedom of expression'.

**Disadvantage Musicians**

Respondents commented that the time limits would 'overwhelmingly disadvantage musicians', be 'burdensome' and that the time spent setting up and packing up for buskers should be excluded. It was further noted that 'it's important to foster an environment where artists are given ample time to prepare and offer a high quality auditory experience'.

**100 Metre Distance**

Respondents commented that the distance of 100m is 'too short', 'still within earshot of amplifier' and may cause 'continued disturbance to a particular area'.

**Enforcement**

The issue of 'enforcement' was highlighted in the responses to this question.

Respondents stated that it will be 'impractical to monitor', 'difficult to enforce' and that if the permit system 'isn't going to or can't be policed, it's pointless trying to do it at all'.

## Permit Application

Several respondents made the point that if the permit applies to a person, rather than an event, this would ‘add to the difficulty of simply being able to preach the gospel’ and ‘would discriminate against certain groups’.

## Cost

Cost was mentioned in terms of the permit system being ‘costly’, ‘an unnecessary drain on public expenditure’ and a question of ‘who would pay for such policing?’.

### **Q17: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?**

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Definitely agree</b>	31.7	1115
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	9.8	344
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	6.2	218
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	5.4	189
<b>Definitely disagree</b>	46.9	1646

### **Q18: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

This question had a total of 1,137 text responses (2434 skipped)

## Specific Places

Respondents who were in favour of a prohibition in designated areas suggested specific places, such as outside City Hall, Royal Avenue, the ‘main pedestrian shopping and entertainment areas’, ‘near religious buildings, medical buildings or residential buildings’ and ‘outside of city centre offices.’

## Encourage Residential Dwellers

It was stated that restricting the use of amplification in residential areas ‘should go some way to encouraging people to dwell in the city centre’.

## Ban Amplification

The theme of banning amplification emerged in the responses to this question with respondents saying that ‘safe and quiet spaces are needed’, there should be a

‘blanket ban on all amplification devices’, that amplification should be ‘prohibited entirely’ and ‘should be made illegal’.

### Freedom of Expression and Right to Protest

Those not in favour of such a prohibition commented that it is ‘vital that these restrictions do not impinge upon the right to protest’, that ‘this is a dangerous path to be going down’ and that any such designation would ‘conflict with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression’. Respondents also commented that this is ‘overreach’ by the Council and it is ‘not the Council’s place to restrict freedom of expression’.

### Equality Screening

**Q19: Please provide any comments in relation to equality of opportunity or good relations issues that you feel should be taken into account by the council in relation to the proposed byelaws.**

This question had a total of 1,303 text responses (2268 skipped)

### Breach of Good Friday Agreement

A pro forma (83 submissions) recurring comment in response to this question was that the draft byelaws ‘breach the Good Friday Agreement, which states, ‘*The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion*’ and that the proposals could ‘increase tensions between different groups if it appears the Council is discriminating between them by granting permits to one group but not another’. As part of this same comment, it was suggested that ‘the Council could then be responsible for damaging good relations across the city’ and a ‘full EQIA’ was requested.

### Freedom of Expression

The right to freedom of expression was mentioned in response to this question with concerns being raised that ‘this is an attempt to circumvent the presumption of basic human rights’ and the Council’s potential ‘censorship’.

### LGBT+ Community

Regarding the LGBTQ+ community, respondents commented that some of the preaching was ‘homophobic’, constituted ‘hate speech’ and that that community is ‘constantly under attack’ by ‘these hate preachers.’ It was noted that ‘homophobia and transphobia has been going unchecked for far too long’, that the LGBTQ+ community ‘should not be forced to listen to hateful and insulting content’ and that this group are ‘often the targets of harassment and bigotry broadcast over loudspeakers’.

### Disability

Disability was mentioned by respondents in the context of how noise levels in the city centre ‘discourage or even prohibit’ the use of it by those with ‘auditory sensitivity or visual impairment’. It was noted that the ‘current use of speakers and their high volumes directly affects those with sensory and auditory processing issues and leads them to feelings of anxiety and confusion’.

Respondents who declared themselves to be autistic or who declared that they have dependants on the autistic spectrum commented that amplification ‘creates an uncomfortable environment’ and that ‘the city centre should be an accessible and reasonably predictable environment’. It was also commented that ‘the city needs to view this as a ‘disability rights / access issue’ as the city centre has become a ‘hostile environment’ for those who are autistic or have sensory processing issues.

It was noted that the byelaws could have a ‘positive impact’ and ‘would make the streets easier to navigate for people who use mobility devices’, if permits favoured applications in an area with wider pavements.

### Disproportionate Effect

A further theme that emerged from this question was the suggestion that these byelaws would have a disproportionate effect on evangelical Christians and would constitute ‘religious discrimination’. Respondents commented that this is ‘an attempt to stifle the religious expression of the Evangelical Protestant community’, that ‘this proposal indicates preachers are the target’ and that ‘freedom to preach the gospel with liberty will be denied’. It was noted that ‘it is crucial for the council to

acknowledge and address any bias or discriminatory attitudes towards certain forms of expression, particularly open-air preaching'.

### Equality Screening

There was some criticism of the draft Equality Screening in terms of its use of 'anecdotal evidence', however, the data provided by the consultation responses will be considered when finalising the byelaws.

## 7.3 Responses to Consultation Monitoring Questions: breakdown by type of respondent (individual or group), gender, community background, national identity, age, geographical location and relationship to Belfast

### **Q20: Are you responding as an individual (member of the public) or on behalf of a group or organisation?**

- Individual (member of the public): 98.3%, 3463
- On behalf of a group or organisation: 1.7%, 59

### **Q21 (if responding on behalf of a group): What is the name of your organisation or group?**

This question had 55 text responses.

### **Q22: We would like your permission to disclose your organisation name, your written comments, and to reference your organisation name in our analysis and feedback reports. Please indicate your preference for what we do with your organisation name.**

- I agree you can share and publish my organisation name and any written comments submitted on behalf of my organisation (43.6%, 24 organisations)
- I agree you can publish my organisation name as responding to the consultation but keep our written comments anonymous (20%, 11 organisations)
- Do not share or publish my organisation name (36.4%, 20 organisations)

### **Q23: Please indicate which sort of group you are representing:**

Type of Group	Number
Church or faith based group	30
Charity	17
Community or voluntary group	13
Other (please specify)	8
Business	6
Public body	4
School	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>

(The survey ended at this point if the response was on behalf of a group.)

**Q21** (if responding as an individual): **About you, please tick all that apply:**

<b>Connection to Belfast</b>	<b>Number</b>
I live in Belfast	1718
I am a visitor to Belfast	1352
I work or study in Belfast	1190
I am a business owner in Belfast city centre	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>4334</b>

**Q22: Demographic and monitoring questions**

73.1% of respondents indicated that they were happy to answer a series of demographic and monitoring questions (26.9% declined to answer).

**Q23: What is your age?**

<b>What age are you?</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 18	10	0.4
18-24	193	7.6
25-34	566	22.4
35-44	571	22.6
45-59	713	28.2
60+	479	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2532</b>	<b>100</b>

**Q24: What is your gender?**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	1400	55.3
Female	1054	41.6
Prefer not to answer	38	1.5
Use another term	40	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2532</b>	<b>100</b>

**Q25: Do you consider yourself to be trans or transgender?**

Trans can be used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, nor does it sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms e.g. transgender, transsexual, gender- queer (QC), gender- fluid, non-binary, crossdresser, genderless. The use of trans as an umbrella term may not be acceptable to all transgender people.

Transgender is someone who intends to transition, is transitioning or has transitioned from the gender they were assigned at birth.

- **Yes:** 49 (2.0%)
- **No:** 2364 (94.7%)
- **Prefer not to answer:** 84 (3.4%)

**Q26. Community background of respondents**

<b>Please indicate your community background</b>	<b>% Total</b>
Member of the Protestant community	41.2
Member of the Roman Catholic community	26.4
Neither	32.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Q27: Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong. How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

The overwhelming majority of respondents, 94.4%, were white, with 2.8% of respondents selecting the “prefer not to say” option. 1.2% of respondents indicated that they came from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

**Q28: Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or work that you can do?**

The majority of respondents (81.8%) stated that their day-to day activities were not limited by a disability or illness, with 13.8% of respondents saying yes and 4.4% of respondents preferring not to say.

**Q29. If yes, how does this disability or illness affect you?**

<b>Disability or illness</b>	<b>Number</b>
Mental health (e.g. depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia)	143
Physical disability (e.g. wheelchair-user, artificial lower limbs, walking aids, Musculo-skeletal difficulties)	127
Neurodiversity (e.g. autism, ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia)	103
Prefer not to answer	51

Other	39
Hearing loss: deaf, hearing loss, tinnitus	35
Communication difficulties: speech difficulties, e.g. stammer, slurred speech	16
Learning disability	13
Sight loss: blind, partially sighted	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>539</b>

**Q30: Do you have dependants or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons?**

- **Yes:** 33.8%
- **No:** 66.2%

**Q31: If yes, who do you have caring responsibilities for?**

- A child or children: 72.2%
- An elderly person or persons: 27.7%
- A person or persons with a disability: 21.6%

(The survey ended at this point for those responding as an individual).

## 8. Summary and Comment on Responses

The examination of the data as presented above reveals a number of trends:

- There was a very high level of public engagement with the online survey and an extremely high response rate, not just to the statistical element of the survey but also in terms of written comments.
- This engagement came from a wide range of individuals in terms of age range, gender, community background and disability status, all of whom felt that the draft byelaws could potentially impact them in their leisure time, work time or both.
- Respondents displayed a strength of feeling in written comments for the most part in either positive or negative terms; there was little feedback from respondents who were 'neutral' on the subject.

- In addition to the public comments, there was a high level of engagement from a broad range of groups and organisations who feel vested in the draft byelaws.
- Respondents emphasised a general expression of support of the human rights that are protected under the ECHR.
- Respondents raised specific queries about how the byelaws may operate in practice.

### 8.1 Summary of Monitoring Data

The consultation monitoring data shows that the majority of respondents were men of White ethnic origin. The majority declared that they came from a Protestant background and were aged 45-59.

## 9. Conclusions

- This was a wide-ranging consultation for a full 14-week period that generated a very high level of engagement.
- Based on feedback received from groups and individuals, it is clear that further decisions will have to be taken on how to finalise the draft byelaws.
- Further engagement may be required with the CAJ and the Trade Unions for potentially creating an exemption in the byelaws for static protests.

**Appendix 1: Draft byelaws**



**BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

**BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE  
AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY  
CENTRE**

**Made by Belfast City Council :**

**Confirmed by Department for  
Communities :**

**In operation on and from :**

**BYE – LAWS**

**BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

**FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE  
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the \_\_\_\_\_ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERPRETATION

### 1. In these Bye-Laws -

'City Centre' means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

'Council' means Belfast City Council.

'Permit' means a Permit issued by the Council in accordance with these Bye-Laws.

'Permit Holder' means a person who holds a Permit issued pursuant to these Bye-Laws.

'Primary Retail Core' means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One of these Bye Laws.

'Prohibited Place' means an area [tbc] [within 100 metres of any place of public worship or public entertainment or other place of public assembly in which person or persons so assembled, after being requested to desist by an authorized Council officer or police officer.

'Public Place' means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

'Permit' means a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws.

## General Provisions

### 2. These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.

3. Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.
4. A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
5. A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
6. A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.

## **Application Requirements**

7. An application for a Permit must be accompanied by payment of the relevant fee and on the production of evidence of identity and address together with two recent photographs of the applicant.
8. The cost of a Permit will be [tbc].

## **Permit Conditions**

9. The Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate.
10. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (9), the following standard conditions may be specified in a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws —

- (a) Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
- (b) A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
- (c) A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
- (d) A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
- (e) A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.

**11.** The maximum performance periods set out in these Bye Laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.

**12.** The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.

**13.** A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.

### **Behaviour and Conduct of Permit Holders**

**14.** A Permit Holder must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.

**15.** A Permit Holder must comply with the standard conditions of Permit and any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended and reissued throughout the period of the Permit.

**16.** The Permit Holder must also comply with any additional special conditions attached to their Permit.

## **Exemptions**

**17.** These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:

- (a) Those activities taking place in a public place which are organised by the Council;
- (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
- (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
- (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008.
- (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995

## **Power to remove equipment, stalls, stand, vehicles etc.**

**18.** Where the Council is unable to identify and/or contact the owner or person responsible for an unattended equipment, stall, stand or vehicle after conducting reasonable enquiries, it may cause the said equipment, stall, stand or vehicle to be so removed.

**19.** Where the Council has exercised its powers under Paragraph 18 it may recover from the owner and/or the person responsible for the said stall, stand or vehicle the costs reasonably incurred by the Council in removing and storing same.

**20.** Any charges incurred by the Council in removing and storing the stall shall be payable by the owner before the return of the stall, stand or vehicle.

**21.** Where it is not possible to contact the owner, the Council may dispose of the item after 28 days from the date of seizure.

**22.** The provisions of Paragraph 18-21 are without prejudice to the power of the Council to take other enforcement action for any breach of the conditions of Permit arising from the failure to remove the item.

### **Revocation, Refusals and Appeals**

**23.** The Council may vary or revoke a permit where, in its opinion, a Permit Holder fails to comply with a condition of their Permit or a Code of Conduct issued pursuant to the provisions of this Bye Law.

**24.** The Council may temporarily revoke a permit or restrict the area to which permits applies in order to facilitate the construction, development, maintenance or repair of a public place or part thereof or for other infrastructural work thereon or such work on adjoining private property or for other operational reasons.

**25.** Where the Council refuses to grant a permit or revokes an existing permit the applicant may appeal that decision to [tbc] within 14 days of the decision.

**26.** Where the Council has granted a permit with special conditions imposed upon the applicant, the applicant may appeal such special conditions to the Magistrates Court within 14 days of the granting of the permit.

### **Offences**

**27.** Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

**28.** A person who obstructs or impedes or refuses to comply with a request of an authorised person acting in the exercise of the functions conferred on an authorised officer shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

**29.** Where an authorised officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under either of the two preceding bye-laws the authorised person may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is refused or the person gives a name and address which is false

or misleading, that person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

## Fixed Payment Notice

**30.** Where an authorised officer of the Council has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under these Bye Laws, the officer may give that person a notice offering the person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for that offence by payment of a fixed penalty to the Council.

**31.** Where a person is given a fixed penalty notice under these Bye Laws:

- (a) no proceedings shall be instituted for that offence before the expiration of the period of 14 days following the date of the notice; and
- (b) the person shall not be convicted of that offence if the person pays the fixed penalty before the expiration of that period.

**32.** A notice under this section must give such particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information of the offence.

**33.** The Fixed Penalty Notice shall specify the name and address of the alleged offender and in general terms the nature of the contravention alleged to have been committed; and the date and place of the alleged contravention.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The foregoing Bye-Laws are hereby confirmed by the Department of Communities for Northern Ireland this day of 2023.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
[job title]

## **Appendix 2: Copy of CAJ submission**

### **Appendix 3 - Summary of written submissions**

Written submissions were received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations.

An overriding theme amongst written submissions is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights; in particular Article 10 relating to freedom of expression and Article 11 relating to freedom of assembly and association. In the context of the draft byelaws, these rights apply most frequently to open air preaching, street performances and static (sometimes spontaneous) protests.

#### **Belfast & District Trades Union Council summary**

- Belfast Trades Council would contend that this bye-law approach is over the top and has, intentionally or otherwise, spread the net far too widely and traps others who should not be caught up in its over-extensive scope.
- How would a union, community group or a number of solidarity campaigners, as opposed to one individual be considered as being in compliance with the proposed bye-law?
- Lacks clarity on what impact this bye-law would have on acts of solidarity in respect of protests of industrial action or how distribution of leaflets, fact sheets etc. by a trade union would be treated, or how amplification devices would be dealt with.
- These bye-laws have the potential to penalise citizens for no legitimate purpose and curtail or restrict legitimate activities on behalf of members, workers and the wider community.

- Setting an absolute restriction of two hours in each and every occasion takes no account whatsoever of the varied nature of some of the events which occur in the city. Such an imposition is petty, nonsensical and more than likely unenforceable.
- Belfast Trades Council is concerned that the Equality Screening for this public consultation has a flawed understanding of “political opinion” and this should be revisited and rectified before any further action is taken.

### **CAJ Summary**

- The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10). ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA).
- CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented de facto ‘authorisation’ regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised.
- The relevant tests (legal certainty, legitimate aim, proportionality) that would need to be met for interference in ECHR rights to be considered justified and hence lawful.
- No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions.
- The ‘standard conditions’ for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc).
- If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions eg monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
- Concern expressed that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. Should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws

### **HERe NI response summary**

- HERe NI is a women focused organisation within the NI LGBTQIA+ sector.
- Primarily concerned about anti-LGBTQIA+ messaging and anti-choice imagery within the primary retail district.
- Endorse the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) suggestion that the council should take further action to enhance the monitoring of street

preachers for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity that can be reported to the PSNI.

- Concerns about the impact that the proposed bye-laws will have on protestors, including infringing on their right to freedom of assembly outlined within Article 11 of the ECHR.
- Suggested amendments:
  - That the council should add static protests to their exemption list (which already includes trade union pickets and parades).
  - That there should be no cost attached to the scheme and that sum of £500 fine for performing without a permit be considerably reduced.
  - Risk impinging on freedom of assembly and the right to protest.

### **Free Presbyterian Church Response summary**

- Concerned that open-air preaching should be seen as a nuisance. It is a long established and noble practice.
- We believe that these draft laws fail to strike the balance between freedom of expression which is enshrined in the European Court of Human Rights as well as freedom of assembly and the alleged nuisance from people using amplification devices which the council professes to be seeking.
- The requirement to obtain a permit will be a hindrance to freedom of expression because there can be no spontaneous open-air.
- Byelaws place an extreme hindrance on the use of amplification equipment or the display of stands of literature outside venues which may be the focal point for a protest or demonstration.
- Note that it is proposed that any permit is to be issued to a person and not for an event. Therefore, if a preacher at an open-air who has the permit goes down sick or cannot come at the last minute nobody would have permission to stand in for him.
- Permit conditions: gives the Council too broad powers; 11am start time is too late; 11 am also applies to distribution of literature - why?; measures in clause 12 are not reasonable or proportionate.

### **NIC-ICTU summary**

- Serious reservations about some of the proposals being made by Belfast City Council (BCC), and echoes concerns made in finer detail from our trade union affiliate NIPSA, and our long-time allies the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

### **NIPSA Summary**

- Notes a failure to address solidarity activity around industrial action / protest
- Belfast City Council needs to make explicit how, in future, it will ensure that its bye-laws do not in any way hinder Trade Union work as regards industrial action and the solidarity/campaigning work of affiliated groups, Trades Councils, and other activist groups (political parties, pressure/solidarity

groups) who might want to support Trade Union sponsored protest/campaigns in and around the city centre area.

- The proposed time limit of 2 hours would have a serious effect on protest(s) and rallies that might be the pattern on a day of industrial/civil society action and could have a serious adverse impact on the right to campaign and organise around a campaign given that “political purpose” is specifically, listed.
- Belfast City Council needs to assess and publicise how it will explicitly exempt such solidarity work
- This exemption will also be necessary for the purposes of its own industrial relations framework – to make clear that a Trade Union protest outside it - in relation to a policy/facility managed by the Council would not be treated as a “nuisance” in the context of these bye-laws.
- Major concerns about their associated Equality Screening. For example, while claims to examine what is the likely impact “in relation to the S75 category of political opinion” it states that this is “not applicable”. This is a serious error as it fails to recognise Trade Unionism as a “political opinion” in the context of anti-discrimination law i.e. on the illegality of discriminating on the basis of “religious or similar philosophical belief and political opinion” and the fact that the latter “is not limited...to Northern Ireland constitutional politics.” This needs to be rectified before the next steps in relation to them is fully considered.
- Questions why existing noise pollution/laws relating to obstruction, hate speech etc., - already available to legally challenge the activities the bye-laws seek to target, are not being used.
- The permit’s “application requirements” treat applications at an individual level rather than organisational level. This therefore begs the question of how this could be operated in the context of Trade Union/solidarity “activity”?

### **UNISON Summary**

- Concerned that as the byelaws are currently drafted they could disproportionately interfere with the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly that are at the core of trade union activity.
- Endorses the CAJ submission.
- UNISON, other trade unions and wider civic society groups regularly hold or attend rallies, protests and demonstrations that may involve the use of amplification devices for public speaking at public places within the areas identified in these proposed bye-laws. We would request clarity from Belfast City Council as to whether the area outside the front gate entrance of Belfast City Hall is included within the ‘primary retail core’ identified in Map 2 of the bye-laws, within which not only performances but the use of amplification devices without a permit is to be prohibited.
- It is unclear from these provisions how far in advance of the use of the amplification device the person seeking the permit must apply for it. This

should be clarified, given that protests and demonstrations can often be organised at very short notice, such as in response to significant events.

- By making the bye-law specific to the individuals involved, rather than the event, the Council opens up the possibility that some individuals who use an amplification device to speak at an event in the City Centre may be liable for breach of the bye-laws whilst others are not.
- We are concerned that the maximum performance periods (two hours or one hour, depending upon the location), particularly if they are to include the periods spent on setting up and packing up, will significantly affect the ability of trade unions to hold such rallies and demonstrations in Belfast City Centre and disproportionately restrict the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.
- It is unclear from these provisions the grounds that will be used by the Council to determine whether to approve the granting of a permit in the first place. The route of appeal also appears to be unconfirmed at this point. As with the provisions above, this again raises issues regarding a lack of legal certainty for those seeking such permits.

### **The Rainbow Project Summary**

- The Rainbow Project is a LGBTQIA+ organisation working across Northern Ireland.
- It welcomes Belfast City Council's attempt to address the harassment, graphic imagery and amplified hate expression that has become prevalent and incessant in Belfast city centre, particularly from anti-choice and anti-LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations.
- It is clear from our engagements within our communities that amplified preaching from those who are seeking to target and cause discomfort to particularly LGBTQIA+ has a direct impact on the ability of LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors to fully engage in the city and freely access the public space in the city centre.
- It is important to recognize and tightly define the issues that these Bye-laws are attempting to address, to ensure that the net is not cast too wide so as to unacceptably restrict ECHR rights including the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and assembly (Article 11), particularly with regards to engaging in static protests, including those which are organised with short notice or spontaneously in response to a local, national or international event.
- What constitutes a “nuisance” is an extremely subjective question, and clearly and tightly defining this is vital to the compliance of these Bye-laws with the tests set out above.
- Agreement expressed with the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in their submission insofar as these Bye-laws place restrictions on the freedom of association and assembly that is not proportional and does not meet the legitimate aims as set out in the Convention.
- The Rainbow Project proposes that the Byelaw should be revised to become a negative procedure rather than a proactive obligation placed on all those hoping to use amplification devices in the city i.e. wherein Council was

empowered to issue warnings or notices to quit to those individuals/groups who are amplifying persistent and consistent hostility for members of the public accessing the city centre, namely by occupying public space and loudly spreading hostility multiple times a week and for long periods of time.

- We would encourage a tightening of the scope of the requirement to seek a permit, which could be achieved either by expanding the “exemptions” list included at point 17 of the Bye-laws to include static protests and demonstrations, and/or by tightly defining the ‘nuisance’ these Bye-laws are addressing as individuals/groups who create a hostile and unwelcoming environment through the amplification of anti-LGBTQIA+ messages and/or displaying what is referred to as ‘graphic imagery’ in the consultation.
- We would also support closer monitoring by Belfast City Council of preachers and those occupying City Centre on a persistent basis for breaches of the “stirring up hate” offence, and would support more concrete action by the PSNI when these offences are reported.

### **Socialist Party**

- These bye-laws could also be used to restrict spontaneous action by workers for example in response to health and safety concerns in workplaces, solidarity initiatives such as those organised by Unite last year to support striking workers, or information stalls to encourage workers to join a union. In other words: anything which contravenes the main purpose of the city centre, making money for the retail and hospitality sector.
- In the view of the Socialist Party what is necessary to take on LGBTQ+ phobic speakers or anti-choice groups is not legal restrictions but mobilising against them - as we and others have done on many occasions. Our experience is that protests, particularly those which demonstrate the limited support for these ideas in society, have been what is key in pushing these organisations back.

### **Traditional Unionist Voice**

- Noted the absence of a Code Of Conduct.
- Gross invasion of freedom of expression.
- Permits issued to individuals rather than organisations exposes the real intent of these laws to make it much more difficult and at times impossible for individuals to articulate their views in the public square.
- How can one pass a judgement on these proposed laws and the full impact of their chilling effect on freedom of expression when the issue of cost is left up in the air?
- The proposed hours of 11am – 11pm will prevent someone who wants to hand literature to commuters outside Great Victoria Street station from doing so. TUV sees this as an unwarranted assault on freedom of expression.
- Glaring flaws in the Equality Screening document in terms of ‘anecdotal evidence’ and how there have been zero attempts by the council to constructively engage with those impacted before using the sledgehammer of these draconian laws.

### **WRDA response summary**

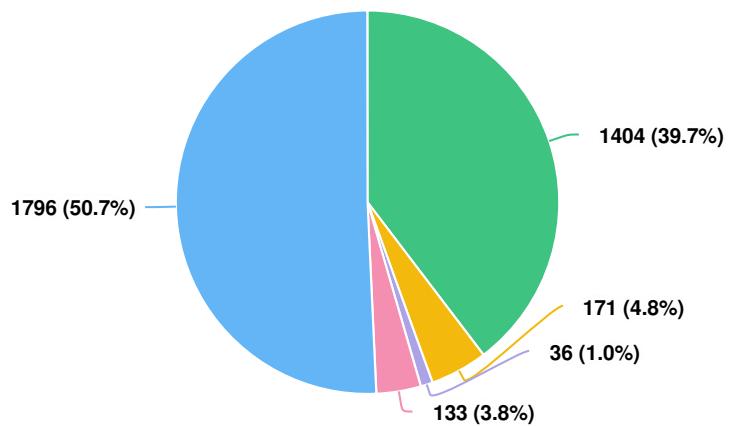
- Endorses the CAJ response
- The byelaws would disproportionately harm other city-centre activity and most particularly impact on social justice movements seeking to organise static rallies, most particularly where the rally is organised relatively spontaneously in response to an unexpected incident, atrocity or crisis.
- Concerns around the need to apply for a permit – cost and time to process
- Concerns within the women's movement about the criteria by which such a permit application would be assessed and that some groups would be disproportionately impacted (cited examples of previous interactions with BCC in relation to protests)
- Concerned with breaches of Article 10 and Article 11 ECHR; significant impact on the ability to organise protests because of the way that the by-laws focus on amplification equipment.
- Urges the Council to consider the methods by which permits are granted, and how permits could be granted with a swift turnaround (for example, within 24 hours) in the case of rallies or meetings in response to an emergent situation.

### **Joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and more**

- Proposed byelaws would undoubtedly breach Articles 10 & 11 ECHR.
- Would restrict the basic ability to intervene on issues of the day.
- Imposition of fines and the requirement for payment and proof of address to access permits are exclusionary and potentially discriminatory measures.
- The byelaws represent restrictions on the activity of people in the city in relation to performance, protest, outreach etc.



**Q1 | To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplifica...**



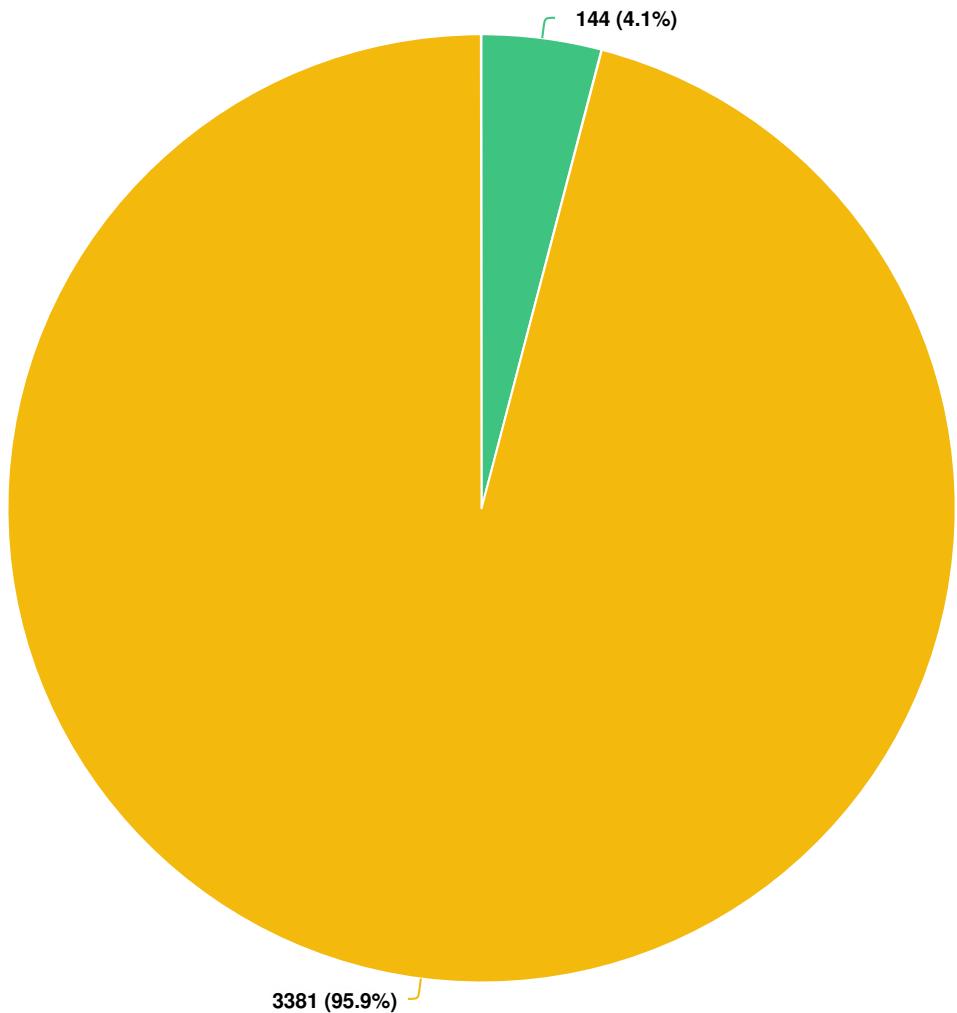
**Question options**

● Definitely agree   ● Somewhat agree   ● Neither agree nor disagree   ● Somewhat disagree   ● Definitely disagree

*Optional question (3540 response(s), 31 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q3 | In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?**

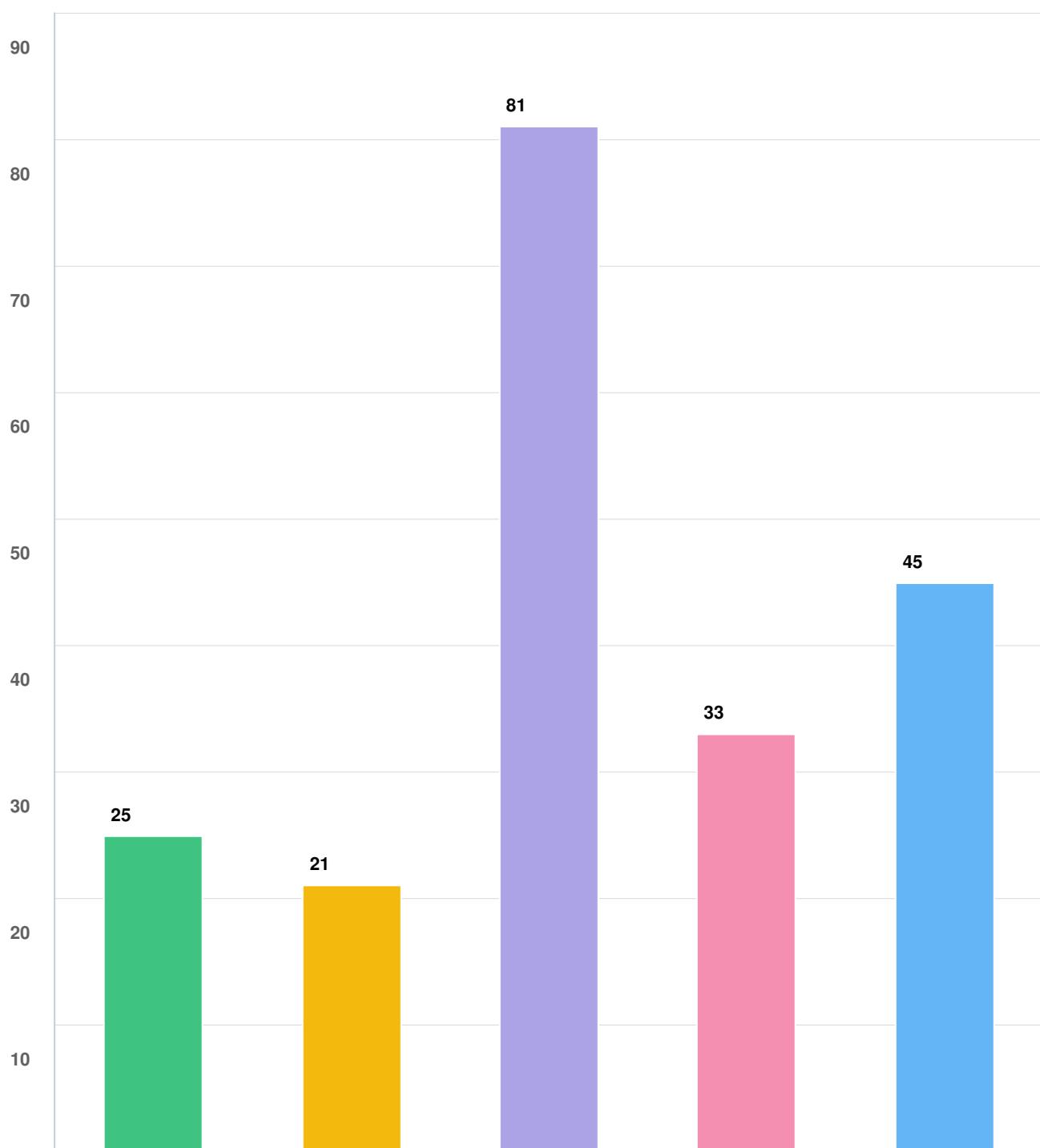


**Question options**

● Yes      ● No

*Optional question (3525 response(s), 46 skipped)  
Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q4 | If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities).**



**Question options**

Busking  Street performance  Street preaching

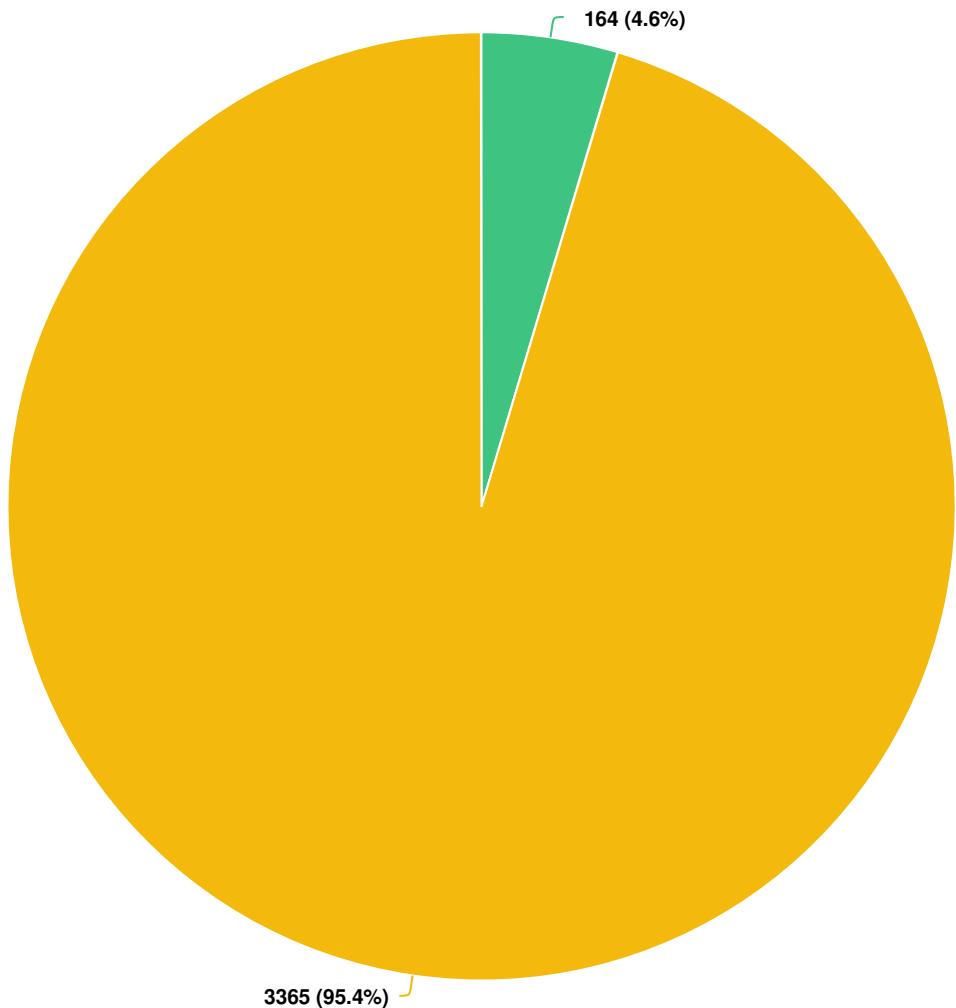
Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery)

Other (please specify)

*Optional question (141 response(s), 3430 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*

**Q5 | In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?**



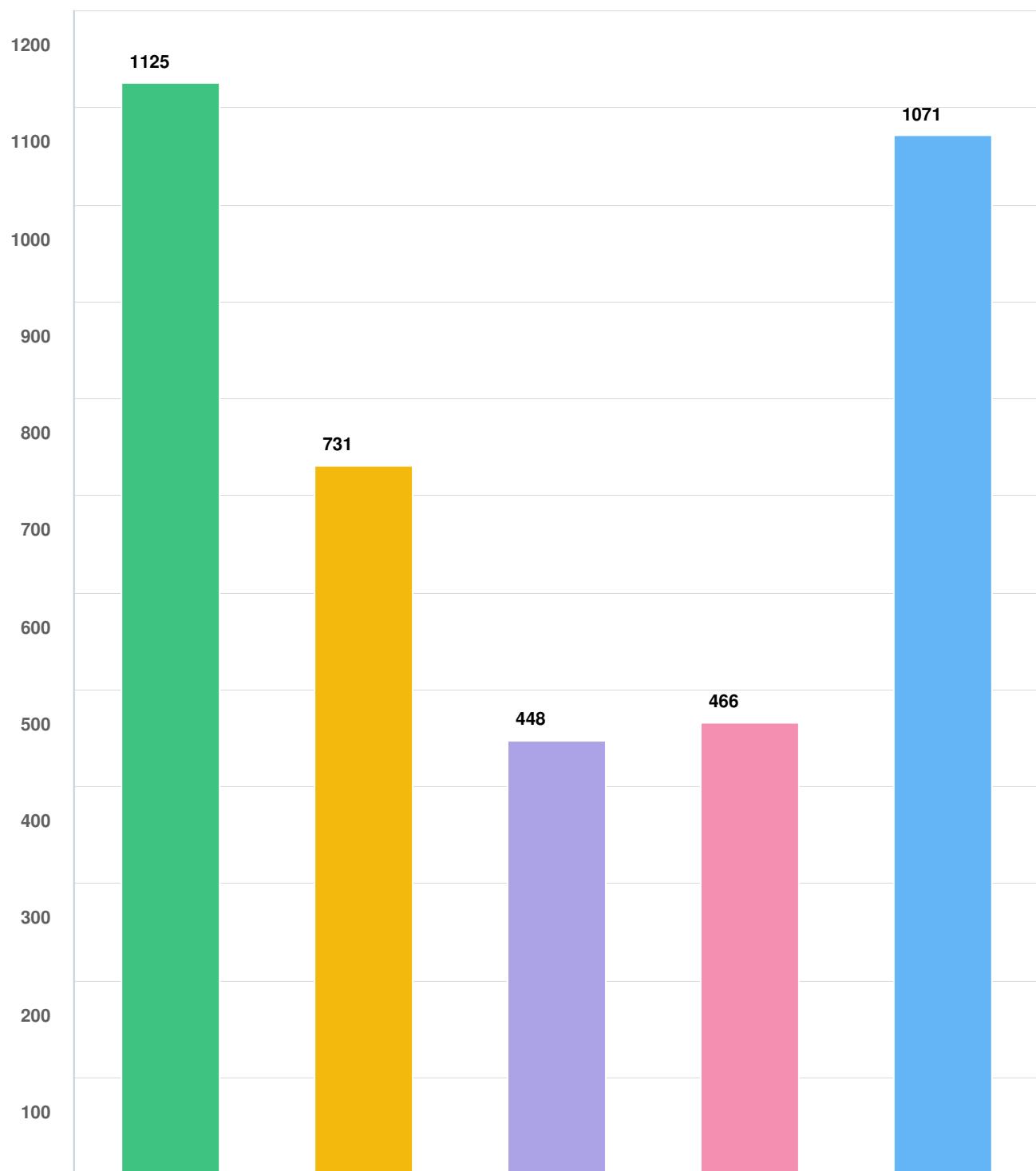
**Question options**

● Yes      ● No

*Optional question (3529 response(s), 42 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q7 | What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound)? You may select more than one option.**



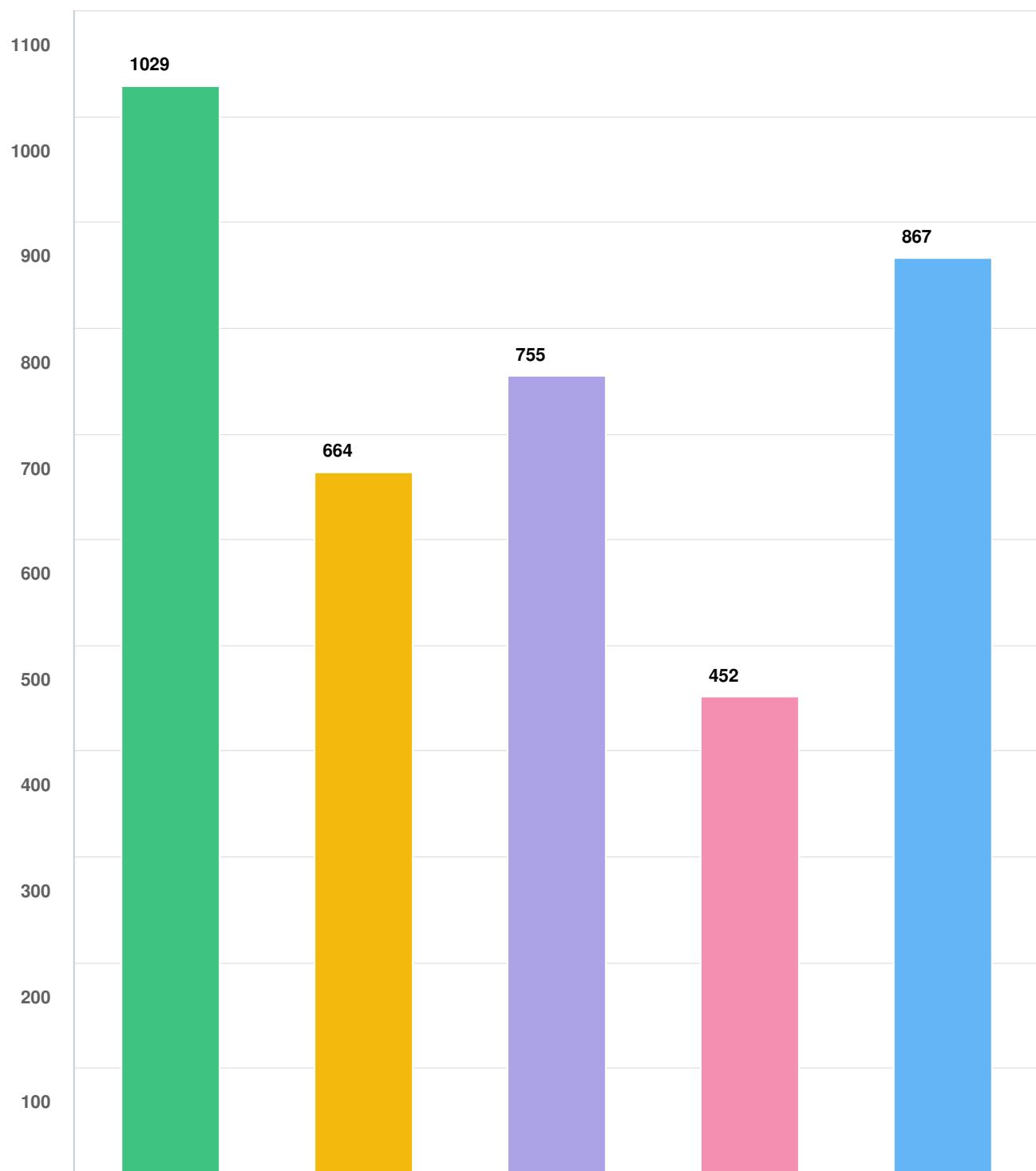
**Question options**

Very positive      Positive      Neutral      Negative      Very negative

*Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*

**Q9 | What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.**



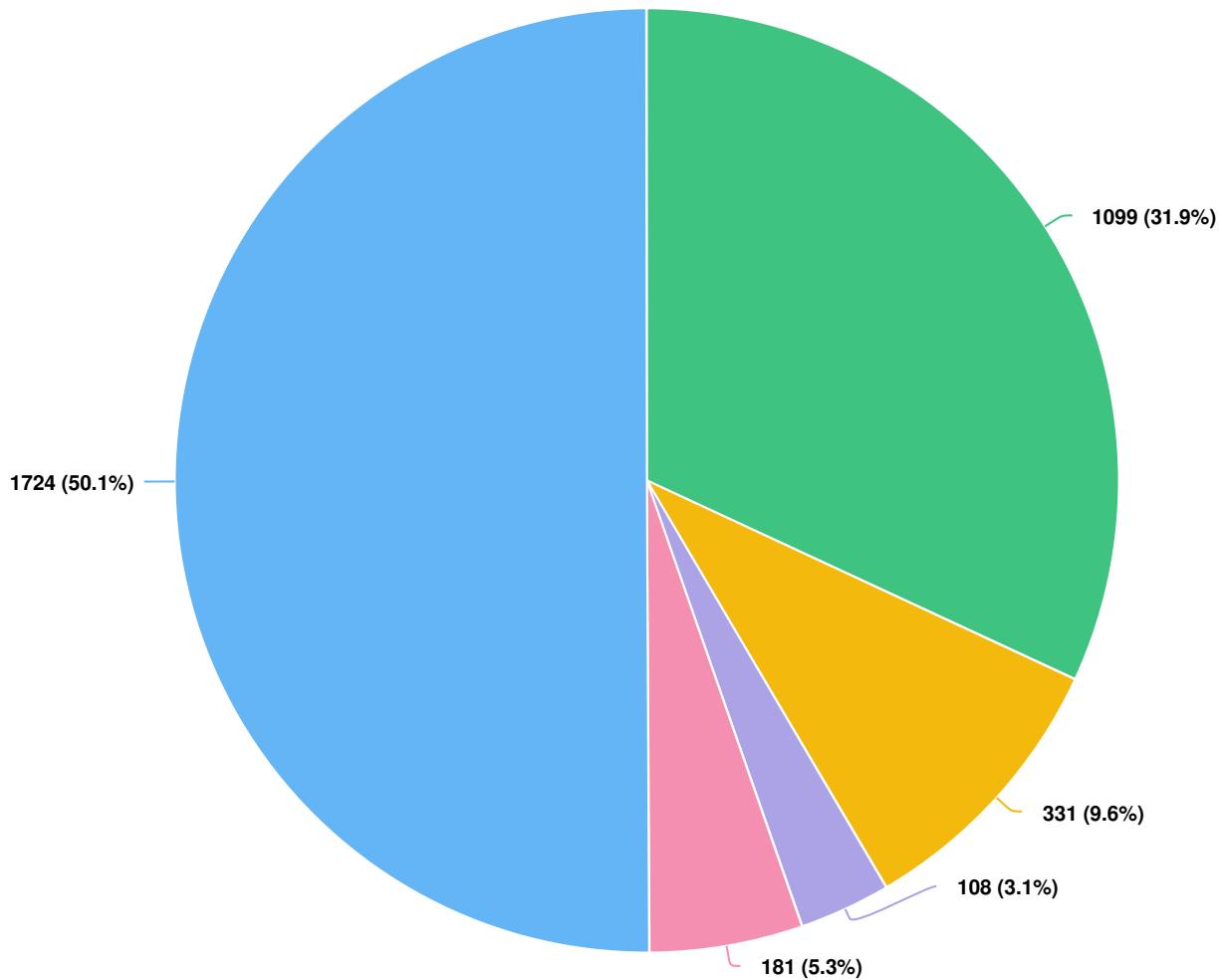
**Question options**

● Very positive    ● Positive    ● Neutral    ● Negative    ● Very negative

*Optional question (3517 response(s), 54 skipped)*

*Question type: Checkbox Question*

**Q11 | To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?**



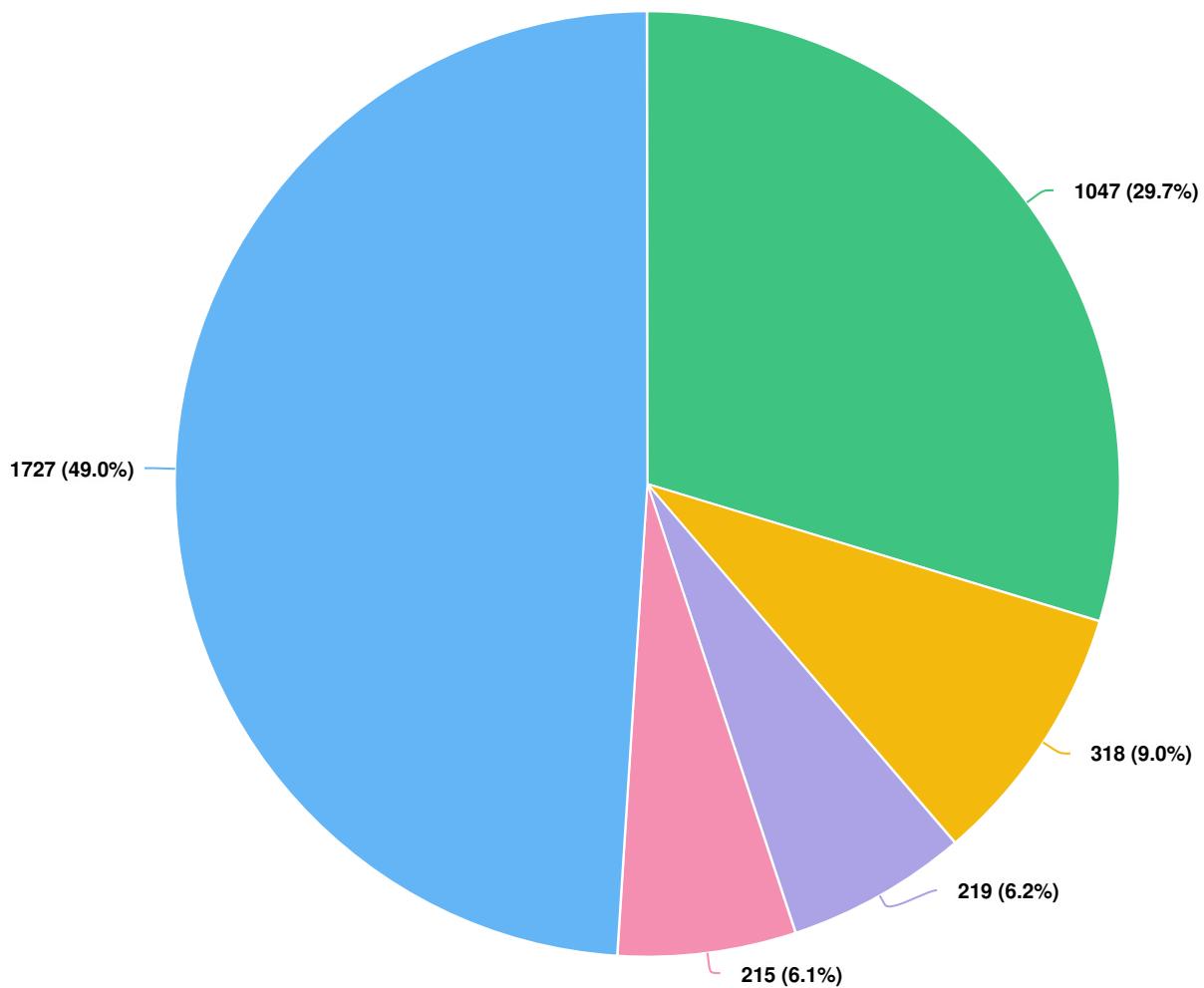
**Question options**

● Definitely agree   ● Somewhat agree   ● Neither agree nor disagree   ● Somewhat disagree   ● Definitely disagree

*Optional question (3443 response(s), 128 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q13 | To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?**



**Question options**

● Definitely agree   ● Somewhat agree   ● Neither agree nor disagree   ● Somewhat disagree   ● Definitely disagree

*Optional question (3526 response(s), 45 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**Q15 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)**

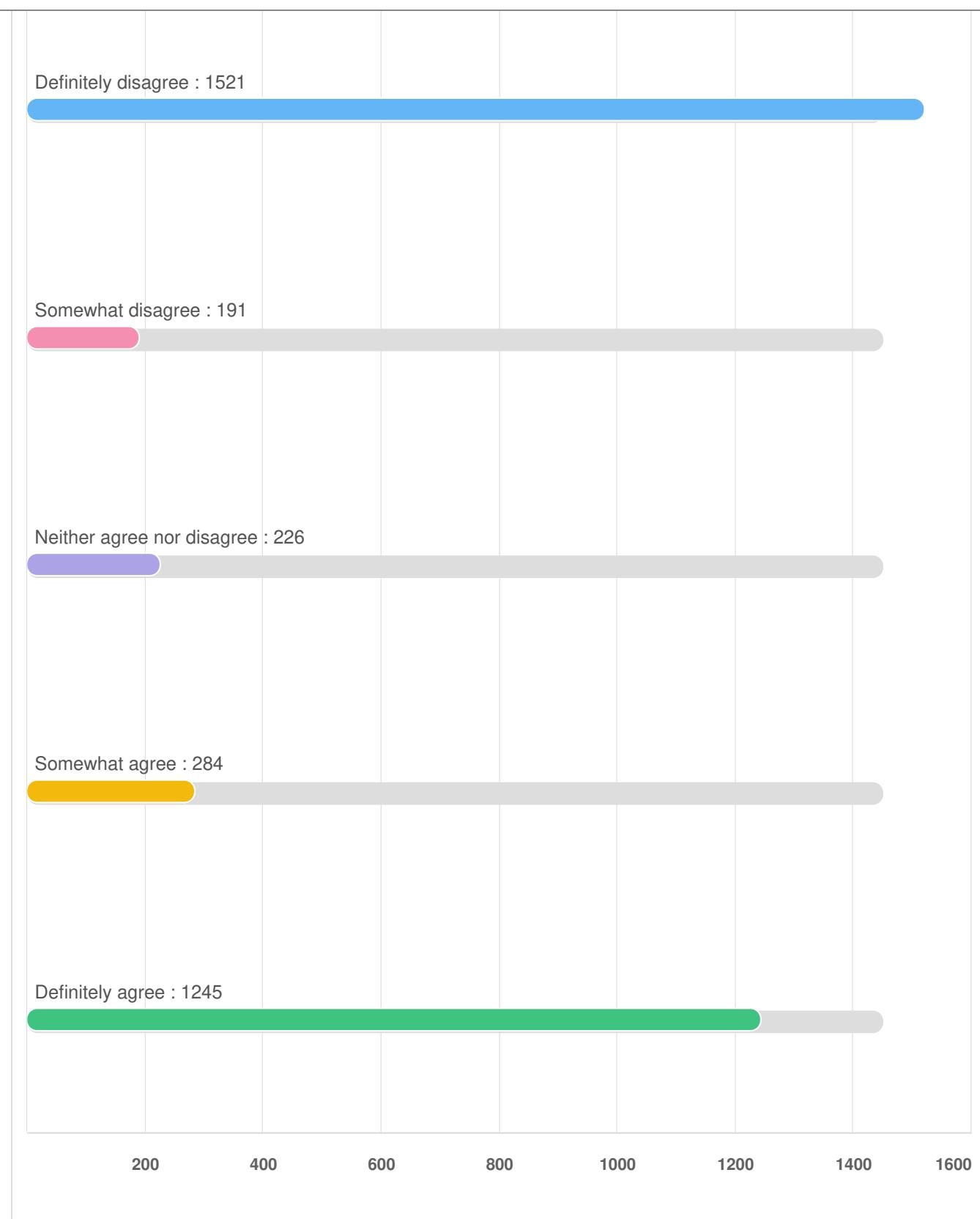


Optional question (3502 response(s), 69 skipped)

Question type: Likert Question

**Q15 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)**

**Permit is not transferable**



**Permit is valid for 1 year**

Definitely disagree : 1614



Somewhat disagree : 294



Neither agree nor disagree : 353



Somewhat agree : 465



Definitely agree : 697



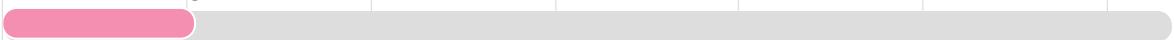
200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800

**Permit not normally granted for 11pm - 11am**

Definitely disagree : 1272



Somewhat disagree : 209



Neither agree nor disagree : 342



Somewhat agree : 390



Definitely agree : 1261



200

400

600

800

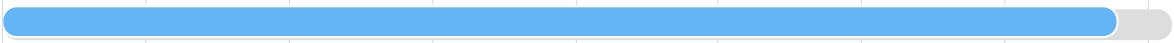
1000

1200

1400

**Permit applies to specific location and duration**

Definitely disagree : 1557



Somewhat disagree : 226



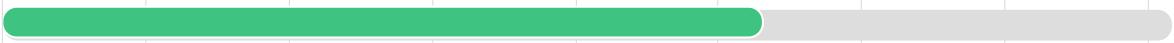
Neither agree nor disagree : 233



Somewhat agree : 392



Definitely agree : 1063



200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800

**Permit holder can only perform for max of 2 hours in specific location**

Definitely disagree : 1599



Somewhat disagree : 300



Neither agree nor disagree : 284



Somewhat agree : 457



Definitely agree : 839



200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800

**Permit holder can only perform for max of 1 hour in primary retail core**

Definitely disagree : 1658



Somewhat disagree : 290



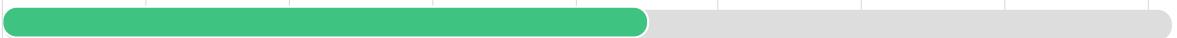
Neither agree nor disagree : 282



Somewhat agree : 345



Definitely agree : 902



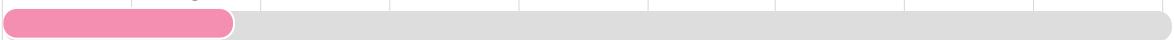
200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800

**The max performance time includes time spent setting up and packing up**

Definitely disagree : 1851



Somewhat disagree : 359



Neither agree nor disagree : 284



Somewhat agree : 207



Definitely agree : 785



200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800 2000

**Permit holder must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of previous location**

Definitely disagree : 1717



Somewhat disagree : 296



Neither agree nor disagree : 347



Somewhat agree : 336



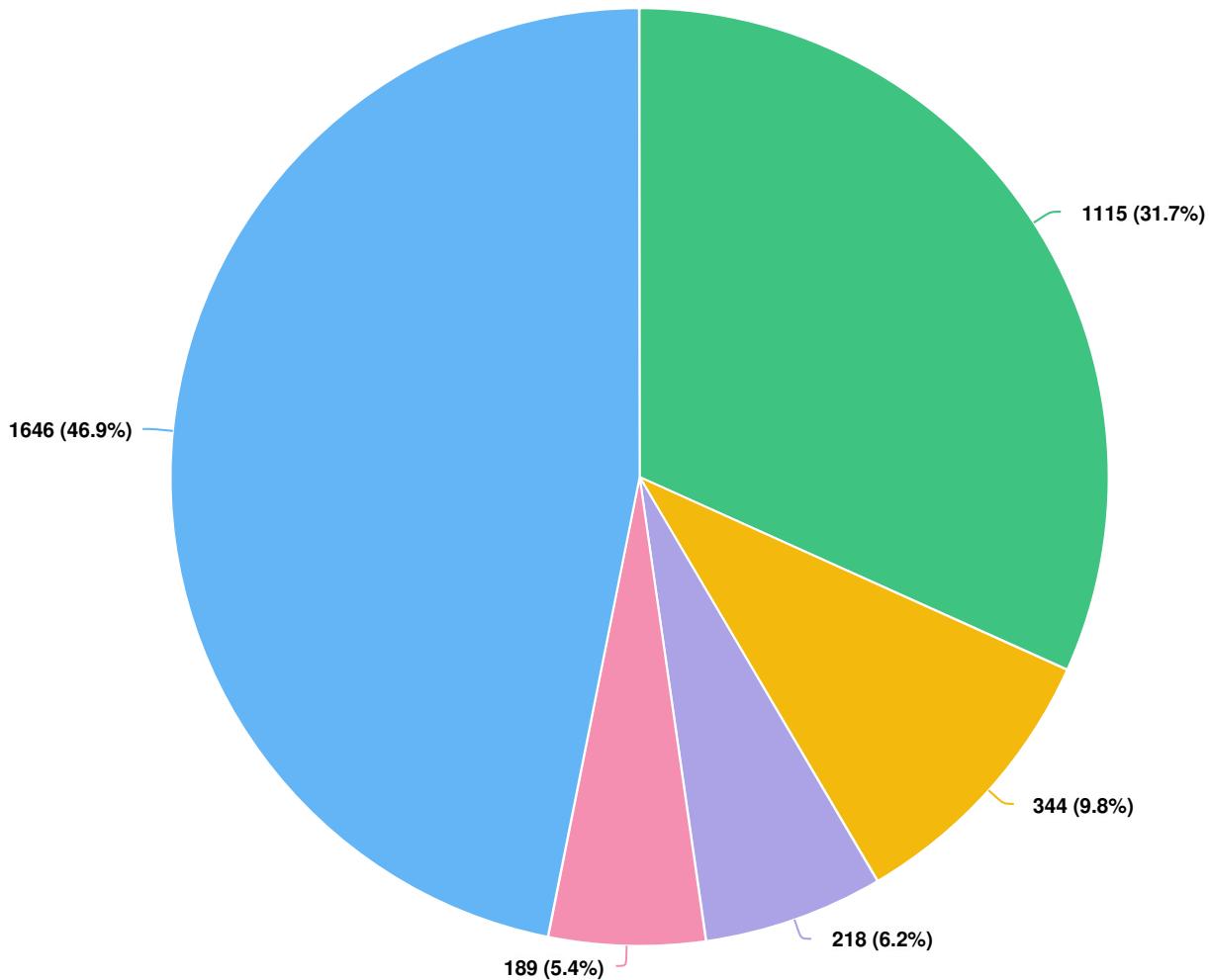
Definitely agree : 781



200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800 2000

**Q16 | Please provide any additional comments in the space below.**

**Q17 | To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?**



**Question options**

● Definitely disagree   ● Somewhat disagree   ● Neither agree nor disagree   ● Somewhat agree   ● Definitely agree

*Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

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<b>Subject:</b>	Physical Programme Update
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
<b>Insert number</b> <input type="text"/>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, approval for best practice site visits to inform the next phase of leisure and an approval to work with DFC to progress the mixed use development at Girdwood.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capital Programme Movements -</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</b> - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver</li> <li>○ <b>City Hall External Christmas Tree provision</b> – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.</li> <li>○ <b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b> - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000.</li> <li>○ <b>Greening &amp; Growing Project</b> – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit.</li> <li>○ <b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b> - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid</li> <li>○ <b>Depot Charging Scheme</b> - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.</li> <li>○ <b>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</b> - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<b>3.0</b>	<p><b>Main report</b></p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p>																								
3.1	<p><b>Physical Programme</b></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property &amp; Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.</p>																								
3.2	<p><b><u>Capital Programme - Proposed Movements</u></b></p> <p>As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Project</th> <th>Overview</th> <th>Stage movement</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</b></td> <td>Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites</td> <td><b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</b></td> <td>Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution</td> <td><b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b></td> <td>Improvements to pitches</td> <td><b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Greening and Growing Project</b></td> <td>Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme</td> <td><b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b></td> <td>Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.</td> <td><b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Depot Charging Scheme</b></td> <td>Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.</td> <td><b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</b></td> <td>HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform</td> <td><b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Project	Overview	Stage movement	<b>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</b>	Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b>	<b>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</b>	Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution	<b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500</b>	<b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b>	Improvements to pitches	<b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000</b>	<b>Greening and Growing Project</b>	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000</b>	<b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b>	Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000</b>	<b>Depot Charging Scheme</b>	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	<b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b>	<b>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</b>	HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
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Assembly Rooms Cluster	Redevelopment of Assembly Rooms Cluster	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>					
Public AED Replacement	To replace our current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>					
3.3	<p><b>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</b></p> <p>This project aims to upgrade the Council's CMS platform and to deliver a modern, secure, and accessible set of council websites that meet evolving legislative, user, and business requirements. The Content Management System (CMS) is software that lets the Council's web editors create, edit, organise, and publish content on the council websites. It acts as the backbone for managing text, images, videos, and other digital assets. The provider of the current CMS has informed the Council that the platform we currently use will no longer be supported after December 2026. This means that there will be no support/ maintenance, patching or security updates from that date onwards. This would represent a significant security and reputational risk to the organisation. The project is now part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. <b>Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.</b></p>						
3.4	<p><b>City Hall Christmas Tree Provision</b></p> <p>Members will recall that in August 2025 this project was moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The project aims to replace the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution. The City Hall Christmas tree is a major focal point within the City Centre and can set the tone for the city's Christmas celebrations, both for visitors and the local economy. Given issues with the quality and supply of real trees it is proposed to purchase an artificial tree which will be installed from 2026 onwards. The Installation - City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Working Group at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November was updated that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had been completed and a supplier had been appointed. <b>Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.</b></p>						
3.5	<p><b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b></p> <p>Members will be aware of the successful completion of pitch improvement works for the financial year 2024/25 as reported in April and October 2025. Officers have since been</p>						

working to identify opportunities to use the recurring annual budget of £500,000 for the 2025/26 financial year and are proposing the following schemes:

Location/ project	Overview
Wedderburn Park*	Perimeter fencing to enclose 2 existing grass pitches.
Falls Park	Spectator fencing and hard standing to existing grass pitch
Marrowbone Millenium Park	Height increase of existing fencing from 5m to 8m
Clarendon	Height increase in fencing at goal ends to 6m
CI Ladies Hockey Club	Funding Contribution towards Floodlighting
Belfast Met Montgomery Road	Provision of junior goal posts for use by SBYL
Westlands Pitch	Fencing and improved gates

*\*A concept design to further enhance Wedderburn Park for the benefit of local residents is being drafted from feedback gathered during preliminary engagement. Further engagement will be carried out and any works arising from this will from a second phase of parks improvements and be separately funded.*

**Members are asked to agree that the ‘Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26’ is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council as a rolling programme of investment.** Members are asked to note that should there be an underspend, this could be utilised for other projects from the existing shortlist subject to Member agreement.

3.6	<p><b>Greening &amp; Growing Project</b></p> <p>This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025. This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island Fund programme. It will be delivered at the GROW NI community garden at Waterworks, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. <b>Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 from Shared Island funding.</b></p>
3.7	<p><b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b></p> <p>This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in May 2025. The project involves the installation of an LED lighting display on the façade of Ulster Hall capable of changing colour similar to City Hall’s Illuminate scheme and will be in keeping with the building’s listed status. The letter of offer to the Council from Linen Quarter BID for the design phase has been secured. A subsequent letter of offer for the supply and installation is under review. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. <b>Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 fully funded by the LQ Bid.</b></p>

3.8	<p><b>Depot Charging Scheme</b></p> <p>This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in October 2025, when the SP&amp;R Committee approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government’s Depot Charging System. The Depot Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council’s counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. The application for funding has been submitted and a decision is awaited. <b>Members are asked to agree that ‘Depot Charging Scheme’ is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course, and update regarding the funding position referred above.</b></p>
3.9	<p><b>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</b></p> <p>The Council’s current HR/ Payroll System provider has informed the Council that the platform that it currently uses needs to be migrated to a new cloud-based platform. This includes the ResourceLink system and the Optimum (Time &amp; Attendance) system. <b>Members are asked to agree that the ‘HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration’ project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.</b></p>
3.10	<p><b>Assembly Rooms Cluster</b></p> <p>At the July 2025 special SP&amp;R Committee meeting, Members agreed that a without prejudice/ conditional offer was made to acquire the Assembly Rooms and adjoining properties – the sale completed on 24 October 2025. The Assembly Rooms Cluster consists of approximately 0.5 acres within the former Tribeca Belfast site located in Belfast city centre. The Cluster is comprised of the following buildings: Assembly Rooms (Grade B1 Listed Building) and including rear extension; part of the Donegall Street carpark site; 5 – 9 North Street (former Laffin Travel building); and the Braddell’s Building, 11 North Street (Grade B1 Listed Building). <b>Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed with further information to be brought back to Committee.</b></p>
3.11	<p><b>Public AED Replacement</b></p> <p>The project aims to replace the Council’s current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units to ensure continuity of service provision. <b>Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.</b></p>
3.12	<p><b>Belfast Stories</b></p> <p>Members will recall that Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC) update was considered by the SP&amp;R Committee in April 2025. Belfast Stories is the Council’s flagship project under</p>

	<p>the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond, helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods. The Committee also noted the detailed overview of the OBC following the 5-case model, with the total estimated capital cost of the preferred option at approximately £100m with £35m funded by BCC and £65m by BRCD. Furthermore, it was agreed to submit the Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and a Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received. Members will also recall that the project is now at Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and update regarding the funding position referred above. <b>Members are asked to note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.</b></p>
	<b>Leisure Programme – Site Visits</b>
3.13	<p>Members will be aware that work is underway on the development of the next phase of the Leisure Programme with Party Group briefings held in late Autumn. At these the need to look at USPs for the other sites was discussed and the need to look at where there are gaps in provision across the city. To inform this it is proposed that a two-day site visit is undertaken in late January/early February to leisure sites in and around London focusing on sites which provide facilities not currently within the Belfast leisure model. Details of the final itinerary are currently being finalised. It is proposed that this will be for Party Group Leaders or their nominees. <b>Members are asked to agree that site visits are undertaken in early 2026 to London to inform the next phase of leisure.</b></p>
	<b>Girdwood Masterplan</b>
3.14	<p>Members will be aware that the Girdwood Masterplan includes several agreed elements, some of which have not yet been delivered. These include the leisure facility, which forms part of the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme; housing at the Oldpark end of the site, which the Department for Communities (DfC) is progressing with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and the mixed-use development. DfC is leading on the mixed-use site, and officers have been engaging with DfC officials to explore options for progressing its development, including the potential for the Council to act as a development or delivery partner. <b>Members are asked to note these ongoing discussions and to agree that officers continue to work with DfC to identify an appropriate mechanism to deliver the mixed-use site.</b></p>
3.15	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p><i>Financial Implications –</i></p> <p><b>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</b> – capital budget allocation of up to £77,500.</p>

	<p><b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b> – recurring capital budget allocation of £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.</p> <p><b>Greening and Growing Project</b> – capital allocation of up to €30,000 externally funded via Shared Island Fund. Letter of Offer is in Euro (€).</p> <p><b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b> – capital allocation of up to £165,000, externally funded via Linen Quarter BID.</p> <p><i>Resource Implications</i> – Officer time to deliver.</p>
3.16	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></b> All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process
4.0	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Asset Management</b>  <b>i) Hannahstown Village - Playground &amp; Public Square Sublease</b> <b>ii) Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works</b> <b>iii) Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI</b> <b>iv) Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI</b> <b>v) Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands</b>
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Pamela Davison, Estates Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
<b>Insert number</b> <input type="text"/>	  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>

<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	  <input type="checkbox"/>

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

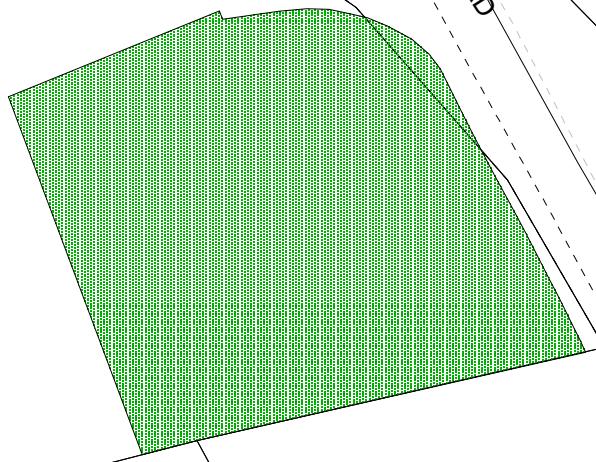
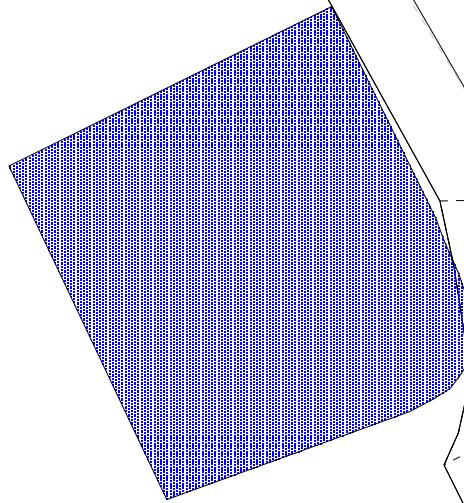
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition and estates matters.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <b>Hannahstown Village - Playground &amp; Public Square Sublease</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve Council entering a sublease with Hannahstown Community Association for the lands for Hannahstown Village Playground &amp; Public Square situated at Pairc Lamh Dhearg.</li> </ul> </li> <li>ii) <b>Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve entering into a licence for works with Ulster University for a plot of land adjoining Belfast City Council Lands at Cathedral Gardens.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iii) <b>Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve entering into a 10-year lease with DfI for the siting of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iv) <b>Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve Council entering a new licence with the Department for Infrastructure for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway.</li> </ul> </li> <li>v) <b>Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane to deliver a footpath.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <b>Hannahstown Village - Playground &amp; Public Square Sublease</b></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee at its meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 approved a licence agreement with Hannahstown Community Association (HCA) for the playground and public square at Hannahstown Hill. The Council had received Rural Development Programme funds on behalf of HCA to improve the quality of the general environment and services available in Hannahstown which included upgrades to the playground and to create a new public square. Despite attempts the Council has been unable to complete the licence agreement due to lack of engagement by HCA's legal representatives. Due to the passage of time Legal Services are now proposing that a sublease between HCA and the Council would</p>

	<p>better protect the Council's interests. HCA's solicitors have re-engaged in the process, and Members are asked to approve the entering into a sublease from the 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2024 for a period of 10 years, for the lands at Hannahstown Village Playground &amp; Public Square within Pairc Lamh Dhearg. See Map at Appendix 1 showing Hannahstown Village Playground &amp; Public Square.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>The rent will be nominal of £1 per annum (if demanded) and payable by the Council to HCA.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Neds Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p><b>ii) Cathedral Gardens – Licence for Works</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>Approval is sought to enter into a licence for works for a portion of lands adjoining Belfast City Council lands at Cathedral Gardens with Ulster University. The licence for works will be used for hoarding to secure the site and to install new natural stone paving, kerbs, bollards and associated drainage as part of the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens. The licence will be for a duration of 53 weeks and then rolling week to week thereafter at a peppercorn rent of £1 per annum. Belfast City Council lands are outlined in red and lands proposed to be included in the licence for works from Ulster University are highlighted yellow in Appendix 2.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit to agree terms. Council shall if demanded, pay a peppercorn rent.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.3	<p><b>iii) Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>Approval is requested to enter into a new 10-year lease with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the installation of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park. DfI has occupied lands at this location since 2000 however the jetty has since fallen into disrepair and is now closed on safety grounds. DfI proposes to replace the jetty with a new floating pontoon and is currently seeking planning permission. Subject to Member approval and the granting of planning consent, it is proposed that the Council enter into a 10-year lease with DfI at a peppercorn rent. The pontoons will provide an additional recreational facility for river users. Council lands are outlined in red and location of new pontoon shaded in blue at Appendix 3A along with plans of the proposed pontoon design at Appendix 3B.</p> <p>In addition, DfI is proposing to install a pontoon at Barnett Demesne. The entrance to this pontoon lies on Council lands, which are already held under Lease between the Council and DfI. Approval is therefore sought to amend the user clause of the existing lease to permit the</p>

	<p>inclusion of the pontoon. Council lands are outlined in red and location of new pontoon shaded in blue at Appendix 3C along with plans of the proposed pontoon design at appendix 3D.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Legal Services will act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.4	<p><b>iv) Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>DFI has agreed to enter into a new licence agreement with the Council for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway. The licence will be for a further period of 5 years, commencing 1st February 2026 and the licence fee will remain at £170 per annum. DfI require that a new clause is entered into the licence to enable the DfI to terminate the licence by giving not less than 6 months prior written notice to the Council in the event that the lands should become required for any departmental function or works scheme. C&amp;NS are agreeable to this requirement. See map at Appendix 4 showing the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>The Council will be responsible for paying a licence fee of £170 per annum to the DfI. Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Neds Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p><b>v) Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>As part of Council's citywide Strategic Site Assessment work Council owned lands adjoining Sally Gardens complex has been identified as a strategic site suitable to bring forward a housing-led regeneration scheme, as part of wider land assembly with Department for Communities (DFC) lands. Following engagement with DFI, DFC and the City Regeneration &amp; Development team the Council owned access road into the site has also been identified as having potential to support the servicing of an active travel route. This would link Brians Well Road lying to the north to the Stewartstown Road to the south, while improving access arrangement to the proposed housing site. To deliver on these placemaking objectives, housing and enhancing connectivity, the Council proposes provision of a second footpath along the existing access road. The adjoining landowner, Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd has agreed to transfer the necessary lands to the Council to facilitate a 2.2m wide footpath at a nominal value, supporting the Council's wider placemaking objectives by enhancing connectivity across the site.</p>

	<p>Separately, Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd has submitted a planning application for a housing scheme on their adjoining lands. As part of their own works, they propose to install a retaining structure along the new boundary line. To enable this, the Council would grant access by way of a Licence agreement to undertake these works. Members are asked to approve the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane and subsequent grant of a Licence to deliver the retaining structure.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>The Council's Estates Management Unit will work with Legal Services to draft the necessary transfer Deed. The transfer is subject to a nominal consideration and the Council would cover Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd reasonable Legal fees.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
<p><b>4.0 Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>	<p>Appendix 1 – showing Hannahstown Village Playground shaded green &amp; Public Square shaded blue.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Map outlining Council land in red, and area to be included in the licence for works from Ulster University highlighted in yellow.</p> <p>Appendix 3a – Map outlining Council lands at Clement Wilson Park in red, and location of proposed pontoon outlined in Blue.</p> <p>Appendix 3b – Proposed pontoon design at Clement Wilson Park.</p> <p>Appendix 3c – Map outlining Council lands at Barnett Demesne in red, and location of proposed pontoon outlined in Blue.</p> <p>Appendix 3d – Proposed pontoon design at Barnett Demesne.</p> <p>Appendix 4 - showing the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Map showing the lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane outlined red.</p>

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GLENMEEN CLOSE

UPPER SPRINGFIELD ROAD

32

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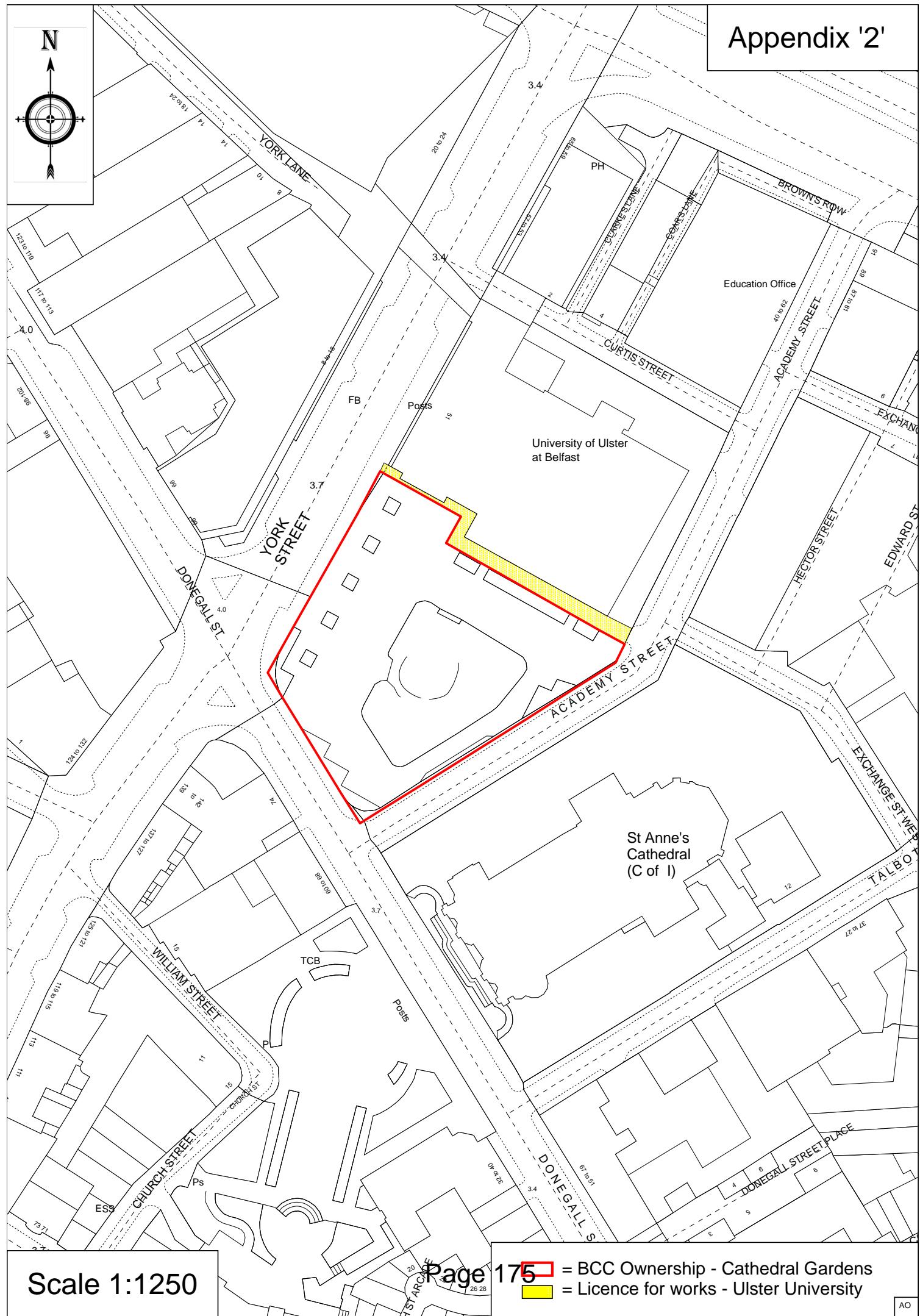
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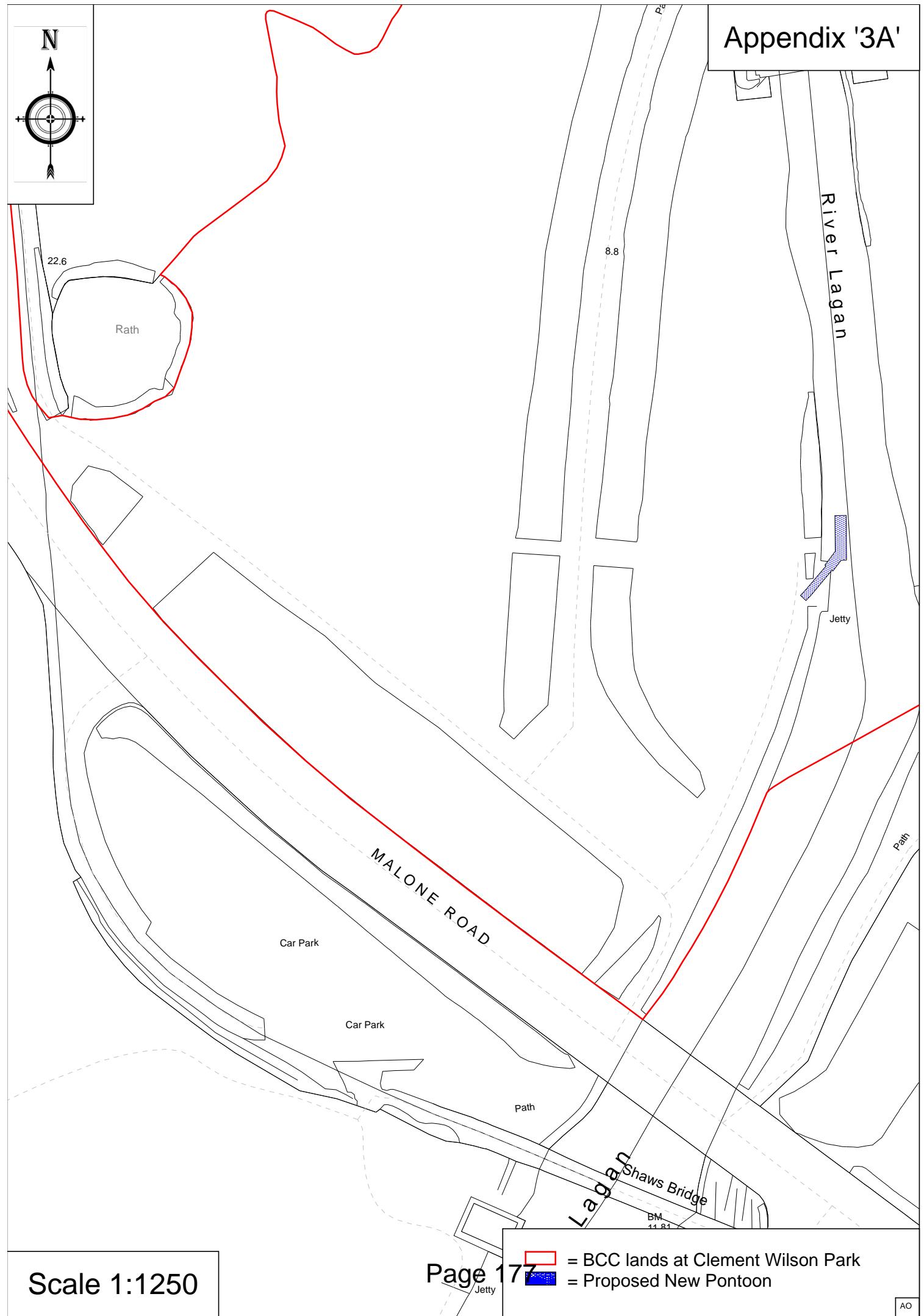
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## Appendix '2'



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Appendix '3A'

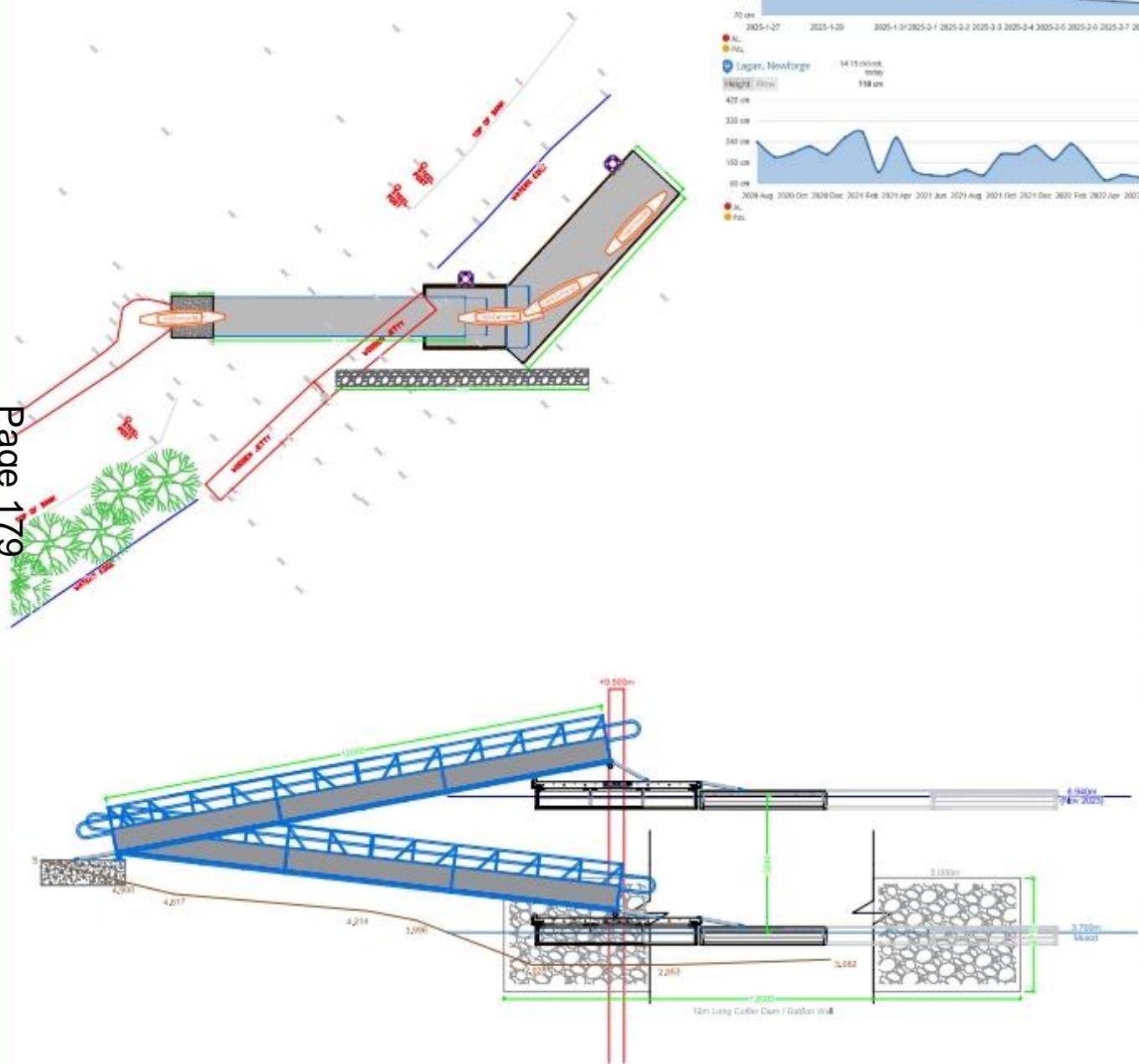


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## Appendix '3B'



**Site 2:  
Downstream Pontoon**



Inland and Coastal Marine Services		CLIENT Acme Corp/Project	DATE 2005-01-01	AMOUNT \$1,250
		PROJECT Blue's Bridge	EXCHG AMOUNT	\$1,250
		EXCHG TYPE	AMOUNT	\$1,250
		EXCHG COMMENT	AMOUNT	\$1,250
<b>BUDGET DRAWDOWNS</b>		<b>Drawn On</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
DRAWING TITLE Proposed Layout	DATE Feb 2005	EXCHG TYPE	AMOUNT	COMMENT
DRAWING NUMBER DRAWING NUMBER	SCALE 1:100	EXCHG COMMENT	AMOUNT	COMMENT
Acme Corp/Project				

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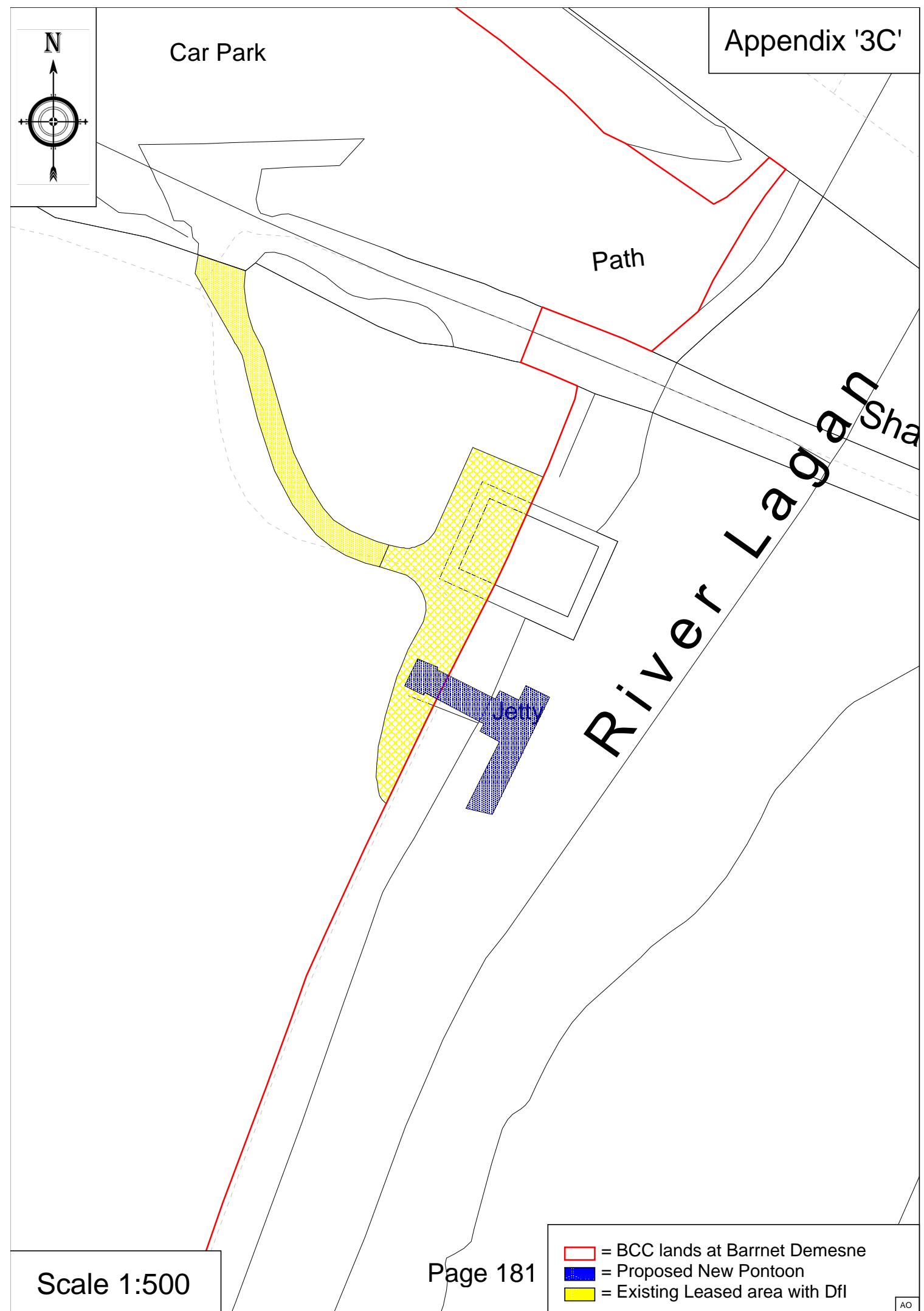
Car Park

Appendix '3C'

Path

River Lagan Sha

Jetty



Scale 1:500

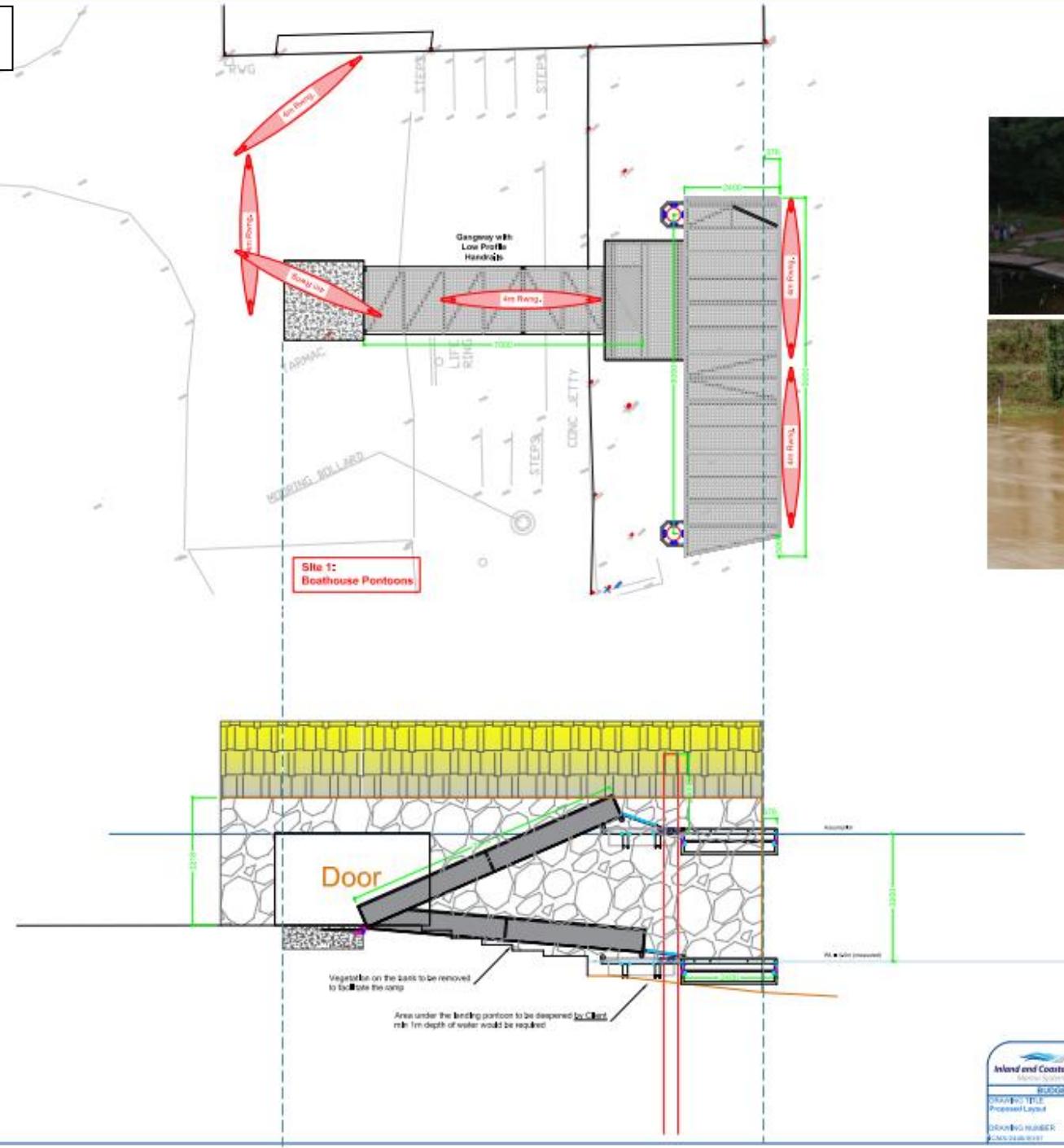
Page 181

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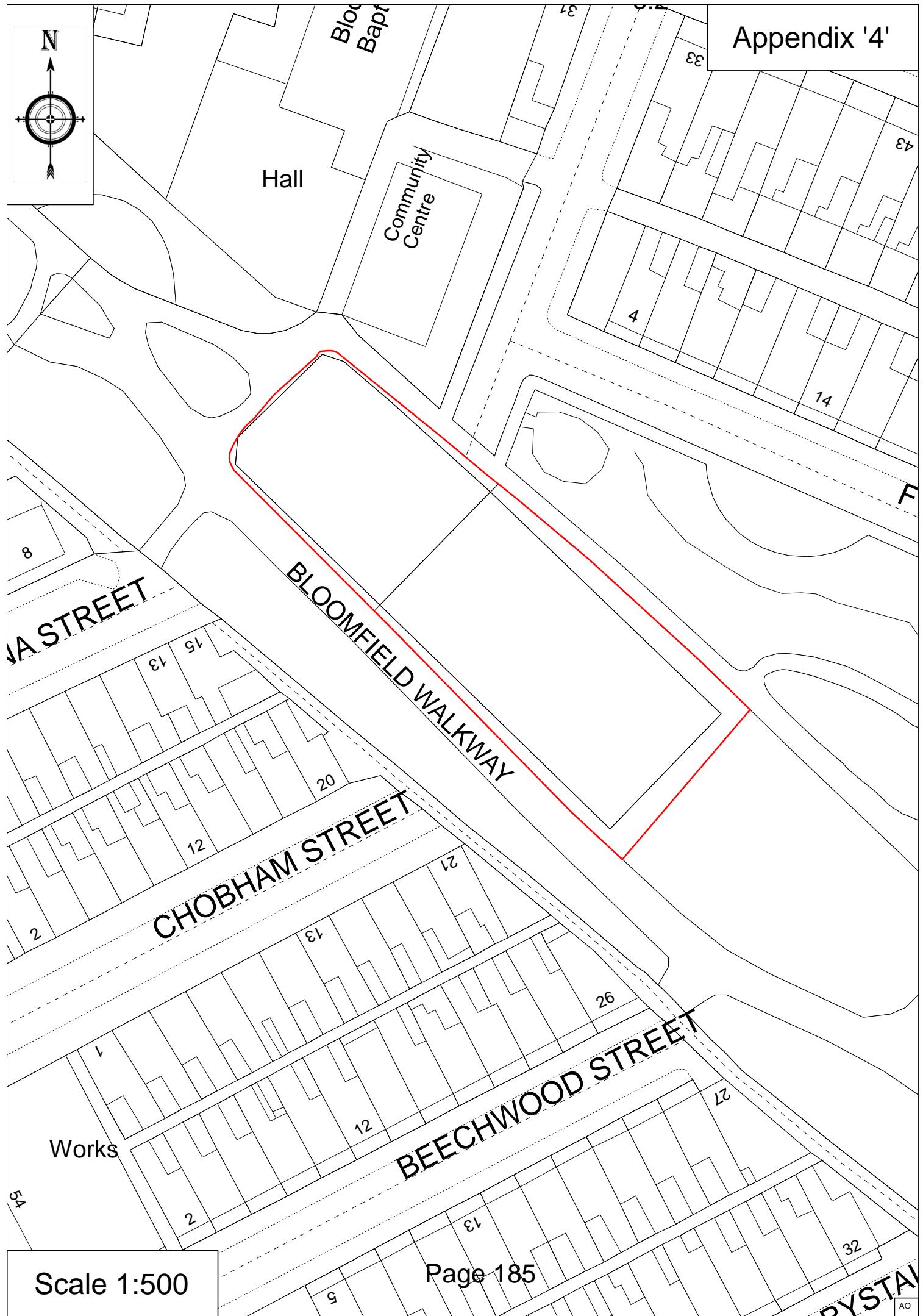
- = BCC lands at Barnet Demesne
- = Proposed New Pontoon
- = Existing Leased area with DfI

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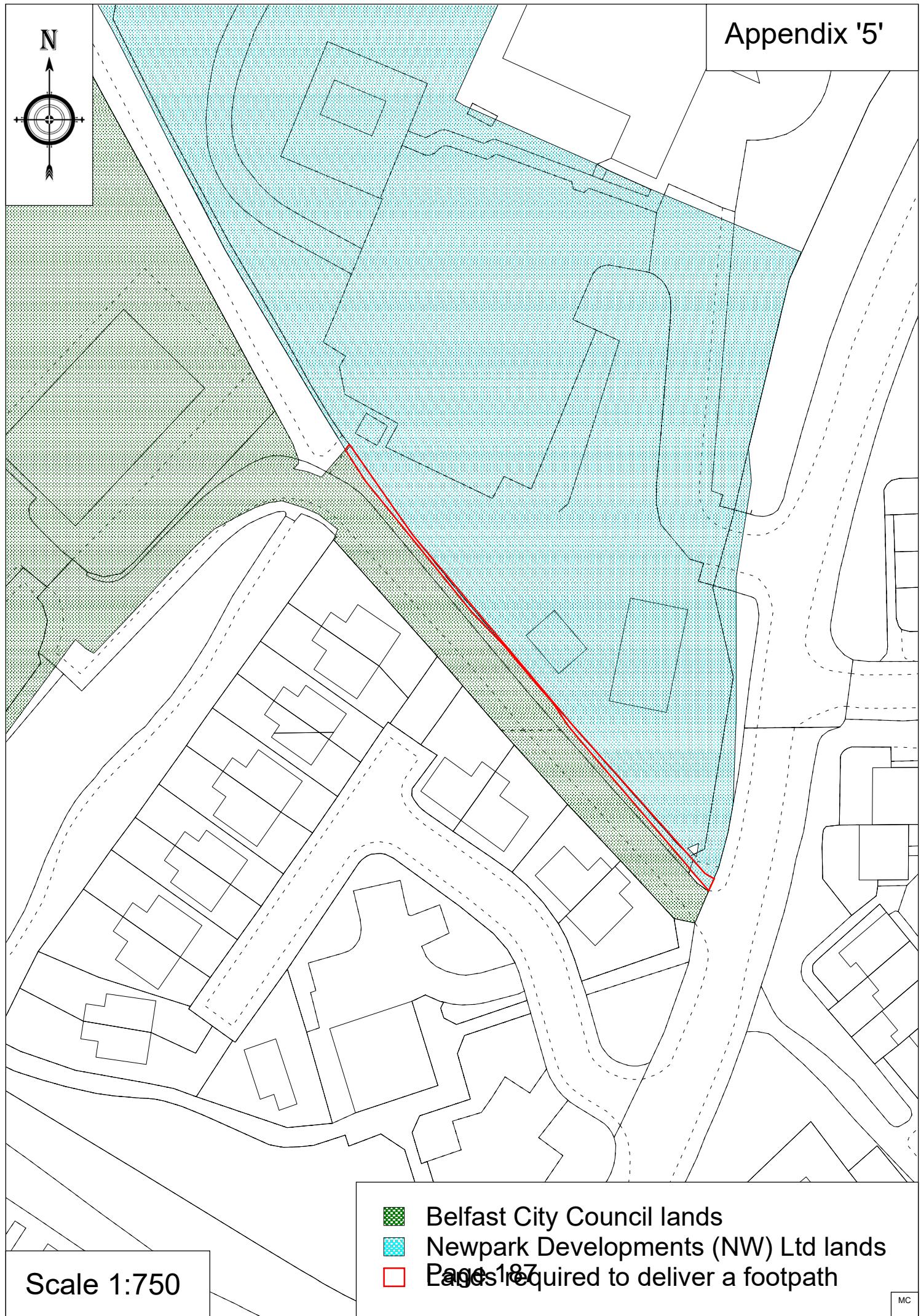
## Appendix '3D'



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<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Area Working Groups
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>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</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>	

<p><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></p> <p><b>After Committee Decision</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>After Council Decision</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>Sometime in the future</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>Never</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
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<p><b>Call-in</b></p> <p><b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To present to the Committee for approval the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Area Working Groups.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve the minutes of the meeting of South AWG – 24 November, North AWG – 25 November, West AWG – 27 November, and East AWG – 4 December 2025 as attached.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Area Working Group Minutes</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed in June 2016 that the minutes of the meetings of the Area Working Groups would be presented to the SP&amp;R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. The Committee is asked to approve the minutes of the most recent meetings, as attached.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Project Updates</b></p> <p><b><i>South AWG</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Memorial at Donegall Road</u> – to note the update on the Memorial at Donegall Road project.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>East AWG</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Bloomfield Community Association (BIF13)</u> – the East Belfast AWG agreed, in principle, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Bloomfield Community Association project be relocated from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
3.4	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> - Minutes – Meeting – South Belfast Area Working Group 24 November 2025</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> - Minutes – Meeting – North Belfast Area Working Group 25 November 2025</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> - Minutes – Meeting – West Belfast Area Working Group 27 November 2025</p> <p><b>Appendix 4</b> - Minutes – Meeting – East Belfast Area Working Group 4 December 2025</p>

# South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 24th November, 2025

## MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson); Councillors Brennan, Bunting, McKay and McKeown.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects; Ms. S. Rafter, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th August were approved by the Working Group.

### Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson, Councillor Groogan, declared an interest in the Vacant to Vibrant item, in that her employer had applied for funding through the scheme, however, as the item was just an update on the scheme, she was not required to leave the meeting.

### Presentation

#### Hearth Historic Buildings Trust – Update on Riddel's Warehouse

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, welcomed Ms. R. Campbell-Palmer, Heritage Development Officer, and Mr. M. Patton, Vice Chair, Hearth Historic Buildings Trust to the meeting.

Mr. Patton outlined the history of Riddel's Warehouse, a Grade B+ listed building which had been constructed in 1867 and was a rare example of Ruskinian design and cast-iron construction. Originally part of Riddel & Co, a prominent ironmongery firm, the warehouse held significant historical value, including industrial features like a weighbridge and crane, as well as records and oral histories from former workers. Located in Belfast's historic market area, it represented the legacy of the ironmongery industry and the City's maritime heritage.

Ms. Campbell-Palmer provided the Working Group with an overview of the regeneration plan for the Warehouse, which focused on heritage-led development to create a sustainable, multi-functional space that supported urban renewal. It aimed to

preserve the building's architectural heritage while fostering community engagement, creativity, and economic growth. The project emphasised adaptive reuse, renewable technologies, and urban greenspaces, while providing cultural, social, and learning spaces to benefit Belfast's residents and visitors.

She provided the Members with an overview of the funding for the project, whereby they were aiming to unlock £5.2 million in UK investment. She highlighted that Riddel's Warehouse was envisioned as a flagship regeneration initiative that would enhance Belfast's cultural and economic vibrancy, contributing to the city's long-term development goals.

The Chairperson stated that she wished them well with the project and that it was a striking and unique historical venue which was an asset to the City.

The Working Group thanked the representatives for the information they had provided and they retired from the room.

### **Local Development Plan (LDP) Update**

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Working Group requested that the slides be circulated to the Members and they thanked the officers for the update provided.

## Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects presented the following report:

### **1. Introduction**

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

### **2. Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Note the Physical Programme update for South Belfast including the recently completed projects – Balfour Avenue playground.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities at Appendix 3.

### **3. Local Investment Fund (LIF)**

Members are reminded that LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG area; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation.

A summary is provided below.

LIF breakdown – South		LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description:		No. Projects	Amount (£)	No. Projects	Amount/ (£)
Number of Projects Completed		13 (100%)	£1,083,600	11 (100%)	£796,000
Total Number of Approved Projects		13	£1,083,600	11	£796,000

The table below shows an overview of the recently completed project.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
SLIF017	Finaghy Bridge	£30,000	Complete	Artwork on the bridge was	Continue engagement with

			completed in August 2025. Investigating the potential to further the environmental improvements at the bridge with planters and artwork on a number of utility boxes.	partners. Obtain quote for planters and identify owners of the utility boxes on Finaghy Road North.
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All 24 LIF projects in South Belfast have now been completed.

4. **Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)**

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council. BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with an additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

***Summary of BIF allocated projects.***

<b>South</b>	Stage 3 - Lagan Gateway - £2.1m; Lanyon Tunnels - £1.3m; Bredagh GAC - £700k; Arts & Digital Hub - £584k; Coffee Culture - £286k Stage 2 - Sandy Row Open Space project- £479k
<b>Balmoral DEA</b>	Stage 3 - Knockbreda Parish Church Hall - £250k; Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC - £250k

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
<b>BIF04</b>	<b>Lagan Gateway Phase 2</b>	£1,428,650 <i>BIF- £579,324 DfI Greenways- £714,326</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Planning Approval expected end of 2025. External match funding is in place from DfI. The contractor procurement has completed. Awaiting CPD sign off to issue awards letter. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements.	Continue engagement with the public, landowners and key stakeholders.

<b>BIF07</b>	<b>Market Arches</b>	£3.3m <i>BIF-£1.3m UV-£2m t</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Different options costed and OBC completed for submission to The Executive Office (TEO).	Officer engagement with TEO, DfC and DfI as key funders.
<b>BIF48</b>	<b>Sandy Row Arts &amp; Digital Hub</b>	£1,129,023 <i>BIF-£584,167 UV-£706,856</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Planned completion November 2025. Official opening proposed January 2026 to allow new facility to be fully operational. Date to be agreed with BSCR in conjunction with Lord Mayor's Office. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>BIF46</b>	<b>Coffee Culture</b>	£1,149,821 <i>BIF-£286,519 SOF-£100,000 UV-£463,302 DfC-£300,000</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Contractor appointed. Pre-start meeting has taken place with contractor to provide their programme of works. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of Arts & Digital Hub. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>BIF33</b>	<b>Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC</b>	£250,000	Stage 3-Committed	Belvoir FC has agreed to lease land from NIHE. Updated LPS valuation May 2025 - 25 year lease assessed at £4,500pa, with rent reviews every five years. NIHE will revert back when they have sought internal approval.	Continue engagement with the group and partners.
<b>BIF47</b>	<b>Sandy Row Open Space project</b>	£479,314*	Stage 2- Uncommitted <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Council has proceeded with procurement of Design Team and process is nearing completion. Ongoing issues with Translink in relation to progressing the scheme, taking account the requirements of their licence. <i>*The remaining balance of the ringfenced allocation for the Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Continue engagement with the group.

## 5. Social Outcomes Fund

**SOF** is a £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment, and 2 have completed. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Members are asked to note the progress update of the remaining project in the table below.

### ***SOF – South Belfast project overview***

Project	Award	Status and update	Action/ Recommendation
<b>SOF02 Coffee Culture</b>	£1,149,821 <i>SOF-£100,000 BIF-£286,519 UV- £463,302 DfC-£300,000</i>	Contractor appointed. Pre-start meeting has taken place with contractor to provide their programme of works. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of Arts & Digital Hub.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

## 6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for South was £1,978,637, and 5 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

### ***South Belfast – NRF overview***

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
<b>Sólás New Build project</b>	£2.5m <i>NRF- £362,141 COF- £800,000 Various funders and group</i>	Stage 3- Committed Delivery stage	<b><i>On Ground.</i></b> Work recently started on site. NRF funding will be used towards the fit-out. Working with Legal Services to finalise funding agreement.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>GVRT- Branching Out project</b>	£540,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 DfC- £40,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	DfC funding (£40k) secured to further develop project designs. Design Team procurement to conclude in early	Continue engagement with the group.

			2026. Discussions continue with potential funders.	
<b>Lagan Water Access Activity Hub</b>	£308,248	Stage 3-Committed	Planning application for boathouse submitted and await decision.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>Redevelopment of former School of Music</b>	£2,308,248 NRF-£308,248 UV- £2m	Stage 3-Committed	Business case being developed by TEO Urban Villages. Approval forecasted in Winter 25/26.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>Market Heritage Hub</b>	£800,000 NRF- £500,000 COF- £300,000	Stage 3-Committed	<b>Building purchase has been completed via NRF funding and the Community Ownership Fund.</b> Group is preparing for an application to Heritage Fund for restoration of the building and transformation into heritage facility.	Continue engagement with the group. Assist with funding application towards building restoration & transformation into heritage facility.

#### South Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
<b>Sólás New Build project</b>	£2.5m NRF- £362,141 COF- £800,000 Various funders and group	Stage 3-Committed <i>Delivery stage</i>	<b>On Ground.</b> Work recently started on site. NRF funding will be used towards the fit-out. Working with Legal Services to finalise funding agreement.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>GVRT- Branching Out project</b>	£540,000 NRF- £500,000 DfC- £40,000	Stage 3-Committed	DfC funding (£40k) secured to further develop project designs. Design Team procurement to conclude in early 2026. Discussions continue with potential funders.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>Lagan Water Access Activity Hub</b>	£308,248	Stage 3-Committed	Planning application for boathouse submitted and await decision.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>Redevelopment of former School of Music</b>	£2,308,248 NRF-£308,248 UV- £2m	Stage 3-Committed	Business case being developed by TEO Urban Villages. Approval forecasted in Winter 25/26.	Continue engagement with the group.

<b>Market Heritage Hub</b>	£800,000 NRF- £500,000 COF- £300,000	Stage 3- Committed	<b>Building purchase has been completed via NRF funding and the Community Ownership Fund.</b> Group is preparing for an application to Heritage Fund for restoration of the building and transformation into heritage facility.	Continue engagement with the group. Assist with funding application towards building restoration & transformation into heritage facility.
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## 7. Capital Programme

**The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or build/buy new assets or facilities. Table below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.**

### South Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
<b>Playground Improvement Programme 24/25</b>	<b>Project completed.</b> Works at three sites across the city including Balfour Avenue Playground has been completed.
<b>Strangford Ave Playing Fields Enabling Works</b>	<b>On Ground.</b> Project nearing completion. Enabling works have been completed and the active travel containers have been transferred. New design to be installed on exterior of containers and disability toilet in old pavilion to be re-opened.
<b>Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26</b>	<b>Stage 3 Committed.</b> Options being worked up with CNS.
<b>Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
<b>City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Windows – LGBT and NHS</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Unveiling of new LGBTQ+ window completed. NHS – Procurement process commenced further updates to be provided via City Hall Working Group.
<b>City Hall External Christmas Tree provision</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Procurement concluded with details of successful operator to be reported to City Hall Working Group at its meeting on 18 November 2025.
<b>Communications Boards</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards ordered, installations due to commence February 2026.
<b>Musgrave Park Sensory Garden</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Upgrade to sensory garden. Design details being worked up.
<b>Basketball Courts</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> The work includes creation or upgrade of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. Currently undertaking design team procurement.
<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Network</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.

<b>Historic Cemeteries</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.
<b>Historic Tiled Street Signs</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
<b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall. Design and delivery is to be fully funded by DfC and Linen Quarter BID. Progressing.
<b>Waterfront Hall Chiller Units</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Detailed design of the new chiller system is underway. The structural integrity of the building is being assessed around the areas of the proposed new units and in advance of finalising the designs. In order to avoid potential cooling issues next season, a temporary chiller installation is being considered.
<b>Waterfront Hall Smoke Curtains</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Modelling of the auditorium has been completed. Following this exercise, and with agreement from Building Control & the Fire Service, no major remedial works are required and the Fire Strategy is to be updated accordingly.
<b>Palm House, Botanic Gardens</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This early-stage Council heritage asset project is being considered as a candidate for partnership working with the Heritage Fund. Consultants are continuing to prepare a Conservation Management Plan to support the application process.
<b>City Hall Preservation</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Programme of works to ensure the preservation of the City Hall building.
<b>City Hall Security Improvements</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works put forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members.
<b>2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works to the ground and first floor to meet its obligation to prospective occupiers and ensure the building is fully fit for purpose. Currently compiling the Outline Business Case as part of Stage 2 development that will involve the production of an updated condition report for the building.
<b>Mobile Changing Places modular facility</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
<b>Belfast Bikes Expansion</b>	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 September 2025.

## 8. Externally funded programmes

**The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office as well as a number of schemes with DfC and DfI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.**

### Urban Villages Initiative

**The table below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined South Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).**

### **UV – South Belfast projects overview**

Project	Status and update
<b>The Lockhouse - Gateway to the River / Walkway</b>	Stalled on site due to NI Water issue. Option to resolve this issue agreed by project board. New planning application submitted in September 2025. Hoping to be onsite in New Year.
<b>Sandy Row Arts &amp; Digital Hub</b>	As above at BIF48. Planned completion November 2025. Official opening proposed January 2026 to allow new facility to be fully operational.
<b>Coffee Culture</b>	As above at BIF46. Contractor appointed. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of A&DH.
<b>Market Arches</b>	As above at BIF07. Business case being developed.
<b>Redevelopment of former School of Music</b>	As above at NRF. Business case being developed. Approval forecasted Winter.
<b>Donegall Pass Good Relations Hub</b>	Business case being developed. Approval forecasted by March 2026.

### **PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan - Capital Project**

**Members are asked to note the update on PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan capital project in South Belfast. The Letter of Offer has been accepted and returned to SEUPB.**

Project	Status and update
<b>Annadale Open Space</b>	Part of the overall Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Development of a playpark, basketball hoop and a small men's shed. The council is actively seeking funding to develop a 5 aside pitch on the same site. The design team has been appointed, and design is underway, with the view to submitting a planning application in Winter 2025. Stakeholder meetings to include elected Members, will be held on a quarterly basis to provide status updates and to receive community feedback. The second stakeholder meeting will be held on 17 November 2025.

### **DfC funded projects**

**Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Communities in South Belfast.**

### **DfC – South Belfast projects overview**

Project	Status and update
<b>Holylands Alleygating and Cleansing Project</b>	Link to the citywide Alleygating Phase 5 project.

### **DfI funded projects**

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

## **DfI – South Belfast projects overview**

Project	Status and update
<b>Lagan Gateway Phase 2</b>	As above as BIF04. Planning Approval expected end of 2025. External match funding is in place from DfI. Contractor procurement has completed. Awaiting CPD sign off to issue awards letter. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements.

### **9. Capital funding opportunities**

**Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities at Appendix 2 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs.”**

The Working Group noted the update provided.

#### **Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme**

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager - City Centre Regeneration, attended in connection with this item)

The Senior Development Manager provided the Members with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and with a list of proposed engagement sessions planned in the South of the City in January 2026.

The Working Group noted:

- the proposed extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, subject to the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the proposed engagement sessions planned, pending the launch of the city-wide extension.

#### **Memorial at Donegall Road Update**

The Director of Property and Projects reminded the Working Group that, at its meeting on 18th August, 2025, it had agreed to the below wording of the plaque memorial to be erected on a Gatepost between 263 - 265 Donegall Road.

**Belfast Workhouse**  
***This was the site of the Belfast Workhouse burial***  
***ground in use from 1848 to 1908.***  
***Tens of thousands of men, women and children were***  
***buried here in unmarked graves.***  
***They all had names.***

The Director explained that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive owned the land where the gatepost was situated and that NIHE had given its consent to install the

memorial plaque on the wall. She also confirmed that no planning permission was required.

She added that there was a graffitied utility box adjacent to the gatepost in question, and that officers were investigating whether there was the potential for this to be painted, subject to ownership checks, approvals etc.

The Working Group considered two illustrative mock-ups of the wording using different materials, together with indicative costs.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed the following:

- that the plaque be made of granite, with white writing on black, if possible;
- that a comma be added after the word “ground”;
- that officers would investigate whether it was necessary to include the Council logo on the plaque; and
- that any proposed street art on the utility box, subject to approvals, adjacent to the gatepost would be in keeping with the burial ground.

The Director of Property and Projects agreed to circulate a final mock-up of the plaque encompassing the above changes.

Chairperson

# North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 25th November, 2025

## NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

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

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

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

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

### Declarations of Interest

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

### Presentation

#### North Belfast Community Partnership

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

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

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

- Youth; and
- Environment.

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

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

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

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

### **Local Policies Plan**

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Working Group thanked the officers for the update provided.

## Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects outlined the undernoted report:

### **“1. Introduction**

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

### **2. Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

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

### **3. Local Investment Fund**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **4. Belfast Investment Fund**

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

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

**Summary of BIF allocated projects.**

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

**5. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

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

**North Belfast – NRF overview**

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

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

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

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

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

### **North Belfast – Capital programme overview**

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

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

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

## 7. Externally funded programmes

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

### Urban Villages Initiative

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

### North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

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

### PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

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

### North Belfast – Capital Projects overview

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

### DfI funded projects

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

### DfI – North Belfast projects overview

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

### 8. Capital funding opportunities

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

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

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

### Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme

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

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

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

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

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

**Request to present: Community Places**

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

Chairperson

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# West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 27th November, 2025

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson); and  
Alderman McCoubrey;  
Councillors Black, Carson, M. Donnelly,  
Duffy, Garrett, McCallin and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;  
Ms. F. Dennison, Neighbourhood Services Integration  
Manager; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie and R. McLaughlin.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28th August were approved and adopted.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in the 'Physical Programmes Update' report in that he was a Board Member of the Lagmore Youth Project. Since the matter did not become subject to debate or discussion, he was not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

### Glencairn Community Project - Presentation

Further to its meeting of 28th August, the Working Group received a presentation from Jennifer Taylor and Sonia Dickson, representing the Glencairn Community Project, who were in attendance to provide an update on the work of the organisation. The Working Group was informed that the principal aim of the project was the establishment a community hub within Glencairn, an estate which she described as a "forgotten" part of Belfast. The new hub, work on which was scheduled to commence in 2027, would help bring the community together and provide opportunities to local for all age groups. The representatives then outlined the additional benefits that would be realised through the hub, such as the provision of an after schools programme and the use of the building by the local youth club and concluded that the hub would instil a sense of community pride in the area.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, congratulated the representatives of the Glencairn Community Project on their work and the Members noted the information which had been provided.

### **Local Policies Plan**

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

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for West Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets. He gave an overview on the current housing numbers, proposed zones for housing. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas. With regard to employment and retail designations, an overview was provided of the proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. The importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area’s economic growth and community development was emphasised to Members.

It was pointed out that the proposals sought to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area’s natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the plan would go out for public consultation in the new year, subject to agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

### **Vacant to Vibrant Scheme – Update**

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager - City Centre Regeneration, attended in connection with this item)

The Senior Development Manager provided the Members with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and with a list of proposed engagement sessions planned in the west of the City in January 2026.

The Working Group noted:

- the proposed extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, subject to the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the proposed engagement sessions planned, pending the launch of the city-wide extension.

### **Physical Programme Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **1. Introduction**

**The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the**

programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, a West Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

## 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed project – Black Mountain Shared Space Project Phase 2 at Appendix 2.
- Note the awards and recognition for Shankill Shared Women's Centre project which won two prestigious awards. The first is the 2025 REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities is attached at Appendix 3.

## 3. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

### *Summary of BIF allocated projects*

<b>West</b>	Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidíó Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's- £3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment
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The table below shows an overview of the remaining BIF project –

BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project. DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/</i>	Continue engagement with the group and partners.

				lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	
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#### 4. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

**The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for West was £3,446,654 (West - £2,721,133 and Shankill - £725,521) and 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.**

##### ***West Belfast – NRF overview***

<b>West</b>	Stage 3— Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre- £684,058; Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1- £537,058; The Mountainview Hotel- £1,500,000; The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre- £295,000; Glencairn Community Project (Hub)- £200,000, The Road- £210,759; <i>Shankill contingency- £19,762.</i> <i>Stage 1— Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Fuiseoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy &amp; External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i>
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##### ***West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery***

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
<b>Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre</b>	<i>£1.1m</i> <i>NRF- £684,058</i> <i>Group- £463,490</i>	Stage 3- Committed	<b>On ground.</b> Main works contractor due to complete before Christmas 2025. The club's design team is appointing a subcontractor for the heritage interpretative design and fit-out. Sectional handover of the indoor pitch will be considered. Project completion expected by spring 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.  Club's Design Team to provide the council with an update, on procurement of Heritage Fit Out subcontractor.
<b>Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1</b>	<i>£787,058</i> <i>NRF- £537,058</i> <i>An Ciste- £250,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	<b>Development stage.</b> Design team is progressing work. At present approx. a further £750k is required to meet the initial business case estimate for Phase 1. Fundraising activities are ongoing along with engagement with other funders. Glór na Móna is planning to use the site for some	Continue engagement with the group.

			meanwhile activities until construction of the main project commences.	
<b>The Mountainview Hotel</b>	£1.5m	Stage 3-Committed	<b>Development stage.</b> New location for project being proposed. Awaiting details.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>The ACT Initiative Community Hub &amp; Visitors' Centre</b>	£295,000	Stage 3-Committed	<b>On ground.</b> Heating element of project has been completed. Exhibition works due to complete in April 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>Glencairn Community Project</b>	£900,000 <i>NRF- £200,000</i> <i>BIF- £700,000</i>	Stage 3-Committed	<b>Development stage.</b> As above at BIF09. DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/ lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	Continue engagement with the group.
<b>The Road</b>	£210,759	Stage 3-Committed	<b>Development stage.</b> Planning renewal is in process.	Continue engagement with the group.

## 5. Capital Programme

**The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.**

### ***West Belfast – Capital programme overview***

Project	Status and update
<b>Playground Improvement Programme 25/26</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2025. Playgrounds selected for refurbishment are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. White Rise playground refurbishment now underway, completion expected by end of January 2026 (weather permitting).
<b>Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26</b>	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
<b>Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
<b>Access to Hills - Black Mountain/ Upper Whiterock Pathway</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation stage. Planning ongoing. The procurement for the design team to take the project through to construction is ongoing, with the PQQ stage completed and ITT to complete in early 2026. Match funding opportunities are still being explored for this project.

<b>Communications Boards in playgrounds</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
<b>Basketball Courts</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.
<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Network</b>	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
<b>Historic Cemeteries</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.
<b>Historic Tiled Street Signs</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
<b>Colin Active Travel – Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Meetings are continuing between the Council and key stakeholders DfI, DfC and NIHE on the Colin Active Travel Plan. Outline business case prepared and request at November SP&R to move to Stage 3.
<b>Woodvale Park Sensory Garden</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Upgrade to sensory garden. Design team appointed to take scheme to tender stage with a view to appointing a contractor to take works forward.
<b>Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain</b>	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Part of this is included in the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill and connecting to the National Trust developments at Divis Mountains.
<b>Mobile Changing Places modular facility</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
<b>Lenadoon Greenway</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Procurement of consultant for feasibility study underway and appointment due December 2025.
<b>Fernhill House and Courtyard</b>	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultant appointed for feasibility study following agreement at Committee on 22 November 2024 to explore options.
<b>Belfast Bikes Expansion</b>	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2025.
<b>Lidl, Stewartstown Road</b> Suffolk 3G Pitch and Lenadoon Park Pitch Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. <i>Suffolk pitch</i> - Planning application approved. Will require additional funding. <i>Lenadoon Park</i> – Grass soccer pitch improvement works completed. MUGA improvements programmed for Autumn 2025.

<b>Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore Drive</b> Lagmore Youth Project proposal	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Discussions have taken place regarding Lagmore Youth Project potential construction of a modular building to replace their existing marquee tent.
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## 6. Externally funded programmes

**The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, PEACEPLUS, DfI, DfC, DoJ as well as schemes with IFI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.**

### Urban Villages Initiative

**The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).**

#### **West Belfast – UV overview**

Project	Status and update
<b>Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub</b>	Business case stage. Completion of the business case is scheduled for early 2026.

### PEACEIV/ PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

**Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACE Programmes.**

#### **West Belfast – Capital Projects overview**

Project	Status and update
<b>Shankill Shared Women's Centre</b>	<b>Awards and recognition.</b> Shankill Shared Women's Centre won two prestigious awards. The first is the REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
<b>Forth Meadow Community Greenway</b>	Beacons to be installed late 2025 early 2026. Signage package out to tender at present. Tender returned expected mid December 2025 with a view to appointing a contractor.
<b>Distillery Street Redevelopment Project</b>	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Design Team has been appointed. Regular meetings with stakeholder group and Design Team. Multiple land ownership in the area discussions ongoing with relevant partners.

### Other externally funded projects

**Below is the status update on capital projects funded by other partners in West Belfast.**

***Other external funders – West Belfast projects overview***

Project	Status and update
<b>Black Mountain Shared Space Project – Phase 2</b>	<i>Via IFI, DoJ, DfC</i> <b>Project completed.</b> Main building works completed and handed over to BMSS in Summer 2025. Fit-out of units planned to commence in October 2025. BCC assisting management of further funding from DfC, DOJ and IFI to aid the fit-out of the Boys and Girls Clubs units, as they are seen by BMSS as a key tenant. Should be completed in early November 2025.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

# East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 4th December, 2025

## MEETING OF THE EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Councillors R. Brooks, D. Douglas, de Faoite,  
P. Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Long and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairperson, Alderman Lawlor, the Working Group agreed that Councillor de Faoite would act as Chairperson for the duration of the meeting.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the Chairperson (Alderman Lawlor), Alderman Copeland and Councillors Abernethy, Bower and S. Douglas.

### Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 4th September were an accurate record of proceedings.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor D. Douglas declared an interest in relation to the item “Physical Programmes Update” in that his children played for Bloomfield Football Club, which was referenced within the report under the Local Investment Fund update. As this project did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

### Physical Programmes Update

(Mr. D. Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager presented the undernoted report to the Working Group:

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**“1. Introduction**

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

**2. Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

- Note the physical programme update for East Belfast including recently completed projects – Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff FC storage facilities, and Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements at Appendix 2.
- Agree in principle the change in project location and recommend to SP&R Committee to approve the relocation of Bloomfield Community Association BIF project from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 3.

**3. Local Investment Fund**

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG area; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 22 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, 19 have been completed, 1 project is at delivery stage and 1 project is at due diligence stage.

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LIF breakdown – East		LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description		Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
<b>Number of Projects Completed</b>	<b>8 (80%)</b>	<b>£931,902</b>		<b>12 (100%)</b>	<b>£1,161,589</b>
<b>Number of Projects in Delivery</b>	<b>1(10%)</b>	<b>£30,000</b>			
<b>Number of Projects in Pre-construction</b>					
<b>Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)</b>	<b>1 (10%)</b>	<b>£70,000</b>			
<b>Total Number of Approved Projects</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>£1,031,902</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>£1,161,589</b>

**The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects.**

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
ELIF31	Bloomfield FC, Clonduff FC, East Belfast FC and Dundela FC, Tullycarnet, Cregagh Wanderers, Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Bredagh GAC – storage facilities	£65,000 (£30k plus £35k reallocation)	On Ground	<p>Bloomfield FC, East Belfast FC, Tullycarnet FC, Cregagh Wanderers, Bredagh GAC – completed. Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff FC storage facilities delivered/ completed.</p> <p>Dundela FC – Club would prefer that container is delivered after the proposed NRF pitch works complete.</p>	Continue engagement with the groups.
ELIF29	Cycling Ireland	£70,000	Due Diligence	<p>The group have updated the council on their priorities. Officers are waiting for the group to provide more detail on the desired specification for the proposed facilities. A proposal to refresh the feasibility study has been discussed, but there is no funding for it. Group considering possibility of seeking match funding, but no funding has been secured yet.</p>	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

**4. Belfast Investment Fund**

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250,000 investment from Council. In East Belfast, 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of

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the In-Principle projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

**Summary of BIF allocated projects:**

East	<p>Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k; H&amp;W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.5m; Bloomfield—£655k</p> <p><i>Stage 2—Lagan Village Youth &amp; Community—no commitment</i></p> <p><i>Stage 1—East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's Orangefield, Church of Ireland, Tullycarnet Community Support Services—no commitment / on long list</i></p>
Outer East	<p>Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Hanwood—£396k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k; Braniel—£390k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k</p>

The table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF12	Strand Arts Centre	£6,782,069  <i>LUF- £4,094,000 BIF- £1,550,000 HF- £255,000 (Development Grant), £768,069 (Delivery Grant) Several Trusts- £115,000</i>	On Ground	On Ground. Works began on site in early January 2025 and are progressing well, with completion due in second quarter of 2026. Discussion ongoing with DfC regarding potential additional funding. Site visit with Councillors took place 4/9/2025.	Continue engagement with the group and funders.
BIF13	Bloomfield Community Association	£715,009  <i>BIF - £655,000 LIF - £60,009</i>	Stage 3 - Committee d – In Principle	New project location being proposed – see details below.	AWG is asked to consider/ agree on the change in project location.

**Bloomfield Community Association (BIF13)**

Bloomfield Community Association (BCA) has been allocated £715k towards demolition of their existing premises at Hyndford Street in East Belfast and creation of a new facility with community spaces, offices, and a multi-use hall. In June 2025, DfC announced plans to contribute funding towards the project. BCA has operated from their premises on Hyndford Street for over 40 years and currently deliver a wide range of activities to support the local community including a

playgroup, after school club, youth programme, detached youth work, yoga classes, senior activities and a musical theatre group. The success of the organisation has outgrown the existing building, and the building's age, condition, size and layout limit the potential for additional activities to take place. Notwithstanding the need for bigger premises, the existing site is confined, and Hyndford Street is a narrow, residential street with no outdoor space or dedicated parking provision.

BCA has approached BCC with a request to relocate to Dixon Playing Fields. As a more spacious site, it is considered that Dixon Playing Fields presents a better opportunity to develop a fit for purpose facility that meets the needs of the organisation and the wider community. The relocation to Dixon Playing Fields would also complement the existing community facilities (pitches and greenway) in the area which in turn would provide open space, greater accessibility and parking provision. Upon approval, officers will commence the due diligence process and designs will be developed further. Engagement will also be undertaken with Estates, Planning and existing user groups.

**Members are asked to agree in principle the change in project location and recommend to SP&R Committee to approve the relocation of Bloomfield Community Association BIF project from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields. Also, Members are asked to authorise officers to explore lease arrangements to facilitate development of Bloomfield Community Association at Dixon Playing Fields.**

#### 5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

Project	SOF Award	Status	Action/ Recommendation
EastSide Hotel & Visitor Centre <i>(links to NRF project)</i>	£2,050,000 <i>Comprising: SOF- £700,000 NRF- £950,000 Group- £400k</i>	Continuing to work with the design team and project promoter to finalise a design which meets the needs of the group and project budget.	Continued engagement with the group.

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**6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for East was £2,351,551 and 4 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

***East Belfast – NRF overview***

East	Stage 3 - Eastside Container Hotel, Portview Exchange, Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road Stage 2 - Impact Belfast, Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience
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***East Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery***

Project name	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
EastSide Hotel & Visitor Centre <i>(links to SOF project)</i>	£2,050,000 <i>Comprising: SOF- £700k NRF- £950k Group- £400k</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Continuing to work with the design team and project promoter to finalise a design which meets the needs of the group and project budget.	Continued engagement with the group.
Portview Exchange	£600,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Linked to UV project. Business case being updated and is at final draft stage. Design team procurement prepared and ready to be issued on receipt of letter of offer.	Continue engagement with the group.
Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park	£500,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Live planning application is ongoing. The Council and group continue to actively seek alternative funding to cover shortfall, which is estimated of up to £300k. The club were unsuccessful in obtaining the NI Football Fund but are aware DCMS funding will be reopening in the new year.	Continue engagement with the group and design team.
Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road	£300,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Application submitted to Wolfson Foundation for funding with decision due in December. Once the full funding package is secured, a design team can be appointed.	Continue engagement with the group.

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**7. Capital Programme**

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

***East Belfast – Capital programme overview***

Project	Status and update
New Crematorium	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Technical Design is complete. Procurement exercise for the main contractor has been completed. A review of the business case has been undertaken. In September 2025, a dedicated Members workshop was held to inform a Strategic Analysis and Options Appraisal on the project. An additional report will be brought back to Committee.
Cremated Remains Burial Plots	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> A procurement process to appoint a contractor has started.
Playground Improvement Programme 25/26	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2025. Playgrounds selected for refurbishment are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. Progressing.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery, Balmoral Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.

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Historic Tiled Street Signs	<b>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</b> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Sydenham Greenway	<b>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</b> Ongoing discussion with DfI regarding a partnership approach. Suggestion for Council to deliver the 'feeder path' through Tommy Patton Millennium Park with DfI part funding. Business Case has been submitted to DfI Greenways Fund (50% funding). A decision is awaited in December 2025.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<b>Stage 3 – Committed.</b> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<b>Stage 1 – Emerging.</b> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East	<b>Stage 1- Emerging.</b> Link to Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan. Education Authority (EA) is continuing to develop a business case for capital funding for youth provision at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Officers are continuing to liaise with EA on the way forward.
Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan	<b>Stage 1- Emerging.</b> Link to the Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East project.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2025.
Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. Project completed. Belmont Park woodland trail and accessible picnic area completed in Spring 2023. Addition accessible equipment was installed at Belmont Park in September 2025.

**8. Externally funded programmes**

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

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**Urban Villages Initiative**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
<b>Titanic People Exhibition</b>	<i>Project underway. Due to project delays, handover is expected to take place in early 2026.</i>
<b>Portview Exchange</b> <i>Link to NRF 'Portview Exchange'</i>	<i>Business case stage. Business case being updated and is at final draft stage. Design team procurement prepared and ready to be issued on receipt of letter of offer.</i>

**PEACEPLUS – Capital Project**

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

***East Belfast – PEACEPLUS LAP Capital Project overview***

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
<b>Sanctuary Theatre</b>	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Refurbishment of the Sanctuary Theatre at Castlereagh Street. Design Team has been appointed. Steering group and design team meeting held and project progressing.

**DfI funded project**

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

***DfI – East Belfast projects overview***

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
<b>Sailortown/ Titanic Quarter Bridge</b>	Consultants have been appointed to undertake RIBA Stage 1 & 2 design services for a proposed new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle swing bridge. The bridge could complete the Harbour Loop and provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island, as well as, providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station.

**9. Capital funding opportunities**

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

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager highlighted that a request had been received from the Bloomfield Community Association, which had been allocated funds towards the demolition of its existing premises at Hyndford Street and the creation of a new facility, to relocate to Dixon Playing Fields. In response, a Member welcomed the proposed relocation of the project and stated that it would provide the Bloomfield

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Community Association with a better opportunity whilst also benefiting Dixon Playing Fields.

During discussion, the Senior Programme Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the Local Investment Fund and the Capital Programme projects outlined within the report, including the Historic Tiled Street Signs Programme and the Belfast Bikes Expansion.

In response to a Member's query, the Senior Programme Manager advised that he would provide the Working Group with further information in respect of land adjacent to the Knocknagoney Community Centre within the Knocknagoney Linear Park.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- i. noted the physical programme update for East Belfast including the following recently completed projects:
  - Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff Football Club storage facilities; and
  - Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements;
- ii. agreed, in principle, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Bloomfield Community Association project be relocated from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields; and
- iii. noted the updated list of external capital funding opportunities.

**Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme**

(Ms. C. Persic, City Regeneration Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Working Group considered a report which provided an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme.

The City Regeneration Development Manager advised the Working Group that funding had been secured from the Department for Communities which, alongside additional Council funding, had enabled the extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme. It was reported that the extended citywide scheme had reopened for applications at the beginning of December, 2025, and that information sessions to promote the scheme would be held across the city in January, 2026.

The Working Group noted that the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme had been extended and that information sessions would be held in January, 2026, to promote the scheme.

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**Presentation**

**Phoenix Education Centre**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. E. Shaw, Executive Director, Phoenix Education Centre, to the meeting.

Ms. Shaw provided the Working Group with an overview of the Phoenix Education Centre, which had been founded to tackle educational underachievement within East Belfast and provide mentoring, support, education and training opportunities for the local community.

Ms. Shaw outlined the wide range of daytime and evening programmes that the centre currently delivered. She emphasised that the programmes had been co-designed with the community to identify local needs in order to improve the education of children with low school attendance, disengaged youth and disengaged young men. In addition to the programmes being delivered, she pointed out that the centre also provided wraparound support which included meals, uniforms, counselling and referrals.

The Working Group was informed that the education model of the Phoenix Education Centre combined accredited Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) courses, mentoring and personal development in partnership with schools, Councils, and youth and community organisations, which ensured its work complemented the wider education system.

In concluding her presentation, Ms. Shaw stated that the centre was operating at capacity, and she drew the Members' attention to the challenges it currently faced. In respect of funding, Ms. Shaw explained that the centre operated on short-term project grants which did not provide long-term stability and that, unlike schools, the centre must secure its own funding each year. She highlighted the need for community education to be recognised as part of a more equitable education system.

Following the presentation, the Members thanked Ms. Shaw for the work currently being undertaken by the Phoenix Education Centre to tackle educational underachievement within East Belfast.

During discussion, Ms. Shaw answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the support for young people to reintegrate back into the school system, the support for neurodivergent pupils and improving accessibility within schools, and the funding challenges faced by the Phoenix Education Centre.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Ms. Shaw for the presentation and the information provided to the Working Group and she retired from the meeting.

Noted.

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**Local Policies Plan (Verbal Update)**

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

The Acting Planning Manager and the Senior Planning Officers provided the Working Group with an overview of the site-specific proposals, designations and land use zonings for the development and use of lands within East Belfast as identified through the draft Local Policies Plan (LPP) as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

**Housing**

The Senior Planning Officers presented an update on the proposed zones and designations for housing, including mixed-use, within East Belfast. The Senior Planning Officers also provided further information in respect of the ‘Call for Sites’ process, which provided an opportunity for individuals, landowners and developers to suggest sites within the Council area for new development, and the policy areas in relation to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Housing Management Orders (HMOs).

**Employment and Retail**

The Working Group was provided with an update in relation to the proposed LPP designations in relation to employment and retail. The Senior Planning Officers outlined proposed areas for employment land, retail cores and mixed-use sites, and emphasised the need to balance residential, employment, and retail to support the area’s economic growth and community development.

**Environmental**

In relation to the environmental assets within East Belfast, the Senior Planning Officers highlighted the proposed Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) within East Belfast.

During discussion, the Acting Planning Manager and the Senior Planning Officers answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to specific sites outlined within the presentation.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the officers for the presentation and the Working Group noted the information provided.

Chairperson

## Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025

### Attendance

#### Members:

Councillor Michael Long  
Councillor Sarah Bunting  
Councillor Brian Smyth  
Councillor Ciaran Beattie  
Councillor Séamas de Faoite

**Apologies:** Councillor Natasha Brennan, Alderman Sonia Copeland

#### Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive  
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services  
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance  
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services  
Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy  
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services  
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects  
Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development  
Jim Girvan Director of Neighbourhood Services (for Items 1,2 & 8)  
Pól Hamilton, Lead Officer, Community Provision (for Items 1 & 2)  
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

### 1. Summer Community Diversionary Programme - Dr Jonny Byrne

The Chief Executive welcomed Dr Jonny Byrne who presented an update on the Summer Community Diversionary Programme along with the emerging findings from the review of the programme in 2025. Members discussed the key principles of the programme, the criteria against which applications would be assessed and the funding model options for the programme for 2026. There was detailed discussion in relation to the options presented and the challenges faced this year and the need to consider some flexibility within the programme for future years. It was also agreed that engagement was needed with communities in some parts of the city in advance of the application process opening. Officers to further consider the points raised and the feedback provided by Members in advance of a report being brought back for consideration in January.

### 2. Bonfire Update - Dr Jonny Byrne

Dr Jonny Byrne also presented an update on the the Bonfire programme and outlined the proposed governance arrangements going forward and outlined the proposed timeline for engagement with the relevant stakeholders. It is anticipated that a Memorandum of

Understanding would then be drawn up between the partners. An update will be brought back to the forum as this work progresses.

### **3. Finance Update**

The Director of Finance provided an update on the setting of the district rate for 2026/27. He advised that Director challenge meetings in relation to the draft departmental estimates, growth proposals and efficiencies had now concluded. Members were advised at a high level of the growth proposals, the efficiency proposals emerging from the recent Efficiency and Transformation workshop and the Capital Financing position.

The Director also advised that the first draft Estimated Penny Product (EPP) had been notified to Councils and he outlined the detail of which incorporating the outcome of Reval 2026 which will be included in the Rates report to December SP&R Committee to quantify the impact on the revenue estimates for 2026/27 and the medium term.

It was noted a further Transformation and Efficiency Workshop will be held in January 2026 and that Party Group Briefings will also be arranged for January in order for the level of the District Rate to be set for 2026/27 by the 15 February 2026.

### **4. Sponsorship Request – Lewis Crocker**

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided a briefing in relation to a request received for sponsorship for the Lewis Crocker fight proposed to be held at Windsor Park in 2026 and advised that a similar request had also been made to NI Executive. The Director outlined the sponsorship arrangements previously provided for the Carl Frampton fight on the Titanic slipways in 2014. Members discussed the socio-economic benefits for the city from hosting large scale sporting events but also highlighted funding concerns for amateur boxing organisations which needed to be taken into consideration when considering this request. It was noted that the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services would further explore in terms of joint funding from the NI Executive and an update to be brought back once engagement has taken place. In relation to the issues raised about amateur boxing it was noted that a Boxing Strategy report will be brought to December SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

## **5. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026**

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy provided a brief update in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann work programme. The Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs also presented the marketing approach for the event and outlined the marketing & communication activity taking place and the channels being utilised in order to build momentum. Members also noted the strategic phasing across the markets outlined and the timeframes in which this would take place.

## **6. Assembly Rooms Cluster update**

The Director of City Regeneration & Development provided an update on the work ongoing following the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms and adjacent properties, specifically the engagement with the World Monuments Fund. The Director outlined the detail of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with World Monument Fund which has been reviewed by Legal Services and subject to agreement at a future SP&R Committee, will form the intentions of the Council's partnership with World Monument Fund. It was noted that a visit to the site would be arranged for Party Group Leaders.

## **7. Planning Update**

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on a number of planning matters which were currently live. An issue was raised in relation to a specific site and the City Solicitor agreed to follow up on this with Planning Service.

## **8. AOB**

### **Update to Standing Orders**

A Member raised a query in relation to the amendment to the standing orders on the process for reconsidering decisions which have been subject to call in and the ongoing legal proceedings. The City Solicitor provided an update and agreed that recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities referred to at November SP&R would be circulated to Party Group Leaders for information. Given the complexities involved it was agreed a high level summary would also be circulated.

### **Proposal to host Large Scale Event**

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy provided a briefing for Members on a request received to be a host city and partner in a large scale event in Belfast in 2028 and potentially

2030. The Director provided an update on the background to the request, the partnership package proposed and the indicative cost of hosting the event. Following discussion in relation to the financial implications, budgetary constraints and resource requirements given existing obligations it was noted that further exploratory work is required in relation to the extent of funding commitment from other sources. The Director to follow up and a report brought back to a future meeting.

### **Loftlines Site Visit**

The Director of City Regeneration & Development referred to the postponement of the scheduled visit for Party Group Leaders to the Loftlines development. It was noted that a rescheduled visit would be arranged with the invite to be opened up to all Members. The Director highlighted the timescales involved in order to accommodate the visit and will follow up after the meeting.

### **Display of Flags**

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services referred to the display of flags in some council owned assets. The Director advised that local engagement had taken place however the flags still remained in place. A list of the sites discussed to be circulated following the meeting and a report on next steps to remove the materials to be brought to a future SP&R Committee.

### **Victoria Square**

The Chief Executive provided an update on the investigation regarding some of the apartments at Victoria Square and the temporary closure of Montgomery Street following information received regarding safety concerns. Members noted that the closure of Montgomery Street was and still remains a precautionary measure, taken in the interest of public safety. It was noted that the recommendation remains that Montgomery Street remains closed while the investigations continue.

### **Illuminate request**

The City Solicitor outlined for Members an illuminate request received for Holocaust Memorial Day on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Members noted the request would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

### **Leisure Transformation Programme**

The Director of Property & Projects advised that following recent party group briefings on the proposed next steps for the next phase of the Leisure Programme a best practice visit to look at how leisure facilities are delivered in London is being organised for early 2026. Members

discussed the benefits of the visit in identifying potential unique selling points for the next phase of the programme. The itinerary and dates will follow from the Director imminently.

### **Masterplan for Girdwood**

The Director of Property & Projects referred to the Girdwood Masterplan for the Girdwood site giving an update on the current status of the remaining elements including the leisure development and the mixed-use site which is being led by the Department for Communities. Members agreed in principle to Officers engaging with the Department to progress the mixed use site. Further updates will be brought back in due course.

### **Communications**

The Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs advised that communications for the upcoming Holiday arrangements including bin collections had been issued. Members noted and agreed to amplify the messaging.

A Member raised a query in relation to communication on planning application updates that was circulated to Members and it was noted this would be followed up with the Director of Planning and Building Control.

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## All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 5th December, 2025

### MEETING OF THE ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE

Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);  
Alderman McCullough; and  
Councillors Groogan and Long.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration;  
Development;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs,  
Communications and Marketing;  
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

#### Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – that Councillor de Faoite be elected Chairperson until the Council's Annual General Meeting in 2026.

#### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March were agreed.

#### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

#### Presentations

#### Under the Bridges and Sailortown

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Working Group noted the contents of a presentation regarding Council-led projects which were being progressed under the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework. These projects sought to improve connectivity and links between the city centre, City Quays/Sailortown and the Waterfront itself; and sought also to provide enhanced recreation spaces in areas in the vicinity of the M3 bridge.

### **Local Policies Plan**

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

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of the housing and environmental planning proposals for central Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet with housing demands, support economic activities and preserve environmental assets. He pointed out that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses alike while protecting the area’s natural and built heritage.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

### **Governance Update**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an update on the progress which had been made with external partners through the City Centre Leadership Coordination Group. He reported that the engagement process had included a workshop which examined opportunities and challenges with a view to identifying and agreeing on short, medium and longer-term interventions which the group could collectively support and drive forward.

The Working Group was advised that that a forthcoming meeting would be held to review the output report and to seek agreement across partners on the recommendations. It was anticipated that an update report in this regard would be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or the Working Group itself, in the new year.

Noted.

### **Communications Update**

The Director of External Affairs, Communications and Marketing updated the Working Group on the recent activity which the corporate communications department had undertaken in promoting events and developments within the city centre. He stated that the department would continue to promote the city centre with a consistent and positive message and he outlined highlights from 2025, together with forthcoming events in 2026.

The Working Group noted the update.

### **Future Meetings**

Discussion ensued on the items which had been included on the agenda and a Member suggested that the role and remit of the working group needed to be reassessed and should be considered as part of the governance review. The Member indicated that the work of the group needed to be Member-led and meetings should seek to consider, in detail, each of the themes identified previously as priorities.

As such, he added that the relevant Committees receive updates and suggested that proactive site visits should form part of agendas and further steps taken to enhance cross-party attendance at future meetings.

Noted.

**Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Group agreed to defer consideration of this item.

Chairperson

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## City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

### THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and Councillors Beattie and de Faoite

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services; Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects; Mr. C. Burns, Functions and Exhibitions Officer; Ms. K. Mullen, Programme Delivery Manager; Ms. J. Murray, Civic Services Manager; and Mrs. S. Steele, Member Services and Digital Support Officer.

#### Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor Murray.

#### Minutes

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

#### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

#### Review of City Hall Exhibition

Following a walkabout of the Exhibition space the Members complimented the use of the space and discussed potential improvements to the area. The Director of Property and Projects encouraged the Members to contact her directly if they had any suggestions.

The Members also noted the improvements to the gift provisions within the shop and encouraged officers to arrange to have bookmarks and prints of the stained-glass windows available, where copyrights permitted.

Noted.

#### Update on Works to Cenotaph

The Members were advised that essential repair works to repoint the Cenotaph monument were due to commence mid-January 2026 for a period of 6-8 weeks, this timescale would be weather dependant. The Cenotaph would be closed during these works with no access to the public which would be publicised via social media.

Noted.

### **Cathedral Gardens and Belfast Blitz Memorial**

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide an update on Cathedral Gardens Scheme which includes a memorial to Belfast Blitz.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**The Working Group is asked to**

- Note that works to Cathedral Gardens which includes a new memorial to the Belfast Blitz will commence Christmas 2025 with planned completion Winter 2026
- Note the progress with the design and manufacture of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial
- Note that the design of the new piece in line with previous agreements around public art is confidential and not to be shared in advance of official unveiling
- Note that NIWM (Northern Ireland War Memorial) have agreed a list of names for inclusion on the new Memorial
- Note that once a final programme has been received from the contractor a planned programme of opening events will be worked up for Members' consideration.

#### **3.0 Main report**

##### **Key Issues**

Members will recall that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 October 2022 agreed that Cathedral Gardens (to include the Blitz Memorial) be moved to Stage 3 – Committed held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The procurement process has now concluded with a contractor appointment having been made. It is expected that works will commence late November/December with the erection of hoarding around the site. Planned at this stage is expected Winter 2026. Regular updates are provided to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A new memorial to the Belfast Blitz has been included as part of that scheme and will be the final works package to be delivered. Officers have been engaging with the NIWM to finalise a design which received planning on 11 February 2025. Ralf Sanders is the artist who has been working as part of the Design Team to bring the memorial to life. Members will be aware that NIWM are making a financial contribution to the cost of the new piece. Members should be aware that in keeping with arrangements put in place for other new public art pieces that details of the design are embargoed in advance of the official unveiling. NIWM have agreed to adhere to this precedent.

The memorial will take the form of a bronze high relief on York Street side with a mirrored polished stainless steel side facing Cathedral Gardens. NIWM Board at its meeting on 18 September 2025 approved the final list of 952 names of known fatalities of the Belfast Blitz for inclusion on the Blitz memorial. The names of the 952 known fatalities will be listed in alphabetical order. NIWM have established an adjudication panel, with members of the public being invited to make comment on those they feel should be included.

Once a more detailed construction programme has been received from the contractor Officers will engage with all stakeholders to put in place a planned programme of events for the official opening of Cathedral Gardens and arrangements to mark the installation of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial. Further details will be brought back to Installations: City Hall/City Hall Grounds.

#### **4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

**Budget – £5 million (overall capital budget)**

**Resources – Office time as required to work up proposals**

#### **5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications**

**As required.**

The Working Group noted the update provided.

#### **Gary Moore Statue**

The Working Group was reminded that, at the January meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it had agreed that the Council would explore land availability for the possible installation of a Gary Moore statue within the Cathedral Quarter and that the item be referred to the Installations Working Group for its consideration.

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that officers had met with a representative of the Wild Frontier Memorial Trust in relation to the potential for a Gary Moore Statue to be installed in Belfast, the Trust proposed to crowd fund the statue to

celebrate Mr Moore's contribution to blues and rock. An artist had been appointed to progress the design and installation of the statue and a wax mould was currently at a foundry in Edinburgh. She reported that, once the final mould had been signed off by Mr Moore's family, it was proposed that the images would be shared via social media with a view to securing sufficient funding to make the bronze statue. It was agreed that the officer would circulate the images to the Members of the Working Group via e-mail.

The Trust had asked that the Council consider identifying a suitable piece of land for installation and agree to take on the associated ownership and management/maintenance responsibility, similar to the arrangements put in place for the Rory Gallagher statue. The Members were advised that the Trust had suggested that Cathedral Gardens be considered as the most suitable location for the statue. The Members noted that officers were currently engaging with both the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Department for Communities (DfC) to confirm landownership of a potential location on the corner of Hill Street and Gordon Street. The location was near to the Oh Yeah Music Centre who had Gary Moore memorabilia included within their exhibition.

The Working Group agreed to recommend the inclusion of a Gary Moore Statue as an Emerging Project – Stage 1 on the Council's capital programme.

#### **City Hall Christmas Tree – Verbal Update**

The Civic Services Manager advised the Members that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had completed, the AJC Group Limited had been awarded the contract at a cost of £77,500.00, this included delivery and installation costs for 2026.

In response to a Member's query as to why an artificial tree was being purchased instead of a real tree, the officer explained that, over that past few years, the structure of the real Christmas trees had been weaker due to changes in the climate and that an artificial tree would be more sustainable.

Noted.

#### **Stained Glass Window Health Service – Verbal Update**

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that the procurement exercise for the stained glass window was due to close on Friday, 21st November, an update would be provided in due course.

Noted.

#### **Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic – Verbal Update**

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that, alongside Memory Stones of Love/Cruse Bereavement Support NI, an event was being held, Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic, on Tuesday, 9th December from 9.00 -11.00 a.m. in the Long Gallery, Stormont Buildings, Belfast, this event was being sponsored by John Blair, Alliance MLA. Elected Members were invited to attend and an e-mail would be circulated to all Members.

The Members also briefly discussed suitable locations for a memorial to those lost during the covid pandemic and asked that when considering this matter further that the Council's park would also be considered as potential locations.

Noted.

#### **Fire Doors at Glass Lift/Stained Glass Windows**

The Civic Services Manager advised that it would not be possible for the double fire doors to be relocated to further down the corridor due to adherence to the Council's fire regulations, however, going forward they could be left open with the access rope moved which would enable members of the public to view the stained glass windows. In the event of a fire alarm the doors would automatically close.

Noted.

Chairperson

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