

# Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 9th March, 2023

## Meeting of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chair); and  
Councillors McKeown, Copeland, Haire, Bower, Faoite,  
Donnelly, Gormley, Maghie, McCabe, McCann,  
McLaughlin, Murray, Smyth and Spratt

In attendance:

### Apologies

Apologies for an inability to attend were received from Councillors Hutchinson and Newton.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### Translink's De-Carbonisation Plans - Presentation by Ian Campbell

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Ian Campbell, Director of Service Operations at Translink, to the meeting. Mr Campbell thanked the chairperson and addressed the Committee meeting highlighting that the purpose of the presentation was to highlight Translink's plans for decarbonising public transport in Northern Ireland. He advised the members of the Committee that there were a number of reasons why transport must be decarbonised; these included the climate crisis, the energy consumption of the current fleet, the health impact of poor air quality and economic drivers to meet the current cost of living crisis – public transport provided an affordable option for the public. He advised them that the public transport levels were back up to 85% of the pre covid delivery. He went on to outline what the modal shift to public transport (people choosing to give up their cars) along with decarbonisation would mean for Northern Ireland in terms of support for a number of common strategies the decreased emissions targets, supported the agenda for doing more with less of our natural resources and supporting the green growth economy by creating green jobs in green technology infrastructure and fleet. He said that Translink worked collaboratively to support the Green agenda and they played an active role in the Climate commission.

Mr Campbell outlined Translink's plans to reach zero emission targets as set out in their climate positive strategy. He explained their phased approach from the pilot of 3 Hydrogen buses that went live in December 2020 to the 80 Electric buses and 20 Hydrogen for Belfast which went live in March 2022. He advised the Committee that the current phase was incorporating a new Foyle Metro Electric Fleet and that would go live in Summer 2023. Phase 3 was for 100 electric buses for Ulster Bus and Metro and he said it was planned that these would go live in August 2024. He added that Translink had created 2 green electric vehicle charging points at Milewater Road and the bus depot in the Short Strand. He went on to outline how their changes had impacted their carbon emissions explaining that Belfast had the 4th largest zero emissions bus fleet in the UK and Ireland.

He said that rail was a bit more challenging but they did see the value in investing in the rail service and said they were undertaking a detailed feasibility study to look at electrifying the rail network in Northern Ireland. He highlighted the collaborative working between the governments and SEUPB. He concluded his presentation by highlighting what was needed to ensure their work towards zero emissions was successful, these included support from local and central government to ensure the modal shift required along with the other steps outlined.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Campbell for his comprehensive presentation.

A member asked Mr Campbell how funding cuts would impact the work going forward. He said that it was given Translink real challenges, but they were working with the Departments who had been supportive and wanted to see this work progress. They had made significant efficiency savings in recent years and were continuing to look at areas of cost saving. Members also raised concerns around the service provision in areas of the city that fell outside the Metro service and asked how they could ensure their views were captured. Mr Bannon highlighted that the process Translink used to ensure service provision was adequate and viable in the various sectors of the city and said there was a monthly service meeting to review requests. He added that he would be happy to attend a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration committee to feed back on the outcomes. The Chairperson also suggested that it might be worth inviting Translink to the member's area working group to deal with the matter there also.

After discussion the Committee noted the contents of the presentation.

**EVI Strategy Update - Presentation by Urban Foresight**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Gary McRae, Head of Electric Mobility for Urban Foresight, to the meeting. Mr McRae thanked members of the Committee for the opportunity to present the update on the EV strategy for Northern Ireland. He said they were a consultancy based in Scotland who had been working with electric vehicle infrastructure for around 12 years, working closely with local authorities. He outlined the framework for the work that they were doing with Belfast City Council and the challenges that were often faced. He said there were 3 key areas to transition; vehicles, infrastructure and people and highlighted there was quite a lot to be done to make the transition smooth. Those 3 things needed to grow simultaneously to make sure the transition was smooth. They used these 3 themes as a framework to help develop the strategy for Belfast. He discussed the framework that had been created for Belfast City Council and highlighted the steps that would be taken to implement the smooth transition, including not only areas that a city council had control over but also the areas that they would have indirect control.

He went on to outline their approach to the strategy along with the implementation plan. He added that they were engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the policy sat within the wider context of the plans for Belfast. He outlined the vehicle sectors that were included in the strategy and said that they started with local authority fleets to ensure that the city led by example. He said that bikes, trucks, buses and micro mobility devices were not included in the strategy due to the type of infrastructure they required but they would still be considered throughout the process. Mr McRae showed an example of what the mapping would look like for the Council with the long term plan to 2045 and explained that this would be broken into realistic chunks to ensure targets could be met by 2030. He outlined the AST (Area, Site Technology) model that they would use to plan the infrastructure and showed the heat maps they would be developing to see what was possible for each area of the city. He showed a number of examples of the types of on street parking that could be used and also the positioning of charge points at public car parks and discussed how they built in scope for the development in technology. He said there were a number of business model options that local authorities could use, including looking to private investors as well as grant schemes. He concluded his presentation by outlining the challenges and opportunities for the city of Belfast.

Members of the Committee raised a number of queries around the presentation, including the use of council owned carparks to install EV charging points and asked if this would

have a detrimental impact on the revenue generated at these spaces. Mr McRae said these queries would be addressed throughout the duration of the strategy process and welcomed any input from the Council to ensure these matters were addressed.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McRae for his presentation and said he looked forward to receiving future updates on the strategy development process.

Noted.

### **Carbon Offset Fund Update - Presentation by Anthesis**

The Chairperson welcomed Matt Badic, senior consultant at Anthesis, to the meeting. Mr Babic thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present to them. He said that Anthesis was the Sustainability Activator. They were the largest group of dedicated sustainability experts in the world. He continued that Anthesis had significant experience supporting local authorities who had declared a climate emergency and were working towards net zero. He continued that they were the developers of the SCATTER tool, which was free to use for all local authorities. He added that they had also performed bespoke support services in response to the climate emergency with 40 cities and local authorities over the last two years. He outlined the objectives of the project with Belfast and other Council's in Northern Ireland and then went on to explain the proposed project outcomes including the report scope and the report insights. He explained area based insetting to the Members of the Committee and said that the aim was to address any barriers that traditional offsetting could present. He updated the Committee on the business survey that they had launched with questions on current approaches, attitudes and appetites to offsetting. He explained that it was a 10 minute survey and that, whilst the audience was primarily businesses, it could also be shared more widely. This would allow them to gauge market demand and potential partners for a local scheme.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentation and the Chairperson thanked Mr Babic for attending.

### **Shared Island Development Fund - update on phase 1 projects in Cork and Dublin**

The Committee considered the undernoted report.

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on Belfast City Council's Shared Island Development Fund supported projects which are progressing in partnership with Dublin City Council and Cork City Council.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:**

- i Note that Belfast, represented by Belfast City Council, has been liaising with both Dublin City Council and Cork City Council in the development of projects under the Shared Island Development Fund.**
- ii Projects must be led by a Local Authority from the South of Ireland, working in partnership with a Local Authority from Northern Ireland.**
- iii Three projects have been funded to date through the Shared Island Development Fund:**
  - Dublin/Belfast Circular Economy Initiative (€250k)**
  - Cork/Belfast Climate and Docklands Initiative (€90k)**

- **Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Initiative (€150k)**
- iv **A detailed report on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Initiative will be provided separately from this report.**
- v **Further opportunities through the Shared Island Community Climate Action Programme and Creative Ireland programme are being explored at present with contacts in Dublin, Cork and Galway, with further updates to be provided should these opportunities progress to become funded projects.**
- vi **A further scheme to support EV charging for sports clubs is currently open with expressions of interest to be presented through governing bodies. This process is taking place independently of the Local Authority to Local Authority projects referred to above, however is relevant to the development of the Belfast EVI Strategy and ongoing discussions on the introduction of additional EV charging points in the city.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Background**

**3.2 Belfast City Council has been liaising with both Dublin City Council and Cork City Council in the development of projects under the Shared Island Development Fund. Projects must be led by a Local Authority from the South of Ireland, working in partnership with a Local Authority from Northern Ireland. Three projects have been funded to date through the Shared Island Development Fund:**

- 1. Dublin/Belfast Circular Economy Initiative (€250k)**
- 2. Cork/Belfast Climate and Docklands Initiative (€90k)**
- 3. Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Initiative (€150k)**

**These projects are described in more detail below.**

**Dublin and Belfast Circular Economy initiative**

**3.3 Dublin City Council in partnership with Belfast City Council (BCC), are striving to make their respective cities leaders in the transition to a circular economy. The successful proposal under the Shared Island Fund will involve undertaking a feasibility assessment to enable the development of capital projects in Dublin and Belfast that support the expansion of the circular economy island wide leading to a Connected Circular Economy. At present, Dublin and Belfast are developing their circular economy ecosystems and have established strengths and partnerships that will contribute to identifying challenges and opportunities to be explored and addressed in the feasibility assessment.**

**3.4 The project aims to develop an implementation plan for realising a Connected Circular Economy that builds on the existing strengths of both cities and unlocks the latent potential of private enterprise identified via the feasibility assessment. Both cities recognise through their independent efforts described in detail in the appendix, that there are significant gaps that need to be identified and addressed to bring coherence to existing policies and plans. The aim is to identify and address these gaps through this feasibility assessment with funding from the Shared Island Fund. This will include feasibility on the capital expenditure needs, and economic analysis. This will be carried out according to the Public Spending Code and under UK 'Green Book' guidelines to present**

both authorities with a detailed and robust case to guide investment decisions.

- 3.5 The primary objective of the feasibility assessment is to inform the development of an official business case for delivering infrastructure and programming for a Connected Circular Economy between Dublin and Belfast. A partnership between the two largest local authorities on the Island, will provide opportunities to create scale, exchange knowledge and complement initiatives on an all-island basis. The feasibility assessment will identify how and what we need to invest in, to realise a Connected Circular Economy and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by all-island co-operation. The feasibility will focus on the economic and social potential of the circular economy, as well as sustainability and climate change – in other words how can the circular economy support a just transition by creating jobs that strengthen communities affected by the transition away from fossil fuels.
- 3.6 This will then help both Belfast and Dublin City Council to evaluate and to prepare a comprehensive business case for a Shared Island capital project that results in a Connected Circular Economy, with infrastructure needs and support regimes informed by evidence, expert knowledge and lived experience of SMEs. Tender submissions will be assessed on the 23rd March 2023.

**Cork and Belfast Solar PV Study**

- 3.7 Both Belfast and Cork cities are developing ambitious climate action plans that will incorporate a mix of technical and behavioural change interventions required to address climate change adaptation and mitigation. Some of the interventions needed will involve significant capital investment. This project will focus primarily on examining best practice and innovative measures that could be used to scale the uptake of rooftop solar PV across both cities.
- 3.8 The overall objective is to develop a scoping study a focused on scaling the uptake of rooftop solar PV solution in the two cities. This will be achieved by initially identifying five public buildings in each city and assessing their suitability for solar PV. The specific objectives are to:
1. determine low, medium and high levels of potential rooftop solar PV installations based upon total roof space, building orientation, assumptions re building age and condition;
  2. review the policy and regulatory frameworks including any support schemes that apply to rooftop solar in Cork and Belfast and identify current barriers to rooftop solar PV installation;
  3. determine the necessary (policy, institutional, financial) interventions required to stimulate rooftop solar PV installations at the low, medium and high levels of penetration;
  4. review current initiatives being used to scale solar PV solutions and prepare a at least 5 rooftop solar PV case studies to showcase best practice for a range of different building types (e.g. domestic, school, public sector, community-use, retail/office building);
  5. identify one or more eligible projects that can be taken forward under phase 2.
- 3.9 The scoping study will be prepared by experienced and qualified consultants in the area of energy planning include national and international context and best practice. A small working group will be formed to guide the preparation of the Strategy. The working group will include:
- Solar PV installers
  - Building managers and property owners
  - Local authority climate representatives
  - Local authority energy representatives
- 3.10 A second strand of the scoping study will undertake a 3D spatial analysis of VU.CITY's highly accurate 3D model of Belfast, to understand the potential for Solar Rooftop PV across the whole city of Belfast, with a particular focus on the potential for carbon emissions savings within a smaller selection of council-owned buildings. This work will include:
- identification of flat roofs across Belfast that are suitable for PV installation;
  - calculation of potential kWh for each rooftop (including a detailed assessment of ~10 council-owned buildings, and

then a more approximate calculation for all other buildings); and

- where power consumption data is available, we will calculate the saved emissions (dependant on provision of suitable data from Belfast CC)

3.11 The scoping study will inform a phase 2 application for capital funding to scale solar PV across both cities with Local Authorities as exemplars in this area making effective use of their rooftop real estate to reduce their energy costs and achieve local and national climate action targets.

3.12 Cork and Belfast Docklands Regeneration

3.13 This project focus arose from the opportunity to connect two important maritime economies and drive decarbonisation, growth and innovation. Ports are key hubs for trade and investment and support SME's and employ thousands of workers. Significant capital investment is planned for both the Belfast Waterside and Cork City Docklands areas. These are two of the largest regeneration areas in Europe. Belfast City Council and Cork City Council have secured funding under the Shared Island initiative to assess the synergies and opportunities to overcome the existing challenges within the respective areas. This work will set the wider benefits of the proposed Cork-Belfast collaboration under the Shared Island initiative, and to provide a list of catalyst regeneration projects including providing spatial requirements, connectivity infrastructure and place-making requirements and capital investment schedules for the emerging list in conjunction with key stakeholders within each of the respective areas.

3.14 This scoping work will identify opportunities and mechanisms for collaboration between the two waterfront areas aligned to Climate Action, inclusive community connectivity, heritage, tourism and innovation.

3.15 Further updates on these scoping studies will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

3.16 Additional information

3.17 A detailed report on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Initiative will be provided separately from this report.

3.18 Further opportunities through the Shared Island Community Climate Action Programme and Creative Ireland programme are being explored at present with contacts in Dublin, Cork and Galway, with further updates to be provided should these opportunities progress to become funded projects.

3.19 A further scheme to support EV charging for sports clubs is currently open with expressions of interest to be presented through governing bodies. This process is taking place independently of the Local Authority to Local Authority projects referred to above, however is relevant to the development of the Belfast EVI Strategy and ongoing discussions on the introduction of additional EV charging points in the city.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1 **Belfast City Council and Cork City Council 90,000 Euro, of which 45,000 Euro is allocated to Climate Initiative (Solar PV) and 45,000 Euro for Harbour Initiative.**
- 4.2 **Belfast City Council and Dublin City Council 250,000 Euro, to undertake feasibility works to lead to potential capital works that link Dublin and Belfast circular economies through learning and operation.**
- 5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
- 5.1 **Officers are currently developing the Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Screening and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.”**

A Member raised the matter of funding available through the shared island fund and asked officers to explore potential opportunities that would be available to the Council. Officers agreed to bring a report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee aligning all funding opportunities available to the Council. The Member also raised the possibility of officers from Belfast City Council conducting an exchange with officers in Dublin City Council and the Director of City and Organisational Strategy agreed to pursue the possibility of this exchange.

Noted

### **Update on UPSURGE Project**

The members of the Committee considered the undernoted report

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 **The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Committee, following the successful award of funding for the Horizon 2020 EU ‘UPSURGE’ project, which Members of People & Communities Committee initially approved at their August 2020 Committee meeting.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to note the update on the UPSURGE project.**

- **Note the update on the development of the UPSURGE main demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens is given, as well as an overview of the work completed to date to include a codesign process which has resulted in an early concept plan for the site which is now at detailed design stages for the first phase.**
- **Note that the first phase i.e. the research gardens to be used by QUB and associated paths and infrastructure will be going on site in late March 2023. At the same time a series of community engagement initiatives will take place including a survey, storyboards on site and a collaborative workshop that will shape the final design for the community gardens.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 **Members are reminded that the ‘UPSURGE Project’ focuses on testing nature-based solutions, to environmental issues in**



partnership with four other EU cities, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice.

- 3.2 Following approval by Members of P&C Committee, in August 2020, the project utilises the Lower Botanical Gardens site, close to Queens University Physical Education Centre (PEC). The aim of the project is to develop a demonstrator site to test different nature-based solutions and support learning on how adaptive practices and management of green spaces in the city can support pollution alleviation, citizen health and climate resilience. Residents of Belfast will benefit from environmental and scientific testing and learning, where soil enhancement, food production and testing can be undertaken, with the outcome being to increase learning and resilience across the city. The project will help deliver on the Belfast Resilience Strategy which aims to transition the city to an inclusive, net-zero emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation.
- 3.3 The UPSURGE project was co-designed by the Council in conjunction with QUB staff. The proposed works are shown in the concept drawing at Appendix 1. Members are asked to note that the works are focused towards the top end of the site near the PEC and allows the potential for other developments on the site in the future subject to budget being secured. Members are asked to note that works will commence this month.

#### KPIs for the project

- 3.4 One of the key aims of the project is to monitor and test nature based solutions being applied to the site. The KPIs for the project include social-economic diversity, gender, soil contamination, urban heat island effect, ecosystem connectivity, mobility, air quality and health. Given the opportunity to build evidence and learning. The project team and partners see opportunities to apply learning and knowledge sharing across the city and for informing more climate resilient practice across Belfast.

#### QUB research plots

- 3.5 The QUB research plots will begin 'in-ground planting' of a number of vegetable types, as well as other plant categories, to measure the transmission of contaminants to potential food and plant matter over the initial period of the project and a QUB Research Fellow will manage the development and ongoing monitoring of this element. Information will then be disseminated within the overall EU project and be shared with local relevant partners, to enhance further development of urban agriculture.

#### Deployment of environmental sensors

- 3.6 As part of the overall environmental learning from the site, sensor-based technologies will be installed (with the procurement process underway) to measure certain particulate levels over the life of the project, with the overall objective to measure impact of the initiative on these localised particulates. Other mobile and personal sensors are also being considered.

Measurement of the following environmental impactors will be an ongoing part over the life of the project and hopefully beyond (subject to future funding):

**Impactors to be measured:**

Temperature  
Humidity  
Pressure  
Ozone  
Nitric Dioxide  
Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)  
Particle Matter – Dust  
Noise Level

The information gathered by the sensors will be regularly sent for analysis to our European partners and disseminated as part of the overall learnings of the project. To complement this, and hopefully coordinate longer term Belfast monitoring, the project delivery team will explore how best to integrate longer term monitoring for the benefit of the city.

**Bee monitoring**

- 3.7 Additional testing will also be undertaken to measure pollen contaminants and biodiversity, utilising the installation of a number of beehives in secure locations on the site. A European analysis, managed by 'Beeodiversity', will be carried out, with local beekeepers being trained to monitor and gather samples from the hives. It would be hoped that a social enterprise element may be developed from this, as well as other growing elements of the site

**Development of the community growing aspects of the site**

- 3.8 The project will also include opportunities for communities living and working in the vicinity to benefit from the development of a number of community gardens on the site. Some initial engagement with existing stakeholders has taken place to co-design the community garden elements of the site and other stakeholders, such as QUB volunteers, local schools and community organisations are being engaged with to ring-fence garden space to support their engagement. This will complement the overall success of the project and further enhance learning, as well as community engagement, community cohesion/diversity opportunities.

**Continuing engagement**

- 3.9 As the research gardens are developing on site, the codesign process will continue with various engagement activities taking place to inform the detailed site design for the wider site. A presentation of the project will be brought to the South Area Working Group in February/March. Following agreement of the detailed site design, council officers will initiate the physical development of the site in partnership with relevant stakeholders and local communities.

**Governance and delivery arrangements**

- 3.10 The UPSURGE project presents an innovative opportunity to develop an underused area of land within Belfast City Council's ownership, through a partnership with QUB, EU partners, and local community organisations. A project team has been established which includes Belfast City Council's Climate Team, Innovation Unit, City and Neighbourhood Services, Physical Programmes, City Regeneration, and Planning in addition to QUB representatives. Physical programmes unit is leading on the delivery of the capital

works programme. The project will act as a hub, with the potential to support rewilding, enhanced local food production, stimulation of local circular economy, and will develop community education programmes in relation to climate, digital innovation, and community resilience. Note that Members will also get an opportunity to feed in to the project at a presentation which will be given to the South Area Working Group in March.

**Knowledge sharing and learning across satellite sites**

- 3.11 The delivery of the project will also work with partners across the city to engage with a number of satellite sites, which will benefit local neighbourhoods and create a citywide network of learning and education. The development of satellite sites will also benefit the overall wellbeing of residents across Belfast. Updates on the identified sites will be brought back to Committee as they are agreed.

The satellite sites have not yet been defined for the project, and whilst do not have an allocation of capital funding, will provide opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing programmes on nature-based solutions across the city.

**Budget**

- 3.12 The current budget, awarded through EU funding is categorised below:
- Project costs of €115,800, which include € 22,000 for the development of satellite sites across the city.
  - Infrastructure costs of € 346,800, which includes monies for the physical development of the site and € 16,800 for the delivery of educational and training workshops related to the site.
  - € 122,500 for staff costs towards the project.

Total funding awarded by the EU is € 660,375.

4.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**

There are no Financial & Resource Implications.

5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications**

There are no direct equality and good relations implications.”

The Committee welcomed the report and said they looked forward to receiving regular updates.

After discussion, Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Visit Belfast**

The Committee agreed to invite Visit Belfast to a future meeting of the Committee to present on sustainable tourism.



Chairman