

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 8th October, 2025

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas,
Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, McCabe, McCallin,
McCormick, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan,
Murray, Nelson and O'Neill.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th September, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October, 2025, subject to the following amendment:

- the minute under the heading "Vacant to Vibrant Programme" was amended to provide that letters be sent to the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Communities to seek additional funding to support the Vacant to Vibrant scheme.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

2 Royal Avenue Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report which provided an update on 2 Royal Avenue and set out a proposed approach in respect of the long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue’s ground floor.

During discussion, a Member requested that engagement be undertaken with all relevant partners in relation to the future use of the building.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees not to progress with the recommended proposal as outlined within the report, and that a report be submitted to its next meeting to provide further detail and options in respect of the future use of 2 Royal Avenue’s ground floor.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation as outlined within the report in respect of the long-term future use of 2 Royal Avenue’s ground floor.

On a vote, two Members voted for the amendment and seventeen against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal, standing in the name of Councillor R. McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Duffy, was thereupon put to the Committee. On a vote, seventeen Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the background information provided in relation to previous Committee decisions on the longer-term use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor;
- ii. agreed not to progress with the recommended proposal as outlined within the report, and that a report be submitted to its next meeting to provide further detail and options on the future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor; and
- iii. agreed that engagement with all relevant partners be undertaken in relation to the future use of 2 Royal Avenue.

St George's Market Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the ongoing and planned engagement with St George's Market traders to support the effective working of the market.

The Director advised the Committee that trader documentation had been updated and would be issued to all traders in due course. He stated that the updated trader documentation would help support those officers responsible for carrying out operational management activities and enable the effective management of the market.

During discussion, a Member highlighted the need to strengthen connectivity between the market and the neighbouring communities and residents.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. the update in relation to the ongoing and planned engagement with all St George's Market traders to support the effective working of the market; and
- ii. the planned introduction of updated trader documentation in the coming weeks to support officers responsible for carrying out operational management activities for the effective management of the market.

Malone House

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update in relation to Malone House and outlined a proposed approach in respect of the asset's future use.

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need for engagement to be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in relation to the future use of Malone House and that all options should be explored and considered. A Member also requested that a condition survey of the building be undertaken to help inform future consideration.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. agreed that, in respect of the proposed approach to Malone House as set out in the report, all options should be explored and considered in relation to the potential future use of the asset, which would be informed by a range of factors, including a condition survey of the building.

Presentation - Belfast Waterfront Task Group

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with background information on the Belfast Waterfront Task Group, which was chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and included representatives from the Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, Titanic Quarter Limited, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure, Department for Economy, Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust, Sailortown Regeneration, EastSide Partnership and the Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group.

She reported that the Task Group had been established, in response to the city's 'A Bolder Vision' key move 'Embrace the River Lagan and Waterfront', to scope how the waterfront could fully realise its potential as a connected, vibrant corridor which would link with key destinations, neighbourhood communities and the city centre. She highlighted that a key objective of the Task Group had been to agree a place-making framework for the city's waterfront promenade and advised that a progress update in relation to the projects within the framework would be provided following the presentation by the Task Group representatives.

The Chairperson welcomed the following representatives of the Belfast Waterfront Task Group to the meeting:

- Ms. Kerrie Sweeney, Chief Executive, Maritime Belfast Trust;
- Ms. Michele Bryans, Chief Executive, EastSide Partnership; and
- Mr. Gerard Rice, Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group.

Ms. Sweeney provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Belfast Promenade Framework, which had been developed by the Belfast Waterfront Task Group to set out a long-term vision to help transform the city's waterfront.

She outlined the waterfront's distinct character areas and development opportunities and provided an update in relation to the current strands of work, including the development of a Maritime Story Plan, which provided a framework to help guide the development of the waterfront and had also identified heritage sites, and the commissioning of a Blueway feasibility study to explore the potential to establish a Blueway along the waterfront in line with the Blueway Ireland Accreditation.

Ms. Sweeney reported that the Belfast Historic Waterfront had been designated as a Heritage Place, one of only two in Northern Ireland, through the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 'Heritage Places' initiative. She stated that the funding would help deliver capital and revenue projects along the waterfront with potential themes in relation to community capacity building and engagement, heritage preservation and conservation, biodiversity, nature and access to water, waterfront promenade connectivity, animation and activation, and destination and organisation sustainability.

She concluded the presentation by providing the Committee with indicative timescales in relation to the 'Heritage Places' initiative, including the announcement, development stage and the overall project delivery.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of question from the Members in relation to community capacity building and engagement, funding, upscaling city events, Sailortown and the balancing of access to the river with biodiversity and nature. The representatives highlighted the positive engagement that had taken place in respect of the Waterfront Framework and the benefits that had been realised by local communities through participation in the Task Group. It was reported that the Task Group would provide a number of avenues to build capacity and offer along the waterfront for existing and new communities.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Belfast Waterfront Task Group Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework, and in particular to provide an update 'Under the Bridges' and the 'Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge' projects, including progress to date, consultation/ planning timeline and next steps.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Note the update on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework;**
- **Note that Members of the Waterfront Task Group will be providing an update presentation to this Committee meeting that will be in conjunction to this report;**

- Note the update on the Under the Bridges and Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge projects.

3.0 Background

- 3.1** As reported to the CG&R Committee in October 2023 a Waterfront Task Group was established to develop a focused approach to the Belfast waterfront, in response to 'A Bolder Vision' Key Move 'Embracing the River'. This Key Move seeks to capitalise on one of the city's most defining, but underused assets, the River Lagan, by strengthening connections, promoting new leisure activities and attracting tourism. Improved connections from the city centre to the waterfront and its surrounding communities would remove barriers by providing links across with new bridges and enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure along the river. The Key Move also promotes revitalisation along the Lagan waterfront and on Queen's Island including activating the river front with new uses and spaces to dwell and utilise waterfront developments like Titanic Quarter, City Quays, community led projects and other initiatives such as the Maritime Mile.
- 3.2** The Waterfront Task Group, chaired by BCC Chief Executive and consisting of Maritime Belfast Trust, BCC officers, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, local community groups, Titanic Quarter Ltd, DfC, DfE, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust and DEARA commissioned a detailed analysis of the waterfront area from the Ormeau Road Bridge to Thompsons Dock.
- 3.3** Consultants, Schulze + Grasso undertook a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, compiling analysis on the completed and pending developments, as well as identifying the catalyst opportunities and gaps in infrastructure to maximise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that exist along the waterfront. This work also undertook to identify the existing and proposed projects emerging from within the adjacent communities, and to identify catalyst opportunities to connect these projects and the local communities to the wider education, employment and leisure facilities along the waterfront corridor. This work was carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders including local communities through online surveys and a dedicated charrette style design workshop.
- 3.4** Following a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, Members of the CG&R Committee received a presentation on the Framework in October 2023 and approved the Belfast Waterfront Framework.

- 3.5 The Waterfront Task Group continues to meet regularly and are making significant progress in the ongoing regeneration of Belfast's waterfront, with a range of initiatives currently underway that aim to enhance connectivity, promote active travel, celebrate the city's maritime heritage, and foster inclusive, community-led placemaking. Local community groups, including Eastside Partnership, Lower Ormeau Residents Association and Sailortown Regeneration Group are Members of the taskforce and are proactively engaged in the Taskforce to develop the emerging work strands to ensure effective design and delivery to meet the shared vision of the Waterfront Framework.
- 3.6 As part of this work, representatives of the Waterfront Task Group undertook a study visit to Copenhagen in 2024 to research best practise, and recently participated in a cycle tour along the Maritime Mile which provided valuable insight into the active travel experience in the area, highlighting both existing connections to the wider cycling network and identifying barriers that require further attention. The tour also served as a platform to learn more about future initiatives under development along the waterfront, including projects under development, which seeks to improve accessibility and recreational opportunities across the waterfront.
- 3.7 This Committee has received a number of updates on Council Led projects emerging from A Bolder Vision and the Waterfront Framework, including Under the Bridges, the Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge and the Queens Quay Kiosk. Members were also invited to attend a presentation update and boat tour of the Framework area in October 2024.
- 3.8 The waterfront has seen substantial development in recent years, with a steady pipeline of emerging developments coming through the planning system to further enable the areas' ability to deliver on the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and the LDP. In addition to the relocation of Ulster University to York Street and the subsequent influx of student accommodation in the surrounding areas, the emerging development landscape of this area is ambitious with the impact expected to be transformational. Projects such as City Quays Gardens has been delivered and is operational since April 2025. The gardens transformed a former car park into a vibrant green space with walkways, seating areas, an events lawn with amphitheatre-style seating, and an iconic 'Gateway Nest' sculpture. Planning approval has been secured for further developments in the area including;

- Public realm works at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, Planning secured in 2025, and currently undergoing the Traffic Road Order Process prior to commencing construction procurement
- Residential development comprising 256no. units, public realm, and associated access at City Quays 4 and the 69 affordable homes in Pilot Street,
- Office, retail, community and cultural development at City Quays 5,
- Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) at 39 Corporation Street.
- Build to rent scheme at 21-29 Corporation Street / 18-24 Tomb Street.
- Public realm environmental improvement scheme at Cathedral Gardens.

3.9 Furthermore, there are several additional schemes at various stages of development, namely,

- Public realm improvements including development of urban recreational space Under the Bridges.
- Sailortown / Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge,
- BCC Housing Led Regeneration Site at Corporation Street.
- DfI's Corporation Street Active Travel Cycle Lane development (including lighting at Dock Street) which is due to open to public consultation in October 2025, and
- The Clarendon Wharf residential development plans within the Harbour Estate including activation of Clarendon Dock, Barrow Square, Clarendon Road and Corporation
- . The Gasworks to Ormeau Park Bridge, funded through BRCD, is currently at the procurement stage to secure a contractor to deliver this cross-Lagan active travel connection.
- John Murray Lockhouse secured planning in 2023, to transform the site into a community café, exhibition and training space, and a good relations hub, with a new water activity hub at McConnell's Lock with work ongoing through the BCC Neighbourhood Renewal fund to bring the project forward.
- Construction is ongoing to deliver 94 affordable homes on the Gasworks Northern Fringe Raphael St site

3.10 The work of the Waterfront Framework will be ensuring the successful integration of these projects into the waterfront area as well as delivering key connectivity and public spaces

to enable the successful embedment of sustainable communities within the existing landscape and areas.

- 3.11 Collectively, the work of the Waterfront Task Group reflects the strength of cross-sector collaboration in shaping Belfast's waterfront. They represent a shared commitment to delivering an inclusive, connected, and world-class destination that supports cultural life, environmental sustainability, active travel, tourism, and community development. The work currently underway is laying a strong foundation for the long-term transformation of the waterfront as a space that will serve both residents and visitors and ensure the protection of the area for future generations.

4.0 **Main Report**

4.1 **Waterfront Promenade Framework Progress Update**

In conjunction with this Committee paper, Maritime Belfast Trust will be providing a presentation to this Committee meeting to provide an update on an emerging strand of work that will focus on building on the heritage of the area, as well providing capacity building within the local community networks. A presentation will also be provided along with this paper to highlight some of the projects delivered to date, and to provide an overview of emerging projects currently under development, as outlined below.

- 4.2 Maritime Belfast Trust is undertaking a feasibility study to establish the River Lagan as a Blueway in line with Blueways Ireland Accreditation standards. Blueway Accreditation identifies a network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites on a waterway. With the potential to be the first urban Blueway under the scheme, the accreditation brings a number of opportunities including strong branding, user reassurance, enhanced visitor experience, community engagement and funding opportunities. The study will involve site assessments, stakeholder and community engagement, and a co-design process to evaluate the potential of the Blueway route. Key recommendations will be developed to ensure any proposals balance environmental sustainability with the area's industrial heritage and meet accreditation criteria over the short, medium, and long term. While water quality remains an issue this work strand will set out a pathway to achieving Blueway accreditation for the River Lagan.
- 4.3 Several projects are already contributing to the transformation of the waterfront into a welcoming and vibrant destination. The recent addition of the Queen's Quay Kiosk to the Maritime Mile has delivered an increased social value to the area. Operated by Native Coffee, the kiosk

combines hospitality with cultural expression, offering a 'coffee and bake' menu alongside a platform for local artisans to showcase and sell their work. Delivered by BCC and funded through the Department for Communities' Covid Revitalisation Programme, the kiosk features public artwork by local artist Terry Bradley, depicting stories of industrial Belfast. The space around the kiosk has also been enhanced with new planting and seating, reinforcing Queen's Quay as a key gateway along the waterfront. Native Coffee have been active in animating the area as a key connectivity node between the city centre and Queens Island, regularly hosting jazz evenings, DJ evenings and running clubs centred around the iconic structure.

- 4.4 Upstream, work has commenced on the redevelopment of the former Lockhouse along the Lagan Towpath. This £2.9 million capital project, led by Council, will transform the site into a community café, exhibition and training space, and a good relations hub. The project complements the existing community garden and men's shed already active in the area and will be supported by a new water activity hub at McConnell's Lock, being delivered in partnership with the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) through the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.
- 4.5 The waterfront is also being activated through a growing programme of cultural events, most notably the Belfast Maritime Festival, which took place in September. Organised by Belfast City Council in partnership with the Maritime Belfast Trust and supported by multiple stakeholders including Belfast Harbour, Titanic Quarter, Odyssey Trust, and Tourism NI, the festival brought the Maritime Mile to life through a diverse offering of maritime-themed entertainment, music, food, arts, and family activities. The festival served both to celebrate Belfast's rich maritime heritage and to animate the waterfront as a space for public engagement and tourism.

4.6 Connectivity, Sustainable and Active Travel

At CG&R Committee in October 2023, Members approved the Waterfront Framework and initial priority areas including, Under the Bridges and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge, and as such work commenced on developing these schemes. In January 2025 the Committee approved the submission of a funding application to DfI's Active Travel funding to progress designs on the Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge projects. These projects aim to improve the connectivity and place-making between the Sailortown community, the City Quays and Queens Island areas and the city centre. The need to improve the connection between the city and the harbour area has been

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

4.7 Under the Bridges

The Under the Bridges project will be a significant connectivity project for the city that aims to improve the connectivity links between the City Centre and City Quays / Sailortown and to provide an enhanced amenity / urban sports space in the area under the M3 bridges. The design work focuses on the connections between Corporation Square and the city centre along the proposed active travel routes of Tomb Street, Gamble St, Gt. Patrick St (connecting into the BCC Housing Led Regeneration site at Corporation Street), and Little Patrick Street (connecting into the Little York Street Little Patrick Street Scheme). Proposals for an urban sports / recreation space will also be brought to public consultation for the car park areas under the M3 flyover, aimed to improving lighting and usage of this area as well as providing a recreation facility for existing and emerging communities and users alike. Design development is happening in tandem with the DfI Active Travel Team to ensure that the proposed scheme integrates with the proposed Corporation Street Cycle Scheme that is due to go to public consultation in October 2025.

- 4.8** Designs have progressed on the Under the Bridges Project with a PAD public consultation event to be held in the 'AC Hotel Belfast by Marriott' on Thursday 9th October, 3pm – 7pm, followed by an online event to follow on Tuesday 14th October, 6pm – 7pm to inform the emerging designs.

In addition to this an update presentation on the projects shall be taken to the North, East and City Centre Area Working Group's in November/December 2025. The ICT will then analyse the results of the consultation process and use this information to update the designs to ensure the outcomes of the consultation are integrated into the design. The emerging designs that will be brought to public consultation will be presented to this Committee meeting.

- 4.9 Following the completion of the consultation, the ICT aims to submit a full application to Planning in Autumn 2025, targeting an approval by end of March 2026, however it should be noted that the scheme remains subject to capital funding to enable delivery.

4.10 Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge

The proposed Sailortown bridge will provide a new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle opening bridge that could complete the Harbour Loop, provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island and providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station and the Queens Island estate.

- 4.11 Funding has now been secured from DfI, BCC and BHC, and a design team of Arup with Knight Architects have been appointed to develop the bridge designs up to RIBA Stage 2. This work will provide concept design, technical requirements, cost plan and outline specification, and feasibility information including capex and opex requirements that will clarify the optimum route to securing capital delivery funding and long-term operation and maintenance.

- 4.12 Community and Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken throughout the process to ensure the optimum design and route for the area with further updates to be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

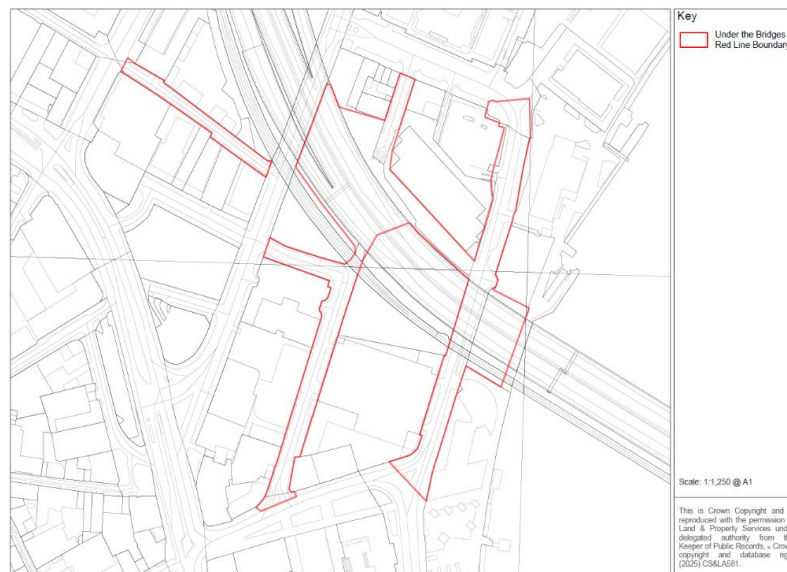
The design development of the Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge projects are funded by DfI, BHC, and BCC through previously agreed budgets. Work is ongoing to identify and secure Capital funding to deliver these projects. Financial implications in terms of the loss of carparking income associated with the UTB's site will be assessed and

incorporated within the whole life costs of the project, and will be reported to a future meeting of the CG&R and SP&R Committees.

**6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

None associated with this report.

Appendix



Under the Bridges - Red line boundary map

The Senior Development Manager presented to the Committee an overview of the following strands of work:

- the waterfront's catalyst and key projects;
- the emerging development landscape;
- the work to establish the River Lagan as a Blueway in line with the Blueways Ireland Accreditation;
- the Queen's Quay Kiosk;
- the Lockhouse Redevelopment; and
- the Belfast Maritime Festival.

The Senior Development Manager also provided the Committee with an update in respect of the Under the Bridges project and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Bridge project.

The Committee noted:

- i. the update on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework; and

- ii. the update on the Under the Bridges and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Bridge projects.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Events Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues

1.1

- To update members on Culture Night 2025
- To seek approval from Members for a dedicated workshop session to support the development of Belfast City Council’s Events Action Plan, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and effective stakeholder engagement.
- To seek approval from Members to facilitate a site visit to Dundalk to view festive lighting scheme as part of planning for future years.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the update on Culture night
- Approve request to facilitate members workshop for events action plan
- Approve request for site visit associated to festive lights

3.0 Culture night

- ##### **3.1**
- Members are advised that Culture Night Belfast 2025 was successfully delivered on 19th September, with a diverse programme of cultural activity taking place across the city centre and neighbourhoods. The event featured over 100 individual performances, exhibitions, workshops and community-led activities, delivered in partnership with artists, cultural organisations, local businesses and residents.

Attendance was strong, with thousands of people engaging in events throughout the evening, reinforcing the festival’s reputation as one of Belfast’s flagship cultural celebrations. The programme highlighted the breadth of creative talent across the city and promoted wide public participation, supporting both the cultural sector and the night-time economy.

Officers are now progressing the final evaluation and reporting process. This will include detailed analysis of outcomes, audience reach and impact, alongside reflections from stakeholders and delivery partners. Recommendations for the future development of Culture Night will be prepared and brought back to Committee in due course for Members' consideration.

3.2 Events action plan

Officers are continuing to work on the development of an events action plan.

Belfast's programme of events plays a vital role in shaping the city's identity, attracting visitors, supporting the local economy, and fostering civic pride. As the Council looks ahead to the next phase of delivery, it is essential that a refreshed Events Action Plan is developed to:

- Reflect the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and cultural strategy.
- Respond to changes in the events landscape post-pandemic.
- Support wider city recovery, tourism, and place-making objectives.
- Ensure an inclusive and sustainable approach to event planning and delivery.

The development of the Action Plan will require input from Members to ensure that the priorities and outcomes reflect the ambitions of the Council and the needs of communities across the city.

It is proposed that a workshop be convened with Members (dates to be circulated via democratic services) to:

- Provide an overview of the current events programme, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing the city's events offering, including community events, cultural programming, and signature events.
- Consider themes such as sustainability, accessibility, economic impact, partnership opportunities, and international positioning.
- Discuss priorities and desired outcomes for inclusion in the draft Events Action Plan.

- The workshop will be designed to be interactive and informative, giving Members the opportunity to shape the direction of the Plan at an early stage. Feedback from the session will be used to inform the drafting of the Action Plan, which will be presented to Committee for approval later in the year.

3.2 Festive lights – site visit

As part of the planning and development for future iterations of the festive lights scheme it is proposed to conduct a site visit to Dundalk at some point between the 2-9th December to see an installation that our suppliers have previously delivered as we move towards planning for 2026, and a subsequent members planning workshop in January

Dundalk's 'The Northern Light Show' presents a valuable opportunity for Belfast City Council to gain insights into the planning, delivery, and impact of large-scale festive lighting installations. Dundalk's success in creating a visually captivating and community-driven experience offers a practical model for enhancing Belfast's own seasonal lighting strategy.

Aligning with the objectives of the Belfast Lighting Strategy, particularly in relation to innovation, placemaking, and increasing civic pride. With Belfast introducing new Christmas lights supplier this year, there is a timely opportunity to explore how immersive lighting can be used not only during the festive season but also extended to other key calendar events such as Halloween. These extensions would allow for year-round engagement, encouraging repeat visits and boosting local economic activity.

The learnings from Dundalk's approach, particularly around community involvement, sustainability, and creative design can inform Belfast's own delivery model, ensuring that future lighting installations are both impactful and inclusive.

The Dundalk installation, which formed the centrepiece of the Brigid1500 Festival , attracted an estimated 48,000 visitors within its first few days (Dundalk Democrat) , demonstrating the strong public appetite for high-quality, visually impactful light experiences.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this paper.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)."

During discussion, Members thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken to help deliver a successful Culture Night on 19th September.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on Culture Night;
- ii. granted approval for a dedicated Members workshop to be held to support the development of a Council's Events Action Plan; and
- iii. approved that Members undertake a site visit to Dundalk in relation to festive lighting.

**International Engagement –
Update on Proposed Approach**

The Committee considered a report which set out a response to queries raised by Members at its meeting in August on the proposed approach to international engagement. The report also set out, for the Committee's consideration, a draft International Relations Framework for 2025-2028 and a delivery plan for the Council's international engagement activity for 2025/26.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy and the Senior Manager, Economy, answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to EU engagement, ethical and environmental considerations, USA 250 activities and international visits.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees that the Council's membership of the Eurocities network be continued, and that options be explored, in partnership with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and four against, and it was declared carried.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees to recommend the establishment of an EU stakeholder group.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and four against, and it was declared carried.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees to recommend that invitations to all international engagement stakeholder groups be extended to the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and four against, and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the response, as set out in section 3.5 of the report, to the issues raised by Members at its meeting in August, 2025;
- ii. agreed that the Council's membership of the Eurocities network be continued, and that options be explored, in partnership with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities;
- iii. agreed to recommend the establishment of an EU stakeholder group;
- iv. agreed to recommend that invitations to all international engagement stakeholder groups be extended to Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee; and
- v. agreed to defer consideration of the proposed approach to Council international engagement work activity for 2025-28, and the Annual Action plan for 2025/26, to enable an updated draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028 to be submitted.

Issue Raised in Advance

Belfast Cycle Network (Councillor de Faoite to raise)

Councillor de Faoite raised an issue in relation to the delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme. He stated that, in response to a letter he had written to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the scheme, the Minister had advised that the formal consultation stage on the scheme had been moved from autumn 2025 to early 2026. He expressed his disappointment at the delay in progressing the scheme, given that it had been highlighted as deliverable in the short term within the Department for Infrastructure's Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan.

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to express its frustration at the lack of progress in delivering the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme, and to seek an update on the reasons for the delay.

Chairperson