

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



**Belfast
City Council**

10th April, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall, and remotely via MS Teams on Wednesday, 15th April, 2026 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update (Pages 1 - 20)
- (b) 2 Royal Avenue Update (report to follow)
- (c) Sandy Row/Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Fund Update (Pages 21 - 32)
- (d) Housing-Led Regeneration Private Sector Partner Update (report to follow)
- (e) Housing-Led Regeneration Programme Update (report to follow)
- (f) A Bolder Vision Strategy Update (Pages 33 - 92)
- (g) Draft Belfast Economic Proposition (Pages 93 - 126)

3. **Requests to Present**

- (a) Destination CQ Business Improvement District (BID) (Pages 127 - 130)
- (b) Queen's University Belfast (report to follow)

4. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Department for Infrastructure Consultation on the Dublin Road and Botanic Avenue Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements - Draft Council Response (Pages 131 - 146)
- (b) Belfast Harbour Commissioners Draft Masterplan 2025-50 Consultation - Draft Council Response (Pages 147 - 152)

5. **Growing Business and the Economy**

- (a) Employability and Skills Update (Pages 153 - 164)

6. **Correspondence**

- (a) Minister for Infrastructure Response - Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme (Pages 165 - 170)
- (b) Department for Infrastructure Response - Issues Raised at Special Meeting in November 2025 (Pages 171 - 180)

7. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

- (a) City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2026/27 (report to follow)
- (b) Minutes of the City Regeneration Members' Working Group - 5th March 2026 (Pages 181 - 182)

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Destination CQ BID – request for presentation
Date:	15 th April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director Place & Economy
Contact Officer:	Keith Forster, Director economic development

Restricted Reports													
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>												
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 													
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 5%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	Never		<input type="checkbox"/>
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Call-in
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of the report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update members on the pending ballot for the third term of the Destination CQ BID (Business Improvement District) • Request that members agree to receive a presentation from the BID at the May meeting of this Committee in order to enable officers to submit the Council votes in the ballot opening in July and closing 1st September 2026.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update on the pending ballot for the third term of the Belfast One BID (Business Improvement District) • Agree to receive a presentation from the BID at the May meeting of this Committee in order to enable officers to submit the Council votes in the ballot ahead of the ballot opening in July and closing 1st September 2026
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that there are three Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Belfast city centre: BID One which covers the main retail core and runs from the City Hall down to the junction of Royal Avenue and North Street; Linen Quarter which covers the office district to the north the City Hall including the new Transport Hub and Destination CQ which covers the Cathedral Quarter including the Ulster University campus
3.2	A BID is a defined district where organisations collectively invest in projects, services and events that will benefit that area. Destination CQ BID is an independent, not-for-profit company that works on behalf of its levy payers to support, develop and promote Belfast city centre. It focuses on delivering programmes that enhance safety, cleanliness, business support and the overall vibrancy of the area.
3.3	Under government legislation, all BIDs operate on a five-year term. At the end of each term, a ballot must take place in order for the BID to continue its work. The ballot for the third term of BID One will open in July 2026 and all votes must be submitted by 1 September 2026.
3.4	<p>Belfast City Council has a number of properties within the BID boundary including Belfast Stories and the Assembly Rooms. The BID area contains around 700 units that are eligible for votes. Each property must pay an annual mandatory BID levy – depending on the NAV (Net Annual Value) of the property. Belfast City Council is responsible (by legislation) for issuing the levy bills (the cost of this service is covered by the BID).</p> <p>In order for the proposal to be successful at ballot, the result will need to meet, as a minimum, three independent criteria, namely:</p>

	<p>1. There must be more yes votes than no votes (volume)</p> <p>2. Total rateable value of yes votes must exceed total rateable value of no votes (value)</p> <p>3. The turnout of ballot papers returned must be no less than 25% of the eligible rate payers entitled to vote in the ballot <i>and</i> total no less than 25% of the eligible rateable value.</p>
	<p>Destination CQ BID works closely with the council on a range of issues related to safety, cleanliness and vibrancy in the city centre. The team and the Board are also represented on a number of city centre forums and working groups and, given their mandate, represent a strong conduit for engagement with city centre businesses operating in this geographical area. They have produced a business plan for the five year term and this proposes focusing resources on three main pillars of work, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Support • Safer, Cleaner, Greener • Promotion & animation
	<p>The draft business plan notes that the BID is likely to generate circa £0.5 million annually through its levy collection and it will use these resources to deliver projects on behalf of levy payers within these agreed priority areas for action. Details of planned activities will be shared by the team at the upcoming meeting.</p>
4.0	Financial and Resource Implications
	<p>Belfast City Council will be liable for levy payments relating to its properties and assets located within the BID boundary.</p>
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	<p>No specific equality or good relations implications. The Destination CQ designated boundary has been approved by DfC. Visitor insights demonstrate that the city centre is accessed by visitors from all parts of Northern Ireland and beyond.</p>
6.0	Appendices – Documents Attached

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Subject:	BCC Draft Response to DfI Consultation on Dublin Road and Botanic Avenue Pedestrian & Cycling Improvements
Date:	15 April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officers:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Martin O'Neill, Lead Officer – Connectivity Programme

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the Council's response to the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) preliminary engagement on proposed pedestrian and cycling improvements along Dublin Road, Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue.
1.2	The response has been prepared in the context of the Council's adopted and emerging strategic frameworks, including A Bolder Vision for Belfast, the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan (LDP), the Belfast Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake, the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, the Resilience Strategy, and the emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP).
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the draft consultation response (Appendix A) for submission to the Department for Infrastructure. • Agree that the response continues to emphasise the need for the scheme to be designed in accordance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Department for Transport's LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design ○ Wheels for Wellbeing – A Guide to Inclusive Cycling (4th Edition, 2020) ○ IMTAC's "A New Approach to Travel, Our Streets and Our Places" (2022) • Note that the scheme represents a significant early delivery opportunity for A Bolder Vision and the Eastern Transport Plan, and that the Council will continue to engage with DfI to ensure alignment with wider city centre regeneration priorities. • Note, that as outlined in Item 3.15, the consultation closes on the 10th April and before this Committee meeting. Therefore the draft response as Appendix A will be submitted to DfI, subject to this Committee's approval and Council Ratification on the 5th May 2026.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>DfI has commenced preliminary engagement on proposals to enhance pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along Dublin Road, Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue. The scheme includes a dedicated cycle track, improved pedestrian crossings, and public realm upgrades. A link to the consultation page, including the scheme drawings, is included here with the consultation with consultation CGI's included in Appendix B of this report.</p>

3.2	The corridor is a strategically important link between the city centre, the university quarter, major employment clusters and South Belfast communities. It is also a key section of the Civic Spine identified within A Bolder Vision for Belfast.
3.3	<p>The Council has consistently supported the rebalancing of street space in favour of walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, as set out in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Bolder Vision for Belfast (2026) ○ Belfast Agenda – Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel (CAST) ○ Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy (2023) ○ BCCRIS Stocktake (2024) ○ Net Zero Carbon Roadmap ○ Resilience Strategy
3.4	<p>The emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) reinforces this direction, adopting a “vision and validate” approach that prioritises people centred streets, reduced through traffic, and high quality active travel corridors.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p>
3.5	<p>Strategic Fit</p> <p>The proposed scheme is strongly aligned with A Bolder Vision, particularly the Key Move to deliver a Civic Spine with a focus on people on the corridor. It supports the transition toward a city centre that is more inclusive, climate resilient and less dominated by private vehicles.</p>
3.6	<p>The BCCRIS Stocktake (2024) highlighted the need for improved connectivity, better public realm, reduced car dominance and increased greenery. The scheme responds directly to these findings.</p>
3.7	<p>The LDP Plan Strategy provides a statutory basis for prioritising active travel (Policies SP7, TRAN 1, TRAN 2), improving city centre streets and public spaces (CC1, CC2), and integrating green and blue infrastructure (ENV 3). The scheme is fully consistent with these policies.</p>
3.8	<p>The Eastern Transport Plan identifies the need to reduce through traffic, enhance walkability, and create safer, gender inclusive environments. The Dublin Road–Botanic corridor is one of the clearest opportunities to demonstrate early delivery of the ETP’s principles.</p>

3.9	<p>Design Standards and Inclusive Mobility</p> <p>The Council’s response emphasises that support for the scheme is contingent on the design meeting the highest standards of safety, accessibility and inclusivity. The Council will seek assurances that the scheme will be designed in full accordance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design, ensuring coherent, direct, safe and comfortable routes, protected cycle tracks, and junction treatments that minimise conflict. ○ Wheels for Wellbeing – A Guide to Inclusive Cycling, ensuring the route accommodates non standard cycles, avoids exclusionary access controls, and supports neurodivergent users. ○ IMTAC’s “A New Approach to Travel, Our Streets and Our Places”, ensuring predictable, legible layouts, clear separation of modes, and streets designed for disabled people first.
3.10	<p>These standards are essential to ensuring that the scheme delivers on the Council’s commitments to equality, accessibility and inclusive mobility.</p>
3.11	<p>Climate Resilience and Blue–Green Infrastructure</p> <p>The scheme provides a significant opportunity to integrate climate led placemaking, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), street trees, biodiverse planting and permeable surfaces. These measures support the Resilience Strategy, Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, A Bolder Vision, and LDP Policy ENV 3, and align with the ETP’s emphasis on climate resilient corridors.</p>
3.12	<p>Integration with Wider Regeneration and Transport Programmes</p> <p>The corridor intersects and compliments with several major regeneration initiatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5 ○ Housing Led Regeneration seed sites ○ Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2 ○ Future City Centre Programme ○ Waterfront Promenade Framework ○ Belfast Bikes expansion ○ Greenways and Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Project ○ Private Sector Investments including Bankmore Square, Weavers Cross, Weavers Hall & Botanic Studios
3.13	<p>The Council will continue to work with DfI to ensure that the scheme is coordinated with these programmes and forms part of a coherent, city wide active travel network.</p>

3.14	The Council also encourages DfI to undertake meaningful engagement with residents, businesses and community stakeholders along the corridor. Given the potential impacts on access, servicing, trade and neighbourhood character, it is important that the Department works collaboratively with those directly affected to ensure the final scheme reflects local needs and supports the vitality of the area.
3.15	As the consultation closes on the 10 th April, the draft response as included within Appendix A of this report will be submitted in line with the Consultation timetable, subject to comment/approval at this Committee meeting and ratification at full Council.
4.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	The Council's response emphasises the need for inclusive design in line with LDP Policy DES 2, ABV commitments, and IMTAC guidance.
5.2	The scheme has the potential to improve accessibility and safety for disabled people, older people, women, girls and other vulnerable groups.
5.3	Equality, Good Relations Implications, and Rural Needs impacts have been considered within the proposed response, and will be the responsibility of DfI as the delivery agent to undertake the full assessments.
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix A – BCC Draft Response to DfI Consultation on Dublin Rd and Botanic Ave Pedestrian & Cycling Improvements Appendix B – Dublin Road Botanic Cycling Visuals

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DUBLIN ROAD AND BOTANIC AVENUE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING IMPROVEMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to consider and respond to the Department's proposal to enhance active travel infrastructure to improve the connectivity for cyclists, pedestrians and wheeled users along Dublin Road, Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue.

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Infrastructure's preliminary engagement on the proposed improvements to Dublin Road, Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue. This corridor is one of the most strategically important routes in the city, linking the commercial and civic heart of Belfast with the university quarter, major employment clusters and the surrounding communities of South Belfast.

The proposal arrives at a moment when Belfast is collectively reshaping how people move around, reside in and experience our city centre. Across the Council's strategic frameworks - the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan (LDP), the BCCRIS Stocktake, A Bolder Vision for Belfast, the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, the Resilience Strategy - and now the Department's emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) there is a consistent direction of travel, Belfast must transition toward a people first, climate resilient, inclusive and accessible city centre.

The Dublin Road–Botanic corridor is therefore not simply a transport scheme. It is a strategic demonstration project for the type of city Belfast intends to become.

2. Strategic Alignment

2.1 Belfast Agenda – Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel (CAST)

The Belfast Agenda identifies Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST) as a cross-cutting priority. The CAST action plan commits partners to supporting behavioural change away from private car use and enabling more journeys by walking, wheeling and cycling.

The Dublin Road–Botanic scheme is a practical delivery mechanism for these commitments, linking major trip generators and supporting the Belfast Agenda's wider ambitions for health, wellbeing and inclusive growth.

2.2 A Bolder Vision for Belfast (2026)

A Bolder Vision (ABV) calls for a fundamental shift away from private car dominance towards streets that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. It emphasises the creation of safe, accessible, flexible and healthy places that work for everyone, embedding climate adaptation, inclusive design and social wellbeing into every intervention.

The Dublin Road–Botanic corridor is an important and significant segment of the Civic Spine, one of ABV's four Key Moves. Its transformation is essential to delivering ABV's ambition for a connected, vibrant and people focused city centre. The scheme supports ABV's commitments to remove severance, create lively and inclusive streets, embed climate led placemaking, and improve perceptions of safety, particularly for women, girls and vulnerable users.

2.3 Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake (2024)

The 2024 stocktake provides a clear rationale for interventions of this nature. Stakeholders consistently identified the need for improved connectivity, better public transport integration, high quality public realm and a reduction in car dominance. The stocktake notes that while Belfast has made significant progress, "the car is still too dominant and there are not enough trees or green spaces", and that the next decade must focus on infrastructure, connectivity and public realm improvements.

The proposed scheme to introduce two-way segregated cycle lanes from Bankmore Square to Queen's University responds directly to these findings and represents the type of catalytic, people centred intervention the stocktake calls for.

2.4 Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy (2023)

The LDP provides the statutory planning framework for the city and places a clear emphasis on sustainable mobility, inclusive design and high-quality public realm. Policies SP7, TRAN 1, TRAN 2, CC1, CC2, ENV 3 and DES 2 collectively require the type of intervention proposed here: continuous, safe active travel routes; improved crossings; inclusive design; and climate resilient streets.

The scheme is therefore fully aligned with the LDP's transport hierarchy and its vision for a modern, sustainable city.

2.5 Emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP)

The Department's emerging Eastern Transport Plan represents a significant shift in regional transport policy. It adopts a "vision and validate" approach, prioritising the creation of places for people and explicitly supporting a modal hierarchy that places walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport above private car use.

ETP aligns closely with ABV and reinforces the need to reduce through traffic, enhance walkability and create safer, gender inclusive environments. The Dublin Road–Botanic corridor is one of the clearest opportunities to demonstrate early delivery of the ETP's principles. The Council therefore expects that the scheme will be designed and assessed in a way that is fully consistent with the ETP's emerging priorities, including:

- reducing general traffic dominance
- improving bus reliability and journey times
- creating continuous, safe active travel corridors
- integrating blue–green infrastructure
- supporting city centre living and regeneration

3. Design Standards and Inclusive Mobility Expectations

The Council wishes to be explicit that support for the scheme is contingent on the design meeting the highest standards of safety, accessibility and inclusivity.

3.1 LTN 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design

The Council expects the scheme to be designed in full accordance with the Department for Transport's LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design, including:

- coherent, direct, safe and comfortable routes
- junction treatments that minimise conflict
- inclusive design for non-standard cycles

LTN 1/20 should be treated as a minimum standard, not an aspiration.

3.2 Wheels for Wellbeing – A Guide to Inclusive Cycling (4th Edition, 2020)

The Council also expects the scheme to reflect the principles set out in Wheels for Wellbeing's Guide to Inclusive Cycling, ensuring that:

- non standard cycles can use the route safely
- turning radii, widths and gradients accommodate all users
- access controls do not exclude cyclists with a disability

- resting points and clear sightlines support neurodivergent users

3.3 The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) – “A New Approach to Travel, Our Streets and Our Places” (2022)

The Council further expects the scheme to reflect the recommendations of IMTAC’s 2022 paper, a useful resource that sets out requirements to engender the ‘normalisation’ of cycling, and emphasises:

- the primacy of pedestrian safety
- the need for streets designed for people with visual or mobility impairments first
- the need for meaningful engagement with people with a disability
- the importance of predictable, legible layouts
- the avoidance of shared surface ambiguity

The Council seeks assurances from DfI that these standards and principles will be embedded from the earliest design stages.

4. Scheme-Specific Comments

4.1 Dublin Road & Bankmore Square

Bankmore Square is a key gateway into the city centre. The proposed improvements should reinforce this role by creating a seamless, legible and generous connection between the square and the active travel corridor. Public realm materials, lighting, planting and seating should be consistent with the standards set through Belfast Streets Ahead. Bus stop placement and servicing arrangements must be carefully managed to avoid undermining the safety and continuity of the pedestrian and cycle corridors.

4.2 Shaftesbury Square

Shaftesbury Square remains one of the most challenging junctions in the city. Its current layout creates severance, poor pedestrian experience and safety concerns. The Council strongly supports efforts to simplify the junction, reduce vehicle speeds and provide continuous, protected cycling provision. Pedestrian crossings should be direct, generous and aligned with desire lines. This location also presents an opportunity to begin the transformation of the square from a traffic dominated space into a civic node, with tree planting, lighting and placemaking elements that reflect ABV’s ambitions.

4.3 Botanic Avenue

Botanic Avenue is a vibrant mixed use corridor with high footfall, a strong evening economy and a significant student population. The proposed improvements should reflect its character and function. Wider footways, decluttered pavements, improved crossings and pedestrian priority side streets will support local businesses and enhance safety. Lighting, sightlines and design should explicitly address perceptions of safety, particularly for women and girls. There is also a strong opportunity to integrate street trees, SuDS and biodiversity features to create a greener, more climate resilient street.

5. Equality, Inclusion & Accessibility

The Council emphasises the importance of embedding inclusive design from the outset. Streets must work for people with a disability, older people, children, neurodivergent users and those with visual and mobility impairments. This requires careful attention to gradients, tactile paving, kerb heights, crossing timings and rest points. Engagement should include disability organisations, women’s groups, youth forums and older people’s representatives. This approach is consistent with DES 2 of the LDP, ABV’s commitment to inclusive streets, and IMTAC’s 2022 recommendations.

6. Climate Resilience & Blue–Green Infrastructure

The Council strongly encourages DfI to integrate climate led placemaking into the scheme. Sustainable

Drainage Systems (SuDS), street trees, biodiverse planting and permeable surfaces should be treated as essential components, not optional enhancements. These measures directly support ENV 3 of the LDP, the Resilience Strategy and ABV's climate adaptation objectives.

7. Delivery, Monitoring & Next Steps

The Council encourages close collaboration between DfI, Department for Communities and Council teams to ensure alignment with other major city centre projects, including Belfast Streets Ahead, Housing Led Regeneration seed sites, the Future City Centre Programme, the Waterfront Promenade Framework, Belfast Bikes expansion and Greenways. Monitoring should include mode share, traffic volumes, air quality, collision data and user perceptions of safety and accessibility. The scheme should also anticipate future ABV, ETP and Belfast Cycling Network interventions to ensure that the corridor functions as a coherent part of a wider active travel network.

The Council also encourages the Department to undertake meaningful and ongoing engagement with residents, businesses, community organisations and institutions along the corridor. Given the scale of change proposed, it is essential that those who live, work and trade in the area are fully involved in shaping the final design, ensuring that the scheme supports local economic vitality, accessibility and community wellbeing.

8. Conclusion

Belfast City Council strongly supports the proposed Dublin Road and Botanic Avenue improvements. The scheme is fully aligned with the city's strategic direction and statutory planning framework. It advances the ambitions of A Bolder Vision, responds directly to the findings of the BCCRIS Stocktake, delivers on the Belfast Agenda, implements the LDP transport hierarchy, supports the Net Zero Roadmap and Resilience Strategy, and reflects the emerging priorities of the Eastern Transport Plan. Most importantly, it represents the type of bold, people-centred intervention that will help Belfast transition toward a more inclusive, sustainable and vibrant city centre

Shaftesbury Square



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Botanic Train Station



Page 142

Typical Minor Road junction (Ireton St)



University St Botanic Avenue Crossroads



Page 144

QUB access from College Park



Page 145

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Subject:	BHC Draft Masterplan 2025–2050 draft Council Response
Date:	15 th April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager. Martin O’Neill, City Regeneration & Development

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to agree the Council’s response to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Draft Masterplan 2025-2050.
1.2	Members should be aware that, due to the Council’s statutory role as Planning Authority, any response should remain high-level and strategic, with no commentary on specific development proposals. It is appropriate, however, to reference alignment with relevant planning policy, including the Draft Sailortown, Greater Clarendon and City Quays Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) masterplan, which was recently out for a 12 week public consultation that closed on 29 th January.
1.3	Members who sit on both CG&R and the Planning Committee should be aware of potential conflicts of interest, particularly as parts of the wider area move through the statutory planning process.
2.0	Recommendations
	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the Council response to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners draft Masterplan 2025-2050. 2. Note the potential conflict of interest for Members who sit on both CG&R and the Planning Committee.
3.0	Main report
	Background
3.1	Belfast Harbour Commissioners have published their Draft Masterplan 2025–2050, setting out the long-term strategic ambitions for the Harbour Estate and wider waterfront area. The document is available at: https://www.belfast-harbour.co.uk/masterplan/
3.2	The masterplan sets out a 25-year framework for investment, regeneration and sustainability aligned to; increase the port capacity, embracing the Belfast Waterfront, supporting transition to clean energy and protecting the environment, redeveloping the Inner Harbour and supporting connectivity and tourism. Over 50 engagement sessions have been held to date, with BHC currently analysing the feedback received prior to publishing the final Masterplan in May 2026.

3.3	<p>BHC presented the draft Masterplan to the Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee on the 25th March 2026, outlining the important role that the harbour estate plays in supporting local and regional economic growth and in assisting on the delivery of the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.4	<p>BHC Chief Executive Joe O’Neill outlined the vision to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase port capacity for trade, cruise and offshore wind • deliver emerging plans for regeneration including additional provision for housing, commercial, logistics, sustainable and active travel • continue to support community and skills development • reclassify the port as a Trust Port to increase the BHC ability to invest in the masterplan in a prudent manner • transition net zero by 2030 and to support the wider region to transition through clean energy hubs, off-shore wind facilities and increasing green corridors and enhancing biodiversity and public access.
3.5	<p>In response to the presentation Members asked further questions in relation to the progress of the Trust Port legislation, the skills academies and the roll out of shore connections for cruise. Mr. O’Neill concluded by requesting that the Council would consider the masterplan and provide positive support and endorsement for its strategic vision and overarching framework. Subsequently, Members agreed at the Special Meeting of the CG&R Committee on the 25th March to submit a formal response to the Masterplan.</p>
3.6	<p>Members are asked to approve the draft response for approval is included within Appendix A of this report, as summarised below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Council recognises the strategic importance of the Harbour to the city’s economic growth and regeneration and welcomes the long-term approach to building the Port capacity, the transition to cleaner energy solutions and the progression for regeneration of the Inner Harbour area in line with the Local Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance. • That the Council recognises the important role of the wider Harbour Estate in growing the city’s key growth sectors in film, innovation and tourism, as well as the Harbours role in delivering regeneration and sustainable connectivity connections. • That the Council recognises and supports the reclassification of trust ports to provide the Harbour with the ability to increase spending in a prudent way, as agreed by the CG&R Committee in March 2025.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Council recognises the importance of proper community engagement and encourages the Harbour to continue to ensure that the delivery of the Masterplan is carried out in partnership with city stakeholders and communities.
4.0	Finance & Resource Implications
	None associated with this report.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	None associated with this report.
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix A – Council Response to the BHC draft Masterplan 2025-2050

Following the presentation to the Special Meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee in March 2026, Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the BHC draft Masterplan 2025-50. Strategically Belfast City Council recognises the important role that the wider Harbour Estate plays in supporting the delivery of the Belfast Agenda, as well as the critical role that the Estate has in supporting and growing the local and regional economy. With regard to the Masterplan the Council welcomes the Commissioners vision to increase the capacity of the Harbour to support growth across the region, to invest in regeneration and the provision of much needed homes for the city, and in providing a leading role towards sustainable energy provision, growing our skills base and supporting local communities.

Strategic Alignment

The Council welcomes the Draft Masterplan's 25-year framework, which aligns with the Belfast Agenda. We particularly draw reference to the Local Development Plan and draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) masterplan, including the including the Draft Sailortown, Greater Clarendon and City Quays SPG masterplan, which provides planning guidance for areas directly adjacent to and overlapping with parts of the Harbour Estate

Port Capacity and Economic Growth

The Council recognises the strategic importance of the Harbour as the region's primary trade gateway. We support the long-term proposals for Horizon 3 (2040–2050), including the ambition to increase the port capacity, including the provision for the handling of additional trade, additional cruise capacity and the provision of off-shore wind infrastructure supporting economic and tourism growth for the region as well as supporting the transition to sustainable energy provision.

Transition to Clean Energy

We endorse the commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2030, as well as the establishment a Clean Energy Hub to facilitate a transition to new fuels. This initiative, alongside the roll-out of shore power for docked vessels, is a vital component of the city's broader decarbonisation goals and the Belfast Agendas objective to create a sustainable and resilient regional city.

Innovation and Sectoral Growth

The Council acknowledges the Harbour's pivotal role in growing the film, innovation, and tourism sectors. Continued investment in the Belfast Harbour Studios and the proposed Global Innovation Institute are essential for the knowledge economy. Furthermore,

we welcome the vision for an iconic waterfront that enhances tourism while delivering sustainable connectivity between the Harbour Estate and the city centre.

Trust Port Reclassification and Financial Prudence

As agreed by the CG&R Committee in March 2025, the Council supports the reclassification of trust ports and welcomes the progress made to date in bringing forward the appropriate legislation required to bring this forward.

Community Partnership and Engagement

Finally, the Council stresses the importance of ensuring the delivery of this Masterplan is carried out in genuine partnership with local communities. We encourage the Harbour to continue its proactive engagement with city stakeholders to ensure that regeneration projects, such as the 3,000 proposed new homes, meet the diverse needs of Belfast’s residents.

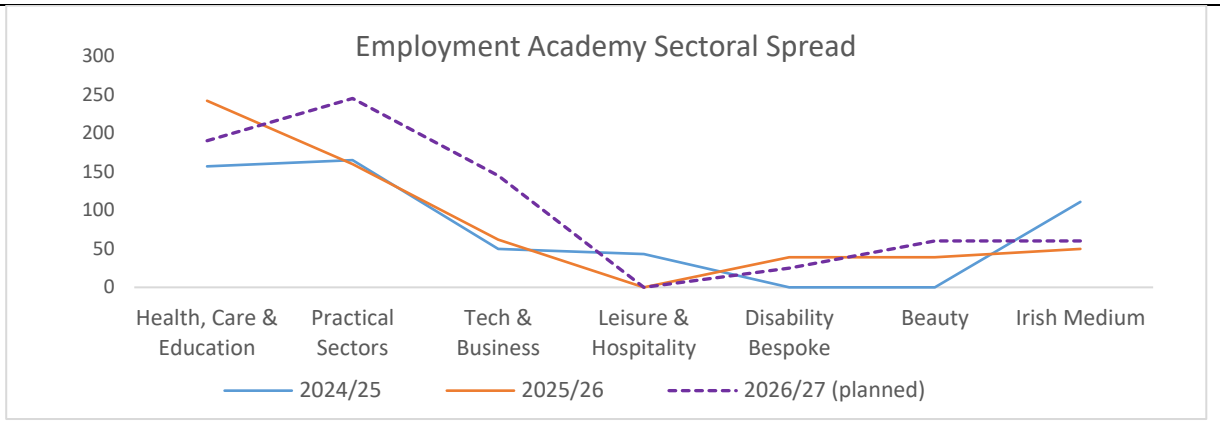
The Council looks forward to the final publication of the Masterplan in May 2026 and to our continued collaboration in shaping the future of the city.



Subject:	Employability and Skills – update and forward workplan								
Date:	15 April 2026								
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Director of Economic Development								
Contact Officer:	Sinéad O'Regan, Employability & Skills Manager								
Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Never</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Call-in									
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>								

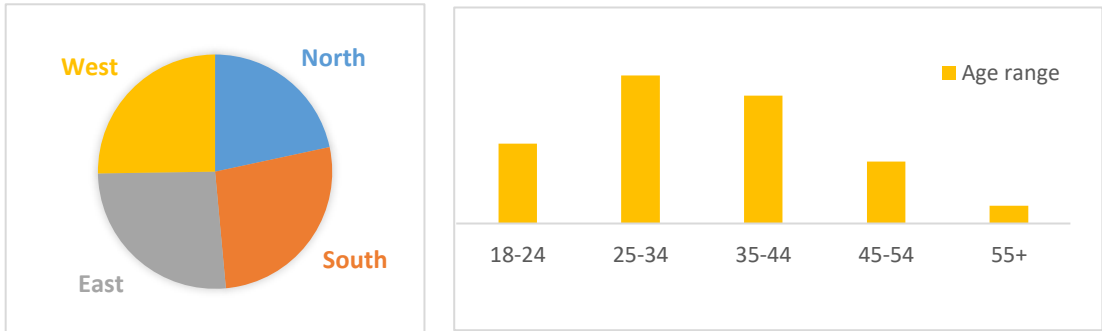
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to advise members of a range of activity undertaken in 2025/26 to support skills development, economic engagement and job outcomes for key target groups and to set out the proposed workplans for the 2026/27 financial year. The work programme supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council by targeting interventions on key cohorts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents out of work and experiencing barriers to employment/self-employment, including those who are long-term unemployed and economically inactive • Residents with low skills levels such as a baseline Level 2 equivalent qualification. • In work, low earning residents. • Those living in areas of highest multiple deprivation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the work undertaken and outputs delivered in the financial year to date • Note and endorse the priority interventions and approach for the 2026/27 financial year.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>2025/26 Update</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is an intervention supported by DfC within all eleven council areas within the region. The LMP provides a platform for engagement with government departments, community partners and business organisations as a means of refocusing regional programmes more effectively within the Belfast area. In addition to LMP resources, the Council also commits resources in each year to support employability and skills interventions focused on those furthest from the labour market.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Employment & Upskilling Academies</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that Employment Academies are one of the key instruments that the Council's Employability and Skills team utilises to support residents to secure a job or a better job. Employment Academies vary depending on employer need but they generally have a number of consistent components, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-academy matching and selection to ensure all individuals who participate have a meaningful chance of securing employment after successful completion • Employer-driven content in relation to vocations and employability skills, qualifications, licences etc. related to the specific job role

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-situ work sampling • Provision of additional supports, from equipment and clothing through to childcare, travel and subsistence • Employability support particularly focused on the final employment interview.
3.3	<p>Given the volatility in the labour market – and the limited financial resources available to undertake the work – delivery has been driven by a number of factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity presented by a number of growth sectors (such as tech, green economy and business services) to support participants into roles with higher earning potential. In recognition of the additional skills support work required, these interventions tend to have a higher per capita cost for participants but offer a positive return on investment in terms of salary levels for those successful in finding work following programme completion • Ongoing need to work with employers to convince them of the value of alternative approaches to finding talent other than pre-existing qualifications and/or experience. This is particularly the case for our work in higher paid sectors – where employers have tended to recruit using an unnecessary ‘degree first’ approach without considering alternative routes to recruiting the skills they need • Opportunities to support existing employees who are in low-paid work and/or underemployed by means of upskilling interventions – supporting individuals to improve salary levels by progressing to a better job and thereby embedding a skills-escalator by creating additional entry-level roles. These Upskilling Academies are limited to low paid sectors such as working with children and other caring professions and only triggered when existing mainstream provision is not suitable or accessible.
3.4	<p>Across 2025/26 we have made investments in over 850 places for Employment and Upskilling Academies, utilising both council and LMP resources. The availability of these resources as well as having an agile, responsive commissioning model, means that we have been able to respond to opportunities, meeting employer demand and bringing forward solutions that benefit local businesses and residents. The pattern of participation by sector is outlined below over the last number of years as well as projected 2026/27 activity.</p>



3.5 It is important to note that differences in volume across sectors above is not an indicator of investment levels. Academies targeting higher paid roles are significantly more expensive to deliver due to the skills levels required for the role. For example, a Tech Employment Academy can cost over £4,000 per person, while a Health & Social Care Employment Academy costs under £1,000 per person. Additionally, employment outcomes are continuously monitored and investments subject to review to ensure residents receive the best service possible. All work is underpinned by the implementation of a Quality Assurance Framework.

3.6 While it is too early to report on outcomes due to the fact that academies are still being delivered, of those who completed participant surveys in 2025/26 so far, 22% of participants reported having a disability while 30% were from an ethnic minority. Details of both the age and geographical spread are below.



3.7 While officers can update members on the outcomes of this investment in a future report, the pattern of outcomes tend to remain stable across the last number of years: attrition rates tend to be low with an average of over 90% successfully completing and with an average into-work rate of 75% for those who complete. The level of demand and supply – both from employers as well as those looking for a job or a better job – remains high, although is much more challenging in higher paid sectors such as Tech.

3.8	<p><u>Provider Engagement</u></p> <p>A vital element of our work is our engagement with groups and providers across the city. This underpins the ability of our interventions such as Employment Academies to successfully match people to the opportunities on offer. Officers have continued to expand the E&S Provider Network, with over 150 organisations and groups from across the city covering key target groups (disability, women, young people, justice leavers, care leavers etc.). Members will no doubt be aware of the likely changes to the community-based employability infrastructure due to the reduction in available funding from the Local Growth Fund. We will need to keep the network membership under review in light of the changes. However we consider that the need for that coordination and information sharing will be even greater in the context of reduced resources.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Digital Badging</u></p> <p>Through RSA Cities of Learning, officers continue to expand micro-credentialing through Digital Badges. These badges help recognise the skills and competencies of those who are at risk of being left behind – a significant challenge in Belfast where there is a disproportionately high percentage of people with no or low skills. All Employment Academies are now digitally badged as an alternative validation of achievement. In addition to this, the Council has offered 60 organisations across the city access to Digital Badging for their own participants and/or employees across the lifetime of the project. In total, 484 credentials have been created through Digital Badging with 90% claim rates across managed programmes.</p>
3.10	<p><u>2026/27 Business Plan</u></p> <p>Building on the work undertaken in 2025/26 as well as learning from previous engagement, the indicative plans for 2026/27 are set out below. Priority areas of work will include:</p>
3.11	<p><u>Labour Market Partnership</u></p> <p>While it will take a number of months to fully know the extent and impact of the reduction of funding available through Local Growth Fund (LGF), one new development may mitigate such a steep reduction of support for those experiencing economic inactivity. A Commission for Work and Wellbeing is being established and is resourced through an NI Executive ‘Transformation Bid’ for those experiencing economic inactivity – using innovative approaches within the ‘health and work’ agenda as recommended by the Health & Work Steering Group convened by the Belfast LMP in 2025.</p>
3.12	<p>Belfast LMP’s approach to 2026/27 includes a focus on the following:</p>

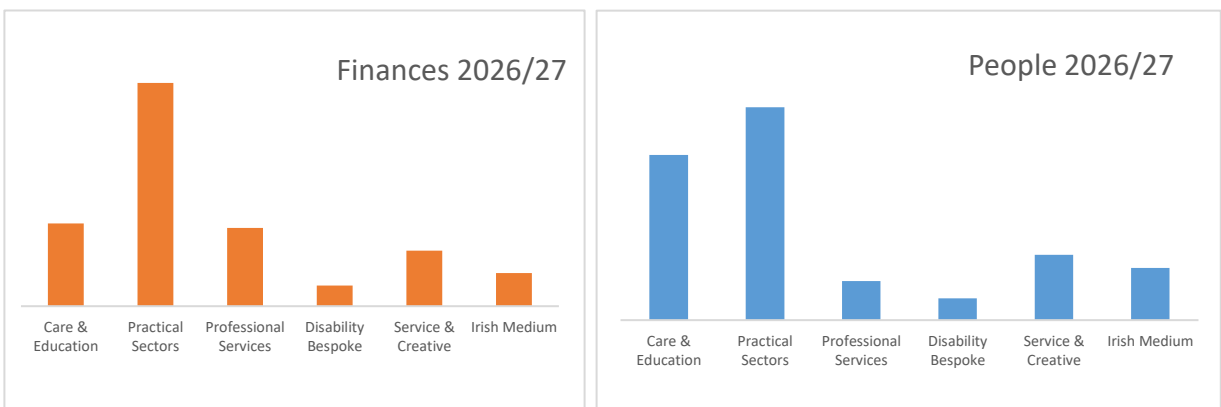
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. System leadership: the Partnership has matured over time and has a strategic enabling role. This leadership input will be particularly important in the coming year, given the radical reduction in support services. The focus will need to be on integration rather than expansion, acting as the convenor of a Belfast-wide employability and economic inactivity ecosystem and influencing the LGF Investment Plan in line with the recommendations of the Health & Work Steering Group; principally that a health-first approach is critical to resolving long-standing barriers along the journey to employment experienced by those who are economically inactive 2. Given the limited LMP resources, it is important to position direct delivery where we can best make the most impact, namely on demand-facing services. A key area of work in the coming year will be the development of an Employer Hub – creating a focal point for employer engagement and input. Our current thinking is that this work will be of immediate use for Local Growth Fund projects in particular – given the reductions in their resources. However it is our intention that this model will become a resource for all employer-facing engagement in order to create resource efficiencies and provide more effective service delivery to businesses 3. While the more natural place for LMP to directly resource and deliver is in the ‘demand facing’ space, the significant reduction of engagement capacity within LGF leaves a gap in the number of people that can be supported. While LMP cannot provide a ‘match’ to LGF, there may be an ability to purchase additional ‘places’ for 2026/27 to be able to maintain some additional level of capacity. While this is a ‘Plan B’ and under consideration until more is known, it could only happen if it was predicated on an assurance that other funding/delivery streams come online in 2027 that mirror the capacity we seek to maintain. The Belfast LMP will keep a watching brief before considering this option, noting that underpinning any decision is the fact that LMP (and BCC) do not have the resources to sufficiently fill this gap beyond an ‘emergency measure’ in this financial year 4. Given that there is a high likelihood of a reduction in skills interventions delivered within LGF projects, LMP will act as a convenor to ensure engagement between LGF and alternative skills delivery which could potentially fill this gap to some extent such as Belfast Met, Invest NI, DfE and DfC.
3.13	<p>Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership has now evolved to incorporate the Local Economic Partnership (LEP). At the March 2026 meeting of this Committee, members agreed an outline workplan of priority projects to be supported using LEP resources. Aligning the LEP and the LMP provides an opportunity for a wider discussion around employability, skills, enterprise and economic growth. As the Partnership develops in the</p>

coming year, efforts will be made to ensure that resources are being maximised to support economic growth in the Belfast area – always with a focus on inclusive growth.

3.14 Employment & Upskilling Academies
 Across 2026/27, we expect that the Employment Academies will engage with at least 675 participants with 75% expected to gain employment/self-employment in sectors outlined below.

- Practical sectors such as logistics and construction as well as scoping opportunities within manufacturing and the green economy (heating, electrical etc.).
- Professional services such as administration, business and digital technology
- Care and education sectors including classroom assistants, health and social care, childcare, childminding and playwork
- Creative industries and service sectors, scoping meaningful opportunities to access good jobs as well as self-employment.

3.15 A breakdown of the sectoral spread planned for 2026/27 is outlined below, both in terms of places allocated as well as the financial investments. As previously noted, differences in volume across sectors above is not an indicator of investment levels and having these together shows this differential.



3.16 The delivery of Employment Academies is underpinned by:

- A focus on growth areas and good jobs – negotiating alternative routes with employers for residents who otherwise could not access due to experience/qualification levels – providing the assurance of aptitude and skills as an appropriate alternative.
- Strong relationships with employers and sectoral bodies who are at the centre of design, such as National House Building Council, CITB, NI Screen, Software Alliance, Logistics UK, NI Social Care Council etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing additional support and highly bespoke academies for those with disabilities and migrants (where gaps exist) • Designing academies such as childminding and beauty which specifically lead to self-employment opportunities with Go Succeed supports built in • Providing in-programme supports as needed so that barriers to participating are removed – childcare, travel, interpreters etc. as well as in-built aftercare.
3.17	Officers will continue to drive excellence through the implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework that underpins delivery and will undertake an external evaluation of Employment Academies in 2025/26 to consolidate and recognise the Belfast Employment Academy model as an evidenced-based and intelligence-led intervention.
3.18	<p><u>Digital Badging</u></p> <p>In 2026/27 officers will continue to work to expand Digital Badging as a way to increase the currency of this inclusive recognition of skills and competence. This includes supporting DfC to roll out digital badging for all LMP delivery across the region. Alongside other RSA Cities of Learning, officers will also explore ways to increase the functionality of Digital Badging for such as the ability to generate CVs through badges, creating a 'marketplace' for recruitment and improving functionality by the development of an app-based solution.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Provider Engagement</u></p> <p>In 2026/27 we will continue to consolidate this work, reaching into, for example, local Neighbourhood Renewal infrastructure across the city and working closely with other anti-poverty measures within the council such as social supermarkets and advice services. This is even more vital given the significant funding reduction with LGF, which will leave a significant gap in provision for those most economically vulnerable across Belfast.</p>
3.20	<p><u>Guidance on employability issues</u></p> <p>In addition to service delivery, the team will also continue to work with internal and external partners to maximise the benefits to be derived through other support mechanisms. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer Contributions: supporting the Planning team with to ensure that relevant E&S considerations are factored into major developments • Social Value: supporting Corporate Procurement Services with the implementation employability and skills measures.

4.0	Financial and Resource Implications
4.1	The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2026/27 budget for the Employability & Skills section of the Place and Economy departmental budget that was approved as part of the 2026/27 estimates process as well as other sources such as DfC (through the LMP).
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
5.1	Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. Considerations given to equality and good relations impacts at the initial stages of project development and monitored throughout delivery. Officers will work closely with the Equality and Good Relations Team on this activity.
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Employability and Skills Business Plan 2026/27

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Appendix 1

2026-27 Employability & Skills Workplan			
Strategic Priority (link to Corporate Plan)	In-year deliverable(s)	How will you measure success (KPIs and Targets)	Budget
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups to drive Inclusive Growth.	Delivery of Employment Academies (into work) - targeting Inclusive Growth cohorts - within sectors with high job demand/good jobs or sustainable self employment options such as caring professions, service sectors, practical sectors and professional services, in line with business demand	675 participants (predicated on level of resourcing from LMP - which is subject to change - as well as recognising that the cost pp increases with the skill level required - numbers will be amended proportionate to changes within these factors) 90% of participants successfully completing 2025 Digital Badges issued as a minimum 75% of those completing gaining employment/self employment	LMP: £691,719 Revenue Budget: £806,250
	Scoping sectors such as the green economy, creative industries and manufacturing, to identify opportunities to build inclusive pathways - through Employment Academies - to jobs for those who would otherwise not be able to access		
	Work with partners to deliver Upskilling Academies targeting those working in low paid sectors to achieve higher level qualifications and gain a better job, in line with business demand		
	Complete the 2026/27 quality improvement cycle within the QA Framework, where self-assessments are undertaken, QA visits held and quality improvement plans produced and implemented		Revenue Budget: £30,000
	Undertake an external evaluation of Employment Academies to ensure the model is 'evidence-based' and to critically examine how outcomes can be optimised.		Revenue Budget: £40,000
	Issue Digital Badges to all participants successfully completing.		-
	Create new Open Framework to provide flexible and agile procurement options for E&S deliverables		-
Support the management and development of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership	Convene and chair up to six Labour Market Partnership meetings, to identify key labour market challenges and co-design solutions and co-ordinate delivery of agreed programmes of work	6 meetings held	LMP Budget: £2,800
	Work with partners to progress the 'Health & Work' agenda, influencing policy direction on intergating health and employability/employment systems	Attendance at Transformation Bid design sessions Membership of oversight group/commission	-
	Design of the Belfast Employer Hub driven through a working group with key partners including EPIC Futures, DfC, DfE, Invest NI etc. This will include the design and implementation of an AI solution for employers as well as a costed business and implementation plan to establish an Employer Hub	6 Working Group meetings to co-design solutions Tech solution created and tested Employer Hub implementation plan completed	LMP: £100,000 Ufl: £225,000
	Develop an three year LMP Action Plan 2027-2030 underpinned by a strategic assessment of supply, demand, policy and provision	2027-2030 LMP Action Plan produced	LMP Budget: £5,200
	Host localised jobs fairs/meet the employer events in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events	4 jobsfairs/meet the employer events held	LMP Budget: £8,832
Deliver social value while supporting the wider employability and skills ecosystem	Consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network to focus on engaging groups and organisations within local community infrastructure as well as those supporting target groups for those with barriers to work. This will include acting as the convenor across the E&S ecosystem	30 new members 6 Newsletters produced for members 8 localised events held on opportunities	Revenue Budget: £30,000
	Continue to operate as an RSA City of Learning, hosting other providers to be able to create/issue badges and working with other cities to enhance the functionality and ease of use of Digital Badging for the benefit of residents gaining vocationally-specific credentials	10 other providers creating/issuing badges 1 functionality improvement implemented	Revenue Budget: £45,000
	Ensure Employability and Skills considerations are included within Developer Contributions by providing statistical data and analysis on labour market shortages. Review and recommend interventions regarding Skills Plans where applicable	3 Skills Assessment completed 3 E&S Plans reviewed	-
	Provide guidance to contractors to meet their Social Value job requirements and support inclusive recruitment practices on current labour market issues	3 BCC contractors supported	-

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Subject:	Minister for Infrastructure Response - Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme
Date:	15th April, 2026
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.					
Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>					
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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?					
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Members on a response received from the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response received from the Minister for Infrastructure.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 14th January 2026, the Committee considered a response from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme.
3.2	<p>The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • request that, should any trees be felled as part of the scheme, all trees removed are replaced with semi-mature trees at a ratio of three new trees for every one tree felled; • seek assurance that a pedestrian crossing at the Ardenlee Avenue junction on the Ravenhill Road would be delivered as part of the scheme; • request that double yellow lines be installed on the corners of the streets off the Ravenhill Road, as part of the scheme, to help prevent obstructive parking; • request that the Department proactively engage and consult with local schools, as part of the scheme's consultation process, to ascertain how best the scheme could promote safe and active travel for children to school; • request an update on the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge; and • request that the Department engages with the Council in respect of the potential for the Department to support the installation of lighting infrastructure across all Council Parks within the city.
3.3	Correspondence has now been received from the Minister for Infrastructure (Appendix 1) which provides a response to each of the issues outlined within section 3.2.
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Document Attached
	Appendix 1 – Minister for Infrastructure Response – Belfast Cycle Network Ravenhill Road Scheme

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA

Mr Craig Mealey
Committee Services Officer
Belfast City Council

MealeyC@belfastcity.gov.uk

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3rd Floor, James House
Gasworks Site
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Belfast
BT7 2JA
Telephone: (028) 9054 0540

Email: Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference: CGR27022026

Our reference: COR-0233-2026

26 March 2026

Craig, a chara,

BELFAST CYCLE NETWORK – RAVENHILL ROAD SCHEME

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 February 2026 seeking further details on the Ravenhill Road / Ormeau Embankment Pedestrian and Cycle Improvements scheme. I welcome Council's support of this scheme, and for the work we undertake to make our transport network more inclusive and sustainable.

In response to each of the Committee's requests:

Should any trees be felled as part of the scheme, all trees removed are replaced with semi-mature trees at a ratio of three new trees for every one tree felled;

On this scheme, my department is content to replace any mature tree felled with two new semi-mature trees. It is proposed that any trees that cannot be accommodated along the Ravenhill Road are planted within nearby local parks, subject to agreement with Council officials. The exact numbers involved will be finalised on completion of the statutory processes, as matters raised during this process may have some bearing on the final scheme.

Seek assurance that a pedestrian crossing at the Ardenlee Avenue junction on the Ravenhill Road would be delivered as part of the scheme;

A pedestrian and cycle toucan crossing near the Ardenlee Avenue junction is included within the scheme design.

Request that double yellow lines be installed on the corners of the streets off the Ravenhill Road, as part of the scheme, to help prevent obstructive parking;

My department will undertake a review of parking at these locations and, where there is evidence of illegal parking on corners, double yellow lines will be provided as part of the works.

Request that the Department proactively engage and consult with local schools, as part of the scheme's consultation process, to ascertain how best the scheme could promote safe and active travel for children to school;

Officials are currently finalising a draft Traffic Regulations Order for public consultation. Elected representatives and key stakeholders will be advised of the upcoming consultation once the orders are prepared. My department intends to explore options for engaging directly with local schools as a part of the upcoming public consultation process.

Road safety and promoting active travel are important priorities for my department and there are a number of programmes that we deliver directly, and in partnership with others, to provide our young people with the necessary skills and confidence to walk, wheel or cycle. On completion of the scheme my officials will also consider how best to use these programmes to promote active travel to the pupils of those schools affected.

Request an update on the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge;


The Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge is currently at procurement stage, however, no further details on the delivery timelines are available because this project, along with other major infrastructure projects, is being considered in light of the pending outcome and implications of the Court of Appeal's ruling on the A5.

Request that the Department engages with the Council in respect of the potential for the Department to support the installation of lighting infrastructure across all Council Parks within the city.

Officials engage regularly with all Councils on their greenway and active travel priorities. Lighting of paths within parks in Belfast is a regular topic of discussion, particularly where those paths are identified routes within the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan. It would be a matter for Council to consider lighting in any parks they wish but my department may provide capital funding support towards installation of appropriate lighting deemed to be beneficial to enhancing the Belfast Cycling Network, subject to approval of a suitable grant funding business case.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Kimmins', written in a cursive style.

LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

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Subject:	Department for Infrastructure Response - Issues Raised at Special Meeting in November 2025
Date:	15th April, 2026
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
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Sometime in the future	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Members on correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure in response to a number of issues raised at the special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 26th November, 2025.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response received from the Department for Infrastructure.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 26th November, 2025, officials from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) attended to present the DfI Roads Annual Report for 2025/26.
3.2	<p>In response to a number of issues raised by Members, the DfI officials agreed to investigate and provide an update in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether a road survey had been carried out by DfI on the A55, Milltown Hill junction, in respect of potential options, including the installation of traffic lights or other appropriate measures, given the road safety issues and traffic congestion; • the resurfacing of roads on Sicily Park and Locksley Park, given the poor road conditions; • the installation of traffic calming measures on Carnanmore Park and Tildarg Avenue, which had been previously surveyed a number of years ago, given the increased traffic on those streets; • the implementation and delivery of the Residents' Parking Schemes and the potential to explore a citywide approach; • the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge; • the installation of traffic calming measures on Distillery Street; • the potential to extend the double yellow lines on Orby Street; • the timeline for the Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycling improvements and whether there were plans to consult in respect of the Limestone Road; and • the timeline to complete the works to the Victoria Park underpass.

3.3	Correspondence has now been received (Appendix 1) from the DfI Acting Divisional Roads Manager, Mr. Simon Wells, which provides an update in respect of the issues outlined within section 3.2.
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Document Attached
	Appendix 1 – Department for Infrastructure Response – Issues Raised at Special Meeting in November 2025

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**DfI Roads
Eastern Division**

Craig Mealey
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Department for
Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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Infrastructure

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Hydebank House
4a Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL

Tel: 0300 200 7893

Email: easternsecretariat@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Being Dealt With By: Simon Wells

Date: 9 March 2026

Dear Craig,

QUESTIONS ASKED BY BELFAST CITY COUNCIL'S CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Please find below responses to the issues raised by Committee Members:

- 1. An update on whether a road survey had been carried out by DfI on the A55, Milltown Hill junction, in respect of potential options, including the installation of traffic lights or other appropriate measures, given the road safety issues and traffic congestion;**

In general, priority junctions form the vast majority of all road junctions and operate satisfactorily where traffic volumes on the minor roads are low in comparison with those of the major roads.

When considering the most appropriate layout and form of control for a junction, the Department takes into account such things as traffic volumes, the collision history, the amount of land available, the associated cost to implement a scheme, and its relative priority against other schemes competing for available finance.

The junctions of the Milltown Hill / Milltown Road and Gray's Park / Milltown Road are typical of many locations in that they form priority junctions, where the side road traffic gives way to traffic on the main road.

Officials appreciate the Milltown Road is busy especially during the peak traffic periods and drivers from side roads must wait for a suitable gap to progress.

A change to the current junction arrangements, for example, signalisation would normally only be considered where there are large traffic volumes from the side roads and there are consistent delays throughout the day. This would not be the case for the junctions of Milltown Hill / Milltown Road and Gray's Park / Milltown Road.

In response to local concerns, officials undertook a survey at the Gray's Park/Milltown Road Junction on Wednesday 5 March 2025 during the morning peak period between 8am and 9am. This did not indicate any significant delays or issues for vehicles exiting and entering this Junction. During this period 3 vehicles exited Gray's Park via a right turn while 52 vehicles exited via a left turn and 37 vehicles entered Gray's Park.

Similarly, Milltown Hill/ Milltown Road junction was assessed on Thursday 6 March 2025 during the morning peak period between 8am and 9am which again did not indicate any significant delays or issues for vehicles exiting and entering this junction. During this period 69 vehicles exited Milltown Hill via a right turn while 101 vehicles exited via a left turn and 36 vehicles entered Milltown Hill.

As such, while officials completely understand the concerns raised and request from residents, it is considered that the current layout at both these junctions is appropriate for the locations and there are no plans to change these at this time.

A yellow box road marking is normally provided to improve traffic management at the intersection of busy public roads where queuing traffic regularly prevents movements within the junction or, where creating a gap in queuing traffic would allow vehicles from another direction to gain access to a carriageway which is free from obstruction.

It was noted during the assessment on Thursday 6 March 2025 vehicles were able to enter and exit Milltown Hill during breaks in the traffic without any difficulties and within a reasonable length of time. There was no evidence of any queuing traffic backing across this junction preventing traffic movements.

It is however accepted that some difficulties may be experienced during the daily peak times for traffic entering and exiting Milltown Hill. However, outside peak times vehicles enter and exit Milltown Hill without any issues or delays.

Given the above information, officials do not consider a yellow box marking is appropriate at this location.

Officials have also considered the residents request that traffic exiting Milltown Hill onto Ballylesson Road should have priority over traffic flows on Ballylesson Road. It is however considered that the current arrangement is the most appropriate and as such there are no plans to change the current layout.

Notwithstanding the above assessments, officials are planning a series of measures to highlight this section of road aimed at increasing driver awareness and safety. This will include enhanced signing on the approach to the puffin crossing, new road markings and improved signing to remind drivers of the 40mph speed limit, additional high friction surfacing and bollard replacement.

2. An update on the resurfacing of roads on Sicily Park and Locksley Park, given the poor road conditions;

Both Sicily Park and Locksley Park are placed within the upper tier of the Department's three-year priority resurfacing programme. Recent inspections have confirmed that the condition of both streets meets the criteria for intervention, reflecting a combination of deterioration and recorded surface defects. Their position on the programme means they will be taken forward for delivery at the earliest opportunity, subject to the availability of funding and the scheduling of works within the wider maintenance programme.

The Department will continue to monitor both locations through routine inspections and will manage any safety related defects in line with established maintenance standards until full resurfacing can be completed.

3. An update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Carnanmore Park and Tildarg Avenue, which had been previously surveyed a number of years ago, given the increased traffic on those streets;

Carnanmore Park and Tildarg Avenue – As the last traffic calming assessment has been over three years ago new traffic calming assessments will be carried out in line with current policy.

4. An update on the implementation and delivery of the Residents' Parking Schemes and the potential to explore a citywide approach;

Following the introduction of the first residents' parking scheme, on Rugby Road and College Park Avenue in Belfast, the Department completed a review of residents' parking schemes and the Residents Parking Review Report is available to view on the Department's [website](#).

During the development of this report and since its publication there has been a significant level of interest in the establishment of residents' parking zones across Northern Ireland.

Given this level of demand, and ongoing budgetary and resource constraints, the Department has developed an application and assessment process for residents' parking schemes that will ensure a streamlined approach for considering, assessing, and prioritising requests for schemes going forward.

An announcement will be made as to how future residents' parking schemes will be assessed by the Department in due course.

With regards to a citywide approach to Residential Parking Zones, the Department are working in partnership with the local councils to produce tailored, evidence-based Parking Strategies as part of the suite of Transport Plans under development. Specifically in Belfast, a dedicated Parking Strategy for Belfast City Council is currently being developed in collaboration with council officers as part of the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP). This strategy will be included within the Belfast City Centre and Metropolitan Area sections of the ETP and will guide any future changes to the transport network. The strategy will seek to identify areas where it would be appropriate to introduce Residential Parking Zones to prioritise local access and reduce commuter parking in neighbourhoods.

5. An update on the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge;

Divis Footbridge re-imagining proposals are currently a low priority within our structures programme. We have a Bridge Strengthening programme in which works are prioritised on those structures in the worst condition (safety critical). DfI has approx. 6,000 bridges and unfortunately currently do not have the resource to be able divert to improving the aesthetics of Divis footbridge.

6. An update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Distillery Street;

This location is current ranked 34th on the DfI Eastern Division traffic calming programme. This is a live document, and rankings are subject to change on receipt of new data. As the survey data is over 3 years old a new assessment will be carried out.

7. An update on the potential to extend the double yellow lines on Orby Street;

I can advise that it is considered that the extent of the current waiting restrictions on Orby Street is adequate and assists with the traffic management and progression in the area.

An examination of the history of personal injury road traffic collisions at this location, provided by the PSNI, has also not indicated a particular safety concern. As such there are no plans to change the current road layout.

8. An update on the timeline for the Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycling improvements and whether there were plans to consult in respect of the Limestone Road;

The Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycling improvement schemes are currently in detailed design, following initial public engagement in November 2025. DfI officials expect to begin the Traffic Regulation Order process and formal public consultation in 2026. Initial public engagement for the Limestone Road scheme is planned for April 2026.

9. An update on the timeline to complete the works to the Victoria Park underpass;

Works at the Victoria Park underpass are now complete. As part of this programme, the old foundry gully pots were replaced with new storm pots. These modern units allow for more efficient cleaning of the gullies and make jetting of the drainage lines considerably easier, which will support ongoing maintenance of the system.

The Department will continue to monitor the location to ensure the drainage network performs as intended and to minimise the risk of flooding returning.

Apologies for the delay in replying, but I trust that the responses now provided satisfactorily address the various questions raised by Members.

However, if further clarification is required on any of the issues please email Eastern Secretariat EasternSecretariat@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk and your query will be forwarded to the relevant team.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Wells
Divisional Roads Manager (Acting)

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City Regeneration Members' Working Group

Thursday, 5th March, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY REGENERATION MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP

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

In attendance: Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;
Ms. P. Conway, Development Manager;
Ms. P. Davidson, Estates Manager;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Mr. A. Ferguson, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. C. Halliday, Project Support Assistant;
Ms. E. Watts, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Member Services and DSO.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th October, 2025 were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

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

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the actions following the last meeting which included that, in February, a comparator site visit had taken place to Loftlines. She provided an update across a number of matters relating to the PSP workstrand and advised of progress to note since the last meeting including: Additional Opportunity Sites, HAG/Total Cost Indicators, Off Street Car Parking Orders, Rates, Inclusive Growth/Social Value, Belfast Agenda Targets and Place-based growth proposition.

The Director then provided an update in respect of the Development Programme. This included information in respect of the multi-site approach and additional opportunity sites and included detail in respect of the benefits and key deliverables.

Consideration was given to addressing the viability challenge and funding models and the Initial Site-Specific Business Plans, during which the Director answered several questions from the Members.

The Director advised that a report would be taken to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. A Member requested that this report would clarify the following:

- Affordable /Social Housing provision in the Corporation Street site and all sites across the multi-site approach;
- The use of any land receipts generated from land disposals and ability to utilise for housing regeneration purposes; and
- Further detail in relation to the £1m secured through the rates setting process to support work towards housing-led regeneration.

A Member requested that the Director of Finance attend the future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to discuss the matters raised in relation to the use of capital receipts, the funding secured via the rates process and consideration of funding and financing options .

A Member asked whether the DfI and DfC Ministers could be engaged regarding the Belfast Rapid Transit route as it impacted Ormeau Avenue. The Director confirmed that this would be addressed via the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the presentation, along with the immediate next steps.