



Subject:	Innovate UK funding opportunity to scope a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between Belfast and Liverpool and to resubmit an application to the Net Zero Living Places fund
Date:	19 th January 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update members on a funding opportunity from Innovate UK to support the development of a Net Zero shipping corridor between Liverpool and Belfast.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the contents of the report and approve the participation of Council staff in the delivery of the scoping study; II. Note that funding (£450,000) from Innovate UK was made available to the Connected Places Catapult on 1st December to undertake a scoping study for a Net Zero shipping corridor between Liverpool and Belfast which is expected to start on 1 January and complete by 31st March 2024; and III. Note that an opportunity to resubmit an earlier application to the Net Zero Living Places Fund and approve the participation of Council staff in the revision and submission of a proposal; IV. A further update will be provided to Members once the scoping study and submission have been completed.
3.0	Main report
	Background
3.1	<p>A Statement of Intent was signed between Belfast, Liverpool, Dublin and Manchester in March 2021 to form a cooperative partnership to develop practical approaches to accelerate the delivery of net-zero commitments in our cities and city regions. The Statement commits each city to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing best practices, knowledge and experience; • Connecting organisations and facilitating R&D, business and investment collaborations; and • Coordinating joint participation at events (including the Net Zero Summit in June 2022) and hosting, where necessary, incoming delegations.
3.2	<p>Subsequent collaboration between the cities has led to the Circular Economy work between Dublin and Belfast funded through the Shared Island Fund and engagement via events in Manchester and Liverpool. Discussions have also been ongoing for some time with the Connected Places Catapult (CPC) and other stakeholders in Liverpool and Belfast around the concept of a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between the two harbour cities.</p>
	Funding opportunity 1: Innovate UK
3.3	<p>In mid-November, the CPC was made aware of an opportunity to access funding (£450K) from Innovate UK, if it was able to identify and develop a proposal by 1st December. This</p>

provided an opportunity to advance an ongoing discussion on a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between the two cities and to access funds that would enable the scoping of a programme of work to develop this concept into a concrete pipeline of projects. Innovate UK has subsequently approved CPC to use the £450K for the scoping study.

3.4 The key stakeholders include: CPC, Belfast City Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Belfast Harbour, Mersey Maritime, Royal Haskoning DHV, Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moores University, Queens University, B9Energy, SIBNI.

3.5 It is envisaged that most of the scoping work will be carried out by the Universities but it is likely there will be a small budget (c£10K TBC) available to Belfast City Council to coordinate, engage and support the work. If successful, the project will start on 1st January and run through to 31st March 2024. The Climate team is working at pace with CPC and Queens University to mobilise in advance of the start date in January.

Proposed project: Net Zero Shipping Corridor between Belfast and Liverpool

Project rationale

3.6 Ports are key hubs for trade and investment and support SME's and employ thousands of workers. They are also increasingly becoming centres for future fuels and decarbonisation. Shipping currently accounts for 3% of global GHG emissions and is set to increase by 130% by 2050. Belfast (13.1 Million Tonnes) and Liverpool (5.6 Million Tonnes) rank as the first and fourth UK ports by domestic tonnage in 2021.

3.7 Belfast Harbour aims to be one of the greenest ports in the world and has set a Net Zero target of 2030. A local consortium has been developing zero-emission shore-side electricity and hydrogen-powered vessels (including a commuter ferry from Bangor to Belfast) and there are many other ongoing developments in this area.

3.8 This is an exciting opportunity to connect two important maritime economies and drive decarbonisation, growth and innovation. The project would be a collaboration of businesses, government and academia in the 2 harbour cities.

3.9 Decarbonising maritime transportation will require research, development, demonstration, and deployment of scalable zero-emission energy sources at a massive scale. It will also require enabling policies that incentivise the transition to zero-emission fuels and technologies as soon as possible, which in turn can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also requires green skills.

3.10	<p>Net Zero shipping corridors, which showcase zero-emission fuels and technologies along maritime trade routes between two (or more) ports, can encourage the early and rapid adoption of alternatives to petroleum-based fuels in the maritime industry.</p> <p><u><i>The opportunity</i></u></p>
3.11	<p>Through leveraging the work already being done, the existing assets in Liverpool and Belfast, and the significance of their existing domestic shipping networks, there is a unique opportunity to create a broad feasibility study which could lead to the trialling of green maritime shipping solutions within well used domestic ports, which once trialled would offer a blueprint for decarbonising a significant portion of UK's domestic shipping and establish the United Kingdom as a global leader within this space.</p> <p><u><i>Aims and objectives</i></u></p>
3.12	<p>The project would be a collaboration between the City Councils and Port Authorities, Industry and academia from Belfast and Liverpool to develop a feasibility study in the two harbour cities. The aims of the project would be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate transition risk for the two ports as the global economy decarbonises ensuring that the ports of Liverpool and Belfast serve as gateway to trade and investment in decarbonisation technologies (wind, green hydrogen, tidal etc); and • Position Liverpool and Belfast at the forefront of net zero innovation and as testbeds for commercialising new approaches and technologies.
3.13	<p>The Study will explore Place Leadership and support, identify existing projects and funding proposals, the regulatory basis, the existing green infrastructure and interventions necessary for an implementable Net Zero shipping' corridor between the two regions, and set out the steps necessary to deploy and deliver on a pilot demonstrating the technologies. The outputs would create a collaboration that could lead to a potential larger programme of activity.</p> <p>Funding opportunity 2: Innovate UK - Net Zero Living Places fund</p>
3.14	<p>In October, Belfast City Council submitted two bids to Innovate UK under the Net Zero Living Places fund which were both unsuccessful. Innovate UK have since been in touch to say that they are re-opening the competition for unsuccessful bidders to re-submit to the 'Pathfinder' fund between 22-31st Jan. This opportunity was previously included a paper to the Climate and City Resilience Committee in Aug 2023.</p>
3.15	<p>The project 'Belfast Net Zero pathfinder' will support Belfast City Council to develop priority interventions (specifically heat and renewable power generation) recommended by the Belfast Local Energy Plan and the Queens Island Decarbonisation Plan into delivery</p>

	<p>projects. This project will address market barriers through business model innovation and assessing commercial viability and routes to finance to de-risk the implementation process. The aim is to create a better understanding of how Belfast City Council can act as an enabler for delivery of net zero projects in the city.</p>
3.16	<p>If successful, the fund will provide total grant funding of up to £150,000. A funding decision is due on 18th Feb with a potential start date on 1st May or 1st June.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.17	<p>There are no financial implications as the scoping study will be funded using the Innovate UK funding and delivered by CPC with inputs from the partner organisations.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></p>
3.18	<p>None.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>