

# East Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 28th February, 2024

## SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor and Rodgers;  
Councillors Bower, R. Brooks, P. Donnelly,  
D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Hanvey,  
Long, McCormick, F. McAteer, McMullan,  
and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;  
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;  
Ms. E. Gowdy, Lead Officer, Open Spaces and Streetscene;  
and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Department for Infrastructure - Active Travel Discussion**

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had agreed to invite the Department for Infrastructure to attend a future meeting to discuss the expansion of the Belfast Bikes Network, the Belfast Bike Scheme and issues impacting the East of the city.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. McParland, Head of Active Travel, and Ms. S. Dustagheer, representing the Department for Infrastructure, to the meeting.

Mr. McParland answered a range of questions in relation to the Belfast Cycle Network Plan, its resources, funding challenges and implications, staffing pressures,

He stated that the funding for the Belfast Cycle Network for next year had not yet been agreed, however, detailed designs for part of the routes of the short term delivery phase of the Network had been completed and would be open for consultation and engagement soon.

He outlined the Active Travel Teams ambitions for the future and provided an update on the schemes at Ravenhill Road, Mount Road and the Sydenham Greenway, together with the consideration of the Victoria Park Underpass. One Member raised issues regarding the Montgomery Road Scheme in relation to residents' concerns regarding the trees at the rear of their properties and the land ownership, together with the potential removal of parking bays.

Mr. McParland advised he would investigate the issues raised and provide further information in due course.

During discussion, Mr. McParland and Ms. S. Dustagheer outlined the process of delivery and highlighted that it typically took two years to deliver a scheme. He confirmed that a number of schemes were ready to be delivered in 2024, with a majority of the remaining schemes to be delivered in 2025. He advised that it was anticipated that critical junctions on the network would also be improved.

Mr. McParland advised that the cycle network played an important role in making short term journeys attractive and highlighted that the Belfast Cycle Network was the focus for delivery in Belfast and confirmed that schemes had been laid out city wide.

In response to a Member's question in relation to promoting active travel within schools, Mr. McParland described how the Cycling Proficiency Programme and the Active School Travel Programme were both still running and were very valuable. He highlighted that the Department added the greatest value in providing suitable infrastructure to enable school children to feel safe on their journeys.

During further discussion, the representatives explained the different types of cycle lanes, together with the temporary measures and interventions. They also answered a range of questions on the gritting of cycle lanes in bad weather and restricted speed zones.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Mr. McParland would provide further information on the issues raised.

### **Additional Item – Expansion of the Belfast Bikes Network**

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting in September 2023, it had discussed the potential for a new stand on the Upper Newtownards Road. As an agreement with local businesses/landowners could not be secured in the preferred location, Members had agreed a back-up location on Sandown Car Park. Several options in the car park were explored and the initial option would result in the loss of three car parking spaces.

The Client Manager advised that the car park team had refused the location due to the risk of a legal challenge if they suspended parking bays under the current Off Street Parking Order. Subsequent discussions with the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the legislation and the possibility for a pilot scheme were held and, though the DfI would not contradict a pilot scheme on this site, it would be a lengthy process. The Client Manager reported that the team had identified an alternative area within the Car Park, close to the bus stop (also supported by DfI) and suggested that the Working Group move forward with the Bike Stand at Sandown Road Car Park.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed that, as part of the expansion in the East area for Phase 4 2022/23, a new bike station be installed at the car park at Sandown Road.

Chairperson