



Subject:	Belfast Region City Deal – update
Date:	13 th December 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services

Is this report restricted? Yes No

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

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

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 No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the progress on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment. • Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>It is almost three years on from the signing of the Belfast Region City Deal, formally signed on 15 December 2021 at the ICC Belfast, the programme of investment is now delivering results, creating more and better jobs, leveraging further private sector investment and developing inclusive growth and social value.</p>
3.2	<p>With one project already operational, four in construction/fit-out stage, eight projects at design phase, four with planning approvals, and three skills assessments completed the programme of investment is firmly in delivery phase.</p>
3.3	<p>There are now also a total of 15 Outline Business Cases (OBC's) approved with a combined approximate project value of £670m and 12 Contracts for Funding signed for projects representing significant momentum since deal signing for the programme of investment.</p>
3.4	<p>Key highlights on progress across the pillars of investment since the last update in August include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iREACH Health has submitted and had its Full Business Case approved, ahead of on site construction work now commencing. The project has also secured key private sector partnerships with Celerion and Exploristics through tenancy agreement to expand clinical trials, boosting Belfast's role in cutting-edge clinical research and enhancing local healthcare innovation. It has also signed a lease agreement with the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. The project received a green rating following its Gateway Review 3 at Investment Decision stage. • In relation to Momentum One Zero, the planning application was formally approved in November. The centre will transform the digital innovation activity taking place in our region, focusing on key sectors such as cyber security and artificial intelligence. The project has also recently received £6.25m from UK Research and Innovation UKRI to transform supply chains to support resilient and reliable supply chains supporting food stability. • Construction work continues apace at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) at Global Point Park. At Studio Ulster, specialist virtual production equipment worth almost £20m and funded by City Deal, has been delivered and is being

installed at its location in north Belfast. The Contract for Funding is being agreed for the **Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology** and detailed design continues to progress well.

- The **Digital Twin Centre** project led by Digital Catapult has leveraged £15m of additional Innovate UK funding and almost £10m of further private sector investment. Rental accommodation within Belfast has also been secured, with occupancy being taken up early in 2025 and a significant recruitment drive is underway.
- An Outline Business Case is being commenced for an **SBRI Programme** valuing c.£5m – with a focus on addressing key challenges across the Belfast Region including net zero. The pilot SBRI project, **Augment the City** continues to progress very well.
- The Outline Business Case has now been approved for the **Ards & North Down Innovation Hub**, focusing on the creative industries, and a Contract for Funding is now being developed for sign off early in 2025.
- Mid & East Antrim Borough Council announced in September the appointment of WH Stephens, a multi-disciplinary construction consultancy to lead on the design for the **i4C Cleantech Centre** at St Patrick's Barracks. The centre will provide a physical base for businesses and will focus on the development of clean technology. The project is scheduled for completion in 2027. A subsidy control assessment was submitted for the project in late November, with the Contract for Funding due to be signed early in 2025.
- Following appointment of the integrated consultancy teams, concept designs are being developed and key surveys works being undertaken across a number of the tourism and regeneration projects including the **Gobbins** and **Mourne Mountain Gateway Project**. The RIBA Stage 2 report for **Carrickfergus Regeneration** has been completed and the project is now progressing to the detailed design stage and progressing towards planning.
- A series of public engagement events for **Carrickfergus Regeneration** and **Mourne Mountain Gateway Project** have taken place, with further events planned for the New Year. These events were designed to gather important feedback and provide insights from residents and key community and business stakeholders on the projects.
- **Bangor Waterfront** has appointed WH Stephens for Ballyholme Yacht Club and McAdam Design for Pickie Fun Park and design works are progressing. Procurement has commenced for a design team for the Urban Waterfront Public Realm project element. The Operator procurement for Pickie Fun Park and Bangor Marina are ongoing with appointments expected early in the New Year.

- **Destination Royal Hillsborough** has commenced procurement of their professional services teams with the first appointments expected in the New Year.
- Engagement is ongoing with the relevant statutory bodies to progress the planning applications for **Destination Royal Hillsborough** public realm and **Newry Regeneration**, to enable progression to the next stage of project delivery.
- The procurement of the contractors for the Theatre & Conference Centre and Civic Hub projects in the **Newry Regeneration** programme is nearing completion and we are expecting to see works commence on site on these two projects in the spring.
- A public consultation on **Belfast Stories** inviting people to explore the concept designs for the project was launched on 19 November and will run for 14 weeks until 23 February 2025. The consultation is being undertaken in order to inform the next stage of project development up to the end of RIBA stage 2 and beyond.
- Procurement of the Design & Build contractor for the **Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge** is ongoing with the intention to appoint in summer 2025 and work to finalise the OBC for **Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2** is ongoing.
- The skills assessment for the Creative Industries (Virtual Production) is now complete and the assessment for the Digital sector is now in progress.

Delivering Social Value and Inclusive, Sustainable Growth

3.5 As reported previously ensuring that the growth generated through the BRCD is inclusive and sustainable and that it balances societal and economic needs with those of the economy is a central tenet of the BRCD.

3.6 Partners have adopted the Buy Social model as the minimum requirement for Social Value within contracts and contractors have now commenced uploading their Social Value Delivery Plans to the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) portal and are reporting monthly on their progress. This process is closely supported and monitored by the Programme Management Office.

3.7 To date contracts that have commenced reporting to the SIB portal have committed to delivery of a total of 6,609 Social Value Delivery Points, mainly through interventions such as paid employment opportunities for apprentices, student placements and graduates, health and wellbeing initiatives and climate change and carbon reducing training.

3.8	<p>The BRCD Programme Management Office (PMO) have also along with representatives from the Department of Communities (DfC) held a Social Value Plans Workshop on 10th September 2024. The focus of which was to learn how DfC have been using Social Value Plans to ensure that inclusive growth is maximised during the development and delivery of capital projects. The session provided some helpful insights for BRCD partners currently preparing their Social Value Plans.</p> <p>Finance & Governance</p>
3.9	<p>The overarching Deal Document is supported by a Financial Plan which sets out the overall financial framework including stewardship, protocols and controls and the role of the accountable body. The plan also details the financial forecasts and predicted funding flows and timelines and forms the basis of the financial reporting and profiling arrangements.</p>
3.10	<p>Performance reports including financial performance are considered by the Executive Board on a quarterly basis and the recent 2024-25 Quarter 2 Finance Report demonstrated the positive progress being made across the programme. The total year to date BRCD spend at the end of Quarter 2 stood at just under £20m. Drawdowns to date from both the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities total £22m, with a further c.£9m due to be paid over the coming months.</p>
3.11	<p>An internal audit of the BRCD PMO is complete with Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) providing substantial assurance that the BRCD PMO have controls in place to facilitate the delivery of the Programme. AGRS found the controls and processes over financial management, programme management, governance, oversight and risk to be adequate, appropriate and operating effectively in line with the requirements of the Heads of Terms and Deal Document and agreed governance arrangements at a programme level.</p> <p>Communications & Engagement</p>
3.12	<p>Partners held a political engagement event on Wednesday 20 November at the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings to inform and engage elected members on Deal delivery and progress to date.</p>
3.13	<p>The event provided a valuable opportunity to update and engage with MLAs on delivery to date on the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment, to share the partners' shared vision and to showcase the region-wide economic and social opportunities that the Deal is creating.</p>

3.14	<p>Members learned of the significant progress that has been made, thanks to the strength of the partnership and how the Belfast Region will benefit from revitalised public spaces, innovation hubs with additional office spaces and improved transportation links. They also heard how a continued focus on inclusivity, social value and employability and skills will help make the city and wider region a better place to live, work and invest in.</p>
3.15	<p>Further business engagement is planned in early 2025 and Members will be updated as this work progresses.</p>
<p>BRCD Council Panel</p>	
3.16	<p>The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held in February 2025 and will be hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.</p>
3.17	<p>The minutes from the meeting hosted by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council on 29 May 2024 are attached at Appendix 1 for information.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets. As outlined additional resources have also been leveraged from other funding sources to extend the impact of the deal.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;</p> <p><i>'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'</i></p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Council Panel Meeting 29 May 2024</p>