



Subject:	Active Travel Delivery Plan and Island Street designs
Date:	5 February 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
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Restricted Reports	
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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	The purpose of this report is to highlight that the Active Travel Delivery Plan for NI is open for consultation until 28 February and to seek approval for the attached Council response to be submitted to the Department for Infrastructure. This paper also provides an update on the designs of the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme that is being delivered as part of the Belfast Cycling Network and to seek approval for Council's response.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note that the Department for Infrastructure is undertaking a public consultation on the NI Active Travel Delivery Plan and approve the draft consultation response provided in Appendix A of this report. The draft response will be submitted subject to Council ratification on the 3rd March 2025. II. Note the correspondence received from DfI as included within Appendix B1 of this report in relation to Island Street and the proposed designs for the scheme in Appendix B2. III. Agree the draft Council response to the designs for the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme in Appendix B3 that is being delivered as part of the Belfast Cycling Network.
3.0	<p>Background</p> <p>The Department for Infrastructure has prepared a draft Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland that will guide the delivery of active travel infrastructure for the next 10 years. A Consultation Event was held on the 13th November 2024 with provision for five BCC Members and Officers to attend, with the feedback incorporated within the draft response as attached in Appendix A of this report.</p> <p>3.1 Since the Belfast Cycling Network (BCN) was already published in 2021, Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022 – 31 Department for Infrastructure, and is currently being rolled out as per the phasing within the BCN Delivery Plan, the draft Active Travel Delivery Plan that is out for consultation does not include the Belfast area, but rather the surrounding council areas. Officers feel that a response is warranted given the cross-council boundary area connectivity needs, along with the potential implications for the Belfast Cycle Network.</p> <p>3.2 As the Consultation closing date is the 28th February, a draft response has been prepared by officers for feedback and approval by this Committee. The draft response will be submitted subject to Council Ratification on the 3rd March. Members can also submit an individual or Party responses via Citizen Space on the DfI website until 28 February: ACTIVE TRAVEL DELIVERY PLAN CONSULTATION - NI Direct - Citizen Space.</p>

3.3	In line with delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network, DfI has shared the designs of the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme for comment as has been done previously with other schemes. This notice has been shared on the Members' portal on receipt. This paper sets out the proposed Council response for agreement by this Committee and is found in Appendix B3.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	The draft Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland sets out the health, environmental, economic and social benefits of active travel and reinforces the potential for modal change since over one third of journeys in NI are less than two miles long and two thirds are less than five miles long. This reinforces the possibility for increased active travel as an option for many people and the opportunity to embrace healthier alternatives and create the conditions for more vibrant places where streets feel safer and there is improved air quality and reduced congestion.
4.2	The Belfast Cycling Network (BCN) and the Strategic Plan for Greenways are already in place and the Active Travel Delivery Plan aims to add to these existing strategies by providing a plan for active travel infrastructure for the rest of NI. Specifically, it sets out how DfI will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure in the urban and rural settlements over the next ten years. Similar to the BCN, it aims to ensure that infrastructure is designed to be safe, accessible and interconnected, thus encouraging people to build active travel into their travel choices. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is a key mechanism to support the delivery of the Active Travel Delivery Plan as well as the BCN and mandates the development of sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum spend of 10% on active travel from the overall transport budgets.
4.3	<p>Given the importance of the provision of an Active Travel Network for Belfast, and for the wider region, along with the potential implications for the BCN contained within the Active Travel Delivery Plan it is important that Belfast City Council inputs into this consultation process. The draft consultation response is focused on a number of key points under the following headings that are summarised below, and the full response is in Appendix A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General comments • Prioritisation: Connections to local schools, public transport and town centres • Designing the Network • Road space allocation and traffic management
4.4	<p>General comments</p> <p>In line with Belfast City Council's submission the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan, we continue to advocate for connected active travel infrastructure which encourages active travel as a means for commuting and leisure opportunities. We have an ongoing collaboration with DfI regarding the delivery of both the BCN and Strategic Plan for Greenways (Council response submitted to then Department for Regional Development in June 2016) and, as appropriate, we would like to see</p>

further engagement as the regional plan is rolled out. We would also like to stress that the delivery of the Active Travel Delivery Plan, in terms of budget and timing, cannot be to the detriment of the implementation of the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan (2022). Belfast City Council welcomes the progress to date on the short-term interventions of the BCN, however continue to stress the need to deliver high quality schemes quickly to address the level of underspend to date.

4.5 The Belfast Agenda (2024-2028) is the city's community plan and as part of the *Our Place* and *Our Planet* themes there is a priority focus on connectivity, active and sustainable travel and a strategic intent to support the production of sustainable forms of transport and low carbon innovation in transport solutions with collaborative action plans in place to help drive delivery. Central to this is the delivery of the Eastern Transport Plan, the Local Development Plan and projects that support people to use sustainable travel and behavioural change projects that replace car journeys with active travel.

4.6 We note that this plan is NI-wide but want to reinforce the importance of connections across council areas, particularly concerning design, materials, routes and maintenance. The maintenance of the network is vital to ensure its continual usage and safety and the removal of debris, blockages and treatment during winter to support the free flow of use, especially on cycle routes.

4.7 **Prioritisation: Connections to local schools, public transport and town centres**
Council supports active travel connections to local schools, public transport and town centres and would highlight that the routes may need to vary in terms of potential users and the mix of travel modes. A mixed network of routes that offers choices for walking, wheeling, and cycling would cater to various abilities and provide options for commuting as well as leisure and recreation. We encourage consideration of interventions designed to prioritise the most vulnerable road users.

4.8 Regarding proposals for routes in our neighbouring councils (Antrim and Newtownabbey; Ards and North Down; and Lisburn and Castlereagh) the majority of routes connecting into Belfast are identified as *Future routes (10+ Years)*. Whilst we appreciate the need for prioritisation, connectivity across Council boundaries is vital to ensure seamless journeys and we would like to see the Department give more weight to those routes which would connect into the established Belfast active travel network, especially considering the significant potential user base that already exists in the populous Belfast Metropolitan Area.

4.9 **Designing the Network**
We support a people-centred design approach that is welcoming, accessible, inclusive and safe. Active travel routes have a role in place making; they are not only transport corridors but also focal points for communities that can stimulate social interaction and encourage investment. We welcome the commitment to high quality infrastructure that is appropriate to the situation and encourage the

	<p>Department to ensure that the design includes climate resilience, incorporating green and blue infrastructure as possible that can absorb carbon emissions and offer biodiversity and habitat creation.</p>
4.10	<p>We acknowledge that there is no one size fits all approach, but it would be helpful if the Department could issue guidance in terms of the design of cycle infrastructure and clarify the use of LTN 1/20 as best practice. We also request that design proposals be site-specific, carefully considering the unique needs of urban routes and proposing thoughtful interventions for recreational paths that protect and enhance the existing landscape character.</p>
4.11	<p>Road space allocation and traffic management</p> <p>We agree that the key principles, welcoming and accessible, people centred design and high-quality infrastructure are critical elements in delivering rebalanced road space and traffic management and this position is reflected in the Local Development Plan, the Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision for Belfast. These principles should enable flexibility while fundamentally placing people at the centre, supporting improved confidence in engaging in active travel through safe, connected, inclusive and well-designed infrastructure. We feel it would be helpful for the Department to produce a menu of potential options or guidance to rebalance the street, supporting future placemaking and mobility projects.</p>
4.12	<p>Belfast Cycling Network: Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme</p> <p>On 3 June 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure published '<i>Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change</i>'. This document articulates the Minister's vision that active travel becomes a pillar of change within towns and cities to cut emissions, to improve health and wellbeing, and to better connect families and communities. It commits to the adoption of the sustainable transport hierarchy where prioritisation is given to sustainable travel by providing for walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport ahead of private vehicle use.</p>
4.13	<p>In March 2017 Committee agreed the Council response to the draft Belfast Cycling Network consultation for submission of DfI. In June 2021 the DfI Minister published <i>Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021</i>' that set out her ambition to make Belfast a more cycle-friendly city and provides a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years and is supported by the BCN Delivery Plan 2022-31. The CG&R Committee received an update from DfI on the delivery of the BCN as a part of their Autumn Statement at the November 2024 Special Meeting of this Committee, with a follow up DfI responses to Members queries presented to the January 2025 meeting of the CG&R Committee.</p>

4.14	<p>The Department is undertaking the legislative process for the installation of new cycling and traffic calming measures on Island Street, Belfast. This also includes sections of Ballymacarrett Road, Belfast and Dee Street, Belfast. The scheme is identified as Scheme No10 within the short-term Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan. This scheme will include the installation of the following measures as listed below and proposed layout is found in Appendix B2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Two-Way Cycle Lane on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. • New Shared Footway on Dee Street & Island Street. • New Disabled Parking Places on Ballymacarrett Road. • Relocation of Toucan Crossing on Dee Street. • Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Not Permitted’ on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Northern Sides). • Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Permitted’ on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Southern Sides). • 1 x flat top road hump, 12.5m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high. • 1 x flat top road hump, 31m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high. • 6 x flat top road humps tapered, 4.1m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.
4.15	<p>Officers have prepared a draft response to the scheme that is in Appendix B3 and highlighted a number of aspects:</p> <p>We note that the proposed cycling infrastructure and traffic calming improvements on Island Street, includes the segregation from vehicular traffic, which enhances safety and inclusivity and could encourage more people to cycle with confidence. This provides better connectivity along the National Cycle Route 99, linking the Connswater Greenway, Titanic Quarter and Belfast City Centre, while also strengthening connections to the Comber Greenway, aligning with the Belfast Agenda and its commitment to delivering enhanced cycle infrastructure across the city.</p>
4.16	<p>To ensure local support and future usage we would encourage the Department to ensure that there is communication and engagement about the scheme with local residents and users starting from this design stage. We also suggest that engagement should include information on the delivery timeframe and nature of the proposed works and outline how these are being delivered in line with best practice guidance.</p>
4.17	<p>The Council’s Tree Officer in Planning’s Trees & Landscape team has provided detailed feedback including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal should be designed in a manner will seeks to avoid creating future stress and strain upon existing trees which could impact on future health, condition, and structural integrity of existing trees. • Proposed landscaping should be included within the proposal to achieve a net gain in future tree cover within the context of the surrounding area. • It may be an option to redesign the proposed cycle path at certain pinch points away from mature tree cover to prevent long-term damage from arising.
5.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report.</p>
7.0	<p><u>Appendices</u></p> <p>Appendix A: Draft response to the Active Travel Delivery Plan</p> <p>Appendix B1: Consultation letter from Ms N. Semple (Active Travel Eastern DfI Roads), Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme</p> <p>Appendix B2: Proposed Island Street Layout</p> <p>Appendix B3: Draft response the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme</p>