

West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 27th November, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Black, Carson, M. Donnelly,
Duffy, Garrett, McCallin and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. F. Dennison, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie and R. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28th August were approved and adopted.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in the 'Physical Programmes Update' report in that he was a Board Member of the Lagmore Youth Project. Since the matter did not become subject to debate or discussion, he was not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Glencairn Community Project - Presentation

Further to its meeting of 28th August, the Working Group received a presentation from Jennifer Taylor and Sonia Dickson, representing the Glencairn Community Project, who were in attendance to provide an update on the work of the organisation. The Working Group was informed that the principal aim of the project was the establishment a community hub within Glencairn, an estate which she described as a "forgotten" part of Belfast. The new hub, work on which was scheduled to commence in 2027, would help bring the community together and provide opportunities to local for all age groups. The representatives then outlined the additional benefits that would be realised through the hub, such as the provision of an after schools programme and the use of the building by the local youth club and concluded that the hub would instil a sense of community pride in the area.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, congratulated the representatives of the Glencairn Community Project on their work and the Members noted the information which had been provided.

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for West Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets. He gave an overview on the current housing numbers, proposed zones for housing. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas. With regard to employment and retail designations, an overview was provided of the proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. The importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area's economic growth and community development was emphasised to Members.

It was pointed out that the proposals sought to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area's natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the plan would go out for public consultation in the new year, subject to agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Vacant to Vibrant Scheme – Update

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager - City Centre Regeneration, attended in connection with this item)

The Senior Development Manager provided the Members with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and with a list of proposed engagement sessions planned in the west of the City in January 2026.

The Working Group noted:

- the proposed extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, subject to the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the proposed engagement sessions planned, pending the launch of the city-wide extension.

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the

programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, a West Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed project – Black Mountain Shared Space Project Phase 2 at Appendix 2.
- Note the awards and recognition for Shankill Shared Women's Centre project which won two prestigious awards. The first is the 2025 REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

West	Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidió Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's- £3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment
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The table below shows an overview of the remaining BIF project –

BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project.</i> DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/	Continue engagement with the group and partners.

				lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	
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4. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for West was £3,446,654 (West - £2,721,133 and Shankill - £725,521) and 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

West Belfast – NRF overview

West	<p>Stage 3— Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre- £684,058; Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1- £537,058; The Mountainview Hotel- £1,500,000; The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre- £295,000; Glencairn Community Project (Hub)- £200,000, The Road- £210,759; <i>Shankill contingency- £19,762.</i></p> <p>Stage 1— <i>Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Faiseoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy & External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i></p>
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West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre	£1.1m NRF- £684,058 Group- £463,490	Stage 3- Committed	On ground. Main works contractor due to complete before Christmas 2025. The club's design team is appointing a subcontractor for the heritage interpretative design and fit-out. Sectional handover of the indoor pitch will be considered. Project completion expected by spring 2026.	Continue engagement with the group. Club's Design Team to provide the council with an update, on procurement of Heritage Fit Out subcontractor.
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£787,058 NRF- £537,058 An Ciste- £250,000	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. Design team is progressing work. At present approx. a further £750k is required to meet the initial business case estimate for Phase 1. Fundraising activities are ongoing along with engagement with other funders. Glór na Móna is planning to use the site for some	Continue engagement with the group.

			meanwhile activities until construction of the main project commences.	
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3-Committed	Development stage. New location for project being proposed. Awaiting details.	Continue engagement with the group.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3-Committed	On ground. Heating element of project has been completed. Exhibition works due to complete in April 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>NRF-£200,000</i> <i>BIF-£700,000</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Development stage. <i>As above at BIF09.</i> DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/ lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3-Committed	Development stage. Planning renewal is in process.	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

West Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
Playground Improvement Programme 25/26	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2025. Playgrounds selected for refurbishment are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. White Rise playground refurbishment now underway, completion expected by end of January 2026 (weather permitting).
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Access to Hills - Black Mountain/ Upper Whiterock Pathway	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation stage. Planning ongoing. The procurement for the design team to take the project through to construction is ongoing, with the PQQ stage completed and ITT to complete in early 2026. Match funding opportunities are still being explored for this project.

Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Colin Active Travel – Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Meetings are continuing between the Council and key stakeholders DfI, DfC and NIHE on the Colin Active Travel Plan. Outline business case prepared and request at November SP&R to move to Stage 3.
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Upgrade to sensory garden. Design team appointed to take scheme to tender stage with a view to appointing a contractor to take works forward.
Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Part of this is included in the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill and connecting to the National Trust developments at Divis Mountains.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Lenadoon Greenway	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Procurement of consultant for feasibility study underway and appointment due December 2025.
Fernhill House and Courtyard	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultant appointed for feasibility study following agreement at Committee on 22 November 2024 to explore options.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 th September 2025.
Lidl, Stewartstown Road Suffolk 3G Pitch and Lenadoon Park Pitch Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. <i>Suffolk pitch</i> - Planning application approved. Will require additional funding. <i>Lenadoon Park</i> – Grass soccer pitch improvement works completed. MUGA improvements programmed for Autumn 2025.

Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore Drive Lagmore Youth Project proposal	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Discussions have taken place regarding Lagmore Youth Project potential construction of a modular building to replace their existing marquee tent.
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6. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, PEACEPLUS, DfI, DfC, DoJ as well as schemes with IFI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).

West Belfast – UV overview

Project	Status and update
Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub	Business case stage. Completion of the business case is scheduled for early 2026.

PEACEIV/ PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACE Programmes.

West Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Shankill Shared Women's Centre	Awards and recognition. Shankill Shared Women's Centre won two prestigious awards. The first is the REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	Beacons to be installed late 2025 early 2026. Signage package out to tender at present. Tender returned expected mid December 2025 with a view to appointing a contractor.
Distillery Street Redevelopment Project	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Design Team has been appointed. Regular meetings with stakeholder group and Design Team. Multiple land ownership in the area discussions ongoing with relevant partners.

Other externally funded projects

Below is the status update on capital projects funded by other partners in West Belfast.

Other external funders – West Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Black Mountain Shared Space Project – Phase 2	<i>Via IFI, DoJ, DfC</i> Project completed. Main building works completed and handed over to BMSS in Summer 2025. Fit-out of units planned to commence in October 2025. BCC assisting management of further funding from DfC, DOJ and IFI to aid the fit-out of the Boys and Girls Clubs units, as they are seen by BMSS as a key tenant. Should be completed in early November 2025.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson