

West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 26th February, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Black, Canavan, Carson, M. Donnelly,
R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Garrett, McCallin, McDowell,
R. McLaughlin, Verner and Walsh.

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

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th November, 2025 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.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1. Introduction

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital programme with a budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The NRF Programme is currently at Stage 3 – Delivery Stage. It is an outcomes focused programme aligned to three key themes of social economy, environmental sustainability and neighbourhood tourism. Members are updated on a quarterly basis on the headline status of the NRF projects via Area Working Groups as part of the Physical Programmes Update report. This

report provides more detailed information on the Fund and the status of projects in West Belfast.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund update for West Belfast; and consider if any projects are to be timebound to ensure progress across the programme.

3. NRF Allocation Model and Allocations

The allocation model per area for NRF as agreed by Members is based on 50% proportion of population per quadrant of the city and 50% proportion of the population that is in the top 20% area of multiple deprivation. Members agreed the allocations of the total programme budget of £10,280,000 as shown below.

NRF – Area budgets and agreed allocations

Area	Total budget allocation	Allocated to projects in principle	Contingency	Unallocated
North	£2,503,158	£2,434,979	£68,179	0
South	£1,978,637	£1,978,637	0	0
East	£2,351,551	£2,350,000	0	£1,551
West	£3,446,654	£3,426,875	£19,762 (Shankill)	£17

In West Belfast the financial position to date is shown below:

Total budget allocation	Total Net Spend to date	Balance Remaining
£3,446,654	£799,195 (23%)	£2,647,459 (77%)

4. NRF Process

Members agreed a 3 Stage process for the NRF projects:

- *Stage 1 - Application* (Emerging project)
- *Stage 2- Development* (Uncommitted project)
- *Stage 3 - Delivery* (Committed project)

A total of 20 projects are at *Stage 3 – Delivery* and received in-principle allocations. A total of three projects remain at *Stage 2 – Development* which means business cases were completed, but allocations were not made; and a total of 23 applicants remain at *Stage 1* which means the applications passed threshold. Projects at *Stages 1 and 2* form the reserve list which comprises 26 projects.

5. **Current Overall Status**

Offers In Principle - Letters of Offer in Principle have been issued to all 20 projects - South, North, West (24 Jan 2024), East (11 Jul 2024) which initiated the full Due Diligence process.

Design stage - Design consultant teams are in place for 14 of the 20 projects and have completed or are working up detailed designs and costings.

Planning process – Planning approval has been secured for eight projects, a decision is awaited on five lodged applications. Planning permission is not necessary for two projects.

Partnership funding – Match funding of approximately £14m has been secured across 14 projects.

Project Funding Agreements – as under LIF and BIF, NRF funding agreements are issued to groups after Due Diligence and tender stage. These agreements confirm the funding offer once the contract amount is known. Four agreements have been issued to groups under NRF.

Projects underway – Five projects are currently on site – Belfast Orange Hall, Michael Davitt’s Community Heritage Centre, Sólás new build project, Act Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre and Ardoyne Youth Enterprise (AYE) Community Hub. Two building purchases have completed – Act Initiative and Market Heritage Hub.

6. **West Belfast NRF Update**

In West Belfast there are six Stage 3 projects under NRF. Three of the West Belfast projects - Croí na Carraige - ‘The Heart of the Rock’, The Mountainview Hotel, and The Road have a funding shortfall. This was reported to AWG Members previously. Two of the projects - Michael Davitt’s Community Heritage Centre and The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre are currently on site and will complete this year. Glencairn Community Project Hub is awaiting a decision on its planning application. For additional detailed information, please see table below.

In West Belfast there are no Stage 2 projects and there are 10 Stage 1 (Reserve) projects.

Project Name & NRF Themes	Description	Cost Estimate	NRF allocation & match funding secured	Current status
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<p>Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre</p> <p><i>All</i></p>	<p>Transformation of a large redundant site adjacent to Páirc Mac Daibhéid located in Beechmount, West Belfast by Michael Davitt's GAC into a newbuild museum/exhibition space, multipurpose hall and supporting ancillary services.</p>	<p>£1,147,548</p>	<p>NRF - £684,058</p> <p>Davitt's GAC - £463,490</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction work commenced in Summer 2025. Awaiting construction completion date, which is forecast to be March 2026. • The heritage fit-out element is currently being procured by the club's design team, with the fit-out anticipated in summer 2026.
<p>Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1</p> <p><i>Social Economy & Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p>	<p>Development of a flagship multi-purpose youth, community, family and heritage hub by Glór na Móna on the derelict land adjacent to their current community hub Gael-Ionad Mhic Goill in the Upper Springfield Area of West Belfast.</p>	<p>£2,053,915</p>	<p>NRF - £537,058</p> <p>An Ciste - £250,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Team appointed. • Planning secured. • Funding gap of approximately £1.3m. • Group has secured funding from An Ciste and is exploring other funding opportunities.
<p>The Mountainview Hotel</p> <p><i>All</i></p>	<p>Creation of a socially owned environmentally friendly 65-bedroom hotel by Fáilte Feirste Thiar.</p>	<p>£25.6m</p>	<p>NRF - £1.5m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project has stalled. • Clarification on the status of the project and alternative site location is required. • Planning approval will be required. • Funding gap of over £24m
<p>The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre</p> <p><i>Social Economy & Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p>	<p>Purchase and development of ACT's central office and Community Hub to include a Visitor Centre that features a historical exhibition.</p>	<p>£295,000</p>	<p>NRF - £295,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project underway. Building purchase & heating work complete. • NRF Funding to be used for the digital exhibition • Group secured additional funding from the Heritage Fund for the fit-out of visitor centre exhibition. • Estimated completion date is April 2026.

<p>Glencairn Community Project Hub</p> <p><i>Social Economy</i></p>	<p>Development of a purpose-built community and youth facility within the Glencairn estate by Glencairn Community Project (GCP) to meet both the needs of the community and provide statutory youth provision within the area.</p>	<p>£1,329,150</p>	<p>NRF - £200,000</p> <p>BIF - £700,000</p> <p>DfC - £430,000 (Awaiting Letter of Offer)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Team appointed. • Planning application submitted. Awaiting response from NI Water on foul disposal solution which is currently a key risk. • Due diligence ongoing. Sustainability of the group has been highlighted as a risk. • Land transfer process has commenced between GCP and NIHE.
<p>The Road</p> <p><i>Social Economy & Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p>	<p>Development of a capital tourism project by Lower Shankill Community Association based around the shared history of the Shankill Road and its contribution to Belfast.</p>	<p>£2,121,036</p>	<p>NRF - £210,759</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning permission expired and a planning renewal was granted in November 2025. • Design Team to be appointed. • Funding gap of approximately £1.9m. Group is exploring funding opportunities.

7. Next Steps

The Teams will continue to work with the groups to develop the NRF projects, taking them through Due Diligence, Design, Planning and contractor appointment stages as required, in line with the project pathway and best practice in construction.

Members will be aware as with all physical projects, challenges can emerge throughout the delivery stage such as planning and building consent approvals, or issues with title or land etc. This has been greatly minimised because of early Due Diligence that was carried out as well as the business case process.

In addition, funding gaps remain a key challenge for a number of projects that were not allocated a full funding package via the NRF Programme. Officers will continue to work with the groups to find potential additional sources of external funding. Escalating costs represent a significant challenge for all projects in the current economic climate.

Members will continue to be updated via the Physical Programme AWG Update reports each quarter.

Members are asked to note the update provided on projects under the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

Members may wish to consider if any projects are to be timebound to ensure progress across the programme.

Discussion ensued on a number of projects, particularly regarding the Mountainview Hotel, in respect of which £1.5m of Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund money had been allocated. The Director noted that the original project had not progressed for a number of reasons, and the project's promoter had submitted a revised proposal to the Council focusing on additional works to be carried out at the Roddy McCorley Heritage Centre. The Working Group agreed that a recommendation be made to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the revised proposal be taken forward, subject to discussion with the Legal Services Department and subject to the Council's due-diligence processes.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the above-mentioned recommendation be submitted for approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

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.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the physical programme update for West Belfast including the recently completed project - Playground Improvement Programme 25/26- Lagmore Activity Park (White Rise).

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	<p>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</p> <p>Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills-Black Mountain Access—no commitment</p>
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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-</i> <i>£700,000;</i> <i>NRF-</i> <i>£200,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project.</i> Planning application submitted. Awaiting response from NI Water on foul disposal solution, currently a key risk. Due diligence ongoing. Sustainability of GCP also highlighted as a risk. Land transfer process has commenced between GCP and NIHE, completion is dependent on Planning Approval in place.	Continue engagement with the group and partners.

4. **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

See separate detailed report on NRF.

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. Lagmore Activity Park (White Rise) playground refurbishment complete 17th February 2026.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Pitch improvement works agreed at SP&R Committee in December 2025. This includes works at Wedderburn Park, Falls Park, Marrowbone Millenium Park, Westlands Pitch and others. Planning approvals now obtained for Falls Park and Clarendon Playing Fields. Falls Park soccer pitch improvements, start date programmed for end of March 2026. Also, Planning application for Wedderburn submitted January 2026. Planning decision for Marrowbone Park expected in March 2026. Westlands fencing/ gates completed November 2025. Belfast Met Campus small-sided games pitches completed September 2025.
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 March 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 February 2026. Match funding opportunities are still being explored for this project.
Fernhill House H&S works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation stage.
Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Delivery of 94no. boards received in January 2026, citywide installation underway, completion expected by October 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrade 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. Design team is currently working up outline design and preparing tender pack.
Colin Active Travel – Phase 1	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Meetings are continuing between the Council and key stakeholders DfI, DfC and NIHE on the Colin Active Travel Plan. Officers working on a Business Case to submit to DfI Active Travel to fund routes within the Colin area. Aim to submit funding application by start of March 2026.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model. Specific locations agreed at SP&R Committee in January 2026.
Depot Charging Scheme	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Installing EV chargers at 5 Council depot sites – Duncrue, Ormeau, Mallusk, Blanchflower and Belfast Zoo. Outline business case prepared and request at February SP&R to move to Stage 3.

Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar’s Bush, Knock Cemetery, Balmoral Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. 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. Outline business case prepared and request at February SP&R to move to Stage 3.
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> New sensory facility. Design team appointed to take scheme to tender stage with a view to appointing a contractor to take works forward. Concept design has now been completed with a view to sign off in advance of tender package being prepared to appoint a contractor.
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. Market research and specification scoping on this project is currently ongoing. Colleagues from P&P and CNS continue to progress this project.
Lenadoon Greenway	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultants have now been appointed to undertake a Feasibility Study of the Greenway.
Fernhill House and Courtyard	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultant appointed for feasibility study following agreement at Committee in November 2024 to explore options.
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 complete. MUGA improvements completed in November 25.
Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore Drive Lagmore Youth Project proposal	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Approval is sought to allocate developer contributions to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team to progress the detailed design and delivery of the new facility. Authority to Spend form prepared and request will be presented at February SP&R.

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. UV forecast completion of the business case spring 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
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	Work progressing on the signage for FMCG. Overall signage package which includes information panels/interpretative panels/wayfinding signage and the beacons being issued with a return date of early March 2026.
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. Community consultations ongoing. Aim to submit planning application early March 2026.

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 Boys and Girls Clubs units completed. Staff continue to engage with BMSS.

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

Future Meetings

The Working Group agreed that consideration be given to undertaking site visits to view several projects which were under development as part of the programme.

Chairperson