

West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 28th May, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson);
Councillors Black, Canavan,
M. Donnelly, R-M. Donnelly,
McCabe, McCallin, I. 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

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th February were approved and adopted.

Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were reported from Councillors Black and McCabe who were associated with organisations named within the Physical Programmes report. Since the matters did not become subject to discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Request to Present - Global Country of World Peace (NI) - Townsend Street Project

The Working Group agreed to receive, at its meeting in August, a presentation from representatives of the above-mentioned organisation regarding a project within the Townsend Street area.

Presentation - Ulster Orchestra re: Townsend Street Presbyterian Church Development

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. A. Sands, Chief Executive of the Ulster Orchestra, together with Mr. P. McCarthy and Ms. L. McCullagh, who were in attendance to outline the plans for the orchestra to develop the former Presbyterian Church in Townsend Street. Ms. Sands indicated that the key aims of the project were:

- To establish a permanent home for the orchestra that would accommodate both playing and administrative staff;

- To create an accessible space for rehearsal, recording, performance and to enhance community engagement through music;
- To collaborate with others to enhance the economic and cultural development of the area;
- To provide a neutral, shared space for community groups, schools and others to work towards promoting a peaceful and shared society based on reconciliation and mutual trust; and
- To reanimate the Ulster Orchestra at the Townsend Street site by creating a sustainable and accessible heritage site.

Ms. Sands added that the restoration and redevelopment of the site would fulfil the orchestra's vision and strategic objectives. It would enable also the orchestra to maximise its activities by creating a hub for learning and community engagement. Several Members congratulated Ms. Sands on the outreach activities which the orchestra had undertaken with local communities.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives of the Ulster Orchestra for attending the meeting and the Working Group noted the information provided.

Physical Programmes Update

The Working Group considered the following 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 projects - The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre (NRF); Alleygating Phase 5 at Appendix 1; and**
- **Note the update on the Local Community Ownership Fund (LCOF).**

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- £700,000;</i> <i>NRF- £200,000</i> <i>DfC- £430,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project.</i> DfC funding secured. Planning submitted. Group received BCC grant support for a member of staff. Due Diligence on sustainability ongoing.	Continue engagement with the group and partners.

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><i>Stage 1— Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Fuisgeoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future,</i></p>
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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

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	NRF construction work, excluding heritage room fit-out was completed in April 2026. Design team has been procured for the heritage fit-out element. The entire project should be completed by Autumn 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£787,058 NRF- £537,058 An Ciste- £400,000	Stage 3 - Committed	The group has received £400,000 from An Ciste towards the project. They have also recently secured \$250,000 (£157,000) in principle from the People Network.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3 - Committed	In March 2026, SP&R Committee agreed on a revised proposal, focusing on additional works to be carried out at the Roddy McCorley Heritage Centre, subject to discussion with the Legal Services Department and subject to the Council's due-diligence processes. This has been reviewed initially at Due Diligence, and will go back in again in June for further consideration after more discussions with the group and with the Council's solicitors.	Continue engagement with the group. AWG is asked to note the update.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Project complete. Exhibition preview took place on 15 May 2026.	Continue engagement with group regarding project monitoring & evaluation.
Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 NRF- £200,000 BIF- £700,000 DfC- £430,000	Stage 3 - Committed	As above at BIF09. DfC funding secured. Planning submitted. Group received BCC grant support for a member of staff. Due Diligence on sustainability ongoing.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3 - Committed	Site meeting is scheduled to take place with the group in June to discuss the project.	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. Works complete at White Rise, Ohio Street, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. Refurbishment also to take place at Roddens Crescent playground.
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. Wedderburn Park amendments to planning application submitted in May 2026. Falls Park soccer pitch improvements, start date rescheduled for mid-August 2026 to avoid conflict with Fleadh campsite. Marrowbone Park planning decision approved in March 2026, now working to resolve structural/ construction details associated with proposed fence extension. Clarendon Playing Fields ballstop fencing works completed in April 2026.
Playground Improvement Programme 26/27	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2026. Playgrounds for refurbishment are Mount Eagles, Lemberg Street, Willowbank, and Browns Square playgrounds.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Project complete.</i>
Access to Hills - Black Mountain/ Upper Whiterock Pathway	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Planning approved and design team appointed to take the project through to construction. Contractor procurement to start in Summer 2026. Discussions are ongoing with the Housing Executive and Woodland Trust regarding neighbouring land that is required for the path. Project should start on site late 2026.
Fernhill House H&S works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The procurement for a contractor for stabilisation works has completed and contract will be awarded in June 2026.
Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. 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 finalising designs and preparing tender pack. Planning applications for Black's Road and Páirc Nua Chollann required and to be submitted shortly. The other courts do not require planning permission.
Parks and Open Spaces Improvement Programme 2025-2027	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Programme of improvement works to parks and open spaces across the Council estate. Progressing.
Colin Active Travel – Phase 1	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Funding application to be submitted to DfI in June 2026.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed. Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation is nearing completion and is due to be issued imminently.
Depot Charging Scheme	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Installing EV chargers at five Council depot sites. Chargers installed at four sites – Blanchflower, Duncrue, Mallusk and the Zoo. Ormeau underway.
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. Surveys have been completed for Friar's Bush, Knock and Balmoral Cemetery.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Currently compiling a list of signs for pilot project to restore historic tiled street signs across the city.
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	<i>Stage 3 - Committed.</i> Project is in procurement and is scheduled to start on site in Autumn 2026. The project should take approximately four months to complete.
Pitches Programme	<i>Stage 3 - Committed.</i> Agreed at SP&R Committee in February 2026. Draft implementation plan being refined.
Leisure Programme – Phase A Shankill and Whiterock	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> In April 2026, SP&R Committee agreed that site optimisation plans be developed for these sites.
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 is ongoing.
Lenadoon Greenway	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultants have been appointed to undertake a Feasibility Study of the Greenway. A consultation event is planned for 2 June 2026.
Fernhill House and Courtyard	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Ongoing public engagement meetings are generating outcomes that will inform the feasibility study.
Artificial Lighting in Parks Sites	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Creation of lit spine and associated path/ access improvements to facilitate extended opening hours on selected parks.
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. Project requires additional funding. Officers continue to explore funding opportunities. <i>Lenadoon Park</i> – Complete.
Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore Drive Lagmore Youth Project proposal	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Integrated Consultancy Team has been appointed. Officers are currently working with the group to agree designs.

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.

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	Tender has recently been awarded for the signage package, and a works programme is being prepared by the contractor.
Distillery Street Redevelopment Project	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Planning application has now been submitted. Discussions ongoing regarding post-completion arrangements.

7. Local Community Ownership Fund

Members will be aware that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the Local Community Ownership Fund (LCOF), a £1.5 million initiative investing in the transformation of local places, supporting community wealth building and capacity development.

The LCOF will support capital related projects that:

- support the acquisition of community assets or existing derelict sites for viable and sustainable community use.
- prevent the risk of loss of such assets in local community areas and ensure that they are used for maximum community benefit.
- enable existing community groups to move to new, larger and/or more appropriate locations within the same area.
- strengthen local community ownership of assets.
- strengthen social & community infrastructure that needs to be in place to allow local areas to thrive.

The LCOF will involve an open call for applications, with three stages to the application and approval process. The fund will remain open to applications until respective area allocations are exhausted. The amount allocated to West Belfast is £494,496. This includes £104,091 for the Shankill Area.

The Stage 1 Expression of Interest opened on Wednesday 20 May and will close on Wednesday 17 June. The Stage 2 Application process will open on Friday 19 June and will close on Friday 28 August. It is anticipated that updates on all applications and the assessment results will be brought to the council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for decisions on next steps. Groups will be able to find information on the Council's website and Council officers will respond to queries throughout the application process.

The Director referred specifically to the terms of the Local Community Ownership Fund, which was due to open for Stage One Expression of Interest on 20th May and close on 17th June. She encouraged Members to raise awareness of the fund within their own electoral areas.

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

Future Meeting

The Working Group noted that it was anticipated that a site visit to view a number of projects would be undertaken later in the year and that details would be circulated in due course.

Chairperson