

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 3rd June, 2026

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman McCullough (Chairperson);
Councillors Anglin, Bradley, Magee,
Meenehan, Murphy, Nelson and O'Neill.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager;
Mr. J. Ahvee, Project Manager - Nature Towns and Cities
Programme;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Officer - Climate;
Mr. G. Wright, Net Zero Officer; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Election of Chairperson

The Area Working Group noted that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor O'Neill,
Seconded by Councillor Bradley and

Resolved – that Alderman McCullough be elected to serve as Chairperson of the North Belfast Area Working Group until the date of the Local Government Elections in May, 2027.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain and Doran.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th February, 2026, were approved by the Working Group, subject to the addition of Councillor Nelson to be noted as an attendee.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Nature Towns and Cities Programme - Verbal Update

The Project Manager for the Nature Towns and Cities Programme provided the Working Group with an overview of the UK-wide initiative.

He outlined that Belfast was one of 19 Towns and Cities that had been awarded capacity building grants in 2025. Over the next 10 years, the wider Nature Towns and Cities programme aimed to help five million more people access nearby green and blue spaces and enable one million more children to play in nature close to home. That included various kinds of urban nature, for example, street trees, community growing spaces, urban woods, historic public parks, river and canal-sides and recreation grounds.

He explained that, in Belfast, the project “Breaking Through Barriers to Connect People and Nature” would be delivered by Ulster Wildlife in partnership with the Council, supported by £850,000 in funding. The capacity building project sought to create a blueprint for a greener, healthier city by identifying barriers that prevented people from connecting with nature and finding ways to introduce more natural spaces into everyday urban environments.

The work focused on five key areas:

- Supporting communities and stakeholders through skills and capacity building;
- Exploring opportunities to “green the grey” in built-up areas;
- Identifying how parks and open spaces could be better managed for wildlife and climate resilience;
- Assess the data we use, and how we can use it to make better informed decisions; and
- Building long-term support through partnerships, volunteering, and training opportunities.

He highlighted that a Stakeholder event would take place on 17th June, which all Members were invited to attend.

During discussion, the Project Manager answered a range of questions in relation to engagement with stakeholders and community groups. He welcomed any links that Members could provide from interested groups.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and that the presentation would be shared with Members.

Climate Toolkit - Interactive Toolkit Session

The Project Officer presented the following links to the Working Group and explained how to explore the online tools:

1. [Household thermal performance – Local Area Energy Plan](#)
– tool to explore thermal performance of homes across the city
2. [Flood Maps \(NI\)](#) – mapping tool showing various types of flood risk by address
3. [EPC Directory](#) – access your home’s Energy Performance Certificate

During discussion, the Project Officer explained how EPCs could help Members and householders to understand the thermal performance of homes, however, not all homes had one and they did have limitations.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects presented 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 North Belfast including the recently completed projects – Capital Programme Sporting Pitches Improvement 25/26-Clarendon Playing Fields ballstop fencing; Alleygating Phase 5; Belfast Orange Hall refurbishment at Appendix 1; and
- Note the update on the Local Community Ownership Fund (LCOF).

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the North being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £800,000 under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 43 projects in total have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 38 have been completed; 3 are at delivery stage; and 1 is at pre-construction stage.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	16 (89%)	£708,201
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	2 (6%)	£90,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction	1 (4%)	£65,000		
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)				

Total Number of Approved Projects	25*	£1,127,500	17**	£798,201
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*This includes additional funding for a LIF 2 project, *Ballysillan Youth for Christ*.

** This includes additional funding for two LIF 1 projects, *Marrowbone Parochial Hall and Jennymount Church*

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club (UV – ABC Trust Hub)	£7,317,000 <i>UV- £4,751,000 DfC- £1,300,000 FT - £1,200,000 LIF- £66,000</i>	On Ground	Partnership project with DfC, Dfl, Flax Trust, and UV. UV project completed. LIF element on purchase of gym equipment to be undertaken.	Continue engagement with group.
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building	£1,084,172 <i>UV- £1,019,172 LIF- £65,000</i>	Design stage	The centre lease is being finalised by solicitors. Planning application has now been submitted. Land acquisition underway for the MUGA and surrounding land owned by NIFRS. Community Information Event on 27 May.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. Construction works on the gallery remain paused. Rewiring has been identified as an alternative activity. Works on site have restarted.	Continue engagement with group.
NLIF2-23	Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre	£95,000 <i>LIF- £15,000 AYC DfC- £50,000; DoEd- £30,000</i>	On Ground	Benview Community Centre – completed. Ardoyne Youth Club – works underway and nearing completion.	Continue engagement with Groups.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – North Belfast was allocated £5.5m. In North Belfast, 7 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m: and 2 projects are on the longer BIF list. Each of the 'In Principle' projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a

rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Members are asked to note the status update of these projects provided below. The table provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects.

North	<p>Stage 3 - Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k, Malgrove -£950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k</p> <p>Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment</p>
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Stage 3 - Committed	Received approval at June 2025 Planning Committee. Issue of Planning Green Form was subject to NIEA and SES responses, which have been recently received. Procurement of contractor underway – ITT being finalised.	Continue engagement with group and Planning Service.
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£498,000 <i>BIF- £350,000</i> <i>DfC- £74,000</i> <i>Cost Risks- £74,000</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	On Ground. Contractor has been appointed. Completion planned by end of December 2026.	Continue engagement with group.

5. 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 North was £2,503,158. Five projects received an In Principle funding commitment and a contingency sum of £68,179 has also been retained. 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.

North Belfast – NRF overview

North	<p>Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises,</p> <p>Stage 1 (Reserve)— <i>Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain, Indian Community Centre, North Belfast Working Men's Club, North City Business Centre, Quaker Service, Belfast Charitable Society, Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Arts for All, Ligoniel Improvement Association</i></p>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£518,191	Stage 3- Committed	Funding Agreement has been signed and works contract awarded. Contractor has since reported significant price increase in key works packages resulting in a forecasted increase in costs from their tendered price. Project reported to SP&R Committee on 22 May 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3- Committed	Land boundary issue being addressed. BCC awaits an update from DfC regarding the vesting of land process which is underway.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub (Link to UV Project)	£3,418,303 <i>UV- £2,013,607 NRF- £154,696 Cost risks- £50k DfC- £1,000,000 Various- £200k</i>	Stage 3- Committed	On Ground. Works progressing on site.	Continue engagement with the group.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Project complete. Handover meeting held on 18 May 2026.	Continue engagement with the group re post monitoring.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Planning Approval and Building Control received at the start of 2026. Procurement of contractor has started. Project was presented again to DD in April 2026. Waiting for sign off from Legal Team.	Continue engagement with the group.

6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new ones. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on the council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in the North Belfast area. **Members are asked to note the updates on the Physical Programme.**

North Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. <i>Stage 3 Committed</i> . The construction contract for the installation of the next phase of the gas abstraction infrastructure (the gas ring main) is underway. Foul Pumping Station contractor appointed. NIE upgrade connections to fully service the site development have started (with completion anticipated at end of 2027).
Floral Hall Health & Safety Works	On ground. <i>Stage 3 Committed</i> . First phase of Health & Safety works completed. Works to a temporary roof agreed to make the building watertight.
Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2	On ground. <i>Stage 3 Committed</i> . Progressing.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	On ground. <i>Stage 3 Committed</i> . Works ongoing. Expected to reopen in Spring 2027.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	On ground. Pitch improvement works agreed at SP&R Committee in December 2025. This includes works at Wedderburn Park, Falls Park, Marrowbone Millennium Park, Westlands Pitch and others. Wedderburn Park amendments to planning application submitted in May 2026, awaiting planning decision in coming months. 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.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	Project complete.
Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> . Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building. Original commencement date delayed to allow for further structural investigations to take place. These have now been completed, with contractor due to commence works June 2026.
Assembly Rooms Health & Safety Works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> . Progressing. Quotations exercise ongoing.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	<i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> . Design team continues to develop designs to Planning stage. Discussions ongoing with DfC.
Pitches Programme	<i>Stage 3 - Committed</i> . Agreed at SP&R Committee in February 2026. Draft implementation plan being refined.
Reservoir Safety Programme (<i>links to PEACEPLUS</i>)	<i>Stage 3 Committed</i> . Reservoir improvements at Waterworks and Alexandra Park. SEUPB PEACEPLUS funding of €13.5m to enhance shared space and connectivity. Planning process ongoing.
Communications Boards	<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.

Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation is nearing completion, and the tender 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.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design complete. However, further discussions ongoing with C&NS to review the service provision.
Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Access to the Hills - Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design team procured. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing. Submitted to Planning.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mtn	<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.
Assembly Rooms Cluster	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Redevelopment of Assembly Rooms Cluster.
Loughside Playing Fields Changing Facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Creation of a modular changing and flexible space facility. The project is now being looked at in conjunction with the next phase of leisure at this site.
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.
Duncrue Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Redevelopment of the whole Duncrue site which aims to improve the efficiency of the site. Strategic outline case being worked up.
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.
North Foreshore - Giant’s Park	A complex development agreement is in place with Giant’s Park Belfast Limited (GPBL). This agreement commits GPBL to deliver over 250 acres of phased development over a number of years in four distinct hubs: Adventure Hub, Welcome Hub, Pit Stop Hub, Distributions and Logistics Hub.
Little York Street/ Little Patrick Street Public Realm Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Procurement stage. Outstanding issue (Non Material Change) now resolved with Planning. Traffic Regulation Order application is ongoing.

7. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, including Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office and PEACE under SEUPB. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to North Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in North Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined North Belfast geography (Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan).

North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

Project	Status and update
Ballysillan Playing Fields	On ground. Partnership project with UV, DfC and Dfl. Works progressing on site.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project <i>(links to NRF programme)</i>	On Ground. Works progressing on site.
Sunningdale Community Centre <i>(links to BIF programme)</i>	Business case stage. Site for development identified. Request for a meeting with the group's solicitor, SCA, UV and BCC to discuss their current tenure on the site at Ballysillan Rd. Project cannot progress until outcome of site ownership is concluded.
Westland Community Centre <i>(links to LIF programme)</i>	As above. The centre lease is being finalised by solicitors. Planning application has now been submitted. Land acquisition underway for the MUGA and surrounding land owned by NIFRS. Community Information Event on 27 May.

PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on capital projects under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

North Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park €13.5m SEUPB PEACEPLUS	Enhancements to shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park. Planning ongoing. Integrated Consultancy Team has been appointed for detailed design stage. Procurement of contractor underway.
Access to the Hills – Glencairn/ Ligoniel <i>Link to Capital Programme</i>	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design team procured. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing. Submitted to Planning.

Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in North Belfast.

Dfl – North Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Under The Bridges Public Realm	Consultants have been appointed to undertake design works. Planning application submitted in November 2025. Statutory consultations are ongoing.
Sailortown/ Titanic Quarter Bridge	Consultants have been appointed to undertake RIBA Stage 1 & 2 design services for a proposed new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle bridge. Stage 2 Report due for completion June 2026.
Giant's Park Greenway	Develop a Greenway around the Giant's Park at North Foreshore connecting from the Giant's Park onto the North Foreshore Path/ National Cycle Route 93. Letter of Offer received and design team appointed.

8. 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 North Belfast is £370,276.

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.

Members are asked to note the update on the Local Community Ownership Fund.”

During discussion, the Director of Property and Projects provided an update in relation to Girdwood engagement and the Alley gates scheme process.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to the recommendations outlined in the report.

Request to present to a future meeting - Ulster Orchestra

The Working Group agreed to receive a presentation from the Ulster Orchestra regarding its Townsend Project and community outreach, at its meeting in September. The Working Group also noted that the presentation would be requested in advance of the meeting.

Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the North Area Working Group was scheduled for 2nd September.

Chairperson