

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 24th August, 2026

MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillors Brennan, Bunting,
Groogan, Kelly, Lyons, McKay,
McKeown and Murray.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager (Physical Programme);
Ms. C. Moraghan, Leisure Development Manager;
Ms. S. O'Regan, Employability and Skills Manager;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Murray and

Resolved - that Councillor McKeown be elected to serve as
Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the
Council in 2027.

(Councillor McKeown in the Chair.)

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor T. Brooks.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th May were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Update - Riddel's Warehouse

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Patton, Hearth Historic Buildings Trust, to the
meeting.

He outlined to the Working Group that Riddel's Warehouse was a unique venue
within the city. He described how, even without heating and toilets, it had already been

used for over 200 events, with over 10,000 visitors, from theatre and music to filming and exhibitions.

He outlined that the estimated cost of regenerating Riddel's Warehouse was £9.2million and, to date, they had secured £7,370,873. Therefore, the remaining partnership funding required was just over £1.8million.

He reported that they were recently honoured to welcome Mr. Oliver Jeffers, a well-known author and illustrator, as patron of Riddel's Warehouse. His work aligned closely with their mission to support creativity, experimentation and new ways of thinking and he had previously used the warehouse in the development of his work.

A number of Members suggested other potential funders and funding streams which the Trust could investigate, including the Belfast Harbour, the Maritime Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, thanked Mr. Patton for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects presented the following report to the Working Group:

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 South Belfast including the recently completed project – Capital Programme Musgrave Park Sensory Garden and Depot Charging Scheme; and**
- Note the update on the Local Community Ownership Fund (LCOF).**

3. Local Investment Fund (LIF)

Members are reminded that 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 area; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation.

A summary is provided below.

LIF breakdown – South	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description:	No. Projects	Amount (£)	No. Projects	Amount/ (£)
Number of Projects Completed	13 (100%)	£1,083,600	11 (100%)	£796,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	13	£1,083,600	11	£796,000

The table below shows an overview of the recently completed project.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
SLIF017	Finaghy Bridge	£30,000	Complete	Continuing to try to progress permissions regarding planters and artwork on several utility boxes.	Continue engagement with partners.

All 24 LIF projects in South Belfast have been completed.

4. Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council. BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with an additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each 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.

Summary of BIF allocated projects.

South	Stage 3 - Lagan Gateway - £2.1m; Market Arches - £1.3m; Bredagh GAC - £700k; Coffee Culture - £286k Stage 2 - Sandy Row Open Space project- £479k
Balmoral DEA	Stage 3 - Knockbreda Parish Church Hall - £250k; Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC - £250k

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF04	Lagan Gateway Phase 2	£1,428,650 BIF- £579,324 DfI Greenways- £714,326	Stage 3 - Committed	Awaiting Planning approval. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements. Council agreement in place to progress with compulsory purchase powers should they be required to complete land assembly.	Continue engagement with the public, landowners and key stakeholders.
BIF07	Market Arches	£3.3m BIF -£1.3m UV – £2m	Stage 3- Committed	The Executive Office are continuing to review the business case. Planning issues to be resolved before project can move forward. Procurement of design team due to begin in Autumn.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF46	Coffee Culture	£1,317,679 BIF- £286,519 SOF- £100,000 Cost Risks- £100,000 UV- £531,160 DfC- £300,000	Stage 3- Committed	Works on site are progressing well. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF33	Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC	£250,000	Stage 3- Committed	ICT appointed. Pre-meeting to be arranged with BCC, Group and ICT end of August/ start of September 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF47	Sandy Row Open Space project	£479,314*	Stage 2- Uncommitted <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Ongoing discussions with community with a view to including a dog park in Blythefield Park. Translink are to complete the remediation of the site prior to handing back to BCC. Plan to include additional sensory type play equipment in nearby Bentham Drive. <i>*The remaining balance of the ringfenced allocation for the Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is a £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment, and 2 are complete. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Members are

asked to note the progress update of the remaining project in the table below.

SOF – South Belfast project overview

Project	Award	Status and update	Action/ Recommendation
SOF02 Coffee Culture	£1,317,679 <i>SOF-£100,000 BIF-£286,519 Cost Risks- £100,000 UV- £531,160 DfC-£300,000</i>	Works on site are progressing well.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

6. 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 South was £1,978,637, and 5 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. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

South Belfast – NRF overview

South	Stage 3 - Sólás New Build project, GVRT Branching Out project, Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, Redevelopment of former School of Music, Market Heritage Hub Stage 2 (Reserve) - Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse Stage 1 (Reserve) - The Avenue Arts Centre, An Droichead Annex, Lagan Legacy
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South Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Sólás New Build project	£2.5m <i>NRF- £362,141 COF- £800,000 Various funders and group</i>	Stage 3- Committed <i>Delivery stage</i>	On Ground. Work is continuing on site. Fit out expected autumn 2026 and project due to complete late 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
GVRT- Branching Out project	£840,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 DfC-</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Design has progressed and project is going out for contractor procurement. Funding	Continue engagement with the group.

	£40,000 (design fees) Garfield Weston - £300,000		applications are ongoing. DfC is now committed to provide more capital funding towards the project.	
Lagan Water Access Activity Hub	£308,248	Stage 3 - Committed	Technical design works underway. Planning approval received.	Continue engagement with the group.
Redevelopment of former School of Music	£2,308,248 NRF-£308,248 UV- £2m	Stage 3 - Committed	Planning submitted in June 2026. The Executive Office is reviewing the business case.	Continue engagement with the group.
Market Heritage Hub	£800,000 NRF- £500,000 COF- £300,000	Stage 3 - Committed	NRF Funding expended towards building purchase. Group will be submitting application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for restoration of the building and transformation into heritage facility in Autumn 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or build/buy new assets or facilities. Table below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

South Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
Musgrave Park Sensory Garden	Project completed in May 2026. Upgrade to sensory garden. Works included new accessible play equipment, safety surfacing and a small sensory trail. See Appendix 1.
Depot Charging Scheme	Project completed. Installation of EV chargers at five Council depot sites at Blanchflower, Duncrue, Mallusk, Zoo and Ormeau Park. See Appendix 1.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Pitch improvement works progressing. Wedderburn Park Playing Fields amendments to planning application approved in July 2026. Fencing & spectator fencing expected to start October 2026.
City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Windows – LGBT and NHS	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Unveiling of new LGBTQ+ window completed in 2025. NHS – works progressing, unveiling date to be agreed following discussion at City Hall Working Group.
City Hall External Christmas Tree provision	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Contractor appointed and tree order placed.

St George's Market – New Stalls	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> 100 stalls and 100 baskets were installed in April 2026. Progressing the construction and assembly of the remaining stalls.
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. Planning applications for Black's Road and Páirc Nua Chollann have been submitted. Working towards end of September for pre tender estimates; planning approval and final technical pack.
Parks and Open Spaces Improvement Programme	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Programme of improvement works to parks and open spaces across the Council estate. Progressing.
Pitches Programme	<i>Stage 3 - Committed.</i> Agreed at SP&R Committee in February 2026. Draft implementation plan being refined.
Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall. Design and delivery to be fully funded by DfC and Linen Quarter BID. Contractor appointed. Works Progressing.
Staff Cycle Racks Installation at Council sites	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation underway.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender published in August 2026.
Historic Cemeteries – Friar's Bush	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Improvements to historic cemetery. Surveys have been completed. Application to NLHF currently being prepared for part funding of works.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Knock Cemetery, Balmoral Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Surveys have been completed for 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.
Waterfront Hall Chiller Units	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Contractor on site. Works to be completed by September 2026.
Wilmont House H&S Works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Procurement for remedial works complete. Contractor has been appointed.
Depot Charging Scheme Phase 2	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Installation of EV chargers at nine Council depot sites - Musgrave Park, Kennedy Way, Charlotte Street, Alexandra Park, Roselawn, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon, Botanic Gardens, Dunbar, Garron Crescent. Project will go for approval to SP&R on 21 August 2026.
Drumglass Park SuDS Project	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> NI Water-led project to introduce a new sustainable drainage system (SuDS), including a new pond, in Drumglass Park. The project aims to provide a nature-based solution to address ongoing issues with surface water and flooding in the area during periods of heavy rainfall. Project in development, with public

	consultation exercise taking place from 22 June to 4 September 2026.
Palm House, Botanic Gardens	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Conservation Management Plan is now complete. Feasibility study to be undertaken. Suitability for NLHF Heritage Grant.
City Hall Security Improvements	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works put forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members. Procurement process for Integrated Consultancy Team is ongoing.
City Hall Preservation	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Programme of works to ensure the preservation of the City Hall building.
2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works to the ground and first floor to meet its obligation to prospective occupiers and ensure the building is fully fit for purpose. Design team working on options for consideration and agreement.
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.
Wilmont House	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Redevelopment of Wilmont House. Feasibility study is underway funded by NLHF.
Blackstaff Greenway	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Phased delivery of a Greenway along the Blackstaff River from Stockman's Way roundabout through Boucher Road Playing Fields. High level details of proposals for the Greenway have been provided in the feasibility study and cost estimates have been produced. Discussions with key stakeholders ongoing.
Artificial Lighting at Parks Sites	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Creation of lit spine and associated path/ access improvements to facilitate extended opening hours.

8. 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 as well as a number of schemes with DfC and DfI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined South Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).

UV – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
The Lockhouse - Gateway to the River / Walkway	Restarted onsite in February 2026.
Coffee Culture	As above at BIF46. Works on site are progressing well.
Market Arches	As above at BIF07. The Executive Office is reviewing business case.

Redevelopment of former School of Music	Business case being developed. Planning submitted. Timeline subject to TEO approvals process.
Donegall Pass Good Relations Hub	Timeline subject to TEO business case approvals process. Department of Finance approval required.

PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan - Capital Project

Members are asked to note the update on PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan capital project in South Belfast. The Letter of Offer has been accepted and returned to SEUPB.

Project	Status and update
Annadale Open Space	Part of the overall Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Development of a playpark, basketball hoop and a small men's shed. Planning submitted on 20 July with contractor procurement documents issued 31 July 2026. Funding for pitch yet to be confirmed. Ongoing meetings and engagement with local community representatives with community fun day to be organised.

DfC funded projects

Below is the status update on projects funded by Department for Communities in South Belfast.

DfC – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Holylands Alleygating and Cleansing Project	Link to the citywide Alleygating Phase 5 project.

DfI funded projects

Below is the status update on projects funded by Department for Infrastructure in South Belfast.

DfI – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Lagan Gateway Phase 2	As above as BIF04. Awaiting Planning approval. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements.
Drumglass Park SuDS Project	As above under Capital Programme. Project in development.

9. Local Community Ownership Fund

The Local Community Ownership Fund (LCOF) is a £1.5 million initiative to support the acquisition of community assets. It will

invest in the transformation of local places, supporting community wealth building and capacity development.

The LCOF has involved 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 South Belfast is £297,418.

The Stage 1 Expression of Interest closed on Wednesday 16 June. The Stage 2 Application process opened 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."

A Member stated that the majority of the projects were in Botanic and that he would like to see more projects in Balmoral. A further Member stated that there were higher socio-economic needs in Botanic.

During discussion, some Members stated that a number of worthwhile projects, such as Riddel's Warehouse, were really located in the city centre, as opposed to South Belfast. They stated that they would be supportive of a separate city centre allocation of funding for such projects. The Director advised that any change to the areas in future would be a matter for Members.

It was pointed out that capacity building would be helpful for local organisations.

A Member raised a query regarding the planning permission for the Belvoir Football Club project and the Director agreed to go back to her with an update.

During discussion, a further Member stated that the historic tiled street sign for Osborne Park needed replaced.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the update provided.

Get Active NI Programme

Ms. C. Moraghan presented the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide members with an overview of a funding application made to Sport NI through the Get Active NI programme 2026/27 and seek recommendations for a project to be supported in their area that benefits one of the target groups set out by SportNI.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to:**

- Note the tight timelines and funding application approach approved at People and Communities on 11 August 2026 for Get Active Grants from SportNI in partnership with The London Marathon Foundation.
- Grant permission for officers to Identify an innovative neighbourhood sport or physical activity programme requiring up to £5,000 in funding in the south area. Allocation would be applied in keeping with council funding guidelines. The selected project will be additional to existing provision and engage at least one of the target groups listed in Section 3.1.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

In June 2026, Sport NI launched “Get Active NI”, a funding stream aligned to the approved Community Plans in each of the 11 District Councils. The programme is matched funded by London Marathon totalling £500,000 and focuses on increasing participation in sport and physical activity aiming to reduce inequality and strengthen collaboration between sport, health, and the community and voluntary sectors.

A key priority is to target and support the least active sections of the population, ensuring those who face the greatest barriers to participation are provided with opportunities to take part.

- Children and young people
- Women and girls
- Communities experiencing high social need
- People living in rural areas, and
- People with a disability

3.2 The funding allocation model is based on the latest NISRA population data and recognises the demographic profile within each District Council area. The maximum funding allocation for Belfast is £103,000. Projects must be delivered by 31st March 2027.

3.3 To avail of this funding allocation, Council had to submit a proposal to Sport NI by 21st August 2026 detailing their approach for delivery of the funding.

3.4 In light of the short delivery timeframe and the requirement to utilise the funding within the current financial year, officers proposed a targeted delivery model through a number of established delivery partners. This approach was presented to

People and Communities committee on 11 August 2026 and agreed by members.

3.5 The agreed approach includes;

- All BCC Community and Play Centres and Independently Managed Community Centres to be invited to develop an activity programme up to £5,000 targeting one or more of the identified groups i.e. children and young people, women and girls; Communities experiencing high social need and - people with a disability. Anticipated allocation of £30,000
- GLL to be invited to develop additional centre based programmes for target groups including extension of the Active and Able programme for children with disabilities up to a maximum of £5000 per programme/site. Anticipated allocation of £30,000.
- Through the Age Friendly Programme, invite their associated older people's forums to apply for up to £5,000 for activity programmes across Belfast targeting one or more of the identified groups. Anticipated allocation of £20,000.
- To work with the Equality and Diversity Unit to develop a programme of activity based events around Disability Month in December 2026. Anticipated allocation of £5,000.
- *Area Working Groups to agree groups in need of funding for innovative neighbourhood activity programmes focused on the target groups. Anticipated allocation of £5k per area group - £20,000.*

3.6 The application had to be submitted by 21 August. As there was insufficient time to present it to the Area Working Group officers before this deadline, the officers proceeded with the application in line with the committee's agreed decision.

3.7 Given the tight timelines officers with area knowledge can recommend prioritising activities that are not currently being delivered locally, can be mobilised quickly within the funding timeframe, and have the potential to attract participants who are not traditionally engaged in sport and physical activity programmes.

Timeline

- 3.8 It is anticipated that Sport NI will advise of the outcome of the application by mid-September for project delivery from October – 31 March 2027.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications contained within the approach outlined within this report.

5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.

The programme is intended to promote participation among groups who experience barriers to physical activity. Equality and accessibility considerations will be incorporated into programme design and allocation processes.

A number of Members stated that it was disappointing that the timeline was so tight.

A Member stated that a constituent had been in contact with him about intergenerational programmes and that might be something which officers could consider.

Noted.

Employability and Skills Update

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. S. O'Regan to the meeting.

She explained that a number of Employability Academy Roadshows would be taking place in September, with the main event taking place on 30th September in 2 Royal Avenue. The industries included scaffolding, health and beauty, technology and childcare, amongst others.

In response to a Member's query, she confirmed to the Working Group that officers were keen to take the events out into other areas of the city, such as Finaghy, and for Members to get in touch with the team.

Noted.

Climate Toolkit Update

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. B. Roddy to the meeting.

She 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.

Noted.

Chairperson