

West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 27th August, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Canavan, Duffy,
McCabe, McCallin, 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.

Election of Chairperson

Resolved – that Councillor McCann be elected to serve as Chairperson of the West Belfast Area Working Group until the date of the 2027 Annual Meeting.

(At the request of Councillor McCann, who was in attendance online, Councillor McCabe agreed to take the Chair).

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

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

Declarations of Interest

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

Springfield Shared Space Corridor

At the request to of Alderman McCoubrey it was agreed that an invitation to present at the November meeting be extended to the above-mentioned organisation.

Presentation from Global Country of World Peace

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above-mentioned presentation to its meeting in November.

Sport NI 'Get Active NI' Funding Stream

The Leisure Development Manager advised the Working Group that Sport NI had launched an initiative entitled 'Get Active NI', which had been developed to align with community plans across each of the eleven district councils. Members were provided with an overview of the objectives of the scheme which sought to strengthen collaboration across the sporting, health, community and voluntary sectors.

The total amount allocated to the Council had been £103,000, with successful projects to be delivered by the end of the financial year. Given the limited timescales, the People and Communities Committee had adopted a delivery model designed to maximise the number of applications submitted by the Council. For each of the Working Groups, she added, a sum of £5,000 had been reserved for the purposes of agreeing collectively a project for submission.

The Working Group agreed to discuss its options prior to the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th September with a view to agreeing a project for consideration.

Climate Toolkit Presentation

The Committee agreed to defer the above-mentioned presentation to its meeting in November.

Nature Towns and Cities Programme

The Project Manager for Nature Towns and Cities provided the Working Group with an overview of the UK-wide initiative. He outlined that 40 towns and cities, in 19 urban partnerships, would receive grants from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve access to nature and green spaces. Over the next 10 years, it 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 project sought to create 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 through skills and capacity building;
- Exploring opportunities to "green the grey" in built-up areas;
- Improving parks and open spaces for wildlife and climate resilience;
- Using better data to guide future planning and decisions; and
- Building long-term support through partnerships, volunteering, and training opportunities.

A number of Members raised the recent Motion stating the Council's support for Belfast to become a National Park City (NPC) and asked whether officers had been in touch with Wild Belfast. A Member stated that she felt the NPC status was a good goal for the Council and its partners to work towards. The Project Manager confirmed that he

had met with Wild Belfast on a number of occasions and that they were returning soon to present a further update to the City and Neighbourhoods Department.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, thanked the officer for the update.

Employability and Skills Update

The Working Group noted an update in this regard and noted further 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.

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; 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	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 DfC- £430,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project.</i> Due Diligence on sustainability ongoing. Meeting held with DfI Minister to discuss NI Water issues. Land transfer process progressing.	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	Stage 3— The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre- £295,000 (completed); 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; Glencairn Community Project (Hub)- £200,000, The Road- £210,759; <i>Shankill contingency- £19,762.</i> <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 Fuiseoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy & External Lighting Improvement</i>
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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 late 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£1,337,058 NRF-£537,058 Discretionary Fund - £200k An Ciste- £400,000 Glor Na Mona fundraising Approx. £200K+	Stage 3 - Committed	The group has submitted several funding applications and other fundraising activities are ongoing. Approximately £500-750k is required to meet the initial business case estimate for Phase 1. The group is using the site for meanwhile activities until construction of the main project commences.	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 September for further consideration after more discussions with the group and with the Council's solicitors.	Continue engagement with the group.

Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>NRF- £200,000</i> <i>BIF- £700,000</i> <i>DfC- £430,000</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	As above at BIF09. Due Diligence on sustainability ongoing. Meeting held with DfI Minister to discuss NI Water issues. Land transfer process progressing.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3 - Committed	Meeting with group and Director of Property & Projects held in June 2026. NRF funds to be used to secure and weatherproof the building.	Continue engagement with the group. AWG is asked to note the update.

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
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Pitch improvement works progressing. Falls Park ballstop fencing, spectator fencing & hardstanding currently on site, expected to be completed September 2026.
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 works at Roddens Crescent playground due to complete in September 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.
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	Stage 3 – Committed. Procurement for remedial works complete. Contractor has been appointed.
Communications Boards in playgrounds	Stage 3 – Committed. Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Citywide installation underway, completion expected by October 2026.
Basketball Courts	Stage 3 – Committed. 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	Stage 3 – Committed. Programme of improvement works to parks and open spaces across the Council estate. Half Moon Lake - meeting to determine priorities against agreed budget to take place week commencing 24 August. Springhill Park – environmental improvement works quotation obtained for painting of railings and gates to open space/ summer football space, and reinstatement of lighting columns to the main spine path clarification ongoing. Woodvale Park - toilet provision to include changing places feasibility study complete with preferred option identified. Consultant to be appointed to undertake detailed design with a view to contractor appointment in early 2027.
Colin Active Travel – Phase 1	Stage 3 – Committed. Funding application to be submitted to DfI in September 26.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	Stage 3 – Committed. Tender published in August 2026.
Depot Charging Scheme	Project completed. Installation of EV chargers at five Council depot sites at Blanchflower, Duncrue, Mallusk, Zoo and Ormeau.
Historic Cemeteries	Stage 2 – Uncommitted. Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Knock Cemetery, Friar's Bush, Balmoral Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Surveys have been completed for Knock, Friar's Bush and Balmoral Cemetery.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	Stage 3 – Committed. Currently compiling a list of signs for pilot project to restore historic tiled street signs across the city.
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	Stage 3 - Committed. Contractor procurement is underway and it 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.
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.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging. 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 appointed to undertake a Feasibility Study of the Greenway. A consultation event took place in June 2026. Feasibility Report due for completion by end August 2026. A launch date for the Lenadoon Greenway feasibility presentation will take place on 29 September 2026 and Members of the AWG will be invited.
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	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space.
Suffolk 3G Pitch and Lenadoon Park Pitch Improvements	<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	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Integrated Consultancy Team has been appointed. Officers are working with the group to agree designs.

Lagmore Youth Project proposal	
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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	Timeline subject to TEO business case approvals process. Department of Finance approval required. Integrated Consultancy Team procurement process underway.

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	Pre-start meeting held with contractor. Phase 1 installation of wayfinding signage with beacons and interpretative panels to follow. Works underway.
Distillery Street Redevelopment Project	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Planning application has been submitted. Discussions ongoing regarding post-completion arrangements in terms of land ownership management and maintenance.

7. 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 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 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.

The Director of Property and Projects outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered several questions in this regard.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson