

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 2nd September, 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;
Mrs. C. Moraghan, Leisure Development Manager;
Mr. J. Currie, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;
Ms. S. O'Reagan, Employability and Skills Manager;
Mr. A. McGeown, Regeneration Project Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain and Doran.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd June, 2026 were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation

Ulster Orchestra

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 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 – LIF Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre, Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club, Sailortown/ St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment; Capital Programme Depot Charging Scheme; 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 42 have been completed; and 1 is at pre-construction stage.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	24 (96%)	£1,062,500	18 (100%)	£798,201
Number of Projects On-going Delivery				
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	18**	£798,201

**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
NLIF2-23	Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre	£95,000 LIF- £15,000 AYC DfC- £50,000; DoEd- £30,000	Complete	Project completed. See Appendix 1.	Continue engagement with Groups re post monitoring.
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club (UV – ABC Trust Hub)	£7,317,000 UV- £4,751,000 DfC- £1,300,000 FT - £1,200,000 LIF- £66,000	Complete	Project completed. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. LIF element (purchase of gym equipment) complete. UV project substantially complete. Awaiting branding and internal building signage and delivery of café equipment. Official launch likely in October 2026.	Continue engagement with Groups re post monitoring.

NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	Complete	Project completed. Rewiring works have been completed. Awaiting invoice to process final payment.	Continue engagement with group re post monitoring.
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building	£1,084,172 UV- £1,019,172 LIF- £65,000	Design stage	The centre lease is being finalised by solicitors. Land acquisition underway for the MUGA and surrounding land owned by NIFRS. Consultants currently working on detailed design.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO.

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	Stage 3 - Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k, Malgrove -£950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Stage 3 - Committed	Procurement of contractor underway – ITT has been issued and due back end of August 2026.	Continue engagement with group.

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 and on site since early 2026. Completion planned by end of December 2026.	Continue engagement with group.
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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	Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises, <i>Stage 1 (Reserve)— 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>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£899,191 <i>NRF-£518,191</i> <i>Cost risks-£381k</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Contractor started on site in June 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3- Committed	Land vesting and right of way issues still being progressed by DfC.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£3,418,303 <i>UV-£2,013,607</i> <i>NRF-£154,696</i> <i>Cost risks-£50k</i> <i>DfC-£1,000,000</i> <i>Various-£200k</i>	Stage 3- Committed	On Ground. Works progressing on site. Completion forecast March 2027.	Continue engagement with the group.

St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Procurement of contractor underway. Funding Agreement to be signed pending resolution on legal/ ownership issues. Agreement to support group with legal advice. Awaiting Legal Team for sign off.	Continue engagement with the group and Legal Services.
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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
Depot Charging Scheme	Project completed. Installation of EV chargers at five Council depot sites at Blanchflower, Duncrue, Mallusk, Zoo and Ormeau. See Appendix 1.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	On ground. Works ongoing. Expected to reopen in Spring 2027.
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. The installation of the gas ring main is complete. Foul Pumping Station contract has had the enabling works complete. There will be a pause in site works until NIW connections are established (June 2027 at earliest). NIE upgrade connections to fully service the site development have started (with completion anticipated at end of 2027).
Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works	On ground. Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building. Works on site.
Floral Hall Health & Safety Works	On ground. First phase of Health & Safety works completed. Works to a temporary roof agreed to make the building watertight is ongoing.
Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2	On ground. Progressing.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	On ground. Pitch improvement works progressing. Marrowbone Park 3G extension to existing perimeter fencing. Awaiting cost estimate from fencing contractor. Possible start 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.

Assembly Rooms Health & Safety Works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Conservation Management Plan for Assembly Rooms due by end of August and Braddell's building by September 2026. Procurement process for consultants to begin in September 2026.
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 (links to PEACEPLUS)	<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 ongoing. Invitation to tender for contractor due to be issued late August 2026.
Communications Boards	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Citywide installation underway, completion expected by October 2026.
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. Grove Park- works programmed to commence mid-January 2027. Ligoniel Park - design work / cost estimate complete, works programmed to commence mid-November 2026. Cavehill Adventurous Playground - works programmed to commence in January 2027. Marrowbone Park – replacement of fencing at Jamacia Road, works to be completed following assessment of extent of repairs required.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender published in August 2026.
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 being looked at in conjunction with the next phase of leisure at this site.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Following some market research, options to progress this project have now been identified. Further internal discussions need to take place to identify best options and finalise budgets.

Duncrue Masterplan	Stage 1- Emerging. 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	Stage 1 – Emerging. Creation of lit spine and associated path/ access improvements to facilitate extended opening hours on selected parks.
North Foreshore - Giant's Park	A Master Development Agreement was entered in March 2024 with Giant's Park Belfast Limited (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 (D&L). Amendments are currently being negotiated on this to extend the D&L hub to meet the demand in this sector and to relocate the Pitstop uses (hotel and drive-thru restaurants) to the Welcome Hub which will co-locate the leisure uses.
Little York Street/ Little Patrick Street Public Realm Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Procurement stage. Traffic Regulation Order application is awaiting approval before proceeding with IST procurement.

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
ABC Trust Health & Leisure Hub (links to LIF programme)	Project completed. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. Project substantially complete. Awaiting branding and internal building signage and delivery of café equipment. Official launch likely in October 2026.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	On ground. Partnership project with UV, DfC and DfI. Progressing well on site. 3G pitch to be completed end of Summer however cannot be used until project handed over. Interim maintenance required. Application for additional funding submitted to PEACEPLUS. Completion forecast February 2027.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project (links to NRF programme)	On Ground. Works progressing on site. Completion forecast March 2027.
Sunningdale Community Centre (links to BIF programme)	Business case stage. Site for development identified. Group liaising with solicitors around their current tenure on the site at Ballysillan Rd. Project cannot progress until outcome of site ownership is concluded.

Westland Community Centre (links to LIF programme)	As above NLIF014. The centre lease is being finalised by solicitors. Land acquisition underway for the MUGA and surrounding land owned by NIFRS. Consultants currently working on detailed design.
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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. Invitation to tender for contractor due to be issued late August 2026.
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. Draft Stage 2 Report received, with final report expected September 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. Initial surveys and design have begun. Contractor procurement to commence in Spring 2027.

8. 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 North Belfast is £370,276.

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

Noted.

Get Active NI Programme

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 in principle, that the £5,000 was to be split five ways and allocated to one boxing club, one football club, two GAA clubs and a club to be suggested to the Leisure Development Manager by Councillor Nelson, and that the Leisure Development Manager would make contact with the suggested clubs to assess eligibility, monitoring and evaluation.

Employability and Skills Update (Including LMP)

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.

Chairperson