



Subject:	DfI Active Travel and Social Distancing Measures
Date:	10 June 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration and Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members on the work with DfI in relation to social distancing measures and active travel.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the Minister of Infrastructure's proposals as set out below in relation to social distancing measures and active travel in the context of a 'green' recovery.Note the Council's opportunity to work with DfI to identify opportunities and practical solutions and support officers working with DfI on this.Note that the Council will revert with Members views and a collective proposition around short, medium and longer term interventions and solutions aligned to the Ministers ambitions, recognising that this will be an iterative process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that the DfI and DfC Ministers have been asked to endorse the <i>Bolder Vision</i> Connectivity Study and commit to progressing the future phases and seek to embed the framework in Programme for Government. Support the partnership project with Ulster University and DfI in relation to monitoring the social distancing measures to inform longer-term changes.
3.0	Main report
3.1	As the city continues to plan for a phased removal of COVID-19 restrictions, the Minister for Infrastructure has announced various proposals to help shape recovery, enable social distancing and give people confidence to come back into towns and cities. The impact of the reduced capacity of the public transportation network also requires consideration of measures to provide additional priority spacing for sustainable transport measures, primarily promoting cycling and walking.
3.2	On 17 April, Council wrote to the DfI Minister highlighting the support across the eight political parties for the reallocation of road space to walking and cycling during the pandemic. Council officers have been working closely with the DfI to bring forward measures and interventions in line with this proposal.
3.3	<p>The Minister for the Department of Infrastructure has now appointed a Walking and Cycling Champion within the department and has set up an Advisory Group that includes representation from Council, DfC, Sustrans, IMTAC Belfast Chamber, among others, to bring forward the Ministers ambition to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus on a 'green' recovery where active ways of travelling will form the core of the overall transport policy; Trial and test temporary interventions that may led to longer term change, including widening footpaths, pop-up cycle lanes, pedestrianising streets and improving sustainable transport connectivity to local hospitals; support communities, particularly those in disadvantaged inner city communities who do not have easy access to space for recreation and leisure who could benefit from repurposed road space
3.4	The Chief Executive wrote to Minister Mallon on 14 May highlighting the opportunity to work collaboratively with her Department to support this work. There is a separate report to Committee on this in the context of Minister engagement.

3.5	<p>In a letter to Councils on 29 May the Minister re-iterated her intentions on this active travel and social distancing work. She highlighted that some areas had already been identified in Belfast but she intended to work with Councils to identify more as a matter of urgency. She advised of her intention to announce a number of pop-up cycle lanes and was especially keen to improve links to hospitals. The importance of collaborative working and the role local government can play in harnessing the opportunities to reshape our cities was highlighted. The Minister referred to the 'can-do' approach of the Councils her officials had been working with so far. She encouraged BCC to bring forward their own ideas and identify opportunities and possible interventions.</p>
3.6	<p>Council officers are currently working closely with the DfI to bring forward short-term interventions with a clear focus on public health, air quality, climate, sustainable travel and equity. These interventions will enable recovery in both the short term, and through the trialling of short-term pilot interventions, could potentially result in more comprehensive improvements and longer-term transformation.</p>
3.7	<p>Some initial temporary measures are as below, with further announcements expected in the coming weeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• widening pavements• additional/new cycle lanes and reduced speed limits• pedestrian priority streets• limiting access to residential streets to facilitate play and exercise• traffic signal phasing• bicycle cages
3.8	<p>It is critical that these measures are implemented immediately to have the infrastructure in place prior to businesses reopening. Consideration of key arterial routes / commercial nodes, as well as the city centre is important.</p>
3.9	<p>Clear and frequent messaging and a public awareness campaign is required to restore public confidence and to identify the active measures in place to promote health and wellbeing during the phased relaxation of current restrictions and officers are working with DfI to further develop these plans.</p>
3.10	<p>Officers are also working with DfI to develop and accelerate longer term interventions across the city including the pedestrian and cycling re-prioritisation of the Fredrick St</p>

Junction, Peace IV, the Ormeau Bridge and improving connections and opportunities to local communities.

3.11 In August 2019, Council, DfC and DfI agreed to jointly commission the first phase of the City Centre Connectivity Study aimed at providing a shared vision for the city centre to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city centre which will improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing for all. Phase 1 is now complete and the 'draft Bolder Vision for Belfast' was ratified by Council in March 2020. The key principles of the Vision, as below, can provide a framework for incorporating social distancing measures across the city, and through further work inform the longer term infrastructure interventions required to lead a modal shift and to enable a green recovery.

- Creating a **healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment** that promotes well-being for all, inclusive growth and innovation
- Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to **prioritise** integrated **walking, cycling** and **public transport** and end the dominance of the car
- Providing **lively, safe, and green streets** linking inclusive shared spaces to promote resilience and enhance our built heritage
- Removing **severance and barriers** to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all

3.12 The draft Vision requires endorsement from the DfC and DfI Ministers and a commitment to progress to the next Phases to identify the key infrastructure and interventions required to enable the changing landscape of the city.

3.13 The Minister and Party Group Leaders met on 2 June to discuss improving walking and cycling provision, both for social distancing and health reasons and to identify other opportunities for active travel in both the short and long term. Members were supportive of the proposals coming forward. Various issues were discussed including the need for improved cycling infrastructure and segregated cycle-ways; further pedestrianisation possibilities; Park and Ride provision; opportunities for Greenways; the Dublin to Belfast high speed rail; inner city residents parking issues; Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan; clean air zones and ensuring that the needs of elderly people were considered with proposed interventions. The importance of re-imagining the city centre was highlighted, whilst also ensuring that the arterial routes were fully considered as part of the reopening of the city process and planned interventions. Moving to the next phases of the Bolder Vision, as a three way partnership with DfI/DfC/BCC, was discussed in the context of

	setting a clear plan for the re-imagining of the city centre and links to the surrounding communities.
3.14	The Minister highlighted her desire to work closely with Members to bring forward interventions based on local knowledge and constituent/area issues and sought the support of Members on proposed interventions. Close working between Council officers and Dfl was emphasised as being critical moving forward.
3.15	It was agreed that the Council would revert to the Minister and her Department with the various issues raised by Members alongside other proposals that officers had also been considering. This collective proposition can consider short, medium and longer term interventions and solutions aligned to the Ministers ambitions – recognising that this will be an iterative process, but highlighting the extent of the Council’s ambitions across the city. However, it has to be recognised that the transport planning and engineering expertise sits within Dfl. Further, there are clear capital implications for Dfl in taking forward any interventions and it is unclear how this work is to be financed at this stage.
3.16	The opportunity to work closely with Dfl is welcomed although consideration is required as to the optimal mechanism to ensure a longer term joined up approach, including how this is financed and resourced to ensure embedment of proposals within Departmental priorities.
3.17	For the short and medium term interventions it is proposed to undertake monitoring and data collection, including engagement with users, communities and stakeholders to evaluate the success of the interventions and to inform and secure longer term interventions aimed at promoting modal shift. Officers are currently exploring a potential partnership project with Ulster University and Dfl that would capture this information and help inform future interventions.
	Finance & Resource Implications
3.18	The proposed interventions are being led by Dfl and any financial implications for the Council are unknown at this stage. Any proposals that may require a Council financial commitment will be brought through the appropriate approvals process. The cost of the proposed joint Dfl/BCC monitoring project with UU will be funded from within departmental budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.19	The proposed interventions are being progressed by Dfl, who will be responsible for considering equality and good relations implications.

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: A Bolder Vision for Belfast