

# Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section  
Legal and Civic Services Department  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast  
City Council**

7th May, 2020

## **MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The following is a list of reports with recommendations which were due to be considered by above-named Committee on Wednesday, 13th May, 2020.

These decisions will now be taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the authority delegated to her by the Council.

A table of Recommendations to Committee will also be sent separately by email and these should be completed by Party Leaders and returned by the deadline indicated in the email.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

1. **Routine Matters**
  - (a) Declarations of Interest
2. **Growing Business and the Economy**
  - (a) Covid 19 - Implications for Economic Regeneration and Emerging Proposals (Pages 1 - 14)
3. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**
  - (a) Motion - Sustainable Transport (Pages 15 - 50)

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<b>Subject:</b>	COVID-19: implications for economic regeneration and emerging proposals
<b>Date:</b>	13 May 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on emerging research on the likely impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on the economic growth of the city and highlight a number of immediate areas of work that are being taken forward by the Council and a range of partner organisations.
1.2	It should be noted that a much broader report on support and recovery post Covid will be considered in due course. This will also consider the impact of the crisis on inequality, communities, health, mobility etc.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the update on emerging research on the likely impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on the economic growth of the city. Sectoral feedback has highlighted the importance of a strong public private partnership approach.</li> <li>• Note that a number of immediate areas of work that are being taken forward by the Council and its partners, in the context of previously agreed Committee priorities, aimed at addressing these challenges and to help mitigate the impact of the downturn on local residents and businesses as well as maintaining investment to support inclusive growth in the city</li> <li>• Note that this work will form part of a wider recovery plan that will be brought back to S P and R Committee at a future date.</li> <li>• Note that a specific report on the Council’s role in supporting and facilitating the opening up of business and the city centre will be brought forward at the June Committee meeting date.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting in February 2020, Members agreed the Committee’s Priorities for 2020/21. This included delivering key activities set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration &amp; Investment Strategy to drive the regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas, and delivering inclusive growth through economic development, employability and skills, international relations and the Cultural Strategy.</p>
3.2	<p>The Committee also approved the development of the Future City Centre Programme to provide a coherent approach to the development of the city centre across priority cross-cutting strands of work including Strategic Sites Assessment, City Vitality, Addressing Vacancies, City Centre Connectivity and Positioning the City to Compete in attracting local and international investment.</p>
3.3	<p>At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 6 March 2020, approval was given for the delivery of a series of work plans relating to city centre revitalisation; growing the economy and working and learning. The work plans contained a range of initiatives and investments to move forward the key areas of focus that sit within the responsibility of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.</p>

3.4	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has had a monumental impact on the economic life of not just Belfast but all across the world. Members will be aware of some of the emerging research findings and forecasts. At a macro level some of the key pieces include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Monetary Fund (IMF) report confirming that the pandemic has pushed the world into a recession and that, for 2020 at least, the situation will be worse than the global financial crisis</li> <li>• McKinsey report noting that it could take three years for the US economy to recover</li> <li>• OECD report confirming that the most significant decline in consumer spend has been in the arts and culture, hospitality, leisure, tourism and transport sectors alongside professional and real estate and retail and wholesale</li> <li>• UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) report suggesting that global FDI will decrease by up to 15% this year.</li> <li>• Bank of England forecasting the UK economy will shrink by 14%.</li> </ul>
3.5	<p>At a Belfast and Northern Ireland level, a number of reports have been produced in recent weeks. Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely slump in NI economy in 2020 of between 7.5% (Danske Bank) and 10% (UU Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC)) – both higher than impact of 2008 recession</li> <li>• Estimated 235,000 staff temporarily laid off or furloughed and 385,000 jobs deemed to be “most impacted” by the downturn – of which 145,000 are in wholesale and retail and 96,000 in manufacturing (UUEPC)</li> <li>• Footfall levels in Belfast city centre around 10% of the figure for the same time last year (Belfast One BID)</li> <li>• Up to 80% of private sector staff furloughed (Belfast Chamber and NI Chamber)</li> <li>• Tenfold increase in applications for Universal Credit (DfC).</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>While the initial response focused on the health-related measures, national and regional governments reacted quickly with a range of business and income support interventions designed to support companies at this challenging time and to shield them and their employees from the most significant impacts of the downturn in economic activity. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank loans for micro, small and larger business (with significant underwriting by UK Government)</li> <li>• Various relief schemes including rates relief for Q1 on both domestic and non-domestic properties</li> </ul>

<p>3.7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job retention scheme (furlough) covering 80 per cent of business staff wages, up to £2,500 per employee per month</li> <li>• Deferral of payments e.g. self-assessment payment due to be paid to HMRC by 31 July 2020 may now be deferred until January 2021.</li> </ul> <p>Despite the interventions, it is clear that the pandemic will significantly affect the Belfast economy and its workforce and our original plans to support economic, physical and social regeneration in the city. Officers have been working closely with partner organisations in the public, private and statutory sectors to get a handle on the scale of the challenge and to work towards collaborative solutions. There has also been significant engagement with and learning from partner networks such as Core Cities – exploring opportunities for joint lobbying and building the case for investment in cities in order to drive economic regeneration. In addition, officers have been working with relevant government departments that are involved in the regional response to the pandemic, particularly Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure and Department for the Economy. There are a number of working groups being established and, where possible, we have been working to secure council input to and representation on these groupings.</p>
<p>3.8</p>	<p>One of the emerging schools of thought is the need for a place-based approach to the recovery: recognising that the needs of cities like Belfast are significantly different from other, more rural locations. Recent research from the Centre for Progressive Policy shows that Belfast could suffer an estimated 30% decline in output in quarter 2 2020, the same as Derry &amp; Strabane and lowest of the councils based in Northern Ireland (with Mid Ulster being the highest of all 11 local council areas). This is largely due to the economic structure in the different areas. By any metrics, these represent significant reductions in GVA. However they also point to the need for locally-responsive solutions. In Belfast, this is likely to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likelihood that those in low skilled occupations will be disproportionately impacted – and the resulting impact on social cohesion</li> <li>• High levels of economic inactivity in Belfast, concentrated in geographical areas of the city and recognising that these people will find the challenge of getting a job much more difficult in an economy that is in recession</li> <li>• Concerns for the micro and small businesses: they make up more than 90% of the business base and many already operate on very tight margins with limited or no reserves</li> </ul>

- Concerns regarding the ability and speed of the FDI return – a significant driver of both job creation and productivity in Belfast
- Infrastructure concerns: with connectivity significantly impacted, concerns for the major infrastructure services such as the port and the airports
- Tourism: this has been a significant driver of growth in Belfast over the last decade or more. With timescales unclear on any return to travel, this means that, in the short term, the market is likely to be reduced to domestic visitors only – and this is not large enough to sustain the level of recent investment in the sector (particularly by the private sector). It also includes concerns about business tourism – with significant implications for ICC Belfast
- The capital investment market may be key to accelerating economic recovery and will require ongoing engagement to see how best this could potentially work for Belfast to drive inclusive growth. There will need to be a strong emphasis on how public / private/ third sector relationships and partnerships can bring forward the appropriate development and regeneration proposals which address inclusive economic growth creating and shaping a sustainable city eco system
- Residential development is an area which sector feedback indicates could potentially have a catalytic role in regeneration, as well as bolstering the construction industry. Investment intelligence also demonstrates there is appetite and demand for long term income residential partnership arrangements with Local Authorities. Members have previously identified more city centre living as a key priority for the city
- Demand for office space remains uncertain. The new normal and social distancing measures may place emphasis on space requirements whilst agile working is also likely to influence demand. The quality of future requirements will potentially focus on “wellness”. This will put an emphasis on the regeneration impact that a strong city employment population provides.
- Hotel development is on hold and there are concerns around the demand given the significant impact on the tourism sector
- The city centre will undoubtedly face challenges in the context of a changing retail and hospitality landscape. Whilst the challenge should not be underestimated, it further highlights the need to amplify the re-imagination of the city centre addressing the importance of vitality, the diversification of land use, promoting mixed uses, enhanced sustainable connectivity, open and green spaces and community infrastructure, with more family usage.
- There is an increasing recognition that the city needs to consider how its infrastructure can adapt to meet the challenges of a world post-COVID. There has

been much debate around connectivity and sustainability issues in the context of modes of transport including cycling and pedestrian priorities, as well as air quality and other environmental considerations.

- With connectivity significantly impacted, there are concerns for the major infrastructure services such as the port and the airports, and the need to re-instill confidence in the public and active transportation networks to avoid a regression to the private vehicle.

3.9 As identified above, the Committee had previously approved a range of activities to support economic development, employability and skills and city regeneration and development. While some commitments will be able to progress, it is considered that there will be a need to re-focus some of the activities to take account of the impact of COVID-19. Given that this is an extremely fluid situation, these conversations are still progressing and details are being finalised. However, details of some emerging areas of work and key issues arising are set out below for Members' information:

3.10 Employability and skills

- As the figures above illustrate, there has been an almost total collapse in demand from employers for any new jobs – with the exception of a number of sectors that have seen exponential growth (e.g. health and social care; food retail and logistics). Some Fintech companies have also experienced some growth. This means that we are having to re-consider many of our interventions which are predicated on bringing together the supply side (in terms of people seeking employment) and the demand side (employers seeking to recruit). This is particularly challenging for those who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive and is likely to mean that it will become all the more challenging for them to get back to work now, given the increased competition from the “newly unemployed” for a much smaller number of job vacancies or those which employers are seeking to fill as soon as possible – with limited flexibility or the availability of additional support required by many of those that have been out of the labour market for some time
- One of the potential instruments to address this is to explore a range of employer incentives, focused on encouraging businesses to recruit LTU or economically inactive clients. We are working on businesses cases to understand what this might look like and how it might be resourced



- Over the last year, we had been working on a series of upskilling employment academies. These were focused on helping people already in employment (but in lower level positions) to undertake additional training with a view to moving up to a higher level of position and achieving a high level qualification. This training is ongoing with more than 110 clients and we are hopeful that, in time, they will progress in the labour market. We are exploring the opportunity to expand this offer into new skills areas (particularly digital skills)
- Given the influx of new people becoming unemployed, we recognise that it is likely that many may need to look at reskilling in new sectors. At present, it is difficult to predict what those specific skills or sectors will be but we are engaging with Invest NI to explore opportunities for re-skilling once there is greater clarity. This also provides an opportunity to focus on new growth areas and, potentially, improve productivity levels. As detailed above, this might include consideration of those sectors that have experienced a jump in growth as well as those that are more likely to emerge “first” from the current situation
- Traditionally, the council’s efforts on employability have focused on the economically inactive and long-term unemployed. We consider that it will be important to keep this target group at the forefront of our investments but recognise that we will need to evolve our support interventions given the changing labour market and sectors most impacted or likely to remain impacted going forward.
- There is an opportunity for the public sector to lead by example on the employment response. In advance of the lockdown, we had engaged with Translink, Education Authority, Belfast Trust and Belfast City Council’s HR teams to develop ring-fenced employment opportunities for the economically inactive. If the public sector partners can stand up these interventions, it can send a positive message about our commitment to support inclusive economic growth and can encourage others to follow suit. This is likely to involve building on the commitments set out by some of the city’s key employers as part of their commitment to supporting inclusive growth in Belfast
- Research suggests that young people are among those likely to be most adversely affected by the situation. There is an opportunity to ensure that young people are placed at the forefront of the recovery approach, demonstrating our commitment to them and supporting social cohesion

- One of the key areas for development will be to look at digital skills. This will involve general digital capability as well as more technical digital skills in high growth areas. We are working with our Belfast Region City Deal partners on a combined approach to this, taking account of the planned investment in the digital infrastructure across the BRCD area. We will also need to work with the relevant government departments and the further and higher education sector to develop a significant re-skilling programme for our citizens.

3.11

Business start-up and growth

- Support services for start-ups, social enterprises, cooperatives and business growth has all been moved to virtual delivery models. In the first weeks following the lockdown, the pipeline of new clients dropped off by up to 40%, given the absence of key referral channels (e.g. Enterprise Agencies, key business support organisations) and officers focused on supporting existing clients who were trying to deal with the impact on their business and consider opportunities for new ways of working. With the support of corporate communications and delivery teams we have developed a communications plan to ensure businesses in the city are aware of this support, as a result of this 51 new businesses have registered for our support since the beginning of April. We also launched a series of live webinars which have engaged 200 businesses so far and in addition to this some of our business mentors have recorded podcasts which are now live on the website. Officers are continuing to develop the services provided across these work streams to ensure that the support in place is relevant to meet the needs of local businesses at this time
- In keeping with government guidance, a decision was taken to close the Innovation Factory (IF) on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. All occupants are now working from home, however they are still able to access the mentoring and services of Innovation Factory to support their businesses at this time. As part of a corporate decision on fees and charges, elected members agreed to give all tenants a three month rent free period from 1st April 2020 to the 30th June 2020 to help support local business in these challenging times. This rent free period has been gratefully received by tenants and will hopefully ensure that tenants are in a position to return to the centre and grow their business through our support when it reopens. In the interim, officers are working with the Innovation Factory team to establish a business recovery plan for when it is safe to re-open the centre and this will include a significant drive to increase occupancy levels

- Exploring additional incentives for start-ups, social enterprises and cooperatives – including those made redundant: we have been engaging with colleagues in the Department for the Economy and Department for Communities to explore the potential for additional incentives to help those who may wish to start up a new business. As has been the case following previous recessions, people who are made redundant may choose to move towards self-employment. We have tested out a number of approaches involving additional financial incentives – whether that is through the benefits system or through additional grant funding – and are working with partners to explore how these might be scaled up. We have also been working closely with Social Enterprise NI and Cooperative Alternatives to identify specific support for the social enterprise and cooperative sector. We understand that the Northern Ireland Executive is to develop a new support package so we will ensure that our investment is complementary
- Supporting DfE on administration of grant support for hospitality sector: we have been working with the Department for the Economy to support the administration of the £25,000 support fund for eligible businesses in the tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors. These businesses are among those that have been most adversely impacted by the downturn. Within the first week of the scheme opening, we had processed 13 requests (the council only inputs where the Department for the Economy requires additional support on a business that it cannot access from Invest NI or Tourism NI)
- We have been focusing on digital skills support in particular, helping businesses to explore new ways of working. This includes enhancing their online presence, investing in new digital equipment and developing a digital media plan
- Through our resilient city approach and the work of the Climate Commission, there has been a commitment to supporting sustainable economic growth by exploring opportunities for energy transition and developing new business opportunities in this growing sector. The current challenges present an opportunity to consider how this work can be set in the context of a wider approach to economic recovery in the city.
- Work on creating a social value procurement framework has been prioritised with a phased approach being developed which focuses on impacted sectors and on maximising economic impact within the district.

Tourism development

- Tourism has been a key growth sector for the city for the last decade and currently accounts for around 18,000 jobs in Belfast. However the industry has totally collapsed since March this year. Engagement with Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland suggests that the sector's recovery is likely to be more protracted than others – stretching out to up to three years. A recovery taskforce has recently been established by the Minister for the Economy and officers are working to ensure appropriate and adequate representation from the council as part of this work
- Belfast has traditionally accounted for around 40% of visitor numbers and spend and it a critical gateway to the region through its port and airports access. Likewise, the sector has provided employment opportunities across a range of skills levels and job types. A recent Tourism NI survey suggests that 79% of businesses consider that their business will be severely affected in the short-term (63% in the longer term). Many of these are small businesses that are reliant on visitors coming to the city. This points to the need for a dedicated programme of investment in product development, city marketing and business tourism development in conjunction with Tourism NI and other partners
- Given the extended timescales for recovery, it will be even more critical for the council and partners to focus resources on initiatives of international scale that can place the city back on the visitor map. In April 2020, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved a series of tourism and cultural development support activities. This includes a programme of scale in 2023 which had been identified as a major strategic initiative to support long-term resilience, growth and transformation in the city. Given the likely impact of COVID-19, it is anticipated that this will become of even greater importance to support recovery. Development work around an engagement and communications approach as well as commissioning, curation and potentially bidding for key events (subject to further approvals) will continue in the coming months. Given that in the short to medium term, the key market for visitors will be the UK and Ireland we will also focus promotional activity to target that audience.

3.13	<p><u>City Centre Connectivity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the context of reduced traffic flows and the likely requirements around ongoing social distancing there is an increasing need to consider how our city’s streets and places can be best used to make them healthy, vibrant and accessible</li> <li>• City Centre Connectivity Study: A Bolder Vision for Belfast – it is recommended that this is now progressed further with DfI and DfC with a view to gaining Ministerial approval for the Vision</li> <li>• Accelerate preparation for Phases 2 and 3 including agreement on specification for procurement and governance arrangement</li> <li>• Working with DfC and DfI to consider immediate small scale interventions to encourage social distancing on the public and active travel networks</li> </ul>
3.14	<p><u>City Centre Living / Strategic Site Assessments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising the delivery of the Strategic Sites Assessment Phase 1 to bring forward residential-led, mixed use, mixed tenure opportunity development sites within the city centre. CG&amp;R Committee in April approved the progression of a Development Brief process in respect on the Inner North West Northern Cluster within Phase1. Further detailed work is required to bring forward the remaining cluster sites in Phase 1</li> <li>• Commencing the Strategic Sites Phase 2 Programme of work to include an analysis of the city wide public sector estate</li> <li>• Engagement with NIHE, DfC, private sector and funders to help bring forward the development of a shared and inclusive city centre, and accelerating solutions to the obstacles of city centre living.</li> </ul>
3.15	<p><u>City Centre Inner North West Area</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inner North West (INW) Special Action Area was identified in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration &amp; Investment Strategy as an area that is currently underdeveloped and in need of significant investment to address long-term dereliction in the area. Members previously agreed a Masterplan for the area and in February 2020 they also agreed an aligned INW Action Plan</li> </ul>

- There are a number of development and regeneration opportunities that sit within this plan area, both from a public and private sector perspective. This includes the two SSA clusters, The Sixth, the Building Blocks (Bywater) proposals and other private sector and derelict lands. Given the extent of lands that are available for development and its proximity to UU, the retail core and connectivity to existing communities which bound the city centre this area represents a key regeneration district within the city
- There is an opportunity now to explore the potential to develop and package this wider Inner North West as a catalytic regeneration project – with an inclusive investment plan linked to the INW Masterplan and associated Action Plan to act as a potential investment prospectus for the area that seeks to bring together a number of individual projects in a more joined up manner with inclusive place making at its core. Further work will obviously be required to progress this emerging concept, together with significant engagement across all sectors. The emerging concept is however being brought to Members now at this early stage for consideration but with a view to a more detailed paper being brought back in the near future as more work is done to refine this concept into a clearer proposition.

3.16

#### Future City Centre Programme

- There are a number of priority strands within the Future City centre Programme which will be critical as we emerge from the current situation. Members have previously agreed the approach to the Future City Centre Programme. This includes a range of proposed activities including:
  - I. Amplify the re-imagination of the city centre addressing the importance of vitality, the diversification of land, promoting mixed uses, open and green spaces and community infrastructure.
  - II. Recast priorities of the programme in the context of COVID-19.
  - III. Update the vacancy baseline and develop the programme for mitigating the impact of vacancies
  - IV. Progress further the development of a strong Belfast narrative in the form of a Belfast City Centre Proposition in order to position Belfast as a tourist, retail and leisure destination in a post Covid world
  - V. Consideration of the role digital innovation can play in helping to address the multiplicity of challenges that affect the city centre.

3.17	<p>VI. Create an attractive environment maximizing opportunities for pedestrainisation and enhancement of the public realm to create a welcoming and safe space.</p> <p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p> <p>All existing commitments have been approved as part of the previous reports to Committee in February and March 2020 and in the context of the estimates process for the financial year 2020/21. Whilst these funds will remain available for their original purposes at the moment they will need to be reviewed in light of the council’s overall financial position going forward</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.18	<p>Equality screening will be undertaken as part of the ongoing workplans and delivery activity.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None

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<b>Subject:</b>	Motion – Sustainable Transport
<b>Date:</b>	13 May 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration and Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To brief Members on details of research / data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes in the context of the Notice of Motion on Sustainable Transport, which was referred to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2020 by the Council at its meeting on 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2020.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee should note the report from Jacobs at Appendix One outlining the findings of other city’s approaches to taxis in bus lanes and some of the consequences and impacts, as requested by the Committee earlier in the year.

	The Committee should also note that a report will be brought back at a later date in respect of the Notice of Motion to agree the Council position on this issue and how that will be raised with the Minister.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>At the Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020, the motion as below was proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor O’Hara. In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), this was referred to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration:</p> <p>“This Council supports the promotion and expansion of sustainable transport in Belfast as a critical step in addressing the dangerous levels of air pollution and congestion across the City and in the context of our climate emergency.</p> <p>With the appointment of a new Minister for Infrastructure, the Council should ensure that the Minister is clear about our commitment to sustainable transport options and the need for urgent action on climate.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council agrees to write to the Minister to state that the Experimental Traffic Control Scheme Permitted (Taxis in Bus Lanes), which was proposed by her Department, does not have the Council’s support and to urge her to not progress this further, instead focusing efforts on further measures to enhance the provision of public transport, cycle infrastructure and pedestrian priority in the City.”</p>
3.2	<p>At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 after discussion, it was moved by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Donnelly:</p> <p>“That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the motion to enable a report to be submitted to its next monthly meeting providing details of any research/data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes.”</p>
3.3	<p>Members will note that there has been a number of reports to the Committee over the past few years in relation to taxis using bus lanes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017- Notice of Motion Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis. Proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Reynolds, to the Committee for consideration: “This Council supports the decision by the Department for</li> </ul>

Infrastructure to introduce the twelve week trial period permitting all taxis to use the Belfast Rapid Transit bus lanes and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure a letter of support to extend the duration of the trial period for an additional six months and expand the trial to include all Belfast bus lanes.” It was moved and declared carried that the Committee supports the decision taken by the Department for Infrastructure to introduce the twelve week trial period permitting all taxis to use the Belfast Rapid Transit bus lanes and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure a letter of support to extend the duration of the trial period for an additional six months and expand the trial to include all Belfast bus lanes.

- 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – Belfast Rapid Transit. Mr. S. Duffy from Belfast Taxi Group, was in attendance and had requested to speak to the Committee. Mr. Duffy explained that he represented taxi drivers from across the city. He pointed out that a recent trial which allowed private hire taxis to use bus lanes in Belfast had been an overwhelming success, with customers having benefitted from cheaper fares and reaching their destinations quicker. He reported that taxis were able to use bus lanes in a number of cities across Great Britain and Ireland, including Manchester, Glasgow, Cork, Dublin and Cardiff. He emphasised that taxis provided a vital community service in the city, by taking people who were unable to use public transport to hospital appointments and to school. He explained to the Committee that taxi drivers would be severely disadvantaged if they were forced out of bus lanes for twelve hours, six days a week.
- 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018 - Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure re: Taxis using bus lanes. The Chief Executive tabled a letter from the Department for Infrastructure, in relation to the Committee’s response to the Department’s consultation on the Bus Lanes Orders NI 2018. The Department stated that it was important that the definition of ‘permitted taxis’, in relation to bus lane legislation be the same across all bus lanes in Belfast, in order not to create confusion with different classes of taxis being able to use the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) bus lanes. The correspondence stated that a large number of people had made representation on the issue, calling for all taxis to be permitted to use all bus lanes in the city. While any permanent change required ministerial approval, the Department stated that it had since decided to carry out a further, more extensive trial whereby Class A taxis would be permitted to access all bus lanes which were available to permitted taxis for 12 months. The Committee noted that the trial would be introduced under Article 5 of the Road Traffic Regulation Order as an

	<p>Experimental Scheme and would come into operation prior to the commencement of BRT services in September 2018.</p>
3.4	<p>As agreed by Committee, a research report has been completed into the research/data available on the impact on air quality, traffic congestion etc. of permitting all taxis to operate in bus lanes. This work was carried out by Jacobs UK Ltd, and is included within Appendix One.</p>
3.5	<p>The report was commissioned to understand whether other similar authorities permit 'taxis' to use bus lanes, and to engage with the local authorities to establish the rationale for their decision, and to specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify whether authorities permit taxis to use bus lanes;</li> <li>- Understand the rationale behind the decision-making process of that authority; and</li> <li>- Identify whether there have been any impacts on cyclists in areas that permit taxis in bus lanes.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>The UK Core Cities were used as a benchmark for Belfast. All eight (Belfast, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol) of the benchmarked authorities allowed Hackney Carriages into the bus lanes (public hire) but only four permitted Private Hire Vehicles access.</p>
3.7	<p>Of the authorities that permitted Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) access to bus lanes the following key reasons were provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historically PHV's were permitted since the introduction of bus lanes to the authority area;</li> <li>- Potentially lower fares for PHV users through reduced journey times, in particular for vulnerable users;</li> <li>- Most effective use of road space, particularly in off-peak times when bus lanes are less utilised.</li> </ul>
3.8	<p>Of the authorities that do not permit PHV's access to bus lanes the following key reasons were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PHV traffic within bus lanes would increase congestion in bus lanes, affecting bus operating timetables and efficiency. It should be noted that the four authorities that currently do not permit PHV's into bus lanes have higher numbers of PHV within the authority area, with Belfast having the greatest number as identified within Table 2 of the report;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enforcement difficulties with and the potential for domestic vehicles to follow PHV's into bus lanes further exasperating issues with enforcement and congestion;</li> <li>- Financial implications of introducing and enforcing the policy change;</li> <li>- Allowing PHVs in bus lanes was also considered to have negative impacts on air quality, although engagement across all authority areas indicated that they carry limited or no data to support this.</li> </ul>
3.9	The benchmarked authorities had not assessed, or have supporting data to assess, the impact of the decision to include PHV's from bus lanes on cyclists, but anecdotally felt that they had not been impacted negatively. That said some authorities did raise issues associated with cyclists in bus lanes in general and were promoting and introducing segregated cycling infrastructure to address this.
3.10	None of the benchmarked authorities had measured the air quality impact from taxis using bus lanes – but Nottingham City Council felt that this was a valid reason for not allowing PHVs to use bus lanes.
3.11	Members will note that the Council produced a Transport Policy in 2004 and revised in 2010 which can be found at Appendix Two and outlined the Council's vision for a sustainable transport system for Belfast. The transportation vision was supported by a number of underlying strategic objectives, including key external policy objectives for the “better support for people and communities” which committed to support and lobbying key delivery agencies for the effective integration of black taxis into the public transport network.
3.12	<u>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix One – Taxis in Bus Lanes Report Appendix Two – Transport Policy

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## Taxis in Bus Lanes

Draft Report

Document No. | 1

1 May 2020

Belfast City Council

### Document history and status

Revision	Date	Description	Author	Checked	Reviewed	Approved
1	16/03/2020		LR	FM	LR	
2	8/4/20		LR	FM		FM
3	1/5/20	FINAL REPORT				LR

### Distribution of copies

Revision	Issue approved	Date issued	Issued to	Comments

## Taxis in Bus Lanes

Project No: TBC  
Document Title: Final Report  
Document No.: 1.  
Revision: <revision>  
Document Status: Final  
Date: 1 May 2020  
Client Name: Belfast City Council  
Client No: Client Reference  
Project Manager: Fionnuala Murray  
Author: Liz Richardson  
File Name: Document1

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**Appendix A. Additional Information**

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## Executive Summary

Belfast City Council are seeking a benchmarking exercise to understand whether other similar authorities permit 'taxis' to use bus lanes. The authority wishes to:

- Identify whether authorities permit taxis to use bus lanes;
- Understand the rationale behind the decision-making process of that authority; and
- Identify whether there have been any impacts on cyclists in areas that permit taxis in bus lanes.

The UK Core Cities were used as a benchmark for Belfast. All eight of the benchmarked authorities allowed Hackney Carriages into the bus lanes (public hire) but only four permitted Private Hire Vehicles access. The main reason PHVs were not permitted was due to the significant number licensed in an authority – this was felt hindered the effectiveness of bus lanes.

The benchmarked authorities had not assessed the impact of the decision on cyclists but anecdotally felt that they had not been impacted negatively.

None of the benchmarked authorities had measured the air quality impact from taxis using bus lanes – but Nottingham City Council felt that this was a valid reason for not allowing PHVs to use bus lanes.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Study Objectives

Belfast City Council are seeking a benchmarking exercise to understand whether other similar authorities permit 'taxis' to use bus lanes. The authority wishes to:

- Identify whether authorities permit taxis to use bus lanes;
- Understand the rationale behind the decision-making process of that authority; and
- Identify whether there have been any impacts on cyclists in areas that permit taxis in bus lanes.

## 1.2 Background

In 2018, The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposed changes to several bus lanes in Belfast as part of the Belfast Rapid Transit proposals. The proposal was for two orders, which would revoke and replace existing bus lanes and introduce new lengths of bus lanes in the city centre, operating between 7.00am and 7.00pm, Monday to Saturday inclusive. Under the proposals, only buses, cycles, motorcycles, permitted taxis and certain specified vehicles would be permitted to use the specified bus lanes during those hours of operation. This order came into effect on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018. Permitted taxis are stated as Class B and Class D.

Prior to this decision there had been a 12-week trial in which all taxis were able to use the bus lanes in East and West Belfast and in the City Centre. The trial commenced in February 2017.

There were mixed views as to the impact of the trial. At a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the Planning and Transport Officer stated that the authority had considered the trial to be a success and had made noticeable improvement to traffic on those routes. <sup>1</sup>

Belfast City Council were asked to submit a formal response to the proposed changes. Having considered the proposals, and the Notice of Motion referred to the Committee by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd January, under Standing Order 13(f) the response was set out at the committee meeting and stated that:

- The Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) lanes should not operate from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday;
- Operation hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday is sufficient for the operation of the BRT lane without general traffic;
- Ordinary drivers and businesses in the area will suffer badly, funerals processions will be affected, and taxi drivers will find it increasingly difficult to earn a decent wage;
- All taxis should be allowed into all BRT routes and all bus lanes in Belfast on a permanent basis; and
- The recent twelve-week trial allowing all taxis to use the lanes in East and West Belfast and in the City Centre was a success and made a noticeable improvement to traffic on these routes and should now be introduced across Belfast in all lanes permanently.

Sutrans, Bikefast and We are Cycling also responded to the proposed changes. In a joint response they considered that increasing the number of vehicles currently using bus lanes would have a detrimental impact on bus lanes. They also considered that:

- Flooding the bus lanes with taxis will jeopardise the BRT system;
- Allowing all private hire vehicles into bus lanes completely contradicts the Belfast City Council Air Quality Action Plan and jeopardises its success;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=41912>

- The trial created unnecessary conflict between taxis and cyclists;

The three organisations also called in to question the credibility of the trial.

Following the trial, the Department for Infrastructure returned to the pre-trial arrangements and original order with only Class B and Class D taxis permitted to use the bus lanes.

### 1.3 Taxis in Belfast

There are four classes of taxi in Northern Ireland. Table 1 below details how each class of taxi can be used:

	Hailed	Rank	Prebook	Able to use bus lanes
Class A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outside Belfast zone</li> <li>- Within Belfast zone midnight – 6am Friday and Saturday night</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outside Belfast zone</li> <li>- Within Belfast zone midnight – 6am Friday and Saturday night</li> </ul>	At all times	x
Class B	At all times	At all times	At all times	✓
Class C	n/a	n/a	At all times	x
Class D	n/a	n/a	For executive or tour services	✓

Table 1: Taxi classifications

### 1.4 Taxis in England and Wales

Within England and Wales, there are two classes of taxi – Hackney Carriage (HC) and Private Hire Vehicles (PHV). HCs are able to ply for hire at ranks, be flagged down in the street and also be able to accept pre-bookings. PHVs can only accept hires by pre-booking.

Local Authorities act as the licensing authority for both HCs and PHVs. They set their own vehicle and driver standards, tariffs (HCs only) and have the discretion to numerically limit the number of HCs in an authority. Where an authority numerically restricts the number of HCs there is often a much higher number of PHVs. In most authority's HCs are required to be wheelchair accessible but some authorities operate a mixed fleet. Typically, most PHVs are saloon vehicles.

### 1.5 Current position in Belfast

The use of bus lanes in Belfast is determined by the Department for Infrastructure. Bus lanes are operational across certain hours of the day and permitted taxis can use them. Currently, permitted taxis are:

- Class B taxis displaying white/yellow roof signage
- Class D taxis displaying internal signage.



## 2. Taxi Licensing and Bus Lane Enforcement

Taxi Licensing and Bus Lane Enforcement in England is dealt with by different local authority departments.

The introduction of statutory instruments in November 2005 under s144 Transport Act 2000 allowed for the enforcement of bus lanes through camera enforcement technology by approved local authorities. Many local authorities used these powers and bus lane enforcement became common place across UK cities. Local authorities had discretion in the vehicles that they permitted to use the bus lanes. Table 1 details the English core cities that permit hackney carriages and PHVs in bus lanes.

Taxi Licensing policies are set locally by the licensing department of the local authority. Local authorities, under the Transport Act 1985 have discretion in their approach to taxi licensing policy. Some authorities allow market forces to dictate the number of hackney carriages licensed – a derestricted authority. Other local authorities set a numerical limit for hackney carriages and will not licence hackneys in excess of this cap – a restricted authority. This has a direct impact on the number of hackney carriages and PHVs operating in an authority. Table 1 details the numbers of vehicles licensed in the Core Cities.

Core City	Taxis permitted in bus lanes	PHVs permitted in bus lanes	Hackney vehicles/Class	PHVs	Total Fleet
Belfast	✓	x	499 <sup>2</sup>	8,035 <sup>3</sup>	8,534
Birmingham	✓	x	1,105	4,086	5,191
Leeds	✓	x	530	4,491	5,021
Sheffield	✓	✓	794	1,789	2,583
Nottingham	✓	Only in 2	420	1,264	1,684
Newcastle	✓	✓	780	2,491	3,271
Liverpool	✓	✓	1,426	1,979	3,405
Manchester	✓	x	1,090	3,390	4,480
Bristol	✓	✓	539	992	1,531

Table 2: Hackney and PHV numbers

<sup>2</sup> Class B as of December 2019

<sup>3</sup> Class A and C as of December 2019

### 3. Review of Best Practice – Core Cities

#### 3.1 Leeds

Leeds City Council have enforced bus lanes since 2011. When the policy was first introduced hackney carriages were not permitted to use the bus lanes/gates in the city. Hackney carriages were permitted to use bus lanes post 2012 on the premise that it would permit drivers to provide a cheaper, quicker and more efficient service for their customers. It was also noted that due to hackneys being liveried in Leeds, enforcement can be readily undertaken without additional resources. All hackneys are stipulated on an exemptions list. Due to the low number of vehicles (530 hackneys) it was not felt that this change would have a detrimental impact on bus journey time reliability.

Currently, Leeds City Council restrict the access of bus lanes to buses, push bikes and Hackney Carriages. They **prohibit** PHVs to use bus lanes. There has been significant pressure from the PHV industry, with one petition collecting the signatures of more than one third of all PHV drivers in Leeds. The main reason that Leeds City Council do not permit PHVs is due to the fact that there are over 4,000 vehicles. This would cause congestion issues as well as impacting on bus journey time reliability. The 'white list' would also become very difficult to manage.

When the authority considered allowing hackney carriages into bus lanes some ward members were concerned about the impact on bus services and cyclists but as there was a relatively low number of hackneys this was less of an issue. The authority decided it needed to allow parity with bus services for taxis. It was not just about time savings but about increasing the visibility and status of hackney carriages as a form of public transport in the City. The authority also felt that allowing PHVs into bus lanes would be detrimental to bus times and cyclist safety.

#### 3.2 Sheffield

Sheffield City Council allows both PHVs and hackney carriages to drive in bus lanes. Not all bus lanes in Sheffield are enforced. Some do not have cameras and therefore no fines will be implemented. When bus lanes were first introduced in Sheffield, hackneys were able to use all of them but PHVs were restricted to only certain bus lanes. Bus priority was then introduced, and hackneys were required to have transponders fitted. The PHV trade in Sheffield put significant pressure on the authority to give them access to all bus lanes/gates in the city. This pressure was successful.

Sheffield City Council have all Sheffield licenced hackney carriages and private hire vehicles on an exemption 'white list'. This list is updated regularly. Councillors wanted to limit use of the bus lanes to vehicles licensed by Sheffield City Council, but the legislation does not permit this. Hackneys and PHVs licensed by other authorities are dealt with by means of the appeal process. They are then included on the white list for the duration of the vehicle licence.

There have been no complaints made by the bus companies, so the authority feels that allowing all taxis to use bus lanes has had no impact on bus journey time, reliability or congestion.

Initially there were issues raised by cyclists over safety issues but over time cyclists have got used to the idea of HCs and PHVs in bus lanes and therefore there has been no negative impact.

There was no evidence on whether there had been any impact on air quality.

Sheffield CC are now seeking to implement, wherever possible, full segregation of cycles from other road users. Research conducted locally and from national sources, recommends that a cyclist sharing a traffic lane with buses is not seen as being desirable and is something that the authority is seeking to change. Sheffield is a hilly city and all major arterial routes into the city are narrow and constrained by natural features, such as rivers and hillsides, or the built environment such as railways, canals and Victorian urban form. When many of the bus lanes were implemented in the late 90's, they were squeezed in (in light of the aforementioned constraints). Some of the city's bus lanes only have a clear width of 2.8m, far below the 4.5m now recommended. This means that cyclists are generally more worried about the dangers presented by buses than by taxis and that buses cannot overtake a cyclist for long lengths. This can become particularly daunting for the cyclist if going up a hill, in rush hour.

### 3.3 Bristol

Bristol City Council allow taxis and private hire vehicles to use all bus lanes in Bristol. This has been permitted since the bus lanes were introduced in Bristol. The aim of the bus lanes and gates is to reduce congestion in the city and improve journey time reliability. The Council do not feel taxis and PHVs impact on the effectiveness of the bus lanes. All Bristol and neighbouring authorities' vehicle registration plates are on a 'white list'. The CCTV cameras are forward facing so any vehicle not on the list receives a PCN. This can often happen with 'out of town vehicles' that haven't been updated on the white list. Should a PCN be issued to a hackney or phv it is dealt with through the appeals process. PCNs are cancelled once the driver has proved they are a licensed hackney or private hire vehicle. This policy has always been in place as far as the officer could remember. The impact on cyclists has been minimal and they have had no issue with cyclists over this. All bus lanes go through a rigorous internal quality assurance process, as well as a road safety audit. There have been a small number of occasions where cyclists have been using the bus lanes and a car crossing the traffic to turn into a side road has hit the cyclist – however this cannot be attributed to anything other than driver error.

The Council are not aware of any impacts on air quality.

There have been issues raised from the hackney trade who don't want the PHV trade to use the bus lanes.

### 3.4 Nottingham

Nottingham City Council have enforced bus lanes since approximately 2007. Only Hackney Carriages can access the bus lanes, however at night PHVs are allowed access to two city centre bus gates. The authority will permit any wheelchair accessible hackney to use bus lanes regardless of where they are licensed. Nottingham City Council have a DfT approved sign that stipulates 'Wheelchair Accessible taxis' on the bus lane sign. They enforce using CCTV and have a list of all permitted vehicles from neighbouring authorities. There is a move to reduce the amount of traffic in the city centre and this is the main reason that PHVs are not permitted to use bus lanes.

The rationale behind allowing PHVs in to two bus gates was to provide easy access and exit from the main night time economy areas of the city. The authority also wanted to ensure that wheelchair users could access the city centre.

Air quality is a concern for Nottingham City Council and therefore it is unlikely that the authority will permit PHVs to use more bus lanes in the future.

The authority also felt that allowing a significant number of saloon cars into the bus lanes would make it difficult to differentiate between PHVs and private cars.

The use of bus lanes by hackney carriages has not had a massive impact on cyclists. Local cycling groups expressed originally that they would prefer HCs to not have access but there has been no issue with collisions.

### 3.5 Liverpool

Liverpool City Council (LCC) permit both Hackney Carriages and PHV's to use bus lanes and have done this since bus lanes were first introduced. The authority undertook a review of bus lanes in 2014 and as a result temporarily suspended all bus lanes across the city. This was undertaken to assess what the impact was on congestion and journey time reliability. The review identified that not all bus lanes were providing any benefits to the travelling public in terms of congestions and journey times. Following this review all but 4 of the cities bus lanes were permanently closed. Given the similarity in numbers of HCs and PHVs it was decided that both could use bus lanes.

LCC are currently progressing the introduction of a "bus-gate" to ease congestion issues for bus services along a key corridor and to aid bus services that are rerouted as part of current roadworks. This bus-gate will be a "point" restriction only and it is LCCs intention to permit pedal cycles and Hackney Carriages through this restriction, along with buses. They do not intend to permit PHV's due to the high volume which use the route daily and as a result of concerns around the enforcement of the restriction.

No air quality studies have been carried out in Liverpool specifically around bus lanes and the impact of them being used by PHV's and taxis. Historically, taxis and PHVs have been allowed into all bus lanes purely because they were an important part of the public transport offer.



However due to substantial growth in some areas of the PHV sector, there is concern over how this is now contributing towards congestion within bus lanes themselves. Future decisions around a policy change will be led by traffic volume and/or road traffic collision data, rather than air quality at the present time.

### **3.6 Manchester**

Manchester City Council allows Hackneys to use bus lanes but not PHV's during operational hours as signed. Bus lanes were introduced to reduce congestion and make bus travel more attractive. They enforce using CCTV and have a list of all hackney carriages. Hackneys have always been allowed into bus lanes, the theory being that hackney carriages can pick up on street when hailed by a customer. If a hackney carriage was travelling in the general traffic lane adjacent to the bus lane and was hailed, there could be safety concerns around a taxi entering a bus lane to make the pickup at short notice. In addition, Hackney Carriages are licenced by the local authorities which means there are a limited number of licences, hence the impact is minimal due to limited numbers of vehicles.

The decision to not permit PHVs is based on the significant number of vehicles licensed. Prior to the 2016 TSRGD introduction, the only permitted class of users were buses, taxis and cyclists. Prior to 2016 Manchester City Council defended any change of vehicles because they were following national standards. MCC did some work to make sure all 10 Greater Manchester Authorities have standardised vehicles permitted and bus lane operations times (peak times 07:00 – 10:00 and 16:00 to 19:00, all day 7:00 to 19:00 and 24/7). There are circa. 200 bus lanes in Greater Manchester and post 2016 TSRGD publication, the 10 authority's setup a working group to review the case of different types of vehicles to be permitted into bus lanes. The only one that received some form of merit (over permitting taxis as existing) was motorcycles. Private hire vehicles were considered as not suitable, as their numbers cannot be controlled via licencing and as such could have a detrimental impact upon bus operations, ultimately undermining the purpose of the bus lane in the first place.

There was also concern as to PHVs being indistinguishable from ordinary saloon cars.

MCC are not aware of any impact on cyclists through this policy. With regard to air quality, given the number of hackneys are limited, the impact on air quality is thought to be minimal

### **3.7 Birmingham**

Birmingham City Council only permit Hackney Carriages to use their bus lanes. Private Hire vehicles are not allowed to use any bus lanes across the City.

## 4. Summary of research

From undertaking both the desktop research and through conversations with Local Authority Officers all the researched authorities allow Hackney Carriage vehicles to use bus lanes. However, several authorities do not allow PHVs to use bus lanes. This is for a variety of reasons that are discussed later in this Chapter.

Figure 1 shows a correlation between high numbers of PHVs and prohibiting their access to bus lanes. Cities with a smaller difference in ratio are more likely to allow PHV's to use bus lanes – Figure 2.

Figure 1: Authorities that do not permit PHVs to access bus lanes

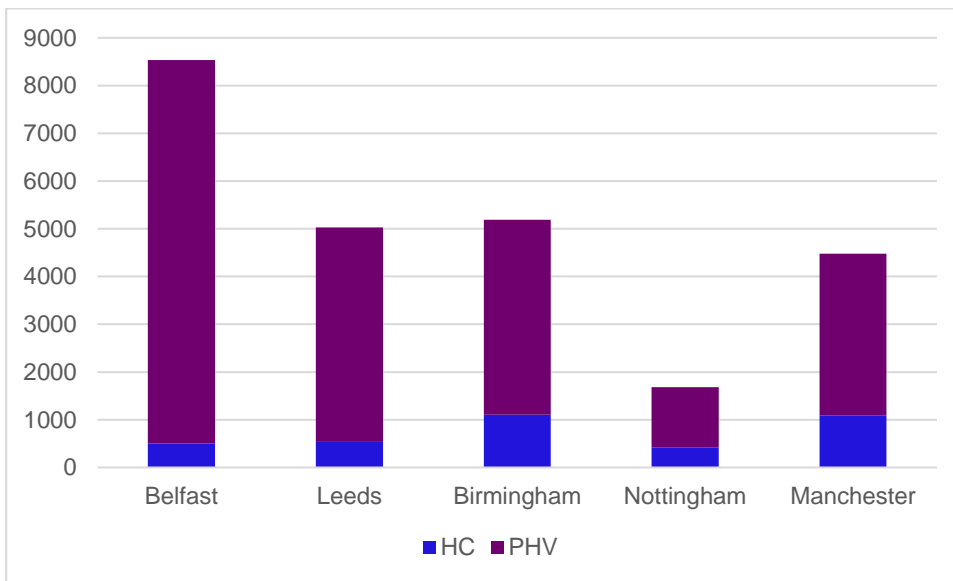
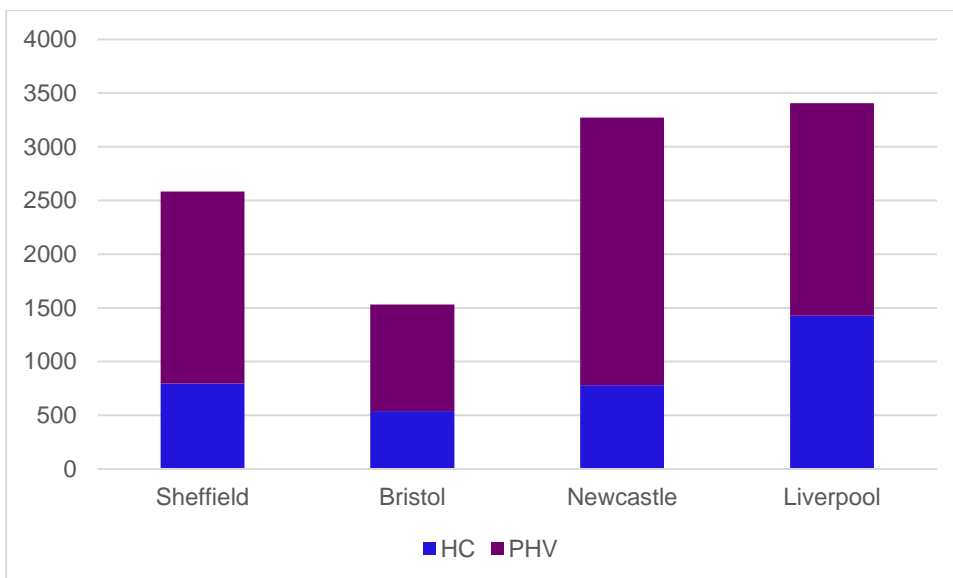


Figure 2 Authorities that do permit PHV to use bus lanes



### 4.1.1 Rationale behind the decisions.

Having undertaken this review and by speaking to Local Authority Officers there are several key reasons as to why local authorities determine their policy in relation to permitting both HCs and PHVs in bus lanes. These are summarised as follows:

**Reason 1 for prohibiting PHVs in bus lanes → Congestion**

Many authorities that do not allow PHVs into bus lanes argue that the bus lanes are designed so buses can run efficiently and reliably. If local authorities allow PHVs into bus lanes it may increase congestion, making it harder for buses to keep to their timetable.

**Reason 2 for prohibiting PHVs in bus lanes → Enforcement difficulties**

Firstly, it is difficult to distinguish between a PHV and an ordinary car. This will become a problem when distributing PCNs for offending vehicles. It is therefore easiest if neither are allowed in bus lanes. Secondly, if PHVs are allowed in, the public are more likely to copy them, leading to a larger number of contraventions and therefore PCNs being issued. It is also impossible to differentiate between a PHV operating as a PHV or when it is undertaking a domestic journey.

**Reason 3 for prohibiting PHVs in bus lanes → Financial implications**

Allowing PHVs in bus lanes would require new signage and road markings. Other costs may come from higher levels of enforcement required and letters sent out to inform PHV drivers of the new policy, and through a predicted higher level of PCNs being issued. There is a financial cost associated with dealing with PCNs on appeal.

**Reason 4 for prohibiting PHVs in bus lanes → Air Quality**

Allowing PHVs in bus lanes was also considered to have negative impacts on air quality.

**Reason 1 for allowing PHVs in bus lanes → Historical reasons**

Those authorities that permitted PHVs in bus lanes had done since bus lanes were introduced and in some instances, it was considered that there was no specific reason for allowing this.

**Reason 1 for allowing PHVs in bus lanes → Reduced fares.**

Allowing PHVs in bus lanes would significantly reduce fares for their customers whose meters run based on distance and time. In particular, disabled people who require door to door should not have to pay extra to travel the same journey if their journey requires a diversionary route due to a bus gate.

**Reason 2 for allowing PHVs in bus lanes → Most efficient use of road space.**

Bus lanes often remain empty for significant amounts of time during the day, and of course, when the buses are not operating. Allowing PHVs to use bus lanes would be using the road space in the most efficient way possible.

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# Transport Policy





# Foreword



“ The current review of public administration and the transfer of powers to local government present real opportunities for us to influence and shape the future development of the city region. ”

This updated Transport Policy outlines our vision for a sustainable transport system for Belfast and aims to build on what has been achieved since our original policy was published in 2001. In recent years, we have witnessed many improvements in the city's transportation system, in our roads, bus and train services and in our walking and cycling networks however, continued development and enhancements are still required.

Belfast has continued to grow and evolve, becoming a modern and successful city that we can all be proud of. The city is a competitive tourist destination, a desirable place to live and work and an attractive place to invest. With growth and

prosperity however, there has been a continuing increase in use of the car, which cannot be sustained. We have concerns about how the city will cope with the increasing demands on our transport infrastructure and the impact of unsustainable transport on the environment and our communities.

The current Review of Public Administration and the transfer of powers to local government present real opportunities for us to influence and shape the future development of the city region. Whilst responsibility for transport planning will not be transferred to local councils, as civic leader we recognise the need to be proactive in influencing transportation initiatives in our city.



The publication of our revised Transport Policy is timely and will feed into the current reviews of the DRD Regional Strategy, the Regional Transportation Strategy and other transport plans as well as proposed initiatives for Belfast such as rapid transit and city centre traffic management proposals.

The Transport Policy has been developed as a framework for us to lead by example and help shape transportation in the city in a sustainable, accessible, and cost-effective way for all those who live, work and visit the city. As an organisation, we will look at how we can address our own transport implications through this policy and future proposals. We will continue to pursue the development

of transport related initiatives addressing the utilisation of our assets; the encouragement of public transport; promotion of more sustainable transport options and a review of business travel as direct contributions to our broader transport objectives.

We hope this policy will support and promote the development of a modern, safe, accessible and integrated transportation system to enhance the connectivity for Belfast and its wider regions, which benefits the environment, supports sustainable development; and enhances the quality of life of all those who live, work, visit and do business in the city.



**Councillor William Humphrey**  
Chairman of Development Committee  
Belfast City Council



# Introduction



## 1.1

Our Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 expresses a number of key messages, which underpin our vision for the city:

- ❑ Better together – working with others to create a shared vision and delivering together;
- ❑ Today's action, tomorrow's legacy – city investment that improves quality of life now and in the future;
- ❑ Value for money – minimising the rates burden, freeing up resources for more delivery on the ground; and
- ❑ Better services – continuing to enhance the level of service offered to the citizen.

We have identified six strategic themes in our Corporate Plan which guide our key objectives and priorities:

- ❑ City leadership – strong, fair, together;
- ❑ Better opportunities for success across the city;
- ❑ Better care for Belfast's environment – a clean, green city now and for the future;
- ❑ Better support for people and communities;
- ❑ Better services – listening and delivering; and
- ❑ Better value for money – a can do, accountable, efficient council.



“ An improved transport system for Belfast, based on sustainable principles, is a key priority for us and forms the basis for a number of our corporate plan strategic themes, in particular “better care for Belfast's environment – a clean, green city now and for the future”.

## 1.2

It is widely recognised that a safe, efficient and effective transport system is needed to support and strengthen the economy, tackle social deprivation, and improve the quality of peoples' lives in many ways. The consequences of excessive car use and dependency are evident, in terms of congestion, community severance and poor air quality. Therefore, an improved transport system for Belfast, based on sustainable principles, is a key priority for us and forms the basis for a number of our corporate plan strategic themes, in particular “better care for Belfast's environment – a clean, green city now and for the future”.

## 1.3

This report articulates our second Transport Policy to support our civic leadership role and it provides us with a coherent view in relation to sustainable transport options for the city. Currently, we do not have statutory responsibility for transport planning and provision. The Review of Public Administration has proposed the transfer of a number of planning functions but no responsibility for transport. We will however, adopt a strong civic and political leadership role in the promotion of sustainable development for the city of Belfast to ensure a consistent and integrated approach to land use and transportation planning.



# Background



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“ The policy was established to provide us with an inclusive and consistent approach to transport development and to allow us to take a proactive role in ensuring that the city continues to grow and prosper in a sustainable manner. ”

## 1.4

We published our first Transport Policy for Belfast in 2001 following wide ranging consultation and an extensive research exercise. The Policy was established to provide us with an inclusive and consistent approach to transport development and to allow us to take a proactive role in ensuring that the city continues to grow and prosper in a sustainable manner.

## 1.5

In 2008, a review was carried out of the 2001 Transport Policy and its supporting environmental policy package with the main purpose of providing us with an up to date transport vision for the city. The scope of the Policy was also extended to take account of our revised strategic themes including a commitment to a detailed review of our internal transport activities with the objective of formulating a range of sustainable transport options for both employees and fleet vehicles.



# Role of the Transport Policy



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## 1.6

The overall role of the revised Transport Policy is to provide us with an inclusive and consistent transport vision that can be promoted both internally and externally. Accordingly, it will allow us to take a proactive role to help ensure that the city continues to grow and prosper in a sustainable manner and that any regional and local transportation policies are developed in line with our wider objectives on sustainable economic development, environmental responsibility, tourism, leisure, good relations, education and health.



## 1.7

The Transport Policy is the key communication document for us, setting out our transportation vision and strategic objectives for the city. It outlines our position on key transportation issues to external delivery agencies and as such, will be used as part of a consultation and lobbying tool to influence the development of external policy and proposals, including the Department for Regional Development's review of the Regional Development and Transportation Strategies.

## 1.8

The Policy is also our main instrument for informing internal activities and our capital programme. There is a need to ensure that 'sustainable transport' is considered as part of other wider council programmes such as sustainable development, social inclusion, tourism, parks and leisure, older people, children and young people, environment and arterial routes and that appropriate resources are allocated for the implementation of the Transport Policy where appropriate.



“ The overall role of the revised Transport Policy is to provide us with a transport vision that can be promoted both internally and externally. ”



# The key messages of the revised Transport Policy



“ The transportation vision will be supported by a number of underlying strategic objectives. ”



## 1.9

The key message of the revised Transport Policy is:

To support and promote the development of a modern, safe, accessible and integrated transportation system to enhance the connectivity for Belfast and its wider regions, which benefits the environment, supports sustainable development; and enhances the quality of life of all those who live, work, visit and do business in the city.

## 1.10

The transportation vision will be supported by a number of underlying strategic objectives, which are based on the six strategic themes outlined within our Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011, including:

- ▣ City leadership;
- ▣ Better opportunities for success across the city;
- ▣ Better care for Belfast's environment;
- ▣ Better support for people and communities;
- ▣ Better services; and
- ▣ Better value for money.

An additional strategic objective relating to Belfast city centre is also included:

- ▣ Belfast city centre, as a key connected and accessible regional asset.

Key objectives are set out under each of the above seven strategic objectives and have been split into external policies (those outside our control) and internal policies (those within our current activities).





# Strategic objectives and policies

## City leadership

### Strategic Objective:

To provide a strong civic leadership role for the promotion of a modern, safe, accessible and integrated transportation system for the city of Belfast and its wider regions.



### 1.11 Key objectives

Key external policy objectives for the city leadership theme include:

- To adopt a strong and public city leadership role in the promotion of sustainable transport initiatives for the city of Belfast;
- To use our influence as civic leader to engage and influence key delivery agencies for the development of a wider Transport Policy framework for Belfast, including the city centre area as well as the wider regions, which is aligned with our wider objectives on sustainable development; environmental responsibility; tourism; leisure; good relations; education and health;
- To seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport;
- To seek to ensure a higher level of emphasis of capital expenditure on sustainable transportation schemes, ensuring that the priority is allocated to sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport schemes; and
- To seek to develop effective working relationships with appropriate delivery agencies for the delivery of local transportation schemes to support local communities and which integrate with a community planning approach.

Key internal policy objectives for the city leadership theme include:

- In line with the proposed transfer of local planning functions to local councils, we will adopt a strong and public city leadership role in the promotion of sustainable development for the city of Belfast and will ensure a consistent and integrated approach to land use and transport planning; and
- To ensure that we have sufficient resources and skills to enable us to fully address the capacity building requirements associated with the transfer of local planning functions.

“ In line with the proposed transfer of local planning functions to local councils, we will adopt a strong and public city leadership role in the promotion of sustainable development for the city of Belfast and will ensure a consistent and integrated approach to land use and transport planning. ”



# Strategic objectives and policies

Better opportunities across the city - regeneration, growth and prosperity

## Strategic objective:

To support the sustainable economic development of Belfast to ensure the future prosperity of Belfast city and its wider regions, and to facilitate the continued development of its economic and physical regeneration through achievement of sustainable transportation, economic, tourism, leisure, good relations, environmental, educational and health objectives for the city.



## 1.12 Key objectives

Key external policy objectives for the 'better opportunities across the city' theme include:

We will support and lobby key delivery agencies for:

- The introduction of a sustainable parking strategy in Belfast city centre, at key commercial and retail district centres and along arterial routes and nodes to help manage travel demand and help reduce the level of commuter-related parking;
- The introduction of sustainable transport corridor plans that take account of the need to prioritise access to sustainable modes of travel, in advance of the provision of new or additional highway capacity;

- The sustainable development of Belfast's airports to ensure continued connectivity to Belfast city centre and a high level of accessibility by sustainable modes of travel;
- The implementation of a new public transport interchange at George Best Belfast City Airport;
- The sustainable development of Belfast port to ensure continued connectivity to Belfast city centre and the strategic road network; and to ensure a high level of accessibility by sustainable modes of travel;

- The introduction of a sustainable freight management strategy for Belfast;
- Implementation of a high quality and high profile rapid transit system for Belfast and its wider regions;
- To support and lobby key delivery agencies for the introduction of bus, rail and rapid transit based park and ride proposals, in appropriate locations throughout Belfast and its wider regions.

Key internal policy objectives for the 'better opportunities across the city' theme include:

- In line with the proposed transfer of local planning functions to local authorities, we will ensure that all new developments comply with the relevant regional and local planning guidance in relation to sustainable transport. In particular, to ensure the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users are fully considered as part of the design and assessment process.

Additional specific policies and proposals for Belfast city centre are included in Section 1.17.

“ In line with the proposed transfer of local planning functions to local authorities, we will ensure that all new developments comply with the relevant regional and local planning guidance in relation to sustainable transport. ”



# Strategic objectives and policies

## Better care for Belfast's environment

### Strategic objective:

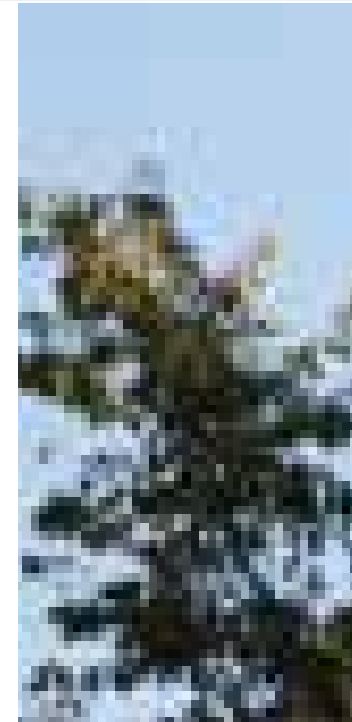
To secure the long term viability of Belfast city and its environment by seeking to ensure that all transportation arising from wider proposals takes into account, and mitigates against, adverse impacts on the environment and the quality of life of local neighbourhoods.



This could include initiatives to help reduce levels of greenhouse gas emissions, implementation of a fleet replacement programme, investigation of options to introduce emerging vehicle technology solutions



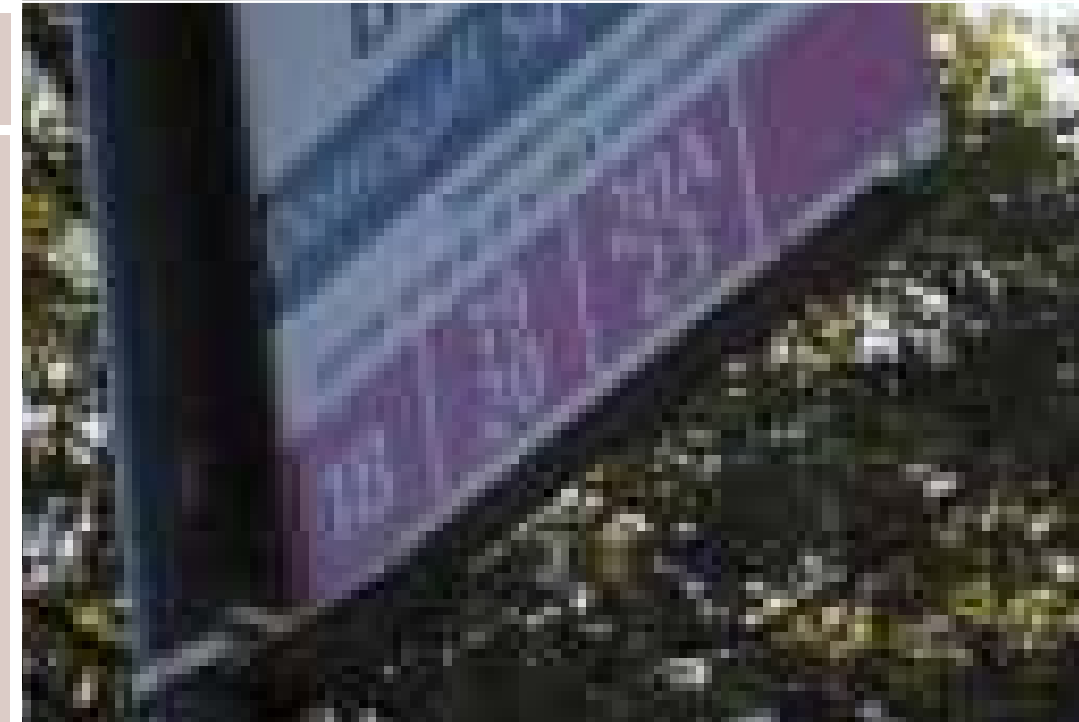
### 1.13 Key objectives



Key **internal policy objectives** for the 'better care for Belfast's environment' theme include:

- ▶ To support, where appropriate, innovative initiatives to reduce car and vehicle ownership;
- ▶ To continue to implement green transport initiatives to minimise the adverse environmental impact of our vehicle fleet and to promote and help roll out successful initiatives to other organisations. This could include initiatives to help reduce levels of greenhouse gas emissions, implementation of a fleet replacement programme, investigation of options to introduce emerging vehicle technology solutions; and
- ▶ In line with the proposed transfer of functions to local authorities (as part of the Review of Public Administration), to identify and implement, where appropriate, a programme of environmental and streetscape improvement schemes as a means of improving connectivity, mobility and the quality of life between neighbourhoods across Belfast.

The key objectives for 'better care for Belfast's environment' are mainly concerned with internal policies. With regard to external policies, there is significant overlap with 'people and communities' (Section 1.14) and 'better value for money' (Section 1.15).



# Strategic objectives and policies

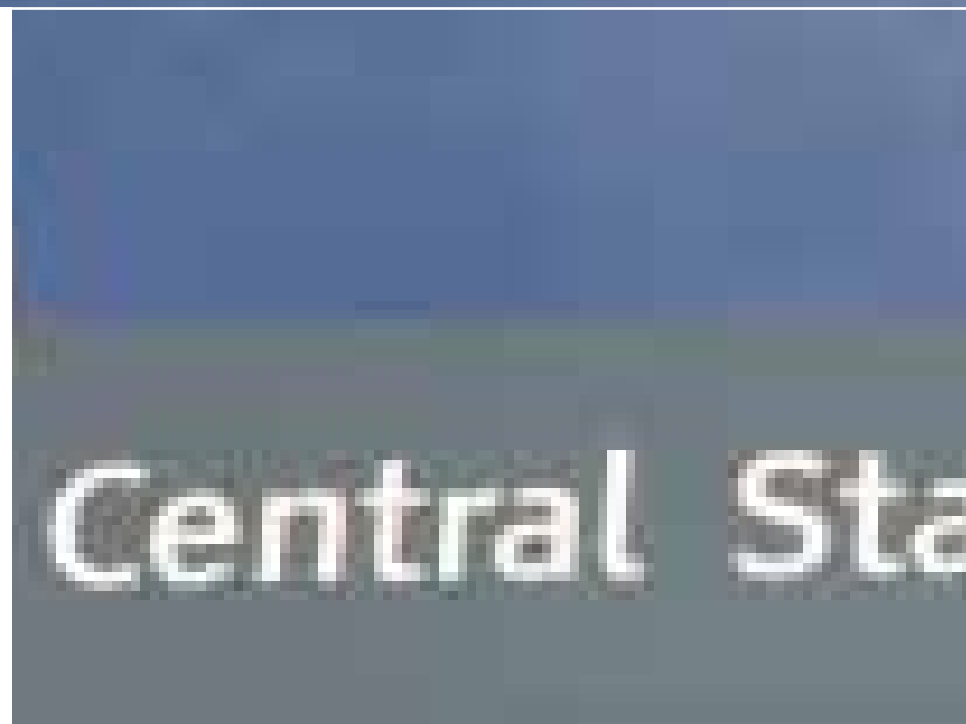
## Better support for people and communities

### Strategic objective:

To support local people and communities by ensuring a community plan approach that integrates transportation to enhance connectivity for local neighbourhoods by making them safer, healthier and more inclusive.



### 1.14 Key objectives



“ The implementation of high quality public realm projects for Belfast, ensuring that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are fully met within planned streetscape improvements. ”

Key **external policy objectives** for the 'better support for people and communities' theme include:

We will support and lobby key delivery agencies for:

- The implementation of local road safety, traffic calming and safer routes to schools schemes which provide improvements for vulnerable road users such as schoolchildren, pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users;
- The introduction of new public transport initiatives that include community transport initiatives;
- The effective integration of taxis into the public transport network;
- The introduction of residents-only parking schemes in areas where it receives local support to help reduce the negative

- impacts of commuter-related parking on local neighbourhoods;
- The review and improvement of the traffic network in areas where current traffic operations result in severance of local neighbourhoods e.g. Middlepath Street / Bridge End gyratory, Yorkgate area and Shaftesbury Square;
- The provision of adequate carriage facilities for bicycles on public transport vehicles (buses and trains) at all times of the day; and
- The implementation of high quality public realm projects for Belfast, ensuring that the needs of disabled users,

pedestrians and cyclists are fully met within planned streetscape improvements.

Key objectives for 'people and communities' are mainly concerned with external policies. With regard to internal policies, there is significant overlap with 'better value for money' (Section 1.15).





# Strategic objectives and policies

## Better value for money

### Strategic objective:

To seek to ensure that our services and facilities are accessible by sustainable modes of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport.



### 1.15 Key objectives

Key **external policy objectives** for the 'better value for money' theme include:

We will support and lobby key delivery agencies for:

- ▶ The implementation of an integrated quality walking network and quality cycle network for Belfast, including the establishment of safe and continuous walking corridors into the city centre area, district centres and between our facilities;
- ▶ Improvements to and integrated direction (and destination) signage in Belfast to support cycling and walking networks;
- ▶ The implementation of improved public transport services into the city centre and wider areas,

between district centres and between our facilities including the continued implementation of quality bus corridors, the introduction of new bus services including routes serving new developments, orbital services, cross-city services; and night-time services, and the introduction of an integrated ticketing system that allows travel between different modes i.e. bus, rail and rapid transit; and

- ▶ The introduction (and review) of parking controls that support the delivery of our key services.

Key **internal policy objectives** for the 'better value for money' theme include:

- ▶ To continue to develop a programme of improved and integrated direction (and destination) signage in Belfast to support the quality walking network, particularly for visitors and tourists to the city;
- ▶ To identify and implement, where appropriate, a programme of high quality and safe walking routes through our sites including open spaces, parks, leisure and community facilities;

- ▶ To identify and implement, where appropriate, a programme of high quality cycle routes through our sites including open spaces, parks, leisure and community facilities, which connect into the wider National Cycle Network and greenways programme for Belfast; and
- ▶ To identify and implement, where appropriate, the provision of public transport information at our sites.

“ To identify and implement, where appropriate, a programme of high quality cycle routes through our sites including open spaces, parks, leisure and community facilities, which connect into the wider National Cycle Network and greenways programme for Belfast. ”





# Strategic objectives and policies

## Better services

### Strategic objective:

To promote the positive effects of sustainable travel and to lead by example by implementing sustainable travel initiatives within Belfast city.



### 1.16 Key objectives

Key **external policy objectives** for the 'better services' theme include:

- ▶ To continue to support the Roads Service's Travelwise Northern Ireland Campaign to promote sustainable travel and a shift away from reliance upon the private car; and
- ▶ To continue to promote, in association with Translink, the positive benefits of travel by public transport in Belfast and to ensure that all our events promote and facilitate travel by public transport.

Key **internal policy objectives** the 'better services' theme include:

- ▶ To continue to promote the annual "Belfast Week of Walking" and "Belfast Week of Cycling" and other initiatives in association with key stakeholders;
- ▶ We will implement a corporate travel plan strategy which will bring together policies and proposals for a workplace travel plan for staff travel activities as well as an operational travel plan for fleet activities. These initiatives are likely to include the following policies and proposals;



- ▶ Development of specific objectives and targets to promote a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of travel;
- ▶ Establishment of a new staff role of staff travel plan co-ordinator, who will be responsible for the development, implementation, marketing and monitoring of the staff travel plan;
- ▶ Identification of specific policies and proposals which many include;
- ▶ Walking initiatives – promotional and information events; provision of on-site facilities; maps of walking routes;

- ▶ Cycling initiatives – promotional and information events; provision of on-site facilities, including cycle parking; cycle maps; training and support; cycle purchase schemes; pool bike schemes; establishment of bike user groups;
- ▶ Public transport – promotional and information events; travel information; personalised journey planners; ticket discount deals;
- ▶ Car sharing – continued operation of car share scheme; the provision of dedicated car sharing spaces; promotional and information events;

- ▶ Car parking – reduction in the number of staff car parking spaces potentially augmented by the introduction of parking permit or charging schemes;
- ▶ Business travel – review of the staff travel policy, corporate membership of car clubs, promotion of existing shuttle bus services and the removal of car-based employee perks for new staff;
- ▶ Travel plan promotion – development of a supporting marketing and communication plan; the identification and provision

- of adequate resources; promotional and information events; monitoring and publishing of annual performance data;
- ▶ Green vehicle initiatives – use of alternative fuels, fleet replacement programme to ensure compliance with Euro standards, fleet management practices to improve vehicle utilisation and fuel consumption, exhaust emissions testing.



# Strategic objectives and policies

## Belfast city centre

### Strategic objective:

To support the sustainable economic development of Belfast city centre, as a key connected and accessible regional asset – to seek to provide an urban environment that supports a more dynamic and competitive centre and to improve its presentation and environmental quality as befits a leading European city.



### 1.17 Key objectives

Key **external** policy objectives for the 'Belfast city centre' theme include:

We will support and lobby key delivery agencies for:

- ▶ The development of a cohesive and integrated traffic management and public realm strategy for the city centre, which improves the urban environment and road safety for pedestrians and cyclists; increases connectivity and accessibility to public transport services; and improves the quality of life for all those who live in, work in and visit the city centre;
- ▶ The reallocation of existing road space in the city centre for use for environmental improvement schemes as well as use by pedestrians, cyclists, buses and rapid transit – including the

- ▶ provision of cross-city public transport routes to minimise the need for bus layover at Donegall Square and City Hall;
- ▶ The development of traffic management and highway proposals, which adequately mitigate against any potential adverse environmental or community severance impacts, in line with the principles of sustainable development;
- ▶ The provision of a 'step change' in the level of public transport provision in the city centre including the introduction of a high quality rapid transit scheme, and enhancements to existing Metro bus services and rail services serving the city centre, which improve public transport

- ▶ journey time reliability and connectivity across the central area;
- ▶ Implementation of planned improvements to the main bus and rail stations in Belfast city centre to enhance integration, accessibility and connectivity;
- ▶ The implementation of a new public transport interchange at Gamble Street;
- ▶ The introduction of a sustainable parking strategy for the city centre;
- ▶ An increased level of cycle parking facilities in Belfast city centre, which are secure and weather protected.

Key **internal** policy objectives for the 'Belfast city centre' theme include:

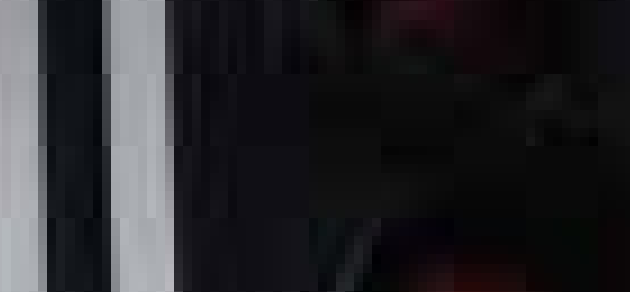
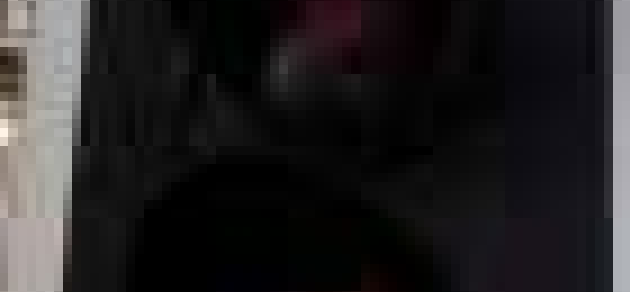
- ▶ To investigate options for the introduction of a bicycle rental service in Belfast city centre to facilitate short-term use of bicycles, particularly for tourists and visitors.

“ The reallocation of existing road space in the city centre for use for environmental improvement schemes as well as use by pedestrians, cyclists, buses and rapid transit – including the provision of cross-city public transport routes to minimise the need for bus layover at Donegall Square and City Hall. ”





# Conclusion



This revised Transport Policy aims to provide us with a coherent and aspirational vision for development of transport across Belfast until 2015. As responsibility for local planning transfers to local councils over the coming years, it is essential that we have a coherent view in relation to transport to ensure appropriate integration of transportation and land use planning in Belfast.

The overall development of the revised Transport Policy was informed by contributions from an interdepartmental steering group within our organisation and through consultation with

a range of key stakeholder bodies from across the city. Progress with implementation of the Transport Policy will be monitored, reviewed and reported annually.

During development of the revised Transport Policy, it was recommended that we should introduce a formal internal workplace travel plan. As a next step, we will seek to develop a workplace travel plan in consultation with staff in order to encourage greater uptake of more sustainable forms of transport for both commuting and workplace travel.

“ As responsibility for local planning transfers to local councils over the coming years, it is essential that we have a coherent view in relation to transport to ensure appropriate integration of transportation and land use planning in Belfast. ”



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