

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 7th November, 2022

SPECIAL MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Bunting (Chairperson); and
Councillors Gormley, Groogan, T. Kelly, Lyons,
McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, Murray
and Spratt.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal
and Civic Services;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Programme Manager; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gormley declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2 – Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund – Feedback on Stage 1 Applications, on the basis that he was on the Board of the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group, which had submitted an application for funding, and left the meeting in advance of that item being considered.

The Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services informed those Members who were on the Planning Committee that, should they vote in favour of a project progressing to Stage 2 – Development, they would be unable to participate in the decision-making process upon it being presented to that Committee for determination.

Request to Present - Donegall Pass Community Enterprises

The Working Group approved a request from a representative of Donegall Pass Community Enterprises to attend a future meeting to provide information on the organisation's regeneration activities in Donegall Pass and the surrounding area, including the development of a Good Relations Hub on the former PSNI site.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund – Feedback on Stage 1 Applications

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

“1. Introduction

Members will be aware that the Council has recently launched its £10m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund. This report provides an outline of the applications received for the South Belfast area. In line with the agreed process, the Working Group is asked to make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on which applications it now wishes to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development Stage*.

2. Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to:

- i. note the update provided on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. note the applications which did not meet the minimum threshold and that these applicants are to be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Feedback on their applications will be provided to Groups;
- iii. consider which projects it wishes to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development* under the Fund. In considering this, the Working Group is asked to note that it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects be progressed at this stage, given the level of funding available and current resource capacity; and
- iv. note the proposed approach that the Council will provide a response to each applicant that is not moving forward to Stage 2 at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.

3. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

Background

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a £10m capital fund to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will recall that the fund was originally £8m and has been bolstered by an additional £2m via the reallocation of year end surpluses. The fund attracted significant interest and a high volume of applications was received. Members were advised that they would be updated on the outcome of the *Stage 1 - Application* stage once all the applications were collated and reviewed by an assessment panel against the agreed project assessment matrix. This is now complete subject to legal validation.

The Fund encompasses a three-stage process, approved by the Council in November, 2021. Stage 1 is the application phase, Stage 2 is the development phase and Stage 3 is the delivery phase. The application stage closed on 12th May, 2022. In line with the timeframe presented to Members in November 2021, an intensive period of eligibility review, validation, panel assessment and moderation has now been completed. Applications that have scored over the minimum threshold are now being presented to Members for consideration.

Assessment Process

As agreed by the Council, projects were assessed and scored against four key criteria: affordability, feasibility, deliverability, and sustainability. Assessments were made solely on the basis of information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form and supporting documentation provided by applicants by the closing date such as business plans and economic appraisals.

The NRF is an outcomes focused programme aligned to three key themes emerging from the City Recovery Framework: social economy, environmental sustainability and neighbourhood tourism. The fund is adopting an Outcomes Based Accountability approach derived directly from these three themes and all applications have been specifically assessed in terms of their alignment to these outcomes.

Applications Summary

A total of 101 organisations requested the application pack and 61 organisations submitted an application. The proposals presented in the applications showcase a wide variety of exciting new ideas for the city as well as enhancements to existing facilities. Overall, the standard of the applications was very high, and this is reflected in the proportion that achieved above the threshold (75%).

Total Applications:

	Total	South	North	West	Shankill	East	Location to be determined
Total applications	61	13	16	14	3	13	2
Total above threshold	46	9	14	13	3	7	0

STAGE 1 APPLICATION RESULTS

The information presented below is based on the application forms and is presented for the Working Group's consideration.

Applications Scoring below Threshold

Organisations that scored below threshold (location to be determined: 2, South Belfast: 4) will be notified that they have been unsuccessful and provided with feedback on their applications as well as advice regarding other potential sources of support.

All Area Working Groups will be advised that a total of 2 applications did not determine a location for their project, as a site or building has not been secured. Neither project reached above threshold. Although both applications demonstrated reasonable alignment to themes and outcomes, overall both applications required more detailed information in several other areas to acquire higher scores. A summary is provided below.

Details of Applications below Threshold – Location to be Determined:

Project Name, Brief Description and Theme
<p>Supported Employment and Sales Training (SEST) CIC</p> <p>Theme: Social Economy</p> <p>The project will include the purchase of a building and development of a call centre.</p> <p>Eligibility issues - Full set of requested financial records was not available.</p>
<p>NI Community Energy (NICE)</p> <p>Theme: Social Economy and Environmental Sustainability</p> <p>The project will include making energy efficiencies and installing solar panels, energy storage and EV chargers, as appropriate, that is co-owned by a local Belfast neighbourhood.</p>

**Details of Applications below Threshold –
South Belfast**

Project Name, Brief Description and Theme
<p>Cycling Ulster and Cycling Ireland Ormeau Park BMX Track Upgrade Project</p> <p>Theme: All</p> <p>The project will include the upgrade of the current BMX track located at Ormeau Park, comprising specific physical cycling related works, an automated starting gate, lighting, storage units, landscaping and fencing.</p>
<p>Linen Quarter BID (LQ BID)</p> <p>Blackstaff Square Hospitality Hub</p> <p>Themes: Environmental Sustainability and Neighbourhood Tourism</p> <p>The project will include the installation of a canopy to the western side of Blackstaff Square to support outdoor dining, signage, seating, planting, a bin store and a kiosk to provide take-away coffee.</p>
<p>Belfast Central Mission (BCM)</p> <p>Multi-Purpose City Centre Hub Development – Grosvenor House</p> <p>Themes: Social Economy and Neighbourhood Tourism</p> <p>The project will include the redevelopment of Grosvenor House into a multi-purpose city centre community hub, to include the expansion of the already established, award winning Puddleducks nursery, which is owned and operated by BCM, a community café, accommodation for meetings and an auditorium/exhibition space.</p>
<p>Southcity Resource and Development Centre and Donegall Road Methodist Church</p> <p>Shawcross Windows and Local Tourism History Project</p> <p>Theme: Neighbourhood Tourism</p> <p>The project will include the preservation of stained-glass windows designed by Neil Shawcross at Donegall Road Methodist Church and the creation of a permanent display of local history information relevant to the local community.</p>

Applications Scoring above Threshold:

Members are aware that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is now a £10m capital programme. The total allocation towards South projects is £1,924,744. No allocations of funding will be made until business cases are produced after Stage 2 - Development. All the applications have now been reviewed by an assessment panel against the agreed project assessment matrix.

**Details of Applications above Threshold –
South Belfast**

Project Name, Brief Description and Theme
<p>Sólás Special Needs Charity</p> <p>Sólás New Build Project</p> <p>Theme: Social Economy</p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the development of a new 3-storey building that will expand the capacity of Sólás to fully accommodate all core services and key activities such as after schools, the youth transition project, counselling/parents' room and the organisation's management, finance and administration function; and• the development of an outdoor space to accommodate sensory play areas to meet the needs of early years, after schools and young people.
<p>Lagan Legacy</p> <p>Lagan Life</p> <p>Themes: Environmental Sustainability and Neighbourhood Tourism</p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the development of unique riverside apartment accommodation for tourists;• the extension of the existing exhibition through new interpretation panels and AV equipment; and• the installation of solar panels, a heat pump, insulation, natural ventilation and efficient lighting.

Markets Development Association (MDA)

Market Heritage Hub

Themes: All

The project will include:

- the regeneration of the old St Malachy's Convent School/Warehouse at Sussex Place into a vibrant new community heritage hub and visitor attraction comprising educational and social spaces, interpretive displays, office accommodation, and an attractive public courtyard space; and
- an interpretive exhibition which tells the social evolution of Belfast through the lens of one of its oldest communities, the Markets. This will be linked to a complementary tenement experience in the nearby Georgian terraces at Joy Street/Hamilton Street, another project currently in development.

An Droichead

An Droichead Annex

Theme: Social Economy

The project will include:

- the building of a tower annex to An Droichead's main building to provide more space for childcare and their education programme for young people and adults; and
- 5 new playrooms, new classrooms for language, craft, dance and music classes. A social space for parents and youth club members and a storage and roof terrace.

Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)

Lagan Water Access Activity Hub

Themes: Social Economy and Neighbourhood Tourism

The project will include:

- the development of a water activity hub at the McConnell Lock on the River Lagan at Lower Ormeau; and
- the construction of a footbridge across the lock to the outer wall and the development of a floating pontoon.

Hearth Historic Buildings Trust

Riddel's Warehouse

Themes: All

The project will include:

- the delivery of phase 1 improvements to Riddel's Warehouse, a disused listed building; and
- the restoration of the warehouse into an arts centre which will provide unique performance and exhibition spaces as well as being a tourist attraction in its own right. It will also provide co-working space for a number of arts organisations and individual artists.

Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT)

Branching Out

Theme: Social Economy

The project will include the alteration, refurbishment and extension of its facility on the Donegall Road, to ensure that it is fit for purpose and can meet the demands for additional places and programmes.

JH Academy Outreach C.I.C.

The Avenue Arts Centre

Theme: Social Economy

The project will include:

- the renovation of the old Windsor Presbyterian Church into an arts and theatre hub for the community, comprising uplift of the ground-floor and balcony areas into a multipurpose functional space for corporate/private hire as well as a theatre space with a stage and audience seating;
- adding a side extension for entrance and accessibility provision; and
- the renovation of a space for its 'tiny-tots' programme.

Fitzroy Presbyterian Church

Redevelopment of former School of Music

Theme: Social Economy

The project will include:

- the redevelopment of the derelict listed former School of Music on Donegall Pass to include a range of social economy, charitable and creative ventures;
- the development of the ground floor into a flexible, community focussed space comprising a rehearsal and dance space, a gallery and a theatre/event space; and
- the development of the upper floor into creative/artist studios.

Next Steps

The Working Group will appreciate that, given the level of funding available and current resources, it will not be possible for each project to be moved to *Stage 2 – Development*. At this stage, it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects per area be moved to the next stage.

Projects agreed to be moved forward to Stage 2 – Development

The projects agreed to be moved forward to *Stage 2 – Development* will be allocated a Project Sponsor who will work closely with the Group throughout the *Stage 2 Development* Stage. The exact requirements for Stage 2 will be dependent on the individual status and needs of each project, for example, it could be the development of a business case or economic appraisal, testing of a business case, capacity building and/or the development of detailed designs. The assigned Project Sponsor will meet with the Group once decisions are ratified by Council and will work with the Group to determine requirements.

Members are asked to note that it is proposed that the development phase will be timebound to six months, with updates on all projects to be brought back to the AWGs at the same time. At the end of this stage, recommendations to Committee will include a detailed update on each project, seeking approval for funding. Projects that receive approval will be issued with a Letter of Offer, in principle, and will move to *Stage 3 - Delivery*. However, a final investment decision will not be taken until a tender has been returned.

Projects not being moved forward to Stage 2 – Development at this Stage

The projects not being progressed to Stage 2 at this time will be advised of the outcome. Groups will be offered the opportunity to request feedback on their application. In addition, it is proposed that officers will help Groups identify alternative potential sources of support. For example, some applicants will also be able to avail of business support and mentoring through the Council's Social Enterprise and Co-operative Support Programme and Enterprise Framework. This will be tailored to each individual project.

It is recommended, however, that projects that reached threshold but are not progressed at this Stage are held at Stage 1, in case any of the projects which are moved forward do not progress beyond Stage 2. If this happens, then projects will be presented again for the Working Group's consideration.

The Working Group is asked to:

- i. note the update provided on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. note the applications which did not meet the minimum threshold and that these applicants are to be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Feedback on their applications will be provided to Groups;
- iii. consider which projects its wishes to recommend to the SP and R Committee to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development* under the Fund. In considering this, Members are asked to note that it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects are progressed at this stage given the level of funding available and current resource capacity and;
- iv. note the proposed approach that the Council will provide a response to each applicant not moving forward to Stage 2 at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.

4. Financial and Resource Implications

Financial - NRF *Stage 2 Development* expenditure will be funded via the agreed NRF budget of £10m.

Resources – Officer time from Physical Programmes Department.

5. **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund has been equality screened.”

The Director of Physical Programmes provided an overview of the report and explained that applications for funding had been assessed and scored against the key criteria of affordability, deliverability, feasibility and sustainability. She drew the Members’ attention to the two City-wide applications and the four applications for South Belfast which had scored below the threshold and confirmed that each organisation would be informed that they had been unsuccessful and provided with detailed feedback.

She then reviewed the nine applications for South Belfast which had scored above the threshold and pointed out that, given the level of funding available and current resource capacity, the Working Group was being recommended to select a maximum of three/four projects at this stage. It was the intention that unsuccessful applications would be held on a reserve list and would be presented to the Working Group, should any of the successful projects fail to progress beyond Stage 2.

The Working Group proceeded to review these applications, following which the six projects listed below were each proposed and seconded for progression to Stage 2 - Development:

- Sólás Special Needs Charity
- Markets Development Association
- Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group
- Hearth Historic Buildings Trust
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust and
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church.

The Director of Programmes reiterated the point which she had made earlier in the meeting around the need to select a maximum of three or four projects.

With that in mind, the Working Group agreed to call a recess and meet in private with only Members in attendance, with a view to identifying up to a maximum of four projects.

Upon the resumption of the meeting, it was agreed that the following two projects be progressed to Stage 2 – Development:

- Sólás Special Needs Charity and
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly,

That the Working Group agrees that the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group project be also progressed to Stage 2 – Development.

On a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and four against, with one 'no vote'. There being an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote in favour of the proposal and it was declared carried.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Working Group agrees that a total of five projects be progressed to Stage 2 – Development, with the final two being those for the Hearth Historic Buildings Trust and Fitzroy Presbyterian Church.

On a vote, five Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Working Group agreed:

- i to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii to note those applications which had not met the minimum threshold, namely, Cycling Ulster and Cycling Ireland, Linen Quarter BID, Belfast Central Mission, Southcity Resource and Development Centre and Donegall Road Methodist Church, Supported Employment and Sales Training (SEST) CIC and NI Community Energy (NICE), and that the applicants would be advised that they had been unsuccessful and receive feedback;
- iii to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following five projects be progressed to Stage 2 – Development:
 - Sólás Special Needs Charity - Sólás New Build Project
 - Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Branching Out Project
 - Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group - Lagan Water Access Activity Hub
 - Hearth Historic Buildings Trust – Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse
 - Fitzroy Presbyterian Church - Redevelopment of former School of Music; and
- iv. to note the proposed approach that the Council would provide a response to each applicant whose project was not moving forward to Stage 2 at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.

The Director of Physical Programmes explained that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund was an open call application process and that this item had been

restricted. The Working Group's recommendations would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th November for approval, with the minutes of that meeting being presented to the Council on 1st December for ratification. All applicants would be notified of the outcome of their application following the Council meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that its next meeting would take place at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 28th November.

Chairperson