

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 21st August, 2023

MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors T. Brooks, Bunting, Gormley, Groogan,
T. Kelly, McAteer, McDonough-Brown,
McKeown and Murray.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;
Ms. N. Mulrine, Regeneration Project Officer;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Working Group agreed that Councillor Murray be elected to serve as Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2024.

(Councillor Murray in the Chair.)

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 27th February were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gormley informed the Working Group that he was on the Board of the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group and, accordingly, declared an interest in relation to agenda item 3 – Request to Present – Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group and agenda item 6 – Update on the Physical Programme, insofar as it related to projects being delivered by the Action Group under the Local Investment Fund and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

As the interests declared were not deemed to be financial or significant non-financial in nature, he was not required to leave the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Request to Present - Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group

The Working Group granted approval for a representative of the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group to attend a future meeting to provide an update on the John Murray Lock House project, including the development of the new water activity hub.

Presentation - Edenderry Village Energy

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 28th November, it had agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation on the work of Edenderry Village Energy.

It was reported that Mr. R. Davison-Kernan, a Director of Edenderry Village Energy, was in attendance and he was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Davison-Kernan informed the Working Group that Edenderry Village was comprised of approximately two hundred houses, half of which were the original, red brick terraced homes used by workers employed in the former linen mill. Overall, the housing stock in the village was quite low, in terms of energy efficiency, with gas and oil being the primary source of heating. He highlighted the increasing cost and environmental impact of using fossil fuels and made reference to the recognised need to decarbonise heat, in the same way as electricity.

He reported that Edenderry Village Energy was a community benefit society and that it had been established with the aim of developing and running an energy scheme in the village, which would take heat from the nearby River Lagan and underground and distribute it to homes via water source/geothermal heat pumps. He provided examples of similar initiatives being delivered elsewhere and pointed out that Edenderry Village Energy had, last year, with assistance from Northern Ireland Community Energy, secured funding from the National Lottery to undertake a feasibility study of its proposed scheme. He reviewed the scope and findings of that study and pointed out that there would be benefits for participants in the scheme, particularly in terms of cost and economies of scale.

Mr. Davison-Kernan then highlighted a number of issues which renewable energy projects in Northern Ireland were facing at present, including the absence of grant assistance, a regulatory framework and meaningful involvement at a local authority level. In such circumstances, Edenderry Village Energy was moving ahead to develop its energy scheme on a pilot basis and was currently working, as part of a consortium, on an application to the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy to secure funding to put in place a financial, governance and regulatory model, in advance of seeking capital for the project itself.

He went on to stress that the proposed heating scheme would provide sustainable, affordable heating in the long term, reduce the need to undertake more significant and costly works to improve energy efficiency, bring residents together and give them a stake in the process and could be replicated elsewhere. He concluded by confirming that there had been considerable engagement with the Belfast Climate Commissioner and her team in the Council and that that would continue as the scheme evolved.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Davison-Kernan, following which the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Update on the Expansion of the Belfast Bikes Network

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1. Introduction

The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015, as part of the Council’s physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development (now DfI) provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of its Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception, using bikes and supporting infrastructure from ‘Nextbike by TIER’. The contract is coming to an end in March 2024.

The scheme currently operates with 573 bikes (including those in reserve for new stands) and 52 docking stations.

2. Recommendations

The Working Group is requested to note:

- i. the current status of the Belfast Bikes expansion scheme for South Belfast, and
- ii. the update on the tender process for a new Belfast Bikes contract.

3 Main Report

Expansion of the Belfast Bikes Network for South Belfast

The new station at Olympia in South has been installed funded by the Revitalisation Programme (DfC, DfI). In addition, in June 2021, Members agreed to proceed with an additional 15 docking stations and for £980,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal (£480,000 funding for Belfast Bikes expansion and £500,000 reallocated from public space programme). Expansion in the South area for Phase 4 2022/23 included Malone Road and Lisburn Road. At South AWG in November 2022 the exact locations in those areas were agreed as Elms Village and the entrance at Drumglass Park. The project status is as follows:

Elms Village – being installed currently.

Drumglass Park – drawings are complete. As the station encroaches slightly onto the public footpath, approval from DfI Roads is required. This is being pursued with DfI.

Expansion for Phase 5 2023/24 included Upper Ormeau Road. Planning for this expansion is on hold as the current supplier/operator contract is coming to an end in March 2024.

Update on New Contract

NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bikes scheme, with a contract renewal available until 2024. Council staff are currently reviewing the scheme and a recent Expression of Interest (EOI) was completed as a market testing exercise. This is used to inform the next stage of the tendering process.

Council staff are currently working on the tender documents for a new Belfast Bikes contract. Elements that potentially will be part of this include (still being refined):

- the introduction of e-bikes
- working with social enterprises and charities
- transition period between existing and new contract to ensure no gap in operation; step by step mobilisation
- expansion in the agreed areas and beyond
- managed service model i.e. the Council would still control locations and prices.

The Expression of Interest exercise has shown strong interest from suitable, experienced bike share companies (including the current supplier/operator). The majority indicated that they could operate a fully contracted managed service where the Council pays a fixed annual fee for the scheme supply and operation (this is the current model). Further detail will be brought to the AWGs and Committee in due course.”

The Working Group noted the contents of the report.

Update on the Physical Programme

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. **Recommendations**

The Working Group is asked to:

- i. note the physical programme update for South Belfast;
- ii. note the project movements for Coffee Culture (BIF46) and Arts and Digital Hub (BIF48) to BIF Stage 3-Committed; and
- iii. note the details for the scheduled site visits for NRF Stage 2 Projects.

3. **Local Investment Fund (LIF)**

Members are reminded LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation. Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 24 projects received 'In Principle' letters under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 21 have been completed; 2 projects at delivery stage, and 1 project still at initial stage. Further details of these are outlined below.

LIF breakdown – South	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	No. Projects	Amount (£)	No. Projects	Amount/ (£)
Number of Projects Completed	12 (92%)	£1,053,600	9 (82%)	£676,000
Number of Projects in Delivery			2 (18%)	£120,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Project in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (8%)	£30,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	13	£1,083,600	11	£796,000

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects – Holylands Area Improvement Initiative (£80,000), The Lock House (£40,000) and Finaghy Bridge (£30,000). The Working Group asked to note the status of the live LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
SLIF2-07	Holylands Area Improvement Initiative	£80,000	Phase 1 completed	Pilot works on planting trees completed. Note that this is a trial part and outcome of the initial phase will inform next steps.	Continue engagement with partners
SLIF2-13	LORAG- The Lock House	£40,000	On ground	LIF funding will contribute to the development of the community garden. Project is linked to Urban Villages programme. At procurement stage and planning permission has been received. Landscaping work completed in July 2023.	Continued engagement with the group; engagement with UV regarding overall project and spending profile.
SLIF017	Finaghy Bridge	£30,000	Design stage	Approved at SP&R Committee in May 2016 to undertake improvements to the bridge. DfI Roads Highways Team are taking the lead on design and the Council will contribute the LIF funding to DfI.	Continue engagement with DfI Roads.

4. **Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)**

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council. BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an in-principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

South	<p>Stage 3—Lagan Gateway—£2.1m; Lanyon Tunnels—£1.3m; Bredagh GAC- £700k</p> <p>Stage 2— Coffee Culture - £286k; Arts & Digital Hub- £584k</p> <p>Stage 1— Sandy Row Open Space project- £479k; Belfast Islamic Centre—no commitment</p>
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Balmoral DEA	<p>Stage 3 - Knockbreda Parish Church Hall—£250k</p> <p>Stage 2— Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC—£250k</p>
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Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF04	Lagan Gateway	£2.1m	On ground	Phase 1 of the project completed in October 2021. Design of Phase 2 gone through consultation process. Site investigations have been undertaken in Spring 2023 and project will be submitted to Planning in August 2023. DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund has been secured.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.
BIF19	Bredagh GAC	£700,000	On ground	Contractor on site. Project to be completed by end of the year 2023. Issues with neighbouring land owner are being dealt with by Legal Services.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF07	Lanyon Tunnels	£1.3m	Stage 3- Committed	Stewart Street has been acquired by DfC. Potential funding under discussion with Urban Villages and DfC. Roundtable meeting being set up. Plans have been amended and additional surveys are required. New planning application will be submitted in autumn 2023. Ongoing discussions with group, DfC and TEO.	Officer engagement with Executive Office and DfC as key funders, and stakeholders.

BIF33	Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC	£250,000	Stage 3-Committed	Members agreed in Feb 2023 that the BIF proposal (includes Phase 1 - replacement of Belvoir FC's grass football pitch, including car parking resurfacing and widening access lane) is decoupled from the wider masterplan and that any future phases will be taken forward separately by Linfield FC and Boys Brigade. NIHE has confirmed that the Council is the preferred purchaser of the site (playing fields) subject to internal approval and contract. NIHE and the Council are liaising to agree key milestones including completion date of purchase of site.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF46	Coffee Culture	BIF-£286,519 SOF- £100,000 UV- £482,923 DfC-£100,000	Stage 2- Uncommitted Part of Sandy Row Area projects	Partnership project with UV and DfC. Letter of Offer approved. Property purchase completed. Planning application submitted in June 2023. Procurement of contractor underway.	Move to Stage 3-Committed. Continue engagement with the group.
BIF48	Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub	BIF-£584,167 UV-£706,856	Stage 2- Uncommitted Part of Sandy Row Area projects	Partnership project with UV. Letter of Offer approved. Property purchase completed. Planning application submitted in June 2023. Procurement of contractor underway.	Move to Stage 3-Committed. Continue engagement with the group.
BIF47	Sandy Row Open Space project	£479,314*	Stage 1- Emerging Part of Sandy Row Area projects	Work is progressing. Meeting being set up in early September with stakeholders to explore potential opportunities in terms of final project, urban farm to allotments or a mixed development	Continue engagement with the group.

				based on community needs. <i>*The remaining balance of the ringfenced allocation for the Sandy Row Area projects</i>	
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5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment, and 2 are completed. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Members are asked to note the progress update of the remaining project in the table below.

SOF – South Belfast Project Overview

Project	Award	Status and update	Action/ Recommendation
SOF02 Coffee Culture	£100,000	As above at BIF46. Partnership project with UV and DfC. Letter of Offer approved. Property purchase completed. Planning application submitted in June 2023. Procurement of contractor underway.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

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. The NRF Programme is currently at *Stage 2- Development Stage*. In line with the agreed process, the AWG made recommendations on which projects should move forward to *Stage 2 – Development Stage* and this was agreed by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The table below provides an overview of the projects that progressed to *Stage 2- Development*

South Belfast – NRF overview

South	Stage 2 - Sólás New Build project, Branching Out project, Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, Redevelopment of Riddel’s Warehouse, Redevelopment of former School of Music, Market Heritage Hub <i>Stage 1 (Reserve) - The Avenue Arts Centre, An Droichead Annex, Lagan Legacy</i>
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South Belfast – NRF Projects at Stage 2 - Development

Project name	Description	Status
Sólás New Build project	Development of three-storey building and outdoor space for the special needs' charity.	Consultants progressing to complete Business Case.
Branching Out project	Refurbishment and extension of existing GVRT premises.	Business Case complete.
Lagan Water Access Activity Hub	Water activity hub on the River Lagan including floating pontoon and footbridge.	Business Case by the Executive Office has been reviewed. Consultant appointed to update costs estimates. Initially presented to Due Diligence and land issue to be resolved.
Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse	Improvements to disused listed building including creation of an arts centre, co-working space and visitor attraction.	Business case nearing completion. Group received Heritage Fund funding in March.
Redevelopment of former School of Music	Transformation of a derelict listed building into artist studios, a gallery, a rehearsal, dance and event space.	Business case nearing completion.
Market Heritage Hub	Regeneration of the former St Malachy's Convent School and warehouse at Sussex Place into a vibrant new community heritage hub and visitor attraction.	Business case nearing completion. LPS valuation completed. Condition report completed. The purchase of the property is a risk in terms of securing funding within a viable timeframe.

In June, the S P and R Committee received an update regarding NRF including the allocation model, outcome of *Stage 1- Application Stage*, updates on *Stage 2- Development Stage* which is underway and the updated programme timeline for delivery. Members also agreed to arrange site visits to Stage 2 projects for September. Site visits have now been arranged in conjunction with the groups and are detailed below. The AWG is asked to note the arrangements for the NRF site visits.

NRF Site Visits Arrangements:

Members are encouraged to attend any and all of these arranged visits and all of the Area Working Groups will also be provided with these details. The meeting point for all visits is City Hall and transport will be provided, returning to City Hall afterwards. Members are asked to RSVP as soon as possible when contacted.

Date	Time	Sites
Tues 5 Sept 2023	9:30am – 12:30pm	South Site visits to three projects – Sólás New Build Project, Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, and the Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse project
Wed 6 Sept 2023	1:30pm – 4:30pm	South Site visits to three projects – GVRT- Branching Out, Redevelopment of Former School of Music, and Market Heritage Hub project.
Wed 13 Sept 2023	9:30am – 12:30pm	North Site visits to three projects – AYE Youth and Community Hub, USEL- Green Growth & The Circular Economy, and Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment project
Thurs 14 Sept 2023	1.30pm – 3.30pm	North Site visits to two projects – CCRF- Cliftonville Community Enterprise and SRG- St Joseph's Restoration project.
Wed 20 Sept 2023	9:30am - 12:30pm	West Site visits to three projects – The Mountainview Hotel, Croí na Carraige and Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre
Thurs 21 Sept 2023	9:30am - 12:30pm	West (Shankill) Site visits to three projects – Glencairn Community Project, The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre, and The Road
Tues 26 Sept 2023	9.30am – 1.30pm	East Site visits to four projects – EastSide Container Hotel, Portview Exchange, Impact Belfast and Nevin Spence Centre (NSC) Visitor Experience

Members will also note that the outcome of the Stage 2 - development phase, preparations of business cases along with the detailed designs and projects costings are nearing completion. It is currently proposed that there will be a special AWG meeting to be held in October/ November to consider the

outcome of *Stage 2- Development* and recommend to SP&R Committee which projects are progressing to next stage.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or build / buy new assets or facilities. Table below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

South Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
City Hall Statues – Winifred Carney & Mary Ann McCracken	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Contractor/artist appointed. Work progressing.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The locations and back up locations were confirmed by Committee in Sept 2022. Engagement with stakeholders ongoing. Order placed with Contractor and gates being manufactured to roll-out the installation of gates.
City Hall – Installation of Two Stained Glass Windows	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> OBC to be worked up.
Palm House, Botanic Gardens	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Link to Tropical Ravine
Waterfront Hall Chiller Units	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Agreed at SP&R in June 2023.
Waterfront Hall Smoke Curtains	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Agreed at SP&R in June 2023.
City Hall Christmas Tree	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Agreed at SP&R in June 2023.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Further expansion – there is a separate update report being presented to Members at this AWG on Belfast Bikes Scheme.

8. Externally Funded Programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government department on key capital investment programmes, namely Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office as well as a number of schemes with DfC and DfI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

Table below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined South Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).

UV – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
The Lockhouse— Gateway to the River / Walkway	As above at SLIF2-13. Partnership project with UV. Letter of Offer approved. Planning permission has been received in April 2023. MTC started landscaping work in April 2023. External works has been completed in July 2023. Contractor for main works will be appointed in August with start on site in September 2023.
Coffee Culture	As above at BIF46/ SOF02. Partnership project with UV and DfC. Letter of Offer approved. Property purchase completed. Planning application submitted in June 2023. Procurement of contractor underway.
Sandy Row Arts and Digital Hub	As above BIF48. Partnership project with UV. Letter of Offer approved. Property purchase completed. Planning application submitted in June 2023. Procurement of contractor underway.
Accidental Theatre (Shaftesbury Square)	Business Case not yet commenced, currently at good relations development stage.
Donegall Pass Good Relations Hub	Council is acting as delivery agent. Emerging project with Clanmil Housing Association. Legal documentation progressing. Approved business case received. Letter of Offer is in development by Executive Office.
Market Tunnels	Emerging project with business case being developed. Feasibility stage BIF Programme – Stage 3 – Committed. Potential funding under discussion with Urban Villages. Plans have been amended and new planning application will be submitted in autumn 2023. DfC to update on Business Case.

DfC Funded Projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Communities in South Belfast.

DfC – South Belfast Projects Overview

Project	Status and update
Frederick Douglass Statue	Project completed. Statue unveiling at Rosemary Street (at junction of Lombard Street) held on 31 July 2023.
Belfast Islamic Centre – Renovations of Aldersgate House, University Rd	The project is to complete by Autumn 2023.
Holylands Alleygating and Cleansing Project	Project progressing. Link to the citywide Alleygating Phase 5 project.
Southwest Quarter Revitalisation Scheme	Council is acting as delivery agent. Contract for funding/ Letter of Offer received. Works underway.
2 Royal Avenue – Bank Square Enhancement	Project aims to improve the linkages and connectivity between Royal Avenue and Bank Square. Works to commence imminently.

Dfl Funded Projects

Below is the status update on project funded by the Department for Infrastructure in South Belfast.

Dfl – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Lagan Gateway	As above as BIF04. Underway.
Finaghy Bridge	As above at SLIF017. Design stage.
Covered cycle stands Phase 2	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> Ormeau Park – complete; Botanic Gardens – installation will begin by September as part of the Upsurge project; Cherryvale Park – installation will begin by September. Funding has been received for Phase 3; potential locations are Lagan Towpath, Clement Wilson/Barnett Demesne, Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park and P&R Blacks Road.
Expansion of Belfast Bikes Network	<i>Via Revitalisation Programme (DfC, Dfl)</i> Further stations are also under development via the Council funded scheme. A separate report is being tabled at the AWGs this month.

EU HORIZON Funded Project

Project	Status and update
UPSURGE Project	City-centered approach to catalyze nature-based solutions through the EU Regenerative Urban Lighthouse for pollution alleviation and regenerative development. Additional funding has been secured from UKSPF to enable the first phase of the works (research plots and community garden) to be delivered in part. Project works underway at Botanic Gardens and the approved infrastructure works should complete in September 2023.”

The Working Group adopted the recommendations.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that its next meeting would be held at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 27th November.

Chairperson