



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Renewing the Routes Update
Date:	11 March 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay Head of Economic Initiatives ext 3459 Keith Sutherland Planning & Transport Manager ext 3578

Relevant Background Information

This report provides an update on the general progress of the Integrated Development Fund (IDF) Renewing the Routes programme and clarifies ongoing issues relating to the commercial improvement programme and the funding provided by the Department of Social Development.

Key Issues

Shankill Road

The main emphasis for the regeneration activity on the Shankill Road remains the commercial frontage improvements. Over sixty premises have now taken part in the scheme, with a further 50 businesses in line to benefit from future phases. The block-by-block approach means that businesses and residents can immediately see the enhancement from the improvements works on the road, contributing to attractive places to work and shop.

The ongoing complementary activity has seen the completion of additional public realm improvements, funded by Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO), at the Agnes Street and Lanark Way junctions. This work, coordinated by the Unit on behalf of BRO, is continuing in the Woodvale Park area with improved pedestrian crossings and additional resurfacing. The project will also include feature embellishments to street lighting alongside the installation of several benches, with the work being completed by March 2009.

Completed IDF funded projects include railings and granite entrance features at West Belfast Orange Hall, floodlighting to Woodvale Methodist Church and new railings at West Kirk Presbyterian Church. Projects delivered in partnership with other Council departments include floral baskets, tourism signage and lighting to the Woodvale Park 'Family Tree' sculpture.

By March 2009 works should be substantially complete on several sites of architectural merit including the listed Shankill Rest Garden's perimeter wall, stonework restoration to Shankill Library and landscaping at Woodvale Presbyterian Church. Following refurbishment it is proposed that the Shankill Rest Garden wall will be lit by recessed up-lighting, this project is currently at design stage.

Upper Springfield Road

The designs are now being finalised for an environmental project to improve the road frontage and upgrade an open space area to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour and misuse at Springhill Park 'funnel'. Renewing the Routes, Parks & Leisure and Groundwork NI have worked with the local community over the last year and works are scheduled to begin on site in February 2009. New railings, paths, landscaping, planting and future artworks from the community will bring this green space back into community use by summer 2009.

Commercial improvements have now been designed to complement previous schemes in the area and will be presented to owners/occupiers for final approval this month with work scheduled to commence in March 2009. DRD Roads Service has approved the installation of street lighting embellishments to compliment these improvements.

An artist has been appointed to make a feature of the highly visible wall on this main arterial road at the JP Corry Ltd, near the entrance to Sliabh Dubh estate. The artist will work with the residents to produce a mosaic style piece on Industrial Heritage, Natural Environment or Families & Stories. The piece will be installed by April 2009.

Planting and boundary improvements were started at Whiterock Orange Hall in February 2009. Additional complementary public realm and landscaping works at other local sites are also at the design stage.

Other completed projects in this area include the new Panoramic Viewpoint at Monagh Road and a major public realm scheme at the main junction of Springfield Rd and Whiterock Road which followed on from the completion of the first phase of shop fronts and the parking area refurbishment.

Crumlin Road

The first phase of Commercial Improvements to six properties at Lower Crumlin Road is almost complete and should be fully completed by March 2009. The second phase of the commercial improvements at Glenbank will also be complete by this month. It is anticipated that third phase of the Crumlin Road commercial improvements, covering over twenty properties at the Ardoyne shops will commence this month, subject to final agreements with the individual owners.

The project to refurbish the Belfast Orange Hall on Clifton Street has commenced on-site with works to ground floor windows opening, the removal of cage surrounds and improvements to the boundary railings.

Proposals have been developed for landscaping schemes in Lower Crumlin (Oldpark/Clifton Park Avenue junction) which are due to commence on site this month. The detailed public realm proposals at Glenbank, Carlisle Circus and Ardoyne roundabout are also being developed following the consultations with the local community.

Falls Update

The first and second phases of the lower Falls commercial improvement covering 67 properties is nearing completion. The consultations in respect of a further 40 properties (Phase III -mid Falls) are currently underway with works having commenced to the first blocks of this latest phase. The next stage of this ongoing commercial refurbishment will see the programme shift to the Andersontown area with detailed consultations with retailers projected to commence in April 2009.

The amenity lighting schemes have been completed at both Carnegie Library and St Mary's University College securing the illumination of the general facades and building details. Detailed design for amenity lighting have been finalised for International Wall with a project start date (subject to statutory permissions being secured) of March 2009.

The refurbishment works to the category B1 listed railings at the St Comgall's has commenced. This project will be carried out in parallel with a landscaping project within the grounds which is expected to be complete by March 2009. Works to Willowbank Youth Club have also commenced including the upgrading of the surfaces and new gates with a target completion date of late March 2009.

Works are also continuing at Falls Park including the enhancements of the Falls Road entrance and final designs are being developed for works to Milltown cemetery with a view to commence works in April 2009.

Points to note for the renewing the routes programme.

Members should note that throughout the routes significant works have been carried out to a number of commercial properties with the intention to continue this approach in 2009. In line with sound project management principles we have reviewed and refined some of the processes involved in order to successfully implement the programme throughout 2009. The ongoing success and popularity of the programme has necessitated careful monitoring of the overall budget and continued review of the scope or extent of the works that can be implemented across the target areas.

As previously outlined to Committee the operational and budget constraints mean that not all properties within the areas identified for commercial improvement will be included within the scheme. The finite level of resources and constraints associated with individual properties due to condition, ownership or agreement will result in properties falling outside of the scope of the improvement programme. In the initial programme approximately 15% of properties have not been included within the implemented works due primarily to issues around: property condition (either recently improved or suffering from structural problems); ownership (indeterminate, temporary, or non eligible eg Banks or Public Sector); unwillingness to participate.

The non-participation in the programme that occurs as a result of properties requiring

significant amounts of structural or repair works are most unfortunate as this can result in situations where there are isolated examples of under investment within areas that have received comprehensive and significant enhancement. The experience in the initial phases has, however, confirmed that the potential level of investment required to address the properties with significant structural problems would curtail the ability of the programme to secure comprehensive improvement across the target areas.

In order to ensure the comprehensive approach it has been necessary to monitor and revise the scope of works for individual properties within improvement areas. These adjustments have in some instances led to a reduction in the extent of works previously envisaged to ensure the inclusion of the maximum number of properties within each of the target areas.

Members should also note that the Renewing the Routes Team is working towards a very ambitious implementation and spend profile from the Department of Social Development (DSD) (£1.6m 40 projects). The revised profile has set an ambitious financial target for expenditure under the Renewing the Routes programme in the current financial year. Whilst work is being developed and progressed to meet these targets there is an enhanced level of risk associated with external variables such as adverse weather conditions the requirement for statutory approvals and other potential contractual delays. Under the DSD approval for the Integrated Development Fund expenditure it should be noted that failure to meet the revised targets could result in the loss of funding which would affect the ability to deliver the proposed comprehensive programme for 2009/10.

Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications arising from the reallocation.

Recommendations

Members are requested to note the updates set out within the report;

Abbreviations

IDF	Integrated Development Fund
BRO	Belfast regeneration Office
DRD	Department of Regional Development