

# Connecting Belfast Harbour

## Placemaking Strategy



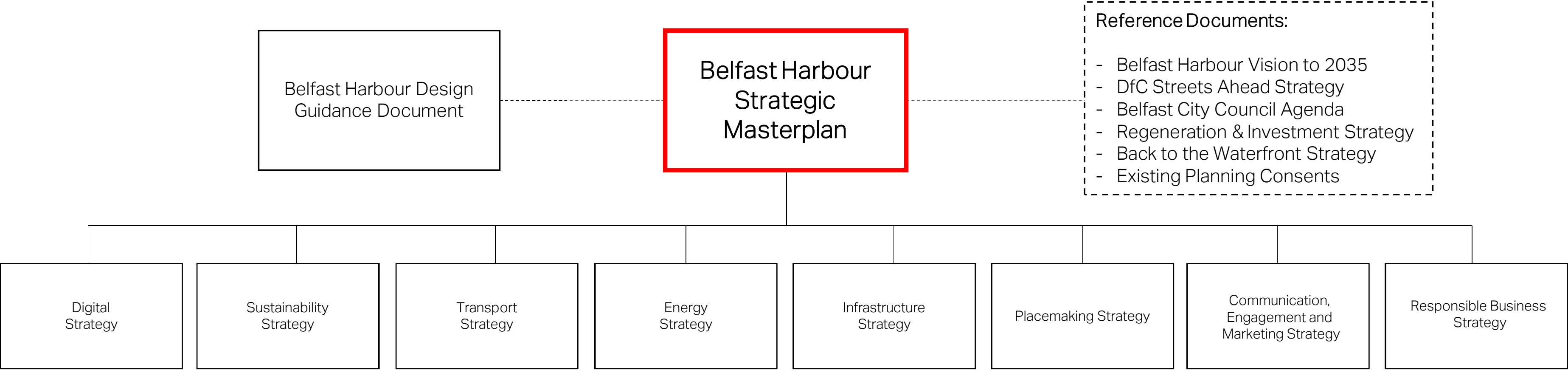
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Harbour**

# Overview

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# BHC Document Hierarchy



# Background

BHC has a long and proud history of supporting local businesses to succeed and trade with the world. Today is no different: it is home to 760 businesses, 1,500 residents and welcomes 27,000 people to work or study each day. Five-million people visit its tourism and leisure destinations, 1.75-million arrive and depart through international ferries and cruise liners and 2.4-million arrive and depart through George Best Belfast City Airport.

Building on this, a Placemaking Strategy will:

- Support BCC's **Agenda** and BHC's **Vision to 2035**
- Facilitate effective **planning, design, management and animation** of shared spaces across the Harbour
- Inform **Community and Stakeholder engagement**
- Support BHC's **Strategic Masterplan** and related strategies for **Transport, Sustainability, Digital Infrastructure and Energy**.

Next steps:

- Engage with the **Strategy Champions** ensure all strands are **aligned and integrated** within the Strategic Masterplan

## The Belfast Agenda: Belfast's Community Plan



## A Port for Everyone: Vision to 2035



# Placemaking and its importance

Placemaking is “more than just promoting better urban design; it facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution”<sup>1</sup>

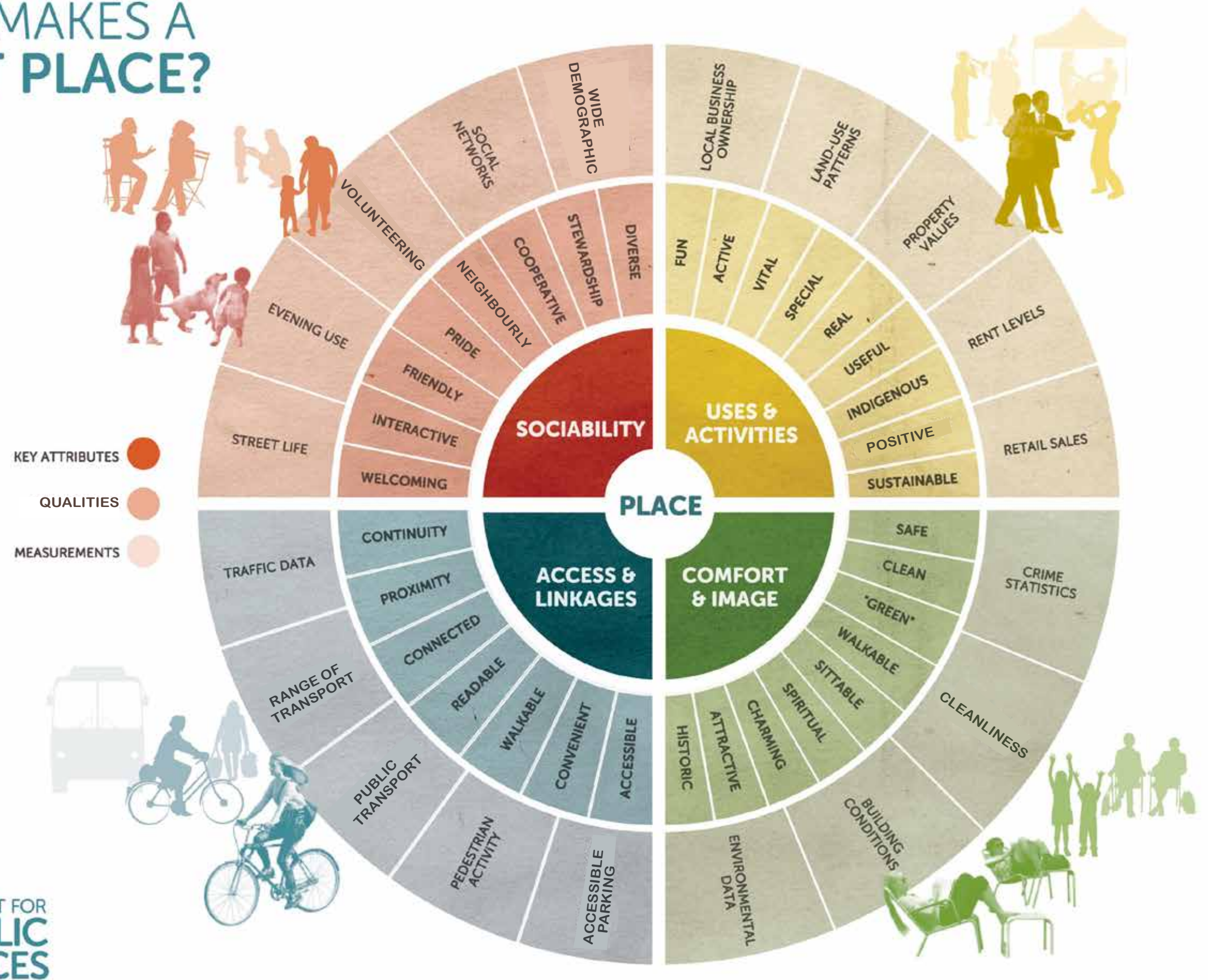
The Placemaking Strategy will:

- Facilitate a **connection between people and places** to promote the sharing of public spaces
- Ensure **community-based participation** at its centre
- Achieve **high quality design** emphasising **physical, cultural and social identities** that define a place
- Develop quality public spaces that **contribute to health and wellbeing**.

The placemaking process will:

- Require collaboration between a range of **private, public, voluntary and community stakeholders**
- Involve community-based stakeholders in association with the Strategic Masterplan, to ensure **joined up engagement on the overall masterplan strategy**.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



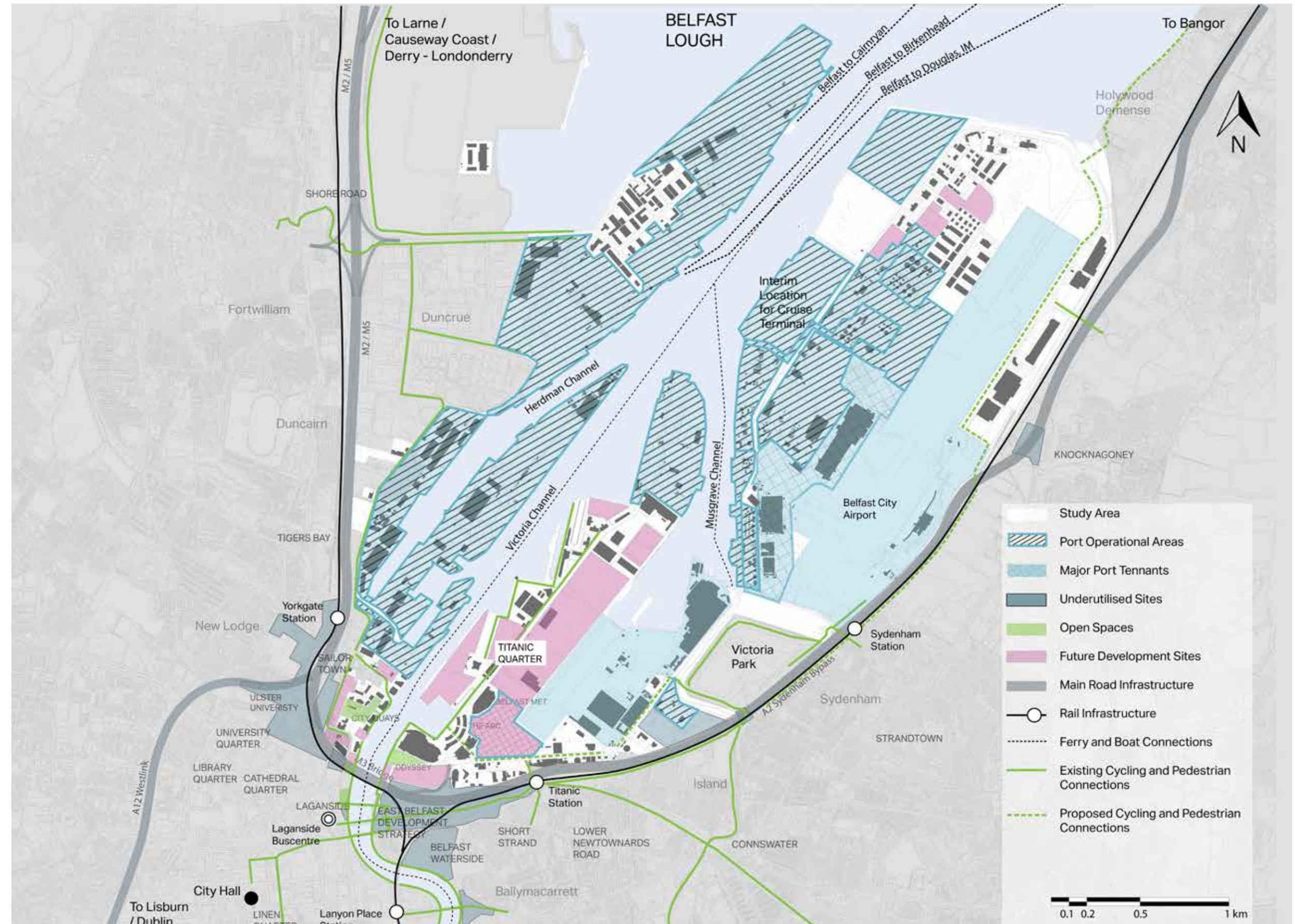
1. Project for Public Spaces 2019, *What is Placemaking*, Project for Public Spaces, viewed May 2019 < <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking> >

# Study extent and influences

The study extent covers the Belfast Harbour Estate, including the emerging mixed-use inner Harbour Development Zones outlined in the Strategic Masterplan: City Quays, Odyssey Quays, Titanic Quarter and Catalyst.

It also considers:

- The industrial, logistics and operational port areas, as well as major port tenants City Airport and Harland and Wolff Shipyard, focusing on **key enhancements that would benefit users while maintaining the primary working function of these areas**
- **Interfaces and relationships with key City Districts and neighbouring communities**, including Sailortown, Ulster University City Campus, Cathedral Quarter, Laganside, Eastbank, Sydenham Road, Victoria Park, Strandtown and Holywood
- **Alignment with key plans and strategies within the Harbour**, including the Titanic Quarter Maritime Mile and City Quays Gardens.



# Strategic context

## STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN AND RELATED STRATEGIES:

- Placemaking Strategy
- Transport Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Infrastructure Strategy
- Energy Strategy
- Harbour Brand Strategy



## OVERARCHING VISION

- Belfast Agenda
- A Port for Everyone (Vision to 2035)



## OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

- City Centre Regeneration/Investment Strategy
- Bolder Vision: Reimagining the Centre
- The Smart Belfast Framework
- Green and Blue/Open Space Strategies



## PLACE-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- Maritime Mile / Titanic Quarter
- City Quays Gardens
- Greater Clarendon and Sailortown
- East Bank Development Strategy



# Key issues identified



## OVERCOMING PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Improving connectivity, safety and activation under elevated infrastructure  
Bridging and connecting over infrastructure  
Wayfinding and thresholds



## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE

Meanwhile and temporary uses and spaces  
Space programming  
Activation



## IMPLEMENTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

Enhancing biodiversity and conserving natural environment  
Education  
Design for climate



## CREATING AN ICONIC WATERFRONT

Recreation, interaction and activities (on water and waterside)  
Improved access to waterfront and broader connectivity to city centre  
Celebrating history



# Vision Statement

A draft Vision has been developed to guide the development of the Placemaking Strategy - laid out under five Themes and underpinned by a series of Principles to guide development of Placemaking Strategies.

The Placemaking Vision and Principles aim to:

- Support BHC's Vision to 2035 – **“to be the region's gateway for trade, growth, tradeable services and an Iconic Waterfront for the City”**
- Support BHC's **Strategic Masterplan Vision** and the successful and holistic delivery of its Development Zones
- Be **delivered in close partnership with key stakeholders** including Maritime Belfast Trust, BCC
- Provide a commitment to the development of high-quality public spaces that **optimise shared value** and contribute to people's **health and wellbeing**.

**“To provide a welcoming, memorable and accessible harbour destination that provides opportunities for prosperity, innovation and leisure, supports the health of its users and the environment, and encourages community and stakeholder participation.”**

# Vision Themes

**“To provide a welcoming, memorable and accessible harbour destination that provides opportunities for prosperity, innovation and leisure, supports the health of its users and the environment, and encourages community and stakeholder participation.”**



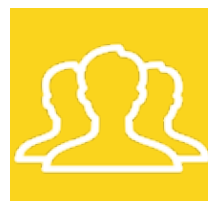
## **INNER LEISURE HARBOUR AND ICONIC WATERFRONT FOR THE CITY**

Celebrating 400 years of innovation - past, present and future. Belfast Harbour will be **an exciting range of living, working and leisure districts, clustered together along its iconic waterfront** - active, engaging and accessible to all.



## **CONNECTED GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY**

The **primary gateway to Belfast - well connected** to its region, its neighbours and within its districts. **Priority will be given to Active Travel - walking, cycling and public transport:** driving will be the least attractive choice.



## **WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY**

There will **no longer be delineation** between city and Harbour. The **waterside will be reclaimed and embedded** into the life of the city. **All people will feel safe and welcome.**



## **SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE**

Place **nature within everyone's reach. Protect and re-build** the natural environment and the waterside's unique bio-diversity. The environment and the need to sustain it will be **celebrated. Education and outreach** will provide protection into the future.



## **ENGAGING AND DIVERSE**

Many reasons for Belfast residents and visitors to stay and return. **Activity and interest beyond day-time hours** and the summer. Early initiatives in underutilised areas will **build momentum for an exciting future.**

# Principles



## INNER LEISURE HARBOUR AND ICONIC WATERFRONT FOR THE CITY

Celebrating 400 years of innovation - past, present and future. Belfast Harbour will be an exciting range of living, working and leisure districts, clustered together along its iconic waterfront - active, engaging and accessible to all.



### Establish a cohesive and iconic identity that complements the City

- Establish an **overarching set of elements** that unify, (branding, wayfinding, public art, street furniture and public realm materials);
- Establish **physical, cultural and social identities** to define places;
- Complement and **reference the identities** of MBT's Maritime Mile concept, heritage assets and tourist attractions;
- Create distinct districts and neighbourhoods;
- Continue **strengths** for built form and public realm (character/typology), building on existing successes;
- Work with **local climatic conditions** (shelter, shade, orientation).

### Maximise activities that are water-fronting, water-proximate and on-water

- Ensure the waterfront is **highly connected to, and easily accessible** from, the City;
- Provide a **range of spaces** along the waterfront (large/small) to accommodate a variety of formal and informal activities;
- Focus **arts, cultural and recreational destinations/features** at the waterfront;
- Introduce **on-water leisure activities** and allow people to get closer to the water;
- Enhance access to, along and across the water **outside of the inner-Harbour** areas;
- Establish **nodes of activity** around water transport stops and bridge crossings.

### Celebrate history and the working port

- Integrate and find **purpose for physical historic features** within built form and public realm;
- Weave **historic stories** into the design of the public realm;
- Provide long-term stewardship of heritage assets;
- Identify where historic artefacts or stories can be integrated into the current offer;
- Use iconic **industrial features as landmarks**, waymarkers and branding;
- Identify opportunities to see and understand more of the working port areas (**working port is part of atmosphere**).

### Embrace innovation and technology

- Provide **unique, innovative and flexible** buildings and spaces;
- Embed **SMART technology** to assist, enlighten, and entertain;
- Celebrate innovation and technology by making it **visible and interactive** (e.g. buildings or spaces that put activities on display, or creating features of innovative infrastructure);
- Facilitate demand-led activities and services (e.g. shuttle services, cruise ship arrivals);
- Evaluate the **technology and sustainability merits of new developments**.

# Principles

## **CONNECTED GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY**

The primary gateway to Belfast - well connected to its region, its neighbours and within its districts. Priority will be given to walking and cycling: driving will be the least attractive choice.



### Reinforce Belfast Harbour's role as the primary gateway to Belfast/Northern Ireland

- Work with key stakeholders to integrate with and enhance the **quality of major gateways and destinations**, including City Airport and the Cruise Terminal;
- Provide convenient, efficient and intuitive transport links to and from the Harbour;
- Create **inviting, memorable and intuitive** public realm spaces.

### Improve connectivity with the City, surrounding communities and broader region

- Provide strong, attractive and intuitive physical connections to **meld Harbour and City** (land and water based connections);
- Improve connections to **neighbouring communities** via active modes of travel;
- Improve connections to **regional active travel routes** (e.g. greenways);
- **Repurpose under-utilised areas** as public spaces to expand/benefit connectivity.

### Provide high-quality experiences that support active modes of travel

- Increase **intra-Harbour connections** via land and water services;
- Provide **safe, direct and attractive** walking and cycling routes for leisure users and commuters (white and blue collar)
- Integrate walking and cycling routes with public realm and public transport nodes;
- Modify existing infrastructure and **reallocate road space** to prioritise active modes of travel;
- Provide clear wayfinding measures to make it **easy to get to and to move around**.

### Create nodes of activity around transport hubs and key points of access

- Co-locate **hubs of activity** around transport nodes and major gateways/points of arrival;
- Locate places/uses of broader interest where they are easily accessible.

# Principles



## WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY

There will no longer be delineation between city and Harbour. The waterside will be reclaimed and embedded into the life of the city. All people will feel safe and welcome.



### Create an open and welcoming environment

- Create spaces that are **open, democratic and flexible**;
- Remove redundant/historic security infrastructure and **reinstate/repurpose** areas around it;
- Ensure **gateways/points** of arrival are **welcoming and inviting**;
- **Avoid hard boundaries**/fenced areas wherever practical (utilise softer measures to delineate).

### Accessible and intuitive

- Develop a clear suite of wayfinding measures (**information, design, branding, way markers**);
- Adopt best practice measures to ensure buildings and places are **accessible to/comfortable for people of all ages and abilities**.

### Create a safe daytime and nighttime environment

- Prioritise **sustainable modes of transport** over cars (crossings, remove blind spots, traffic calming);
- **Reduce space** for car movement and **manage vehicle/HGV speed** and traffic to create a pleasant and safe environments for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Ensure routes and spaces are **activated with passive surveillance** and activity over extended hours;
- Design spaces to **reduce anti-social behaviour** (remove 'blind spots' and remove reliance on security cameras);
- Provide high-quality lighting that provides **safety and comfort at night**.

### Support health and well-being

- Establish attractive routes for walking and cycling to **support active lifestyles**;
- Provide opportunities to **engage with nature** and the natural environment to support **mental health and well-being**;
- Provide green and blue spaces for **relaxation and contemplation**;
- Blur lines between indoor and outdoor spaces and **encourage use of outdoor spaces** for working;
- Design spaces and places to **improve air quality**.

# Principles

## SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

Place nature within everyone's reach. Protect and re-build the natural environment and the waterside's unique bio-diversity. The environment and the need to sustain it will be celebrated. Education and outreach will provide protection into the future.



### Protect, enhance and celebrate wildlife and biodiversity

- Enhance wildlife and **ecology corridors/connections** between existing and new green spaces (remove barriers to migration);
- Design to achieve a **net-gain in biodiversity** in new developments and existing areas across the Harbour;
- Integrate features/activities to **educate** about the local environment;
- Consider the design of all spaces (public/private) to **support biodiversity** (e.g. lighting).

### Create sustainable buildings and places

- Improve **air quality** by maximising flora and implementing sustainable measures (planting, limiting cars, renewable energy, allowing air movement and circulation);
- Improve **water quality** by managing water in a sustainable and integrated way (SUDs, recycling/reuse, education);
- Design and orientate buildings and public realm to reduce emissions and create a **comfortable micro climate** (protection from wind exposure);
- Encourage use of materials and construction methods that support a **circular economy** (embodied carbon, recycling/reuse);
- Provide more green spaces to drawdown atmospheric carbon dioxide and **reduce heat-island effects**.

### Enhance quality of life and encourage sustainable behaviour

- Create an extensive, connected and appropriately-scaled network of high-quality open spaces to bring **nature within everyone's reach**;
- Prioritise **sustainable and active modes** of transport (walking, cycling, electric/hydrogen powered public transport);
- Introduce community-led programmes that **foster and develop healthy lifestyles** (e.g. urban farming);
- Weave **sustainable/environmental story-telling** into the public realm (education, information boards, interactive/art installations).

# Principles

## **ENGAGING AND DIVERSE**

Many reasons for Belfast residents and visitors to stay and return. Activity and interest beyond day-time hours and the summer. Early initiatives in underutilised areas will build momentum for an exciting future.



### Provide reasons for people to visit and stay

- Provide a range of anchors/destinations to **draw a diverse group of people** to the Harbour;
- Curate a **year-round programme** of events in the public realm to **encourage shared use**, in partnership with MBT and other stakeholders;
- Provide places and activities for a **broad range of users** (children, young people, enterprise, learning/knowledge, art/design, recreation/health, cultural/visitor attractions);
- Consider relationships between different activities to **foster innovation, creativity and partnerships** (interaction, co-location);
- Integrate **interactive elements** within places that are educational, interactive and fun;
- Co-locate social uses along and within open spaces to encourage their use and contribute to their character.

### Expand activities beyond 9 to 5

- Curate **night-time and weekend activities** to activate and attract people beyond office hours;
- Provide high-quality, sustainable and ecologically compatible **lighting that adds interest and spectacle**;
- Curate activities/programmes that suit **different seasons**;
- Encourage restaurant/bars to locate around public realm to **animate space and provide passive surveillance**.

### Build momentum and interest over time

- Identify **quick wins and interim solutions to transform** underutilised or poorly accessed places for the benefit of users;
- Implement meanwhile uses on **vacant sites** awaiting development;
- Consider meanwhile uses, on land and on water, that will provide a **platform for innovation and a broader range of uses** early on (not just leisure activities);
- Provide **low-cost spaces to encourage enterprise, innovation** and start-up activity (pop-ups, food growing, arts/culture, trade/business);
- Provide opportunities for public engagement.

### Connect people and places to optimise shared value

- Consult with a range of stakeholders to **integrate diverse opinions**, to avoid designing in isolation;
- Undertake **regular engagement** to help **shape, adapt and refresh** places and activities as the Harbour develops and evolves;
- Encourage **community participation and ownership** through volunteering, stewardship and cooperatives.

# Alignment with BHC's Strategic Vision to 2035

		Placemaking Vision Themes and Principles																		
		Inner leisure Harbour and iconic waterfront for the city				Connected globally and locally				Welcoming, inclusive and healthy				Sustainable and environmentally responsible			Engaging and diverse			
		Establish a cohesive and iconic identity that complements the City	Maximise activities that are water-fronting, water-proximate and on-water	Celebrate history and the working port	Embrace innovation and technology	Reinforce Belfast Harbour's role as the primary gateway to Belfast and Northern Ireland	Improve connectivity with the City, surrounding communities and the broader region	Provide high-quality experiences that support active modes of travel	Create nodes of activity around transport hubs and key points of access	Create an open and welcoming environment for all	Accessible and intuitive	Create a safe daytime and nighttime environment for all	Support health and well-being	Protect, enhance and celebrate wildlife and biodiversity	Create sustainable buildings and places	Enhance quality of life and encourage sustainable behaviour	Provide reasons for people to visit and stay	Expand activities beyond 9 to 5	Build momentum and interest over time	Connect people and places to optimise shared value
Supports Vision 2035	World's Best Regional Port																			
	A Green Port																			
	A Key Economic Hub																			
	A Smart Port																			
	An Iconic Waterfront for the City																			
Supports Belfast Agenda	Growing the Economy																			
	Living Here																			
	Working and Learning																			
	City Development																			



# BHC Placemaking Strategy



**Character**  
Creating distinctive new City Areas

**Connectivity**  
Connecting home, work and leisure with attractive active travel routes

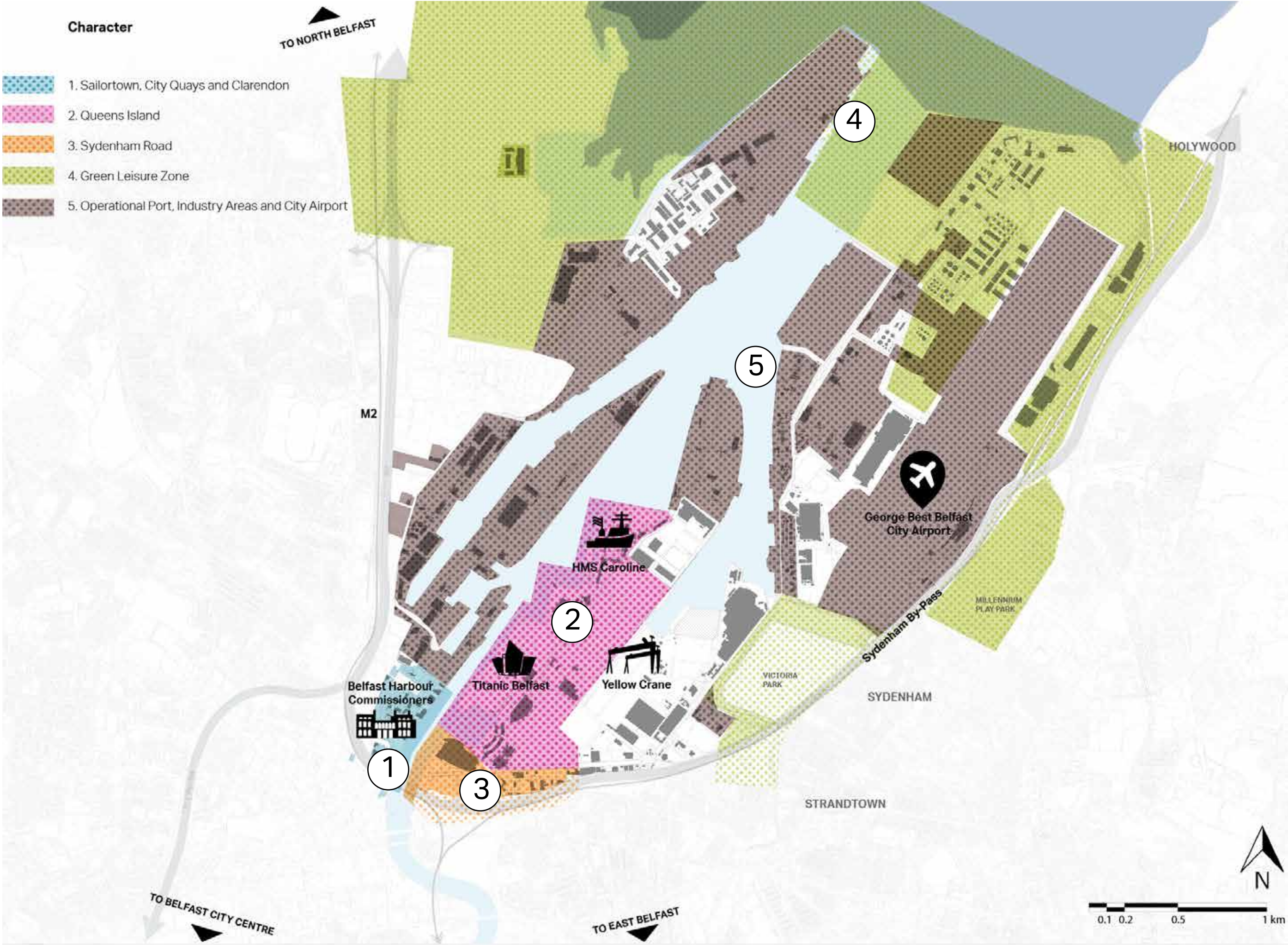
**Focal Points and Attractors**  
Building attractors to enhance the existing offer of land and water-based tourism and leisure across the City Areas

**Programming**  
Developing dynamic experiences for residents and visitors.

# Character:

## Creating distinctive new city areas

- 1 Sailortown, City Quays and Clarendon:**  
 An attractive new destination that accommodates a broad range of users, offering green space, events space and activities. It will have a strong relationship with the River Lagan and will celebrate its industrial and cultural heritage.
- 2 Queens Island:**  
 Belfast's premier visitor destination, incorporating major visitor attractions, cultural and recreational activities, green spaces and art and heritage trails. Mixed landuse with, office, commercial, studio and operational activities and emerging residential.
- 3 Sydenham Road:**  
 A vibrant commercial led location integrating key access routes to Queens Island.
- 4 Green Leisure Zone:**  
 A well-connected network of active travel routes and green spaces that will provide improved access to nature and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.
- 5 Operational Port, Industry Areas and City Airport:**  
 Retaining its primary working character and functionality, enhancements will be made to improve public transport and active travel links to enhance connectivity to destinations within and through the area.



# Connectivity:

Connecting home, work and leisure with attractive active travel routes

## Gateways:

Targeted enhancements to key gateways will be made to ensure a positive first impression welcoming visitors and residents. Safe connections and intuitive wayfinding will allow navigation into and around the Harbour and onward to other destinations.

## Active Subway/Bridges:

New and enhanced linkages will be created to connect Belfast Harbour with the City and surrounding communities.

## Active Travel:

A comprehensive network of pedestrian and cycle routes, combined with green infrastructure, will be established to encourage sustainable travel, extend nature into the City, improve micro-climate for users and establish desire lines that link active open spaces with key destinations.

Note: all greenways, cycleways, active travel corridors and subway/bridge connections shown opposite are indicative only and subject to review and alignment with the Transport Strategy.



# Focal Points and Attractors:

**Building attractors to extend the existing offer of land and water-based tourism and leisure across the City Areas**

## Trails and creative wayfinding

A series of themed walking and cycling trails will be created, using art, wayfinding and waymarkers to link attractors and points of interest.

## Regional attractors and landmarks

These are iconic elements that are visually prominent and are regional and international draws for Belfast.

## Culture/history-based attractors

Predominantly based around Titanic Quarter, these will bring the waterfront and adjacent areas to life with maritime exhibits celebrating Belfast's rich culture.

## Water-based attractors

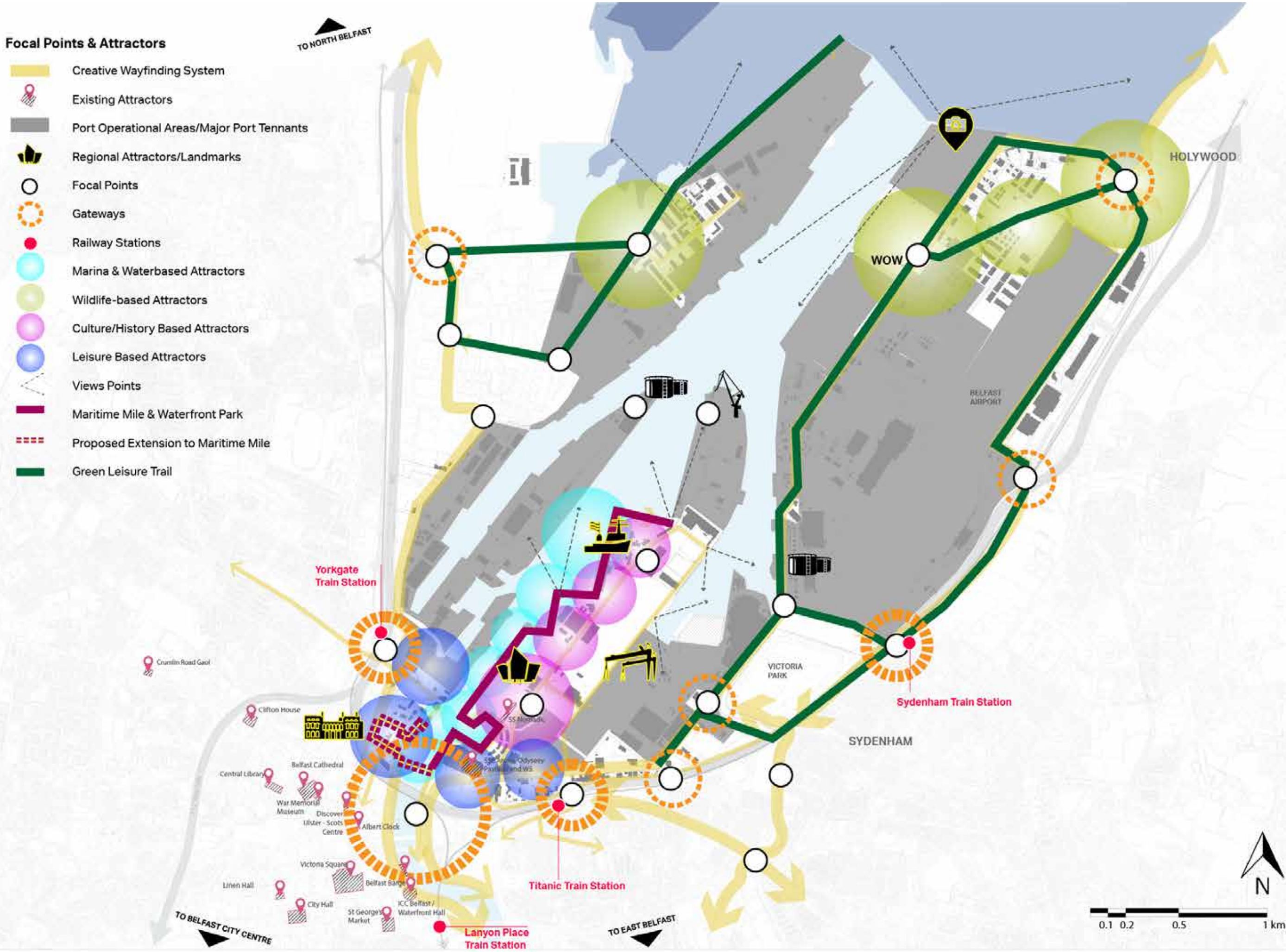
The Abercorn Basin has potential to expand, providing enhanced shore-based facilities as well as leisure activities.

## Wildlife-based attractors

The wildlife theme will be supported by existing ecological assets and extended, sensitively drawing the shore and wetland habitats deep into the existing built infrastructure.

## Leisure-based attractors

Active travel routes will lead to new honey-pot destinations, with cycle hire and Belfast Bike docks located strategically to promote local and visitor use.





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