

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

Summary
December 2021



A decade of opportunity
starts **now**

THE BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

The highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), signed in December 2021, arrives at a critical time. The Deal represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of our shared vision of:

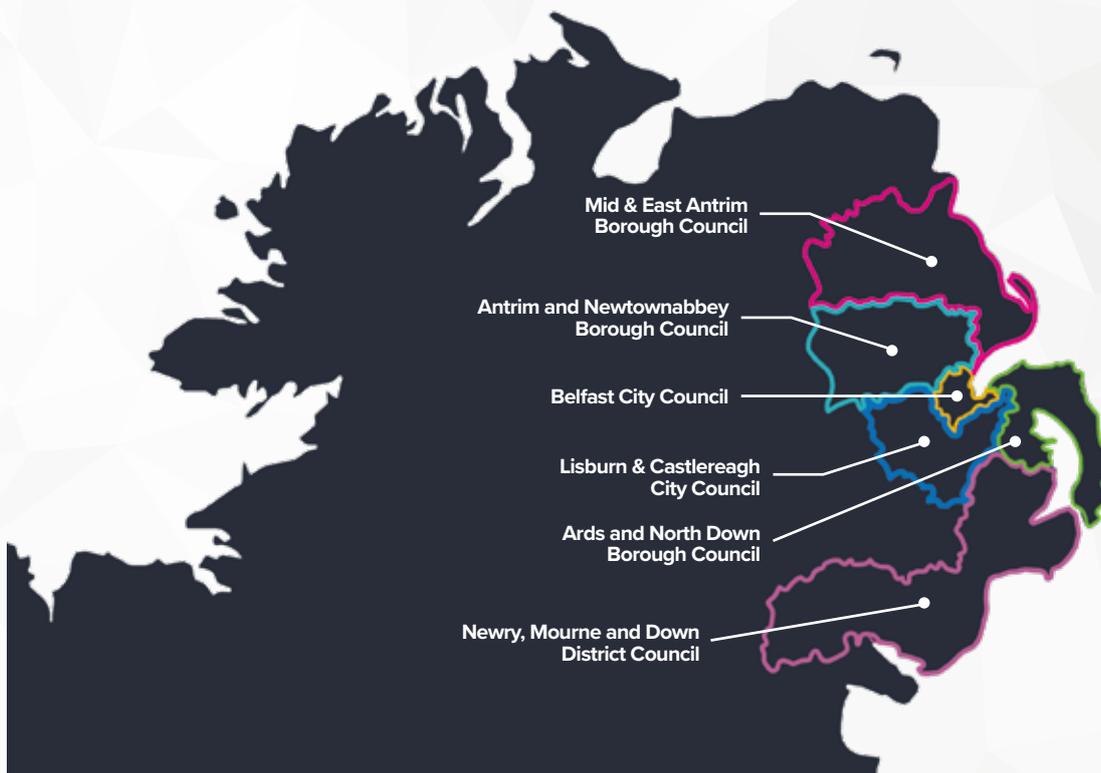
“Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region.”

This substantial financial commitment, which will be further supplemented by the private sector to create a programme in excess of £1 billion, will generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10 to 15 years - an exciting, once in a generation opportunity to accelerate economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

This Deal will strengthen the region's offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of our region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.

The Deal involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The BRCD partners comprise the six local authorities; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, the region's two universities; Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, and four of the region's further education colleges; Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, Southern Regional College and the South Eastern Regional College.

The BRCD region has a population of over 1 million residents. The region is young, ambitious and growing - over half the population is under the age of 40. The place-based nature of the City Deal presents an enormous opportunity to drive economic recovery and boost competitiveness, improving the region's resilience to future shocks and stresses and complementing key plans for economic recovery post the Covid-19 pandemic.



It is estimated that over the lifetime of the programme the Belfast Region City Deal will:



support the creation of up to **20,000 jobs**



connect local people to new and better jobs



place the region at the **top table of digital innovation**



deliver **£400 million in GVA** directly on-site and within the region



target delivery of almost **£1 billion of private sector leverage**



create compelling **world-class visitor attractions**



help to **regenerate major towns and cities**



foster **collaborative working**

The ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through the following pillars of investment:

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL



Innovation and Digital

Achieving world leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capability - facilitating invention, commercialisation and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased well-being

Tourism and Regeneration

Boosting tourism and regenerating our region - creating world-class visitor attractions and investing in towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will provide stand out in international markets

Infrastructure

connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure

Employability and Skills

Putting in place arrangements to enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support the emerging job opportunities

INNOVATION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in five industry-led centres of excellence, focusing on the industries of the future, providing new tools and utilising data insights to support increased productivity and business competitiveness.

AMIC - Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre will provide the springboard for manufacturing innovation in NI, providing a specialised environment for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sectors to access the very latest manufacturing technology and Industry 4.0 smart automation, supported by experienced, professional engineers and a state-of-the-art Factory of the Future.



CDHT - Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology will provide a world-class space for academia, industry and clinicians to innovate and boost the productivity of the life and health sciences sector by accelerating the development of medical technology devices and diagnostics. Technology, Community and Clinical Living Labs will be based beside the Ulster University Belfast campus and at the Royal Victoria Hospital.



GII - Global Innovation Institute is a unique combination of expertise, combined with a ground-breaking partnership approach to delivering scalable computing solutions. GII is aiming to transform Northern Ireland's digital economy by substantially increasing both the volume and range of digital innovation taking place within the region, and developing skill sets to meet industry needs, focussing on health and agri-food.



i-REACH - Institute of Research Excellence for Advanced Clinical Healthcare

an integrated clinical research centre of excellence, iREACH is an NHS, industry, and research facility. It will transform the region's ability to test new drugs, medical-technology, care pathways and societal interventions. It will leverage the opportunities that exist at the interface of medical research and digital transformation.



Studio Ulster (formerly Screen Media Innovation Lab - SMIL)

will provide a large-scale Virtual Production studio complex to include world-class commercial Virtual Production stages, fully supported by an integrated research, development and innovation centre of excellence in real-time and Virtual Production. Studio Ulster will drive a revolution in production pipelines across converging sectors with application in film, broadcast, commercial, animation, games, immersive and visual effects.



DIGITAL

The BRCD will invest £125 million in a challenged, flexible digital programme that will maximise the benefits and opportunities of the Innovation centres of excellence and focus on areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive. The key interventions include:

The Belfast Region Innovation Challenge Fund

- This £55 million fund will support an agile approach to address the emerging needs and unique characteristics of the region and be designed to stimulate collaborative innovation and investment.
- The fund will stimulate innovation to address the region's 'Grand Challenges' of (i) artificial intelligence and data, (ii) health and wellbeing and (iii) sustainability and resilience.
- Funding opportunities are likely to include a range of financial instruments including capital grants, small business research initiatives, challenge prizes and equity/debt investments.



Enabling Infrastructure

- £40 million of funding to invest in digital connectivity (including advanced wireless), data infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure to support the Belfast Smart District and wider regional innovation.



Regional Innovation Hubs

- £30 million of investment will deliver a series of Innovation Hubs across the region.
- The Hubs will build upon and leverage existing sectoral strengths including cleantech and creative industries in order to promote innovation activity and new business growth across the region via local hubs.
- **The i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks** regeneration site, Ballymena represents the first of these Hubs which will provide a physical base and support to increase levels of SME innovation and commercialisation activity. It will also provide skills and training solutions in the cleantech sector including the Hydrogen Training Academy.



BOOSTING TOURISM AND REGENERATING OUR REGION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in delivering globally visible tourism products and reimagined town and city centres that will support sustainable year round tourism and drive economic recovery.

Bangor Waterfront

will reconnect the town with the sea through a range of attractions and experiences. The investment will provide high quality public spaces, a new Music Hub and will regenerate assets including Bangor Marina, Pickie Fun Park and watersports facilities at Ballyholme Yacht Club, enhancing the town and encouraging further investment.



Belfast Stories,

a transformational anchor visitor attraction in Belfast will allow people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screen and social spaces. The experience will include a state of the art multi-screen film centre and vibrant public spaces allowing for lively event programming and animation.



Image for illustrative purposes only c/o BDH Grimshaw.

Carrickfergus

Regeneration will provide investment in Carrickfergus Castle, including its visitor hub and historic walls. Its connection to the town centre will regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town placing it firmly on the map as an authentic, heritage-led tourism hub - a 'must visit' starting point to the Causeway Coastal Route.



Destination Royal

Hillsborough will further enhance Hillsborough Castle by restoring and developing the historic Courthouse and Fort and investing in the Forest. This will include opening a Social Enterprise Café and integrating and improving connections between these attractions and the wider village through improved public realm, to attract more visitors to this world class heritage village.



The Gobbins

aims to build on this exhilarating visitor attraction through the addition of a stunning staircase, an upgrade to the cliff top path - to include a new rope bridge that stretches across the coastline - and the development of a new Welcome Hub which will include Augmented Reality experiences.



CONNECTING OUR REGION

The **Mourne Mountains Gateway** will redefine visitors' experience of the Mourne Mountains whilst supporting the sustainable growth of tourism and protecting the natural heritage and habitat of the region. The project will deliver a world class visitor attraction, and will create improved, and more sustainable access to the Mournes.

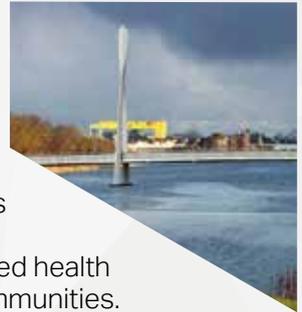


Newry City Centre Regeneration will deliver a civic hub, theatre and conferencing facilities which, together with new public realm and grade A office provision, will revitalise the city. The regeneration will also create and sustain jobs, increase visitor numbers, appeal to residents and stimulate the evening economy.



Our investment of £140 million will help to connect people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure.

Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will connect Belfast city centre with Ormeau Park, providing access to jobs, leisure space, services and opportunities for residents and visitors, contributing to the improved health and well being of local communities.



Newry Southern Relief Road will link the A1 bypass with the A2 Warrenpoint dual-carriageway providing an alternative strategic route for traffic that reduces pressure on Newry city centre, facilitates onward travel to Dublin and improves access to other regional gateways.



Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 - BRCD funding will support enabling investment for the extension of this public transport network which will support improved access to health, education, leisure and job facilities and improve economic return across the region.



EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

The employability and skills profile of the local labour market is a critical factor in competitiveness. Despite a positive upward trend in skills over recent years, NI continues to lag behind its competitor regions in terms of the pace of change. The future skills system will need to be increasingly agile if it is to be in a position to respond effectively to these challenges and to changing market conditions such as automation and the pace of technological change.

New NI Executive strategies and plans for employability and skills are also seeking to respond to this challenge. City / Growth deals offer an ideal opportunity to support, enhance and contribute to arrangements emerging through the creation of Local Labour Market Partnerships and the NI Skills Strategy for more joined-up employability and skills planning.

The BRCD investment will support efforts to rebalance our local economy by building on our competitive strengths, increasing productivity and supporting the creation of more and better jobs. However, for it to succeed it will be critical that the right skills are in place to enable people to avail of the opportunities arising from this investment and that pro-active measures are put in place so that the opportunities emerging reach as wide a range of people as possible - a fundamental aspect of City / Growth deals across the UK.

The BRCD partners will therefore work together to align our plans and resources in the following priority areas to help prepare an appropriately skilled workforce that can benefit from the

employment opportunities that will emerge as a result of the transformative investments in innovation and digital, tourism, regeneration and infrastructure.

Skills for Growth: working with employers to align skills programmes and employment opportunities with the growth in sectors supported by BRCD; helping to create new apprenticeship pathways and fostering development of higher level skills;

Skills for Inclusion: creating opportunities to address skills imbalances and improve access to employment opportunities across the region through socially inclusive progression pathways; and

Skills for a Digital Future: helping to build our digital literacy from grassroots up and enhancing the digital transformation of businesses across the region, with a specific focus upon smaller enterprises.

The impact of Covid-19 further underlined the need to harness collective effort and investment in digital technology. Early in 2020, a Digital 'Task and Finish' group was established by the BRCD partners to consider how to support an inclusive and sustainable recovery. Arising from this work, Further Education Colleges, working with industry partners, and supported by funding from the Department for the Economy, delivered the **Digital Futures Programme**, an innovative skill development and work experience initiative providing unemployed and under employed graduates with the opportunity to reskill in relevant digital areas, including Cloud Computing, Data Analytics or Cyber Security.



DEAL DELIVERY TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2018



Proposition submitted to UK Government

OCTOBER 2018



Chancellor announced BRCD

MARCH 2019



Heads of Terms signed

MARCH 2021



Outline Business Cases developed

DECEMBER 2021



Deal Document signed

2022 ONWARDS



Deal Delivery

- Stakeholder engagement
- Project delivery
- Further private investment leveraged
- Collaborative working
- Full Business Cases approved
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Project completion
- Benefits delivered



Images courtesy of Tourism Northern Ireland and partners.

 #BRCityDeal

 www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal



Belfast
City Council



Antrim and Newtownabbey
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Ards and North Down
Borough Council



Lisburn & Castlereagh
City Council



Mid & East Antrim
Borough Council



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
BELFAST



Ulster University



NORTHERN
Regional College



SERC
INSPIRING. TRANSFORMING. ENRICHING.



Southern Regional College



Northern Ireland Executive



UK Government