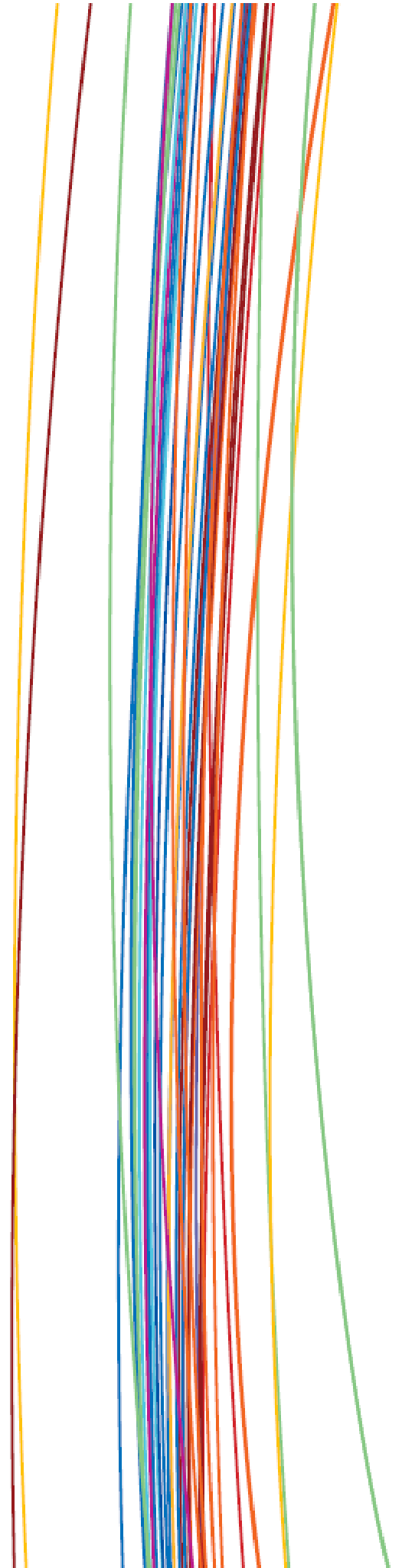




Renewing the Routes Programme



Introduction to Renewing the Routes

Belfast's arterial routes radiating from the city centre are key gateways and the lifeblood for the social and economic functioning of the city. Previously these once thriving locations supported their surrounding neighbourhoods but now require investment to tackle problems of economic, social, physical and environmental decline.

The Renewing the Routes Initiative represents an innovative approach developed locally to enhance the areas and the vitality of the routes. By developing and implementing local regeneration plans the actions or interventions have secured local ownership and helped link wider regeneration activity. The actions have been carried out under general themes of commercial improvements; developing gateway sites; celebrating diverse heritage and working towards cleaner, greener and safer neighbourhoods.

Background to Renewing the Routes Activity

The arterial routes should be seen as much more than playing a mere transportation role in connecting the many neighbourhoods and communities which comprise the social, economic and environmental fabric of Belfast. They are the catalyst and driver for future regeneration and prosperity within not only the neighbourhoods but the city as a whole. Without improvement along these roads the creation of a compact, sustainable city will become increasingly difficult. The city's suburbs will continue to expand covering more green fields and sucking the life and people from Belfast.

To bring about much needed sustainable improvement the Council, both as a key strategic body and as a landowner, has used its position to create a collaborative partnership with other lead agencies responsible for influencing urban development work. The partnership consists of the Belfast Area Partnership Boards, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Belfast Regeneration Office, the Department for Regional Development and Belfast City Council. The principles that underpin this partnership work which targets development and regeneration of the arterial routes include:

- **People first:** empowering people who work and live in neighbourhoods to ensure long term urban renewal
- **Collaboration:** the whole is greater than the sum of the parts
- **Holistic approach:** developing an integrated approach to addressing the problems faced
- **Connectivity:** connecting the arterial routes together and linking them to the city centre
- **Sustainable regeneration:** leaving a legacy within communities for future generations
- **Partnership:** accountability between organisations with the power and influence to affect change
- **Identity:** identifying the unique role for each arterial route and ensuring that each makes a contribution to the city as a whole.

Aims of Arterial Routes Programme

- To facilitate economic competitiveness
- To tackle social exclusion
- To promote physical and environmental development
- To promote creativity

It was recognised at an early stage that, due to the complexities and depth of problems faced by these areas and the level of regeneration required Renewing the Routes would be a long term programme.

The routes identified within the programme are: York Road, Antrim Road, Crumlin Road, Shankill Road, Falls Road, Springfield Road, Donegall Road, Ormeau Road, Albertbridge Road and the Newtownards Road.

These arterial routes were once the focus of thriving neighbourhoods in the city but have experienced serious decline over past decades. The routes (to varying degrees) have all been adversely affected by depopulation, economic and environmental decline and social segregation. Many of the remaining communities find themselves in areas of urban decay characterised by high rates of unemployment, poor environments and stretched social infrastructure which in itself leads to growing outward migration.

Project breakdown

Largely projects fall into six general categories:

- **Commercial Improvements**
- **Gateway sites**
- **Public Art**
- **Public Realm Improvements**
- **Heritage Preservation**
- **Environmental Management**

- **Commercial Improvements**

The need to consider enhancements of the commercial environments throughout the nodes emerged as a clear priority from the consultations and scoping work. Those consulted recognised the value of the existing commercial areas as important sources of employment and economic activity within their area.

The commercial nodes are important community gathering places, essential to the functioning of all the roads as their communities. An attractive well designed environment can help create a framework for promoting economic identity and growth. By providing the area with a mix of high quality commercial and cultural premises will help the routes provide vital community facilities, compete with other areas of Belfast, the city centre and ensure that the areas maximises the potential to attract foot fall.

The opportunity for a LOTS (Living Over the Shops) scheme was raised in the course of the consultation work. NIHE is actively promoting this scheme in town and city centres across Northern Ireland. Within Belfast, it was considered that there may be an opportunity to support LOTS scheme on a number of arterial routes, this is currently being progressed as a pilot scheme on the Shankill Road.

- **Gateway Sites**

On most routes the junction that connects the road into the city centre was considered a vital link. It was felt that a range of interventions could be focused on these areas, in recognition either of their importance as areas of high usage or their prominence as entry points onto the roads. In this context, they have the potential to establish an identity and help place-making for the area.

- **Public Art**

Public art plays a pivotal role in shaping and re-energising our urban environment. It is about engagement and discussion and about new ways of looking at who we are and where we live. Through the programme public art has brought into the main stream bringing community groups and artists together around the central theme –the aspiration to use art to add life and vitality to neighbourhoods. Projects range from temporary installations to landmark sculptures.

- **Public Realm Improvements**

The public realm encompasses the broad road corridor and the potential for improvements throughout the routes was evident. The network of public spaces provides a web of connections which is vital for connecting neighbourhoods that are sustainable. The consultations to date have clearly highlighted these issues and areas as a priority for ongoing and planned work. We have and continue to work in partnership with the Road Service to address the issues through a combined approach that involves the utilisation of statutory measures to supplement any investment in projects that would provide an enhanced road corridor.

- **Heritage Preservation**

While the number and range of buildings of architectural merit vary throughout each of the routes, each area has its own remainders of a distinct and rich heritage. Whether natural or man made it is recognised that they are often in key locations and offer the potential to have a greater positive impact on the environment of the area. Where places and properties have been identified a wide range of interventions have been used to highlight features or detailing and thereby contribute to the identity/legibility of the area. Activities or projects include signage, lighting, boundary treatment, landscape works or feature reinstatement.

- **Environmental Management**

It is important that a high quality environment is provided and maintained as public space and community space. It is recognised that the routes are targets for vandalism, graffiti; anti-social behaviour and that they have suffered from poor planning decisions, lack of maintenance and inward investment. Issues such as community safety, enhancement of lighting, vandalism and the aesthetics of the built environment need to be addressed comprehensively.

The short term nature of these, in essence complementary works, have required action and support through either statutory actions (internal and external to the Council) or private development proposals.

The Routes

- **Crumlin Road**
- **Falls Road**
- **Shankill Road**
- **Upper Springfield Road**
- **Albertbridge Road**
- **Antrim Road**
- **Lower Ormeau Road**
- **Newtownards Road**
- **York Road / North Queen Street**

Falls Road

Context

Four evident themes were identified including gateway sites at key locations, commercial improvements on selected blocks, diverse heritage celebrating the cultural, industrial and natural heritage value of the Falls Road as well as cleaner, safer and greener initiatives in the form of targeted environmental improvements. Falls Road is broken down into three workable and distinct areas:

Area One: Divis Street to the Broadway junction and also taking in the lower end of the Springfield, from the junction with Falls Road towards the West Circular Road. Area I is 3.2km in length.

Area Two: Broadway to Glen Road Junction. Area II covers a length of 2.5km.

Area Three: Glen Road junction to Finaghy Road North. Works to Area III will primarily be based around commercial improvement since the largest percentage of land use in this area is concentrated on commercial retailing. The area is 2km in length.

Projects

Area One:

- Commercial Improvements
- Gateway Sites: West Circular Roundabout
- Diverse Heritage: St Comgall's Site
- Diverse Heritage: International Wall
- Diverse Heritage: Carnegie Library
- Diverse Heritage: St Mary's University College
- Celebration Art Piece
- Cleaner, Safer, Greener: St Peter's

Area Two:

- Commercial Improvements
- Gateway Sites: Broadway
- Gateway Sites: Glen Road Junction
- Diverse Heritage: Milltown Cemetery
- Diverse Heritage: Bog Meadows
- Diverse Heritage: Falls Park
- Diverse Heritage: City Cemetery
- Cleaner, Safer, Greener: Willowbank Youth Club

Area Three:

- Commercial Improvements

Commercial Improvements – Lower Falls Road



Commercial improvement scheme to Lower Falls Road opposite Dunville Park at the junction of Springfield Road.

Careers 'n' Kids



Environmental improvement scheme to the Careers 'n' Kids property on Falls Road.

Twin Spires Complex (Ortus)



External enhancements to retail frontage of the Twin Spires complex.

Commercial Improvements: Area One



Commercial improvement scheme to 50 properties located on Falls Road (from Divis Street to Broadway) and Springfield Road (from Falls Road to West Circular Roundabout.)

Gateway Sites: West Circular Roundabout



West circular roundabout is located at a busy junction on Springfield Road. Landscaping and planting on the roundabout with complementary work to areas of left over space surrounding the roundabout will transform this area of Springfield Road whilst complementing ongoing work at Upper Springfield.

Diverse Heritage: St Comgall's



St Comgall's is a listed building situated on Falls Road. A major redevelopment is planned for this building. Restoration and painting of the category B1 railings have significantly enhanced the building on the Falls Road. The project is complimented by a landscaping project carried out by the Greencare Programme.

Diverse Heritage: International Wall



The International Wall contains a collection of murals by local artists. The wall is a popular tourist destination in West Belfast and feature lighting has complemented this ever changing wall as a local landmark and tourism asset.

Diverse Heritage: Carnegie Library



Carnegie Library was built in 1908 and is a building of architectural merit. The building has benefited from being highlighted on the road to reflect its identity and grandeur. This project included 25 custom designed lights to accentuate its magnificent architecture and tourism signage as an extension of the citywide tourism initiative.

Diverse Heritage: St Mary's University College



St Mary's University College is located opposite the Royal Victoria Hospital. The building is hidden behind walls and railings and lacks presence on the road. Feature lighting has highlighted the property as an important academic institution on Falls Road. A tourism blade was included as part of the wider project which successfully draws attention to the building as well as outline its architectural grandeur.

Ceiliúradh/Celebration Art Piece



Renewing the Routes Programme will contribute to the “Ceiliúradh/ Celebration” art initiative which plans to provide an iconic sculpture celebrating the Irish language and welcoming visitors into the west of the city.

Cleaner, Safer, Greener: St Peter's



This project proposes to enhance the access point to St Peter's Cathedral on Falls Road and improve its local environmental quality.

Cleansing Scheme



As part of the cleaner, safer and greener element of the proposed environmental improvements for Falls Road a team to tackle graffiti, fly – posting and littering problems was implemented to establish a better baseline for the local environment and reflect the aspirations for civic pride. The aim of the project was to develop a zero tolerance approach to the aforementioned issues by creating a clearer, safer and greener place for the community.

Gateway Sites: Broadway



Broadway is a busy thoroughfare providing access from the M1 to Falls Road. A three part project is currently underway including a hanging basket scheme, a community art piece and painting of the façade, detailing to 50 residential properties on the road.

Diverse Heritage: Milltown Cemetery





Milltown Cemetery is located at the Glen Road Junction. The archway entrance to the cemetery acts as a local landmark and is a prominent feature on the road. The restoration of the railings and refurbishment of the gates are completed which enhances its presence on the road. The second stage of the project involved the replacement of a pillar and missing stones along the cemetery wall.

Diverse Heritage: Bog Meadows



Bog Meadows is the “jewel of West Belfast” and is rich in flora, fauna and natural heritage within the city limits. Tourism signage has been erected at the entrance.

Diverse Heritage: Falls Park



Falls Park opened to the public in 1876. The park has many water features, sports pitches and walkways. Environmental works are complete including re-pointing the basalt stonework and the replacement of the finials on the entrance pillars.

Diverse Heritage: City Cemetery



City Cemetery is a major landmark of local importance on the Falls Road. Tourism signage has outlined the history of the city cemetery and contributes to the wider tourism signage initiative.

Cleaner, Safer, Greener: Willowbank Youth Club



The existing entrance to Willowbank Youth Club is uninviting. An environmental enhancement scheme is complete including the improvement of the access path, newly designed gates and resurfacing.

Commercial Improvements: Area two



A phased commercial improvement scheme is underway in this part of Falls Road to enhance the appearance of over 70 properties. 40 properties are currently on site with a further 30 identified in the second part of this two phase project.

Commercial Improvements: Area Three



Commercial improvement scheme to over 60 properties located between the Glen Road Junction and Finaghy Road North is now completed.