



## Belfast City Council response to Inner East Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership's Action plan (2007)

### Background

The Inner East Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership was established in March 2005.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) has identified Inner East Belfast as – Short Strand, Lower Newtownards Road, Albertbridge Road, Albertbridge/Beersbridge, The Mount, Woodstock Road and Lower Ravenhill Road. These areas are contained within the four inner East electoral wards of Island, The Mount, Ballymacarrett and Woodstock.

An analysis of need in the area was completed in June 2005. This provided the agenda for a series of consultation events in June 06 involving key community and statutory interests and some external expertise. The Neighbourhood Partnership agreed the following Vision Statement in August 2005: *"Inner East Belfast will be transformed into a safer, attractive, healthier community in which people choose to live, learn, work and invest"*.

They also identified the high level objectives which it believed were key to addressing the four strategic priorities in Inner East Belfast. These objectives then formed the basis for Action Planning and an outline Action Plan was produced in November 2006. The Action Plan has been refined and improved since then as a result of targeted consultation with relevant government departments, Belfast City Council, local community organisations and a series of open community meetings across the area.

The four strategic priorities are:

- **Community renewal** – to develop consistent communities that are able and committed to improving the quality of life in their areas
- **Economic renewal** – to develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider urban economy
- **Social renewal** – to improve social conditions for the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods through better coordinated public services and the creation of safer environments
- **Physical renewal** – to help create attractive, safe, sustainable environments in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

### The council's input

A number of discreet actions in the plan identify Belfast City Council as either a lead or supporting partner in their delivery.

As part of their consultation process the Inner East Partnership have now asked the council to make an official response to the actions. A copy of the plan was received in May of this year.

Detailed below are each of these council-related actions and a combined council response (established after discussions with the council's departments).

### Belfast: The Masterplan 2004 to 2020

In its masterplan for the city, published in 2004, the council carried out a careful analysis of the social, economic and physical needs of the city and proposed a framework for the revival of Belfast in the period up to 2020. Within the plan five areas, including east Belfast, were identified for particular attention ensuring that neighbourhood renewal was integrated with the strategic citywide framework. In many ways this framework complements the Inner East Action plan and can offer a significant contribution to the plan's development.

The plan has a number of specific recommendations for east Belfast:

- The lower Newtownards Road is an important visual and functional gateway from the east to the citycentre. This must be enhanced in order to improve accessibility and overcome perceptions of physical and social separation between the inner east and the centre-city. A comprehensive development opportunity exists on land at the intersection of the lower Newtownards Road, Sydenham Pass, Sirocco Complex and River Lagan.
- Sites adjacent to the Lagan offer considerable development opportunities, notably at the boundary of the east city-sector and the centre-city. The Sirocco and Tennents Textile sites adjoin Laganside and could accommodate mixed-use developments (research, residential and commercial). These would contribute to the physical and visual renewal of the riverside and the inner-east city sector, and provide improved linkages with the city-centre.
- Land adjacent to the proposed 'E-Way' rapid transit route may offer opportunities for commercial and residential development. The precise route and location of stops on the 'EWay' corridor between the Hollywood Arches and the River Lagan should be carefully considered to maximise the regeneration benefit to this area.
- The development of a 'Connswater Amenity Corridor' would provide a link from the Castlereagh Road to Victoria Park. This corridor would run from the Beersbridge and Newtownards Roads along the embankments of the Connswater River to connect community facilities, including Elmgrove School, Avoniel Leisure Centre, Connswater shopping centre, Hollywood Arches, and Victoria Park.
- The renewal project for the Hollywood Arches offers an opportunity to increase the provision of services to communities in this sector. This is a positive initiative that should integrate with the Connswater Amenity Corridor project above.

#### **The Future East Initiative**

The council also believes that the role of the Future East Initiative (set up by the ABC group of Ards, Belfast and Castlereagh councils in 2005) is of particular significance to the success of the Inner East Action plan and establishes a context for the likely contribution that Belfast City Council can make.

The initiative was set up to focus on the regeneration needs of the east Belfast travel-to-work area. It published a series of agreed objectives in October 2006 that seek to practically address areas of concern within the area:

1. To develop and enhance the ABC Regeneration area through innovative branding and marketing of case studies as part of a "Future East" promotional plan. Future East is the new brand established by the ABC Regeneration Committee to spearhead its future promotional and marketing campaigns.
2. To lobby for the E-Way as a critical element of the future economic growth of the ABC Regeneration area. The E-Way will be Northern Ireland's first rapid transit system and will run into Belfast city centre from Ards/North Down. The E-Way will be provided using tram-type coaches utilising parts of the abandoned Belfast and Co. Down railway track bed.
3. To lobby for and secure a commitment to pilot the establishment of local area agreements which link future regeneration projects to local communities. There are many exciting regeneration projects currently underway or at development stage throughout the ABC Regeneration area. This agreement envisages a relationship in which Local Authorities, alongside other local partners, agree a set of targets for particular regeneration programmes in respect to local labour clauses and sub contracting of construction jobs. The purpose of these contractual arrangements is to ensure that those living in the most marginalised,

disadvantaged communities can begin to share in economic prosperity delivered through local regeneration.

4. To lobby for the establishment of an enterprise zone in the ABC Regeneration area by 2008 and associated comprehensive development zones in three designated areas. Enterprise Zones are specially designated areas that are intended to promote and encourage private sector activity by removing certain tax burdens, and relaxing or speeding up the application of certain statutory or administrative controls. Comprehensive Development Zones are a process of land acquisition and disposal to secure the better planning and regeneration of selected areas of towns and cities.
5. To secure additional resources for the expansion of a major urban renewal programme building upon the work already carried out through Belfast City Council's Arterial Routes programme. Urban Development Programmes aim to stimulate viable economic activity in the commercial areas of cities, towns and villages by offering assistance towards the costs of rebuilding or refurbishing buildings for commercial purposes. Grants are offered at a percentage, usually between 40-50% and, the remainder is met by the proprietor/owner. The scheme also ensures quality standards are adhered to and finish is of the highest quality.
6. To secure additional resources for the Further Education sector to pilot a skills enhancement programme targeted at those currently in work with no or low skills/qualifications. The skills enhancement programme will provide financial support and/or contributions towards training/further education courses required to upgrade existing skill levels. This programme could offer a range of support, including a Career Development Loan to help cover costs such as fees, books and travel.

In working with the Inner East Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership it is therefore appropriate that the council ensures that there is complementarity with the Future East objectives.

## Contact

For more information on the council's approach area-based working and its neighbourhood renewal activity contact:

### **SNAP Team**

Development Department

Belfast City Council

Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BP

T: 028 9032 0202

F: 028 9027 0501

E: [snap@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:snap@belfastcity.gov.uk)

## Strategic Theme: Community Renewal

(1) Desired outcome:	A coherent and integrated plan for the development of East Belfast
Action sought:	<b>1.1 To develop a Strategic Regeneration Framework for East Belfast</b>
Lead	<b>DSD/BRO</b>
Support:	East Belfast Partnership (EBP), Belfast City Council, CBC, DSD/BRO

**Council response:** The council recognises the importance of a strategic approach to regeneration in the east of the city and is involved in current development of local masterplans. In particular the director of Development is part of RPS Consulting's strategic group for the area.

The council's masterplan for the city (2004 to 2020) offers a number of recommendations for neighbourhood renewal work within an overall integrated city regeneration framework. The council would be keen to ensure that the any strategic regeneration framework complements these previous recommendations.

(2) Desired outcome:	Strategic Co-ordination of Regeneration Framework
Action sought:	<b>Formation of Framework Steering Group Co-ordination with DSD East Belfast Strategic Regeneration Framework Co-ordination with Newtownards Road Masterplan</b>
Lead	<b>EBP</b>
Support:	DSD/BRO EBCDA, Belfast City Council, DRD, DOE

**Council response:** The council recognises the importance of a strategic approach to regeneration in the east of the city and is involved in current development of local masterplans. In particular the director of Development is part of RPS Consulting's strategic group for the area.

The ABC group is also lobbying for the establishment of an enterprise zone in the ABC area by 2008 and associated comprehensive development zones in three designated areas which should be factored into the development of a strategic regeneration framework.

(3) Desired outcome:	Establishment of improved physical links with Titanic Quarter
Action sought:	<b>a) Production of detailed TQ links feasibility study b) Implement recommendations</b>
Lead	<b>EBP/BHE</b>
Support:	DRD, TQL, BHE, DSD/ BRO, EBCDA, Belfast City Council, DOE, NIHE, Landowners

**Council response:** Noted.

The council would encourage such a study to consider all forms of linkages in the area for pedestrians, cyclists through to public transport. It might also consider the potential benefits that could emerge from the E-way proposals.

The Council, through its involvement in the Future East initiative (a consortium of Ards, Belfast and Castlereagh councils), has been lobbying for the E-way as a critical element of the future economic growth of the East Belfast area.

(4) Desired outcome: Establishment of improved physical links with City Centre, with continuous street connections

Action sought: **a) Production of a comprehensive masterplan for East Belfast city centre linkages**  
**b) Implement recommendations**

Lead DSD / SIB

Support: DRD, EBP, Belfast City Council, DOE, EBCDA, landowners

**Council response:** Noted.

The council has promoted the role of the city centre in contributing to a competitive Belfast and, through its Belfast Masterplan, has also argued for the importance of ensuring strong physical links between the city centre and surrounding communities. In particular, the masterplan notes that the lower Newtownards Road is an important visual and functional gateway from the east to the city centre. It recommended that it be enhanced in order to improve accessibility and overcome perceptions of physical and social separation between the inner east and the 'centre-city'.

The council is also currently developing a city centre action plan and would welcome engagement with the partnership on this.

(5) Desired outcome: Comprehensive regeneration of Holywood Arches

Action sought: **a) Comprehensive masterplan for Holywood Arches**  
**b) Implement recommendations**

Lead EBP

Support: DSD / BRO, DRD, Belfast City Council, BELB, HE, EBCDA S&EHSST, NITB landowners

**Council response:** Noted.

The council has noted the importance of development in this area in the recommendations of its Belfast Masterplan (2004

to 2020) which has also argued for the importance of ensuring strong physical links between the city centre and surrounding communities. The plan notes that renewal projects for the Holywood Arches offer an opportunity to increase the provision of services to communities.

(6) Desired outcome: Strategic development of Templemore Avenue to support new civic facilities  
Action sought: **a) Detailed masterplan for Templemore Ave**  
**b) Implement recommendations**  
Lead: DSD/BRO, EBP  
Support: EBP, DENI, BIFHE, DRD, Belfast City Council, BCDA

**Council response:** Noted.

(7) Desired outcome: Comprehensive regeneration of Newtownards Road and Albertbridge Road  
Action sought: **Environmental Improvements Project**  
**Property Improvements Programme**  
Lead: Belfast City Council, DSD/ BRO  
Support: EBP, DRD, DSD/BRO, DRD, HE, BCC, DOE

**Council response:** The ABC group is lobbying for additional resources for the expansion of a major urban regeneration programme that would build on the Renewing the Routes programme to stimulate economic activity in these areas.

Our Parks and Cemeteries Service are eager to work with Inner East to expand the opportunities presented by parks and other open space in the area to contribute to the wider renewal work beyond the traditional projects associated with open space.

Parks will work with local community groups to seek to improve, protect and promote the provision of open space in Inner East which is accessible to all. At all time the council must function within physical, human and financial constraints. Parks have an outreach worker available to facilitate such work.

The council has already completed several local regeneration schemes in the area (to complement investment in Pitt Park) as part of its Renewing the Routes programme. However, a comprehensive regeneration project would require budgets on a much larger scale - requiring intervention by government.

(8) Desired outcome: Improved accessibility to railway network  
Action sought: **Review of local rail provision (including station locations)**  
**Implement recommendations**  
Lead: DRD/DSD/Translink  
Support: EBP, DSD/BRO, Belfast City Council, TQL, Belfast City Airport

**Council response:** Noted.

The council would suggest that such a review could include addressing improvements alongside emerging plans for Titanic Quarter and the former Sirocco site.

(9) Desired outcome:	Strategic physical community infrastructure projects
Action sought:	<b>1.6 Endorsing an integrated and coherent plan to support key developments</b>
Lead	This will vary from project to project, likely lead partners will be Belfast City Council/DSD/VCU, DETI/Invest NI
Support:	EBP Again this will reflect the leading local partner

Council is aware that the physical infrastructure and social communities of East Belfast are in a process of change. There is a need to assess the changing needs of the area, and develop a flexible and adaptable approach to meeting these needs.

**Council response:** Council is aware that the physical infrastructure and social communities of East Belfast are in a process of change. There is a need to assess the changing needs of the area, and develop a flexible and adaptable approach to meeting these needs.

The council's masterplan for the city (2004 to 2020) offers a number of recommendations for neighbourhood renewal work within an overall integrated city regeneration framework. The council would be keen to ensure that the any plan complements these previous recommendations.

Our community services section is currently being re-organised and is about to engage in a major public consultation on the delivery of its services across Belfast. The council will be keen to work with Inner East on the development of this new strategy and local capacity issues.

(10) Desired outcome:	Development of Connswater Community Greenway & component parks – promoting increased access  Development of playground facilities & provision within Woodstock ward
Action sought:	<b>1.7 Successful Stage 2 bid to Living Landmarks Fund</b>  <b>1.8 All local playgrounds upgraded and new play area within Woodstock</b>
Lead	EBP, Belfast City Council
Support:	Belfast City Council, DSD/BRO, EBCDA, DRD Local Residents

**Council response:** Our Parks and Cemeteries Service are eager to work with Inner East to expand the opportunities presented by play areas, parks and other open space in the area to contribute to the wider renewal work beyond the traditional projects associated with open space.

Parks can work with local groups to seek to improve, protect and promote the provision of open space in Inner East which is accessible to all. At all time the council must function within physical, human and financial constraints. Parks have an outreach worker available to facilitate such work.

Our Community Services section offer a range of play projects and run a number of playgroups throughout the city. A play development worker is available to support play initiatives.

## Strategic Theme: Community Renewal

(11) Desired outcome: Rationalise and strengthen community infrastructure and capacity

Action sought: **3.1 Initiative to promote Neighbourhood co-ordination  
To ensure effectiveness of local strategies for renewal**

Lead: **Belfast City Council**

Support: Community Fora – Woodstock Short Strand, Newtownards Road (2)  
Albertbridge/Beersbridge

**Council response:** The council's new Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme (SNAP) is putting in place new policies and processes which will allow the council to operate in a much more effective and joined-up manner at neighbourhood level. It will also create mechanisms to allow it to work at a local level more effectively with partner organisations in the community and in the statutory sector.

The SNAP team provides the co-ordination for Neighbourhood Renewal across the council.

The team are about to carry out a 'neighbourhood services' audit that will map services provided by organisations at neighbourhood level and will share these findings with Inner East when they are published (late Autumn 2007).

Our community Services section is currently being re-organised with a commitment to 'sustainable communities' as one of its likely core functions. This would be an excellent opportunity to look at how Community Services in partnership with others (both internal & external) could enhance the community capacity in the area.

The council's work on sustainable communities extends beyond the work of Community Services. For example, our Parks and Cemeteries Service are eager, through its community outreach worker, to develop links with local communities on the regeneration and renewal potential of open space.

(12) Desired outcome: A new generation of skilled community leaders

Action sought: **3.5 Volunteering and Citizenship Programme**

Lead: **Belfast City Council**

Support: EBCDA

**Council response:** Our community Services section is currently being re-organised with a commitment to 'sustainable communities' as one of its likely core functions. There are therefore opportunities for Community Services to work with the NRP and other partners, statutory and community, on issues of volunteering and citizenship.

(13) Desired outcome: Improve relationships across the interface  
Action sought: **3.6 Two employees to co-ordinate targeted initiatives and events involving interface communities**  
Lead: Community Safety Partnership  
Support: Short Strand Forum, Inner East Forum

**Council response:** Through its Good Relations unit, the council is involved in several initiatives and programmes in support of good relations in the area and the unit are available to explore joint action with the Partnership.

The unit are currently leading on projects such as the 'Re-Imaging Communities' programme and the Bonfire Management pilot programme and are keen to discuss future involvement by the Partnership. They also support the work of local groups and are available to engage on opportunities in developing good practice in community engagement processes.

The unit can also offer information on our Good Relations Grant Aid programme and the local work and representation of the Good Relations Steering Panel.

The council's Parks and Cemeteries Service are also actively engaged in work on interface issues and are available to discuss contributions from the Partnership.

In 2004 the council helped establish the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the council Community Safety team have been engaged in numerous projects aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

(14) Desired outcome: All communities offering opportunities for local cultural and arts activity  
Action sought: **Culture & Arts Worker to facilitate increased level of activity**  
Lead: **TBC**  
Support: Community Fora – Woodstock, Short Strand, Newtownards Road (2), Albertbridge/ Beersbridge

**Council response:** Noted.

The council is a keen advocate of the role of culture and the arts in contributing to neighbourhood regeneration and to wider city development. Its culture and arts team have a number of grant funding opportunities for local groups. The unit has recently guided the creation of a new integrated cultural strategy for the city – a strategy that recognises the contribution culture can play at a local level. Our culture and arts team can work with the Partnership to explore the opportunities offered by the strategy.

The council's Parks and Cemeteries Service, through our Open Space strategy, also play an important role of supporting community arts.

(15) Desired outcome: More Improvement in perception of community safety

Action sought: **3.7 Ensure effective delivery of Community Safety Strategy in Inner East**  
**3.8 Facilitate individual communities to articulate Community Safety issues and access support to address these.**

Lead **Belfast Community Safety Partnership, (BCSP), BCSP**

Support: EBP, NR Co-ordination Team

**Council response:** In 2004 the council helped establish the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the council Community Safety team have been engaged in numerous projects aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour including roaming wardens, Get Home safe campaigns, tackling underage drinking and alley-gating.

The partnership is currently developing a Community Safety Course designed for local community representatives. The course is being developed in partnership with BIFHE.

A key aim of the council's Community Safety strategy is in communicating and challenging perceptions around community safety issues.

The council's Community Safety team are working on a new community safety plan and associated local engagement mechanisms and can engage with the Partnership on this.

The team can offer advice at a local level on addressing community safety issues and sign-post access to appropriate funding.

## Strategic Theme: Economic Renewal

(16) Desired outcome: Effective networks and mechanisms to ensure that new opportunities are communicated to target groups

Action sought: **4.2 Management and facilitation for the East Belfast Employability Group**

Lead: Belfast City Council

Support: **Employability Group**

**Council response:** The council is a member of the Employability Group and has funded key pieces of research as part of its Service Level Agreement with the East Belfast Partnership.

The council's Economic Development unit is engaged in employability projects in the Inner East area and currently provides funding for the Stepping Stones project. It also contributes to the citywide Employability group.

Local employment initiatives have been a key component of the council's current and previous economic development strategies. Key examples of this have been support for the Belfast GEMS project which was linked to the Gasworks and more recently the LEAP and Stepping Stone initiatives.

The council will be keen to work with the Partnership to ensure that barriers – physical, educational and economic are reduced for the local community in east Belfast.

(17) Desired outcome: Employers access skilled local workers to develop their product/services

Action sought: **4.4 Employability initiative linked to Flagship developments – Titanic Quarter, Sirocco, Queens Quay**

Lead: **DETI/Belfast City Council**

Support: Employability Group

**Council response:** The council's Economic Development unit is engaged in a number of employability projects in the Inner East area – for example, the Stepping Stones project. It also contributes to the citywide Employability Group.

Local employment initiatives have been a key component of the council's current and previous economic development strategies. Key examples of this have been support for the Belfast GEMS project which was linked to the Gasworks and more recently the LEAP initiative.

The council will be keen to work with the Partnership to ensure that barriers – physical, educational and economic are reduced for the local community in inner east Belfast.

Through the Future East initiative, the ABC group is also lobbying to secure additional resources for the Future East sector to pilot a skills enhancement programme targeted at

those with no or low skills and qualifications. Such programmes should be linked to the above flagship developments.