



Department of

Finance

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NI CITY AND GROWTH DEALS

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024/2025



Transformative
for NI



Over £1.3
billion capital
investment



Economic
Growth



Partnerships
that lead to
Collaboration



Skills, Jobs,
Higher Wages



Innovation &
Creativity will
be a Game
Changer

FOREWORD



NEIL GIBSON
 Permanent Secretary
 Department of Finance

 NICS City and Growth Deals
 Senior Responsible Owner

I am pleased to publish the third City and Growth Deals Annual Progress Report, covering the financial year 2024-25. As with previous years this report provides an overview of progress across the four Deals.

This year’s report is framed around Community Engagement, Social Value, and Benefits, reflecting our continued collaborative commitment to ensuring that City and Growth Deals deliver inclusive and lasting impact for people across the region.

The Deals are listening, and will continue to listen to local voices, ensuring that communities are not only consulted but actively involved in shaping the delivery of projects. This has included targeted outreach, co-design workshops, and partnerships with community organisations to ensure that investments reflect local needs and aspirations. At the outset, community involvement has helped shape the thinking behind the projects, and through the next phases of detailed design and implementation, communities will play a significant role in ensuring the delivery of more impactful outcomes.

The benefits of this approach are already being realised, from improved access to skills and employment to the development of enhanced

public spaces. By embedding social value into procurement and delivery, we are helping to create opportunities that extend beyond economic metrics, fostering stronger, more resilient communities across the Belfast regions.

Over the past year, the Finance Minister was privileged to visit some key sites across the City and Growth Deals, providing valuable opportunities to view progress and hear directly from stakeholders about the benefits being realised on the ground. From innovation centres to regeneration zones, these engagements highlighted the scale and ambition of City and Growth Deals, and the collaborative spirit driving its success.

It is important to acknowledge that escalating costs of delivery remain a challenging factor and can quickly render business case estimates obsolete. The cost of delay is significant, and all deal partners are re-doubling efforts to learn lessons from projects further downstream and to minimise bureaucratic and paperwork delays.

This progress report highlights the Belfast Region City Deal, which is currently the furthest along in its delivery, and has already produced an annual progress report. I look forward to sharing similar, more detailed updates on the other Deals going forward in future reports, as they continue to build on the progress achieved in the past year.

If you have any queries or want to find out more about City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland, please contact: CityDeals@finance-ni.gov.uk, or visit www.finance-ni.gov.uk/citydeals. Direct contact details for each Deal can be found later in the report.



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BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL (BRCD)



The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is an investment partnership between UK Government, NI Executive, six councils, two universities and private sector partners to boost innovation and drive inclusive, sustainable growth, with £700 million in funding being provided by NI Executive and UK Government, with additional funding coming from Deal Partners.

There is up to £1bn of funding in projects across digital, innovation, tourism, regeneration and infrastructure strands with an ambition to create 20,000 jobs and transforming the regional economy.

BRCD signed its Deal in December 2021 and is now well into delivery stage.

 belfastregioncitydeal.co.uk

 brcd@belfastcity.gov.uk

DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL (DCSDC)



Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) City Deal is a single council Deal with up to £210 million in funding being provided by NI Executive, UK Government and the Inclusive Future Fund, with additional funding coming from Deal Partners.

DCSDC signed its Deal in September 2024 and is now in delivery stage. Contracts for Funding are being finalised for the furthest advanced projects, after which funding can start to flow.

 www.derrystrabane.com/about-council/city-deal

 oonagh.mcgillion@derrystrabane.com

CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS (CCG)



Grow Causeway
Coast & Glens
Connection | Destination | Innovation



Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council

Causeway Coast and Glens (CCG) Growth Deal is a single council Deal receiving £72 million of NI Executive and UK Government funding, with additional funding coming from Deal Partners.

CCG signed its Heads of Terms in April 2024, and the Growth Deal is now progressing the development of Outline Business Cases for each project, four of which are expected to be approved in March 2026, paving the way for Deal signing around summer 2026.

www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/work/strategic-projects/growth-deal

Niall.McGurk@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

MID SOUTH WEST (MSW)



Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal is a three council Deal receiving £252 million of NI Executive and UK Government funding, with additional funding coming from Deal Partners.

Following the signing of the Heads of Terms Agreement in November 2024, MSW Project Teams are progressing development of Outline Business Cases for each project, with submissions expected in early summer 2026.

For the most advanced project, the A4 Enniskillen Bypass, tenders have been received which are currently being assessed. However, as with all projects within the road infrastructure portfolio, and in light of the A5 judgement and subsequent appeal, the Infrastructure Minister is currently taking this opportunity to consider its potential impact before determining the next steps for this scheme.

midsouthwestregion.org

info@midsouthwestregion.org



COMPLEMENTARY FUND

The Complementary Fund was agreed by the NI Executive on 4 May 2020 and comprises £100 million capital funding. In the first round of funding, £52 million was allocated for a total of five projects.

PROJECT	OVERVIEW	CURRENT PROGRESS
Whitespots Country Park	This investment to redevelop the parkland will not only transform the existing park but will also extend it to develop the derelict industrial site of the lead mines into an active community space for the people of Ards and North Down and visitors alike.	This project is in the planning and design phase.
HyTech NI - Hydrogen Hubs	This project aims to develop a continuous learning pathway, create a state-of-the-art learning environment and deliver essential hydrogen skill training to support a greener future for Northern Ireland.	Business case is currently in development.
Industrial Investment Challenge Fund (Phase 1)	This project will support businesses with in-house innovation, and the introduction of Industry 4.0 and emerging technologies into their operations along with boosting innovation across existing and emerging sectors	Business case is currently in development by Invest NI.
The Albert Basin Park	The Albert Basin Park Project seeks to develop a new 15 Acre City Park on the Albert Basin site which responds to both the Health, Fitness and Well-Being of Newry’s Citizens as well as to the Local Area’s Education & Arts.	Survey work is underway to inform the planning application and resulting construction
Digital Transformation Flexible Fund	The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund can offer eligible businesses and social enterprises help to fund their digital transformation project.	Project operation with call 6 for applications ongoing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any queries or want to find out more about City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland, please contact:

 CityDeals@finance-ni.gov.uk

 www.finance-ni.gov.uk/citydeals

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

City and Growth Deals reflect national, regional, and local priorities, including council community plans shaped through broad engagement.

Locally elected Councillors lead strategically, representing community interests and connecting the Deals to wider policy initiatives that support local development and wellbeing.



City and Growth Deals welcome community engagement as an integral part of the journey.

BRCD

Initial benefits of the BRCD City Deal have emerged largely through the construction sector.

Construction focused skills development initiatives including careers and skills presentations to local schools and colleges, as well as paid employment opportunities for apprentices and priority groups and student and graduate placements, are preparing local people for emerging opportunities.

Partners across the region are continuing to engage local communities to understand what additional untapped benefits there may be.

DCSDC

DCSDC is committed to the continued involvement of local stakeholder groups as it progresses with the detailed design and implementation phases, with a strong focus on achieving inclusiveness through community engagement. The City Deal Partners are engaging and collaborating with sectoral and geographically focused groups to ensure the benefits realisation process and the design and delivery of projects that meet local needs.

CCG

CCG Growth Deal projects have emerged from the council's Capital Programme, which was shaped by clear community needs and local consultation through its elected members.

This has led to continued engagement with landowners and community organisations, including consultation events on initial design concepts and public surveys carried out to gather initial views and development priorities.

MSW

Locally elected Councillors continue to play a key role in providing strategic leadership of the MSW Growth Deal as well as representing the interests of their communities.

As projects enter the design phase, the importance of and approach to community engagement will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

INCLUSIVE GROWTH



Driving Inclusive Growth with Social Value is at the heart of the City and Growth Deals initiative

BRC D

Projects within BRC D are also helping to deliver wider programme benefits by embedding social value into procurement activity.

Contributions have included health, wellbeing and environmental initiatives and carbon reduction training.

Contractors involved with BRC D projects are positively impacting communities beyond the building site to foster inclusion, well-being, and long-term social benefits.

DCSDC

The Deal has a strong alignment with the anti-poverty action plan which supports pathways out of poverty through contributions towards skills development, creating employment opportunities and improving health outcomes.

Inclusive growth metrics will be agreed as part of the overall monitoring and evaluation framework for the Deal, including the use of social value criteria in the award of contracts required to deliver the projects.

CCG

By adopting a community development approach, partners will promote socially inclusive growth in the local economy, creating wide-ranging opportunities for the community have the opportunity to prosper.

There is a strong focus on social value ensuring that public investment delivers wider benefits for communities, including improved wellbeing, stronger local networks, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

MSW

Inclusivity will underpin the delivery of the MSW Growth Deal.

Partners are committed to fostering a fair and resilient local economy through a community wealth building approach, ensuring that all communities benefit from economic growth.

As projects progress, social value will remain a key consideration in procurement, with contract awards reflecting broader benefits.

BRC D ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

BRC D is delivering a bold and ambitious £1 billion investment programme designed to support innovation, deliver more and better-quality jobs, improve physical and digital connectivity, increase tourism, regenerate major urban spaces and leverage private sector support to deliver a transformative impact on the local economic landscape.

Following signing of the Deal in December 2021 tangible benefits are now beginning to emerge across the region as BRC D moves deeper into delivery phase. Immediate impacts were seen in construction contracts, which have been generating employment, stimulating supply chains and enhancing infrastructure. And the most advanced projects are now moving from construction into operation, recruiting and upskilling staff and procuring equipment for the new centres.

Skills development is another key area of progress as programmes aligned with innovation centres, for example, such as Unreal Engine training at Studio Ulster and clinical trial modules at Queen’s University, are equipping local people with the skills needed to bridge the gap between emerging job opportunities and their ability to achieve them.

With flagship projects now operational and inclusive growth already taking root, the Deal stands as a blueprint for collaborative investment, future-ready skills, and long-term regional transformation.

Full details of the latest progress can be found in Belfast Region City Deal Annual Report 2024/25

[Publications and Minutes | Belfast Region City Deal](#)



OBC - Outline Business Case
CFF - Contract For Funding

FA - Financial Agreement
FBC - Full Business Case

BRCDC IN OPERATION



Studio Ulster

This state-of-the-art facility, home to the world’s most advanced Virtual Production facility at Belfast’s Giant’s Park, sets the precedent in creative ambition and innovation within the entertainment industries and positions Northern Ireland globally as a leading centre of excellence in virtual production.

The facility was officially launched in June 2025.

[!\[\]\(a69696d69cfd88b51cbd02e5288eca32_img.jpg\) Studio Ulster](#)



Augment the City

The Augment the City Challenge Fund competition enables local innovators to develop ideas using immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality to support the future proofing of visitor attractions in the region. Six companies have progressed to Stage 2 of the competition.

[!\[\]\(ac7494f141109b59d18bf9c3aeb84d93_img.jpg\) Augment the City | Belfast Region City Deal](#)

BRCDC IN CONSTRUCTION



Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC)

AMIC is an industry-led, open access manufacturing and engineering innovation centre with state-of-the art facilities and an expert engineering team.

Construction of this ‘Factory of the Future’ at Global Point, Newtownabbey commenced in March 2024 and is expected to be completed in early 2026.

[!\[\]\(c3a92afbfbcda259fe6c9d5eed0857d1_img.jpg\) AMIC](#)



iREACH Health

iREACH Health will accelerate clinical trial delivery, strengthen industry partnerships and improve patient access to high-quality research.

Construction commenced in December 2024, and the facility is expected to be operational by 2027.

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CITY AND GROWTH DEAL PARTNERS

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www.northernireland.gov.uk



UK Government

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL (BRCD)



Belfast City Council



DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL (DCSDC)



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS (CCG)



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