

# BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

December 2021



A decade of opportunity  
starts **now**



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# FOREWORD

## A Deal to Support Economic Recovery and Prepare for Future Growth

The highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) arrives at a critical time. This substantial financial commitment from the UK Government, NI Executive and BRCD partners, which will be further supplemented by private sector investment, represents a £1 billion investment in key sectors of our economy. The Deal will generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10 - 15 years - an exciting, once in a generation opportunity to accelerate economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

The Heads of Terms for the BRCD were signed in March 2019, prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. Since then the pandemic's speed, scale and severity has had a profound and unprecedented impact on Northern Ireland (NI), compounding many of the challenges with which the region was already grappling.

The Executive's Economic Recovery Action Plan<sup>1</sup> acknowledged that rebuilding the local economy will require the region to successfully adapt to the 'new normal' created by Covid-19, the UK's exit from the European Union and the imperative for action on climate change; and to deliver that change within constrained budgets. The scale of the challenge that

these circumstances have created will require an integrated 'economy wide' response. The BRCD will deliver projects that are uniquely placed to support recovery, facilitating investment in businesses and in sectors which have the greatest potential for long-term growth, driving productivity and creating and sustaining jobs.

We are confident of our ability to overcome present challenges and to drive sustainable economic growth long into the future, building on key assets in terms of our workforce, colleges and universities and expanding businesses in a number of sectors in which we have competitive advantage.

All partners remain fully committed to delivering the Deal and ensuring that its economic impact is maximised to leverage additional investment and as a catalyst for a sustained approach to collaborative working both within the region and across NI's other City / Growth Deals. Partners continue to take account of Covid-19 and the changing landscape it creates to ensure that all projects and programmes respond to these challenges and remain relevant, while continuing to build our key growth sectors and align with our wider inclusive growth ambitions.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/economic-recovery-action-plan>



**Our signing of this document confirms our joint commitment to full implementation of the Belfast Region City Deal. This Deal Agreement is the statement of commitment by all parties to support and deliver the Belfast Region City Deal and is underpinned by a suite of detailed supplementary documents.**



**The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP**  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
On behalf of the UK Government



**Conor Murphy MLA**  
Minister of Finance  
On behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive



**Cllr. Kate Nicholl**  
Lord Mayor  
Belfast City Council



**Suzanne Wylie**  
Chief Executive  
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**Cllr. Billy Webb MBE JP**  
Mayor  
Antrim and Newtownabbey  
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**Jacqui Dixon**  
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**Cllr. Mark Brooks**  
Mayor  
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**Stephen Reid**  
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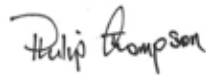
**Alderman Stephen Martin**  
Mayor  
Lisburn and Castlereagh  
City Council



**David Burns**  
Chief Executive  
Lisburn and Castlereagh  
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**Cllr. William McCaughey**  
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**Cllr. Cathy Mason**  
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**Ian Greer**  
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Vice Chancellor  
Ulster University



**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**



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The BRCD region, stretching from Mid and East Antrim to Newry, Mourne and Down, is a functional economic area based on the local authorities that comprise the Belfast Travel to Work Area. With a population of over 1 million residents, more than half of whom are under the age of 40, the BRCD region is young, ambitious and growing.

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. These partners have worked together intensively since 2017 to secure £850 million of co-investment to support the delivery of a shared ambition to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the region and to deliver thousands of new and better jobs; with pathways and support in place to make them accessible to people from all communities.

The NI Executive and the UK Government have each committed up to £350 million to the BRCD and the BRCD partners will contribute a further £150 million. By leveraging additional private sector investment, the partners will deliver a programme with an overall value well in excess of the £1 billion objective that will support the creation of up to 20,000 new and better jobs.

As a city region the BRCD provides a scale that enables the development of a coherent sub-regional approach. Contributing more than two-thirds (£27.4 billion, 2019) of NI's economic output (Gross Value Added) and home to 40% of the total NI business base, the BRCD area has an employment share of 63% of the NI total<sup>2</sup>, provides critical access and transport links for trade and tourism and considers itself the economic engine of NI.

However, like many city regions, the BRCD faces a range of barriers to continued economic growth - it requires significant additional investment to tackle persistent regional and local inequalities in terms of investment and outcomes. The BRCD provides a perfect example of the UK Government's levelling up ambition which seeks to promote economic growth across all regions, ensuring that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The region suffers from persistently high economic inactivity and low levels of productivity; lagging behind the UK average by about 18% (GVA per hour worked) and experiences an employment rate that is 7% lower than the UK average<sup>3</sup>. Trickle-down approaches have failed areas of greatest need and pockets of extreme deprivation prevail; more than 2/3 (64%) of NI's most deprived wards are located within the region including the top 3 most income deprived wards<sup>4</sup>. By delivering projects designed to attract business and visitor investment, new economic opportunities will emerge that can begin to address these challenges and support the region's ambition for inclusive economic growth.

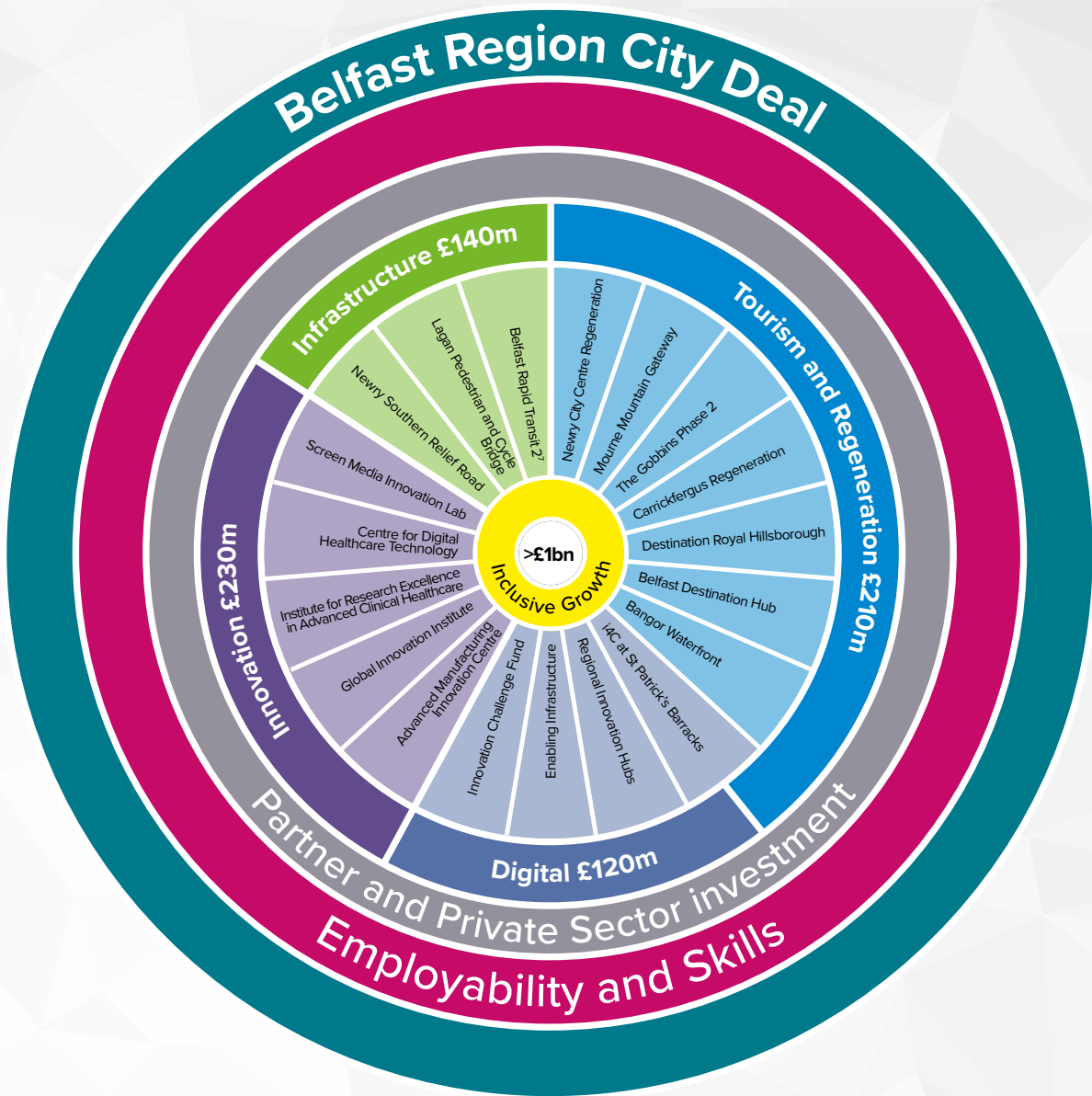
Partners have worked to identify and build on the local strengths and priorities that will help overcome some of the challenges facing the region, identifying new and more collaborative ways of working that will deliver inclusive growth for the benefit of the Belfast region, and by extension, the wider NI economy. The resultant Deal involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local councils, the NI Executive and UK Government.

In line with the ambitions of the recently published 10X Economy<sup>5</sup> and the Landfall report<sup>6</sup> that recognises that small economies "cannot be experts or world class in every area", the BRCD aims to focus its efforts on areas in which the region can become genuinely world-class: in particular in digital and creative industries, life and health sciences and the advanced manufacturing and tourism sectors. The BRCD's ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through the following pillars of investment:

- **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 stand out in international markets;
- **Infrastructure** - connecting our region - connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure; and
- **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.

See page six for footnotes

## BRC D in summary



<sup>2</sup> BRC D Industrial Strategic Framework, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Regional Accounts (GVA), Labour Force Survey (labour force and total employment), Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (hours worked), Nomis (mid-year population and working age population estimates), UUEPC analysis, June 2021

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017#toc-2>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/10X-economy-economic-vision>

<sup>6</sup> The Strategic Integration of Skills & Innovation Policy in Northern Ireland: An International Small Economy Perspective, Landfall Strategy Group, July 2019

<sup>7</sup> See page 25 for further detail



The BRCD is based upon a robust evidence base, including an Industrial Framework<sup>8</sup> that seeks to build upon the region's strengths and unique characteristics, including the rapid growth of the knowledge economy. The Deal is directly aligned with the UK Industrial Strategy<sup>9</sup>, 10X Economy<sup>10</sup> and the NI Executive's Programme for Government<sup>11</sup> and Economic Recovery Action Plan<sup>12</sup> (and emerging action plans) and aims to tackle head-on the fundamental structural barriers that have traditionally constrained productivity and excluded many from enjoying the benefits of economic prosperity.

The place-based nature of City / Growth Deals presents an enormous opportunity to drive sustainable economic recovery and boost competitiveness, building on key areas of economic strength and improving the region's resilience to future shocks and stresses. At the same time partners will continue to review their plans to take account of any changes that might be required as new evidence emerges in relation to the economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

The BRCD partners will continue to work with the central Government (NI Executive and the UK Government) to deliver the Deal. Effective and accountable governance arrangements will ensure that public money is spent responsibly and is accounted for and that decisions are made strategically and in an open and transparent way for the benefit of the whole Belfast region.

While this document sets out the central Government funding commitments to the projects in the Deal, this is subject to the approval of individual business cases.

## Impact of the BRCD

**Through the City Deal investment, it is estimated that over its lifetime the Belfast Region City Deal will:**

-  support the creation of up to **20,000 jobs** as part of the high growth ambitions for the region<sup>13</sup>
-  **connect local people** to the **new and better jobs** that are being created
-  place the region at the top table of **digital innovation**
-  deliver **£400million in GVA** directly on-site and within the Belfast region
-  target delivery of almost **£1 billion of private sector leverage** in addition to the funding contributions already identified across the City Deal
-  **create compelling world class visitor attractions**, that will attract visitors from across the globe
-  help to **regenerate major towns and cities** across the region

<sup>8</sup> BRCD Industrial Strategic Framework, 2018

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/10X-economy-economic-vision>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/economic-recovery-action-plan>

<sup>13</sup> Job estimates are drawn from project OBCs and include direct, indirect and induced jobs across the construction and operation of the projects



## 2 DELIVERING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

BRCD partners have committed to a 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.”**

From the earliest stages of the Deal’s development, partners have demonstrated their commitment to delivering growth that offers everyone the opportunity to succeed. This has informed the range of projects making up the Deal, ensuring that a commitment to inclusive growth has been embedded in their development and actively creating approaches to connect communities and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to economic opportunity through the underpinning employability and skills programme, improved infrastructure, and social value interventions.

The partners’ focus on inclusive growth is driven by a clear understanding that although the Belfast region has historically benefited from investment contributing directly towards economic growth, some communities have been left behind and have not enjoyed the same benefits that others have experienced. Many of NI’s most deprived wards fall within the BRCD geography. Within these areas, and across specific client groups, a number of obstacles stand in the way of the benefits economic prosperity could otherwise bring. High levels of economic inactivity, notable gaps in skills and educational attainment and inadequate access to key infrastructure such as public transport are among the barriers such communities face.

As well as improving inclusivity across society, BRCD partners are also committed to strengthening the sustainability focus of the Deal by considering its contribution to climate resilience. The implications and long-term economic risk of climate change both globally and across the Belfast region have become increasingly clear since the BRCD programme was initially developed. New legislation to decarbonise the economy, which commits the UK to a ‘net zero carbon’ target by 2050, will necessitate a step change in all our plans.

The BRCD will deliver upon its inclusive growth and sustainability commitments by:

- **Integrating these commitments during project design and development** - requiring sponsors to ensure that as projects are developed they robustly consider how they will contribute to environmental sustainability and deliver benefits to our communities.
- **Holding projects to account for the delivery of their inclusion and sustainability commitments** - the Boards established to oversee the delivery of the BRCD projects will be tasked with ensuring that projects clearly demonstrate how they are maximising their contribution to inclusive and sustainable growth and inclusive growth metrics will be agreed as part of the overall Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Deal.
- **Delivering the BRCD Employability and Skills Programme** - aligning partners’ plans and resources to help individuals overcome barriers that might be preventing their entry into or progression through the labour market. This will include partners delivering job specific skills development interventions aligned to known employment opportunities, including the expanding area of clean growth. To maximise impact and ensure that interventions are focused on areas of need (e.g. geographical areas and/or client groups), an intelligence led approach will inform the delivery of this programme.
- **Using policy levers to integrate inclusive growth** - by harnessing the collective efforts of partners through policy and practice, we can maximise opportunities to drive inclusive growth outcomes. This will include the use of social value criteria in the award of contracts required to deliver the transformational projects and collaborating to develop HR policies that promote inclusion, such as the public sector apprenticeship programme. Within their individual organisations, BRCD partners have already begun to develop environmental sustainability plans to support net zero carbon targets.

The diagram below illustrates how the BRCD processes and projects plan to deliver, incentivise, and contribute to the ambitions of Inclusive Growth.



**Deliver**



**Incentivise**



**Contribute**

<p><b>Businesses</b></p>	<p>Investment projects: creating business opportunities - building capability, competitiveness and resilience</p> <p>Access to a skilled workforce</p>	<p>Digital Innovation</p> <p>Investment in research and development</p> <p>New pathways and models for employability and skills</p>	<p>More and better jobs</p> <p>Increased productivity</p> <p>Increased investment in R&amp;D</p>
<p><b>Citizens</b></p>	<p>More and better job opportunities</p> <p>Improved access to job opportunities</p> <p>Reimagined towns and cities</p>	<p>New opportunities for skills development</p> <p>Digital literacy and capability</p> <p>Healthcare innovation</p>	<p>Increased investment in towns and city centres</p> <p>Digital and environmental resilience</p>
<p><b>Partners</b></p>	<p>Social value through procurement</p> <p>Social value through HR practices</p>	<p>Triple helix partnership working</p> <p>Place based model for recovery</p> <p>Community and business engagement</p>	<p>Increased skill levels</p> <p>Decreased skills inequalities</p>

# 3 ACHIEVING WORLD LEADING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN KEY SECTORS

## Building our Digital and Innovation capability

The potential offered by City / Growth Deal investments creates an opportunity to make a transformative impact in the region's innovation and digital capabilities. Research<sup>14</sup> has shown the importance of a high performing innovation system and, for small economies such as NI in particular, it is a prerequisite to generating strong overall economic performance.

City Deal investments, alongside investments such as the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre, are ideally placed to support the UK Government's 'levelling up' ambition for Research and Development (R&D) investment. Despite a growing knowledge economy and research excellence in a number of priority areas, comparisons with other UK regions suggest NI is punching below its weight. The region is currently ranked twelfth of 12 UK regions in terms of innovation investment.

The BRCD is a catalyst for a step change in the digital and innovation capabilities of our region. Investments in innovation will be targeted to build upon the research strengths of our local universities and be aligned to sectors that are demonstrating the potential for exceptional growth. BRCD investments will create new centres of excellence spanning key priority sectors including advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences and digital and creative industries. This will provide new mechanisms for integrating research and innovation into the plans of our businesses, driving innovation through the creation of breakthrough technologies, products and services.

In addition to unlocking private sector investment, the City Deal centres of excellence will be critical in enabling access to an estimated £250 million of R&D funding to which NI has been missing out<sup>15</sup>. The projects will support business to access major funding opportunities from outside the region. The opportunity is not just to mitigate the current economic shock, but to seize the opportunity for the Belfast region to have distinctive, long-term sectoral strengths.

Our Digital programme of investment will complement this, helping to maximise the impact of the universities' new centres of excellence, and encouraging translational research into the key industry sectors. This will be facilitated through an agile governance partnership that encourages stakeholders to collaborate to maximise the impact of the BRCD investments, attract co-investment and raise the capacity of the region's start-ups and SMEs.

The Digital programme will harness efforts and inject investment to address key areas of challenge (including artificial intelligence and data, health and wellbeing and sustainability and resilience). In addition, funding for next generation digital connectivity will support the development of a Belfast Smart District and regional testbeds. The creation of Regional Innovation Hubs will ensure diffusion of innovation and skills to support a regionally balanced economy, and further build on sub-regional sectoral strengths in areas such as cleantech and creative.

<sup>14</sup> The strategic integration of skills & innovation policy in Northern Ireland: An international small economy perspective, David Skilling, July 2019

<sup>15</sup> The Missing £4 Billion Making R&D work for the whole UK, NESTA, May 2020



## Innovation Pillar - £230 million from UK Government<sup>16</sup>

The investment that will be made through our innovation projects will have digital technologies and data assets at the centre of a sustainable innovation model. The approach to innovation looks at the industries of the future and how

new tools that give data meaning and insight are shaping business trends. The Innovation Pillar of the BRCD consists of five industry-led centres of excellence in innovation, designed to be a catalyst for investment in R&D in the region.

### Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC)

AMIC will have the capability and scale to define and deliver high quality, industry-focused R&D as required by NI's advanced manufacturing sectors. It comprises three facilities within the Belfast region that will serve to bridge the gap between emerging research and industrial application:

- AMIC Factory of the Future is an industry-led, advanced digital manufacturing and prototyping facility to enable testing and scaling-up of new technologies;
- AMIC Northern Ireland Advanced Composites and Engineering (NIACE) centre is an industry-led centre focused on composites technologies; and
- AMIC Campus (not-BRCD funded) serves as a bridge to university research and skills development in the university setting.

Ultimately, AMIC will act as a nationally and internationally recognised capability that, along with the establishment of the Makers' Alliance, will help to safeguard the future of the NI manufacturing base. Together these facilities will provide the professional environment for industry to adopt research ideas, direct their own research programmes and access equipment and expertise for new product and process development that de-risk investments within their own businesses.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£98.0 million	£78.7 million from UK Government	Queen's University Belfast	£19.3 million

<sup>16</sup> Figures in this document may not always be exact due to roundings

## Global Innovation Institute (GII)

GII will be an innovation centre in digital technologies, applying cyber security, wireless connectivity, artificial intelligence, machine learning and scalable computing approaches to address local, national and global societal and economic challenges. The project will provide a distinctive offering to companies and organisations seeking to navigate the complex landscape of data analytics and artificial intelligence. Its primary sectoral focus areas will be in health sciences and agri-food, and expertise across these areas will enable GII to adopt a “Digital One Health” approach.

Based on the evolution of the Institute of Electronics, Communication and Information Technology and the Centre for Secure Information Technology (CSIT), GII will provide a mechanism for extending CSIT’s approach to enabling company growth and ecosystem development across a broader range of NI sectors. The GII project aims to catalyse digital innovation in key sectors within the Belfast region through the provision of challenge-led solutions for the data-driven economy. Selected research capability from Queen’s University’s internationally regarded Institute of Health Sciences and Institute for Global Food Security will be embedded and expanded at GII, enabling the creation of co-located multidisciplinary teams capable of creating technological solutions to specific innovation challenges.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£58.4 million	£52.4 million from UK Government	Queen’s University Belfast	£6.0 million





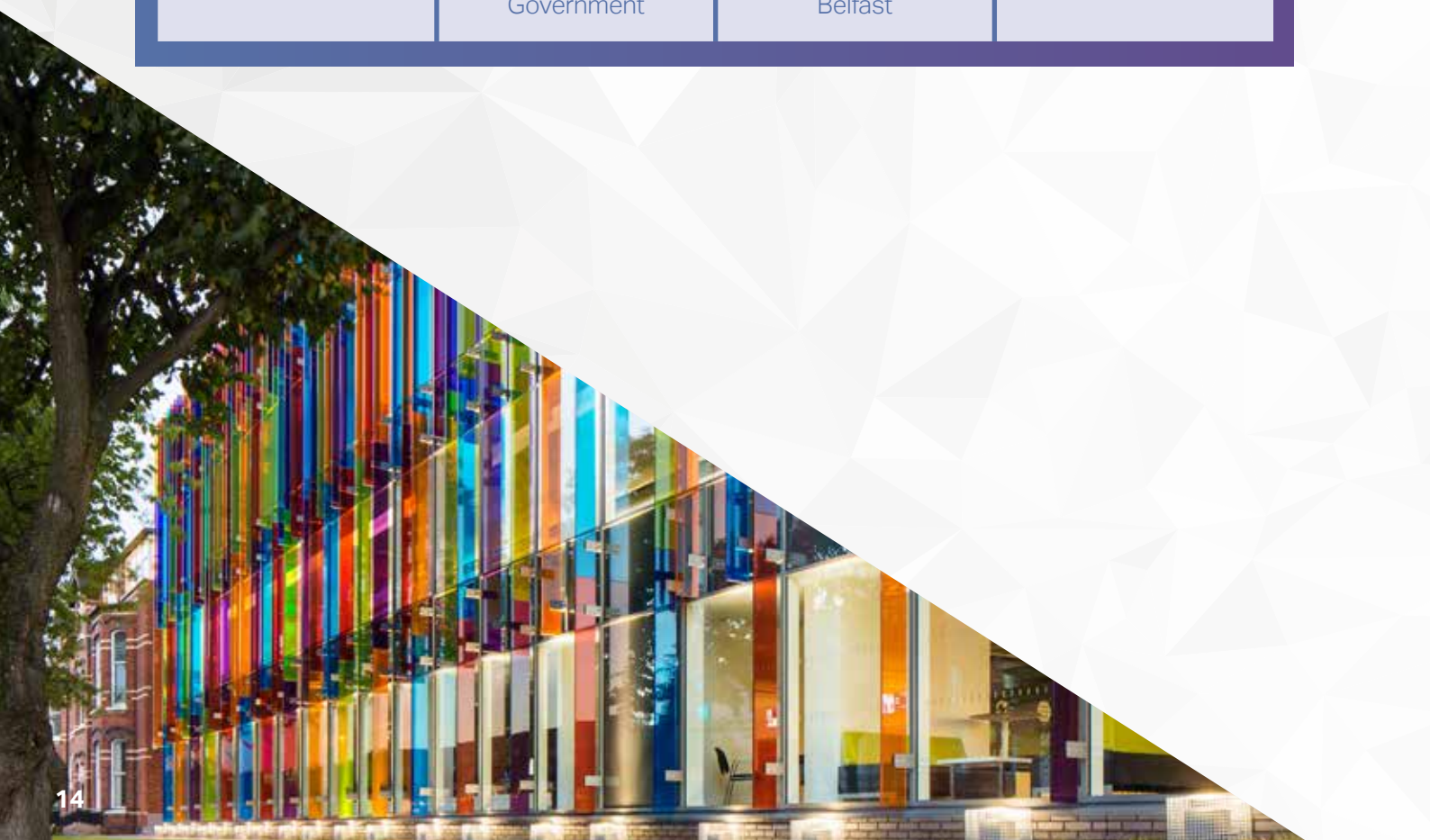
## Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH)

An integrated clinical research centre of excellence, iREACH is an NHS, industry and academic facility that will focus on the innovative design and delivery of Phase I/II trials and innovative real-world evidence trials. iREACH will transform the region's ability to test new drugs, med-tech, pathways and societal interventions and determine the redundancy of current practice. It will link innovation in clinical trials with investments planned in artificial intelligence and data science to fully leverage the opportunities that exist at the interface of medical research and digital transformation.

Industry's main challenge is that clinical trials are complex, slow and, as a consequence, expensive. iREACH will facilitate the modelling and design of a much more efficient pipeline to get treatments through to the clinic, developing an efficient and effective ecosystem to attract inward investment through optimal design and agile delivery of trials. The facility will provide co-ordinated access to clinical investigators and patients through a single point of contact for industry, accessible clinical research support infrastructures, and streamlined and timely clinical trial approvals. Investment in iREACH will make a transformative difference. This will play a vital role in helping to deliver solutions to long-term health challenges and deliver public health impact. As a streamlined world class clinical healthcare institute, this will also accelerate therapies to patients and attract additional inward investment. This will help drive UK innovation and economic and health benefits into the future.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£46.6 million	£39.7 million from UK Government	Queen's University Belfast	£6.9 million

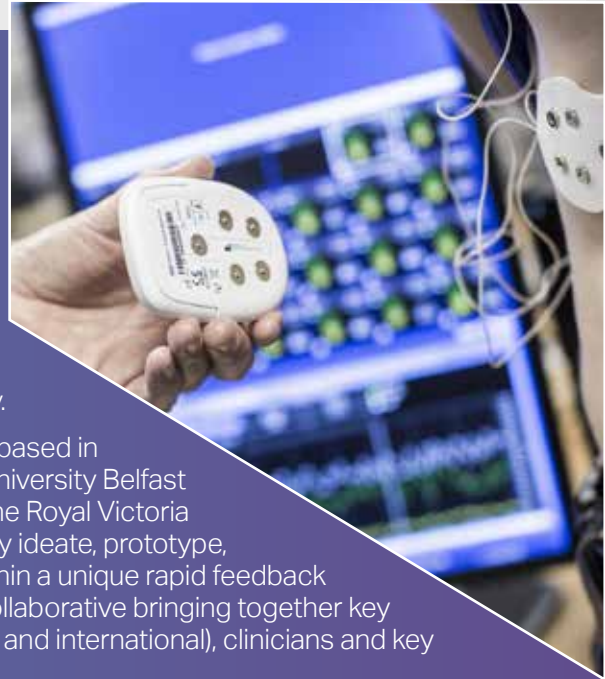




## Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT)

CDHT is a project which will accelerate a dynamic and productive open innovation ecosystem for the development of innovative medical technology devices and diagnostics. It will transform the innovation pathway and will encourage a faster, more productive and more successful rate of commercialisation for new products by co-locating academic and clinical researchers alongside industry.

In addition, it will provide both a community living lab based in the main CDHT building adjacent to the new Ulster University Belfast campus and a clinical innovation living lab based at the Royal Victoria Hospital site. This will support all users to successfully ideate, prototype, develop, test and validate new ideas successfully within a unique rapid feedback clinical setting. It is innovative, forward looking and collaborative bringing together key partners including both NI universities, industry (local and international), clinicians and key public sector partners.



Total project cost	BRCDC contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£42.9 million	£34.0 million from UK Government	Ulster University	£8.9 million

## Screen Media Innovation Lab (SMIL)

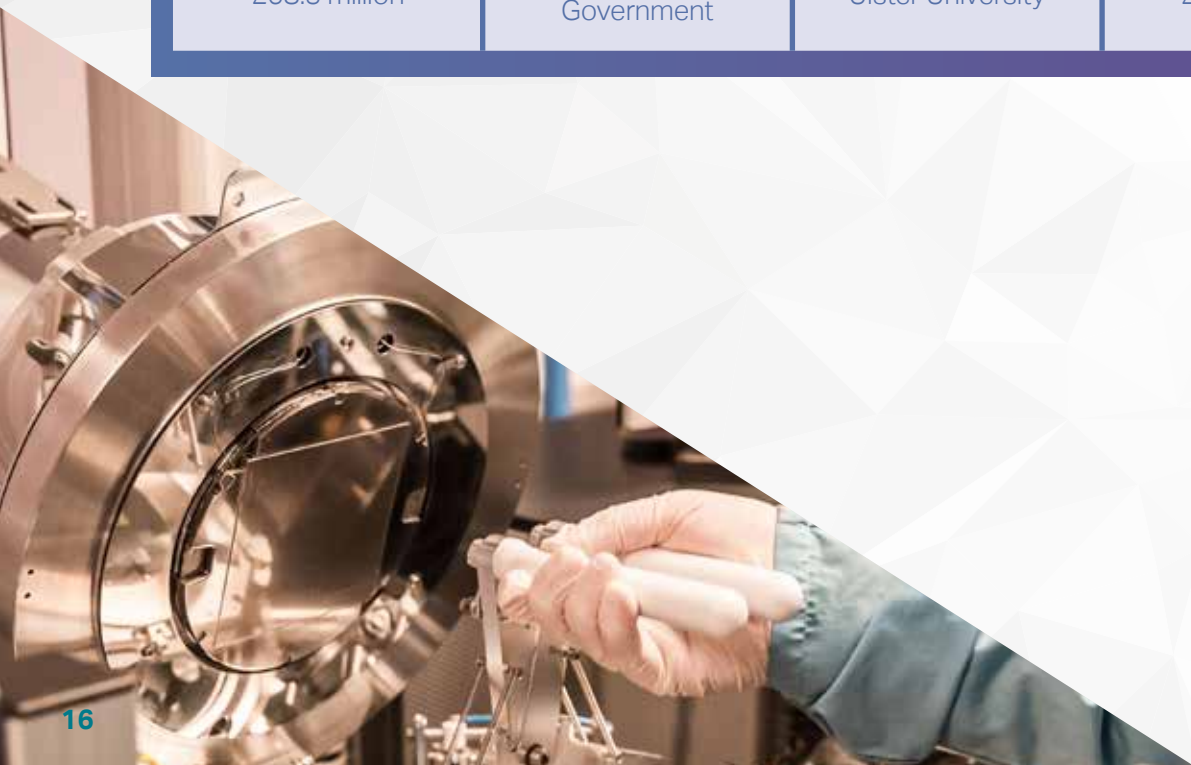
The vision for SMIL is to become established as a 'Tier 1' centre of excellence in R&D and innovation in Virtual Production, a rapidly developing suite of technologies and methodologies for screen content production, where the physical and digital worlds meet. Located on the North Foreshore in Belfast, the development of SMIL as a leading edge, world class centre of excellence that in conjunction with the Belfast Harbour Film Studio complex creates a unique blend of facilities, will drive collaboration in R&D on an unprecedented scale with researchers from virtual production, film, broadcast, animation, games and immersive co-locating with screen production and technology professionals.

At the core of SMIL is a unique facility, developed through partnership between academia and industry, and comprising production and R&D and innovation capability as follows:

- Virtual Production (VP) Facilities: including a highly specified VP stage (of a scale benchmarked against the VP stage used in the production of The Mandalorian), with supporting Motion Capture and 3-D Scanning studios and a SMART stage. The specification for these facilities has been developed to conform with the standards required by leading global players, such as Netflix and EPIC Games.
- Broadcast Studio: A commercial facility developed by Belfast Harbour, with an audience capacity of 600 integrated with, but separate from the VP facilities, to operate on a commercial basis, with BBC NI potentially as the primary tenant.
- Film Studios: co-located within the Harbour Film Studios complex at the Giant's Park on the North Foreshore in Belfast, where Belfast Harbour is planning a major £45 million expansion to quadruple the size of the existing studio complex. The presence of SMIL will enhance and diversify the offering.



Total project cost	BRCDC contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£68.3 million	£25.2 million from UK Government	Ulster University	£43.1 million



## Digital Pillar - £120 million from UK Government

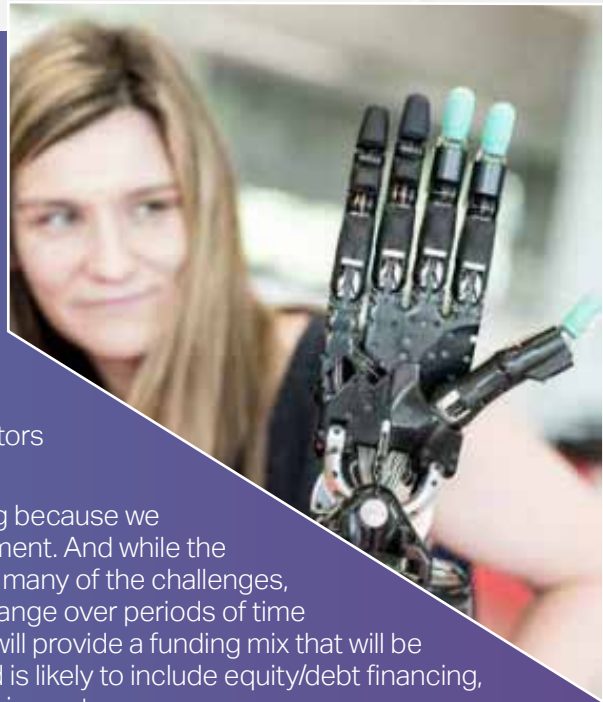
Technological innovation is one of the most powerful drivers of increased wealth and productivity as well as improved well-being. A successful digital innovation ecosystem within the region will play a critical role in contributing to economic inclusion and sustainable growth. In recognition of the pace of technological and societal change, a

challenge-led, long-term, flexible programme has been developed which will maximise the parallel investments in the universities' centres of excellence and together focus on those areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive. Overall, the key interventions within this Pillar comprise:

### The Belfast Region Innovation Challenge Fund

A £55 million fund will stimulate innovation addressing three Grand Challenges: (i) artificial intelligence and data, (ii) health and wellbeing and (iii) sustainability and resilience. The agile fund will respond to the emerging needs and unique characteristics of the region and be shaped by a series of 'missions' to stimulate collaborative innovation and investment. The mission-orientated approach aims to support growth in key industry sectors while also addressing major public policy challenges.

We have placed great emphasis on challenge funding because we recognise that we exist in a rapidly changing environment. And while the City Deal offers funding across a ten-year time scale, many of the challenges, solutions, and in particular technologies, will often change over periods of time measured in months not years. The Challenge Fund will provide a funding mix that will be influenced by the specific needs of each mission and is likely to include equity/debt financing, competitive capital grants and innovation for societal impact.



### Enabling Infrastructure

£40 million of investment in enabling infrastructure will stimulate the conditions for innovation and business growth by targeting investment in digital connectivity, data infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure to support the development of a Belfast Smart District and regional testbeds. Given technology's underpinning role in the future of many commercial and public services across a wide range of sectors, the funding will have a particular focus on supporting the rapid availability of advanced wireless networks.





## Regional Innovation Hubs

Regional Innovation Hubs will build upon and leverage existing sub-regional sectoral strengths in order to promote innovation activity and new business growth across the region via local hubs. Each hub will have a specific sectoral focus and purpose. Collectively, the hubs will provide horizontal digitalisation support to expedite the widespread adoption of digital technologies by companies at different levels of digital maturity, thereby mainstreaming digital innovation activities across the region. The Hubs will also;

- encourage greater investment in innovation activities, particularly supporting open innovation;
- support business clusters and innovation across the region;
- create SME digital hubs across NI to support more companies to engage in e-business and benefit from digitisation; and
- work with industry and educational institutions to develop a network of digital hubs across the region.

The Regional Innovation Hubs will provide local businesses and communities the space to pursue innovation projects at small and medium scale and a space where people with shared interests, especially in computing or technology, can gather to work together on projects. It will also offer the community access to tools, technology, and social connections that may not be easily accessible otherwise. This is a £30 million fund, including £5 million investment from partner councils.



## i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena

The i4C proposal involves the construction of a new, significant scale innovation and clean technology centre for SMEs. The centre includes a range of accommodation types to facilitate SME innovation activity i.e. incubation labs and workshops, Grade A office and co-working office space, as well as meeting and event spaces to encourage open innovation and collaboration. i4C has a Memorandum of Understanding in place with AMIC and will offer innovation programmes for SMEs in the region as well as wraparound support to tenants. The Innovation Lab (iLAB) at i4C also forms a key part of the i4C proposal allowing for an engineering staff led and well-equipped workshop that focuses on developing products, services, training and solutions for the cleantech sector across NI i.e. in the emerging hydrogen economy.

The 15-hectare mixed regeneration site is situated in the heart of the town and will act as a catalyst and enabler of inclusive growth in Ballymena and the wider borough. The BRCD regeneration pillar investment aims to help create a step change for these regeneration plans by enabling i4C to serve as the anchor tenant building and key economic driver for future growth and will also allow local communities to avail of skills and employability opportunities. This regeneration will add greater social value through place-making, enterprise stimulation, community development and good relations in the wider catchment area.



Total programme investment	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£23.0 million	£13.5 million from UK Government (Digital Pillar) and £7.0 million from NI Executive (Tourism and Regeneration Pillar)	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	£2.5 million

## Digital Pillar funding

Total programme investment	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£125.0 million	£120.0 million from UK Government	BRCD Partners	£5.0 million

## 4 BOOSTING TOURISM AND REGENERATING OUR REGION

The programme of investment in Tourism and Regeneration aims to create a regional, sustainable, year-round tourism product that will provide standout in international markets. The investment in diverse world-class visitor attractions will create spill over benefits for local economies, retained by indigenous SMEs and deliver a breadth of sustainable, entry level to highly skilled, employment opportunities across the region.

This investment in Tourism and Regeneration has the potential to play a critical part in the region's economic recovery; focusing long-term and transformative investments to address a legacy of under investment, building on key areas of economic strength and creating resilience to future shocks and stresses. Although the BRCD cannot provide answers to some of the immediate challenges facing the tourism and hospitality sector, partners are working with industry and government partners through the Tourism Recovery Steering Group to develop and implement plans that will seek to reduce the impacts on this key sector of our economy. These will focus initially on minimising the 'leakage' of tourists out of NI through campaigns and schemes to encourage domestic trips and to support local accommodation and hostels.

In addition to new tourism products, investment is being directed towards towns that have suffered from industrial decline and economic restructuring, so that they have the opportunity to play a full part in the region's growth. The

regeneration outturn of this investment will see transformational improvements in the quality of the environment that will benefit local economies and communities and promote public wellbeing and will also serve as a catalyst for investment from, and collaboration with, private sector businesses.

Through our integrated programme of investment in digital innovation, digital technology will be used to support, improve and extend the quality of visitors' experience and to help tackle the regeneration challenges faced by our rapidly changing towns and city centres. Innovative and creative use of digital technology in our tourism and regeneration projects can also provide a platform to advance schemes that anticipate climate change and support the UK Government's 2050 carbon neutral commitment.

Despite the pre-pandemic trend of healthy growth, there was broad agreement that the capacity of the existing tourism infrastructure in NI generally was beginning to constrain the industry. NI has room to expand its offer through the provision of new attractions and experiences of scale; a critical mass of new, innovative tourism products of sufficient appeal and credibility; products that respond to international and domestic consumer demand; which add new and complementary dimensions to the current offer<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Information in this section drawn from the BRCD Tourism and Regeneration Strategic Narrative





# Tourism and Regeneration Pillar - £210 million<sup>18</sup> from NI Executive

## Bangor Waterfront

Bangor has suffered from a period of underinvestment, compounded by changes in travel culture which has undermined market confidence in the same way as many other seaside towns. This project has been designed to turn Bangor into a 'destination of choice'.

The project involves investment to revitalise the waterfront promenade to offer a necklace of attractions and experiences that will reconnect the town and the sea. This series of developments and experiences will connect to one another through shared themes and narratives. Planned physical enhancements through the provision of high quality public spaces will involve good placemaking, public realm, signage, improvements to existing assets and the identification of transport solutions and digital solutions designed to enhance the town's appeal as a place to live, work, study and visit. This will boost market confidence and create the conditions for further private sector investment.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£72.8 million	£40.0 million from NI Executive	Ards and North Down Borough Council	£32.8 million

## Belfast Destination Hub

As a new £100 million visitor destination located close to Belfast's Cathedral Quarter, the Belfast Destination Hub will be a landmark signature experience in the heart of the city that speaks to the essence of Belfast and its people. This transformational project is designed to capture the unique spirit of Belfast. As a major tourism anchor, it will help revitalise our city centre and create a focal point for the screen industry, allowing people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screen and social spaces. Belfast Stories, a visitor experience that will offer remarkable first-person accounts of the city by the people who call it home will be its 'beating heart'; stories spill out into every aspect of the Hub including a state of the art multi-screen cultural cinema with the best visual storytelling from around the world. These attractions will be connected by dynamic architecture and vibrant public realm, allowing for lively event programming and conversation.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£100.0 million	£65.0 million from NI Executive	Belfast City Council	£35.0 million

Image for illustrative purposes only c/o BDH Grimshaw.

<sup>18</sup> This includes £7 million NI Executive funding allocated to the regeneration element of the i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks as outlined above in section 3

## Destination Royal Hillsborough

The vision is to establish Royal Hillsborough as a high quality, leading visitor destination and experience while also regenerating the village with an enhanced, sustainable culture and heritage offer (integrated with the wider regional heritage offering in NI as a whole). Building on an already popular destination in Hillsborough Castle, this investment in the wider Hillsborough Village will further enhance the existing offer to create a world class heritage village that extends dwell time and visitor spend. This project responds to the strong appetite for distinctive, immersive experiences that offer authentic expressions of culture. 'Destination Royal Hillsborough' will offer integrated and improved access and connections to key attractions such as the Castle, Courthouse, Fort, Forest, Gardens and wider village area. The various components will be part of an overall package that seamlessly connects these places of interest. By investing in further enhancements to Hillsborough Castle, Hillsborough Forest and the public realm, the project will deliver a must-see 'whole village' tourism experience enriching the significant heritage tourism potential and offering of this landmark asset.

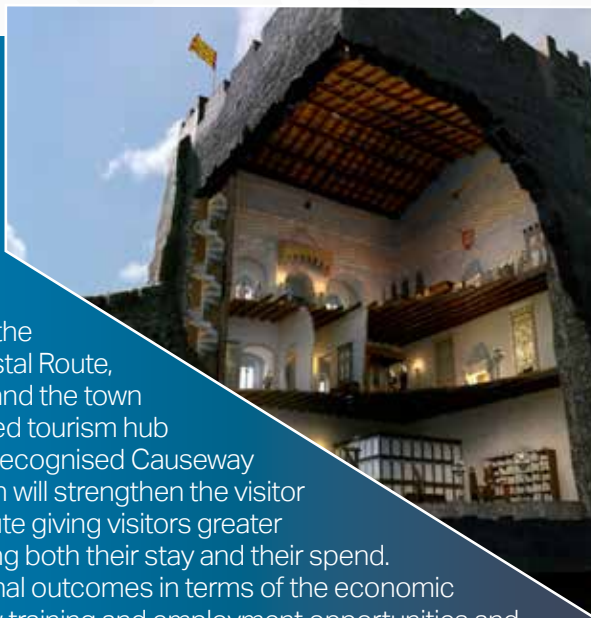


Total project cost	BRC D contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£26.0 million	£20.0 million from NI Executive	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	£6.0 million

## Carrickfergus Regeneration

Home to one of the most impressive castles on the island, an historic harbour and lough-side setting, a stunning Norman church, impressive sections of medieval walls and one of the best series of stories and sagas in the region, the historic town of Carrickfergus has much to celebrate.

Already benefiting from close proximity to Belfast and the enduring and ever-rising appeal of the Causeway Coastal Route, further investment will regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town to place it firmly on the map as an authentic heritage-led tourism hub and the 'must visit' starting point of the internationally recognised Causeway Coastal Route. The planned investment in regeneration will strengthen the visitor offering at the south end of the Coastal Causeway Route giving visitors greater opportunity to consume the route as a whole, extending both their stay and their spend. It is also intended that the investment will drive additional outcomes in terms of the economic benefits to Carrickfergus town centre; provision of new training and employment opportunities and the promotion of social inclusion and well-being for local residents.



Total project cost	BRC D contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£42.2 million	£26.3 million from NI Executive	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	£15.9m



## The Gobbins Phase 2

Already an established visitor attraction, the Gobbins experience offers unparalleled access to the Antrim coastline, immersing visitors in a coastal environment while connecting them to the local landscape. Its world class credentials will be secured by creating a spectacular and iconic staircase structure to link the experience across the existing cliff top and cliff face paths, creating a circular closed loop and significantly increasing visitor capacity. The project includes a major upgrade to the cliff top path providing stunning views across the Irish Sea, and opportunities to cross a new rope bridge that stretches across the coastline below. A new cliff top Welcome Hub with amenity facilities will be provided to act as a starting point for visitors to the site. A 360° immersive visualisation experience will also be delivered at the current visitor centre via a Virtual Reality Dome. The Gobbins Phase 2 will offer an exhilarating and accessible 'must see' visitor attraction at the southern end of the Causeway Coastal Route.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£13.6 million	£12.6 million from NI Executive	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	£1.0 million

## Mourne Mountain Gateway Project

The Mourne Mountain Gateway Project will redefine the visitor experience associated with the Mourne Mountains. The project includes the establishment of a Visitor Centre in the Mournes and the creation of a mountainside Gondola experience commencing in Donard Park, Newcastle. A mountain top visitor centre will give visitors an opportunity to connect with nature's rugged beauty, discover the secrets of the Mournes, and experience unobstructed views across Dundrum Bay, the Irish Sea and the Isle of Man. The project will deliver a world-class international tourist attraction and more sustainable access, including better transport infrastructure and green travel options, to Newcastle and the Mournes for residents and visitors. By protecting and enhancing the natural heritage and habitat of the region and creating an appealing year-round, sustainable tourism offering, the project will also support the sustainable growth of tourism in the Mournes and will help to position the local area as one of the premier tourism destinations on the island.



Total project cost	BRCD contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£44.0 million	£30.0 million from NI Executive	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	£14.0 million

## Newry City Centre Regeneration

The Newry, Mourne and Down District is an ambitious and entrepreneurial region, with a strategic cross border location that ensures a regional and international focus. Despite major advances in recent years, high levels of deprivation and economic inactivity demonstrate that the local economy in Newry has been underperforming in comparison to the rest of NI. This investment in Newry city centre will support the re-imagining of the city centre by delivering a civic and regional hub, theatre and conferencing facilities, improvements to the public realm and investment in Grade A office provision.

This project will put in place the economic infrastructure to enable a competitive economy. It aims to revitalise the area and improve the experience of residents and visitors, to increase footfall and, by attracting private sector investment, to reduce levels of retail and residential vacancy. The project will unlock the potential of the area and support growth of the local economy. As well as regenerating the city centre, the investment will create employment opportunities, increase visitor numbers, stimulate the evening economy, improve civic pride and help stimulate further private sector investment. Rural areas will also be able to benefit from the wider range of employment opportunities that increased investment in the city will bring, contributing to the inclusive growth ambition of the City Deal.



Total project cost	BRCDC contribution	Project Sponsor	Project Sponsor and other contributions
£33.5 million	£8.0 million from NI Executive	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	£25.5 million





# 5 CONNECTING OUR REGION

The Belfast region continues to wrestle with the consequences of underinvestment in transport infrastructure, particularly public transport, and the resulting high levels of car use, pollution and congestion. For any region to be successful, modern and world class infrastructure needs to be in place. It enables economic growth, builds the connections to markets and opportunities, gets people to jobs in a sustainable way and is a key consideration for inward investors. Investing in infrastructure is also important in delivering balanced economic growth and ensuring that job opportunities can be accessed by all communities.

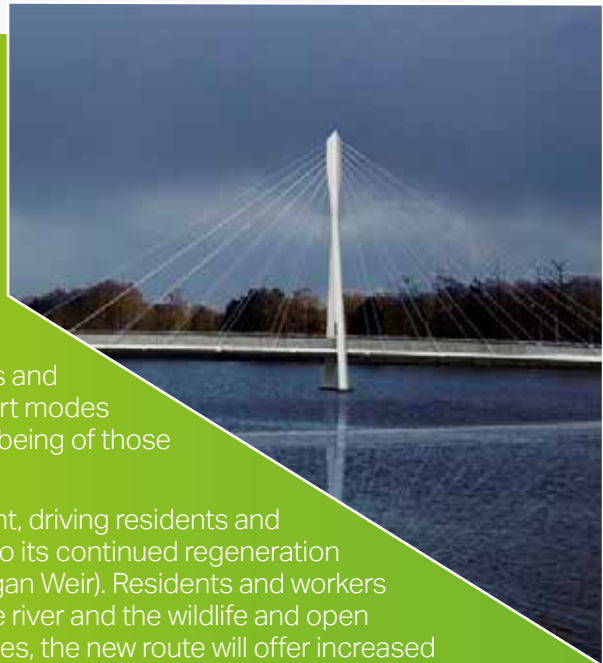
For continued economic growth, improvements to inter-regional and intra-regional transport will therefore be vital. Such connectivity will be key to providing access to jobs and increasing the pool of talent from which business can hire. The infrastructure plans for BRCD are about adding to the prospects which will position the region to support these efforts. Whilst skills provision is an important enabler to supporting individuals into employment, the conditions for economic growth to enable job creation must also be present and the structural barriers to employment, such as transport infrastructure, need to be addressed.

## Infrastructure Pillar - £140 million from NI Executive

### Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge

This pedestrian and cycle bridge over the river Lagan will connect south and east Belfast to the city centre. The iconic structure will provide an attractive commuter and leisure linkage and offer workers and visitors a quicker route between the city centre and Ormeau Park, one of the biggest parks in greater Belfast. The bridge will improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists and encourage a shift to sustainable transport modes while promoting an active lifestyle, improving the wellbeing of those in the region and enhancing social inclusion.

The bridge will also help further activate the waterfront, driving residents and visitors to this unique asset and further contributing to its continued regeneration (building on the successful redevelopment of the Lagan Weir). Residents and workers on both sides of the river will be reconnected with the river and the wildlife and open space it offers. As well as opening up such experiences, the new route will offer increased opportunities for visitors to explore the city, shrinking the perceived (and actual) distance between previously disconnected areas. This investment has the potential to unlock new development opportunities, boost tourism and support regeneration efforts.

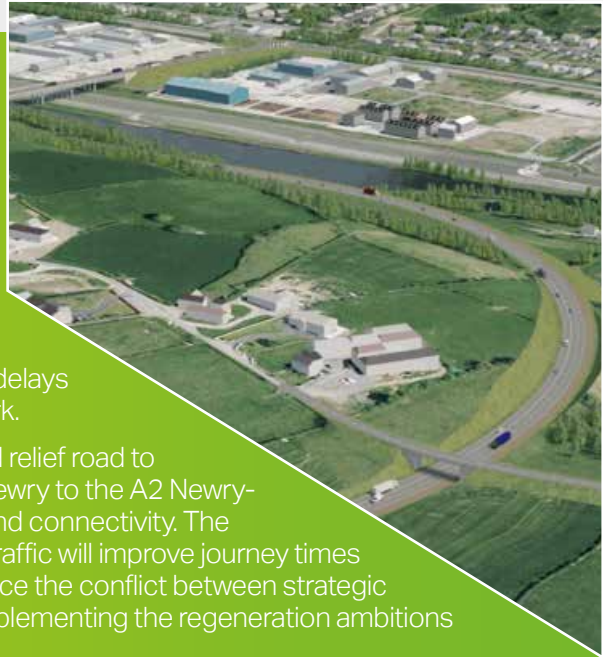


Total project cost	Project Sponsor	BRCD contribution
£12.1 million	Department for Infrastructure	£12.1 million from NI Executive

## Newry Southern Relief Road

Newry is strategically located on the Eastern Seaboard between Belfast and Dublin. It is a major inter-regional gateway that includes through access to Warrenpoint Harbour, NI's second busiest port. Its location means the city experiences periods of high traffic demand, in particular from shoppers and visitors coming from the Republic of Ireland, as well as a significant number of HGVs travelling to and from the Harbour to Belfast and Dublin. This contributes to delays and congestion on the local and strategic road network.

This project proposes development of a high standard relief road to extend from the A1 Belfast to Dublin Road, South of Newry to the A2 Newry-Warrenpoint dual carriageway to improve traffic flow and connectivity. The provision of an alternative route for strategic through traffic will improve journey times and journey time reliability for strategic traffic and reduce the conflict between strategic and local traffic movements in Newry city centre, complementing the regeneration ambitions of the city.



Total project cost	Project Sponsor	BRCD contribution
£93.4 million	Department for Infrastructure	£93.4 million from NI Executive

## Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2

The Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 (BRT2) project is the further development of the Belfast Rapid Transit system north to Antrim and Newtownabbey and south to Lisburn and Castlereagh and an extension of the existing CITI route to serve Queen's University and City Hospital. The rapid transit network will provide a high-quality passenger experience and services will run using accessible, comfortable, low-emission bespoke rapid transit vehicles that combine the quality and feel of a tram-like system.

On the basis that the combined total value of the NI Executive's contribution to the tourism and regeneration and infrastructure projects cannot exceed the £350 million funding envelope it would not be possible to complete BRT2 and all the other projects within the Deal funding envelope as originally hoped. However, there remains up to £35 million of funding for the Infrastructure pillar. The BRCD Executive Board has expressed a strong desire that this funding should be used to part fund the BRT2 and is working with the relevant departments to explore whether this is possible. However, it fully understands that this would require Executive agreement and that the Executive's ability to finance the balance through its future capital programmes is itself dependent on the capital funding allocations available to it and the other commitments it faces.



## 6 EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

Recent research<sup>19</sup> detailing NI's performance over the last two decades demonstrates a continuing erosion in its relative competitiveness over time. The local labour market environment and skills profile 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 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<sup>20</sup> for employability and skills are seeking to respond to this challenge with a new skills strategy, Skills for a 10X Economy, published by the Department for the Economy in May 2021. Drawing from international best practice, this strategy sets out the need for a Northern Ireland Skills Council with ministerial leadership and representation from senior figures in key Government departments, business, education and trades unions. Its purpose is to drive a more collaborative approach, ensuring the NI skills system is responsive to economic need.

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 Skills Council will be the key mechanism to capture the skills and employability needs emerging across all NI City/Growth Deals and will ensure collaborative working with the NI Civil Service departments which have responsibility for the policy, delivery and investment of skills.

With the knowledge that competitive economies are more productive and that this productivity leads to improved income levels and well-being, the focus of employability and skills within the BRCD is directed at improving both productivity (growth) and inclusivity (inclusion).

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. 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.

Employability and skills will play a key role in achieving the inclusive growth ambitions of the City Deal - connecting communities and businesses to economic opportunity. To maximise this potential, partners will work collaboratively to deliver additional benefit through social value within procurement processes and, as employers themselves, by creating opportunities for new inclusive employment pathways.

The BRCD Employability and Skills programme has been framed around three thematic areas within which a suite of interventions is contained:

- **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.

<sup>19</sup> UUEPC Competitiveness Scorecard, January 2021

<sup>20</sup> Such as DfE's '10X Economy - an Economic Vision for a decade of Innovation', DfE's 'Skills Strategy for NI - Skills for a 10X Economy', and DfC Employability NI plans





# 7 PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

## Delivering a Strong Regional Partnership

The Belfast region partners recognise that delivering the ambitions of the BRCD requires alignment between local, regional and national ambitions, policies and resources. The partnership arrangements empower partner organisations to:

- operate strategically and collectively to fully realise the economic potential of the region;
- respond to issues critical to the economic wellbeing of the region;
- unlock economic assets; and
- decide on the alignment of resources in projects and programmes with the greatest economic potential.

Since the approval of the Deal's Heads of Terms in March 2019, partners have continued to work together with central government to meet the expectations set out in the Heads of Term document while continuing to reflect emerging economic priorities. The partners agree that ensuring sufficient scale and quality of governance to manage financial and policy risks will be key to effective delivery throughout the lifetime of the Deal. The governance arrangements will operate in a way that best delivers inclusive growth and accountability and will be supported by a stakeholder engagement process to ensure participation of the region's key stakeholders. The BRCD partners will continue to build on the City Deal projects to develop broader partnerships that will deliver new opportunities and increased investment, such as development of an innovation district and the bid to create a Digital Twin centre<sup>21</sup> which can help to support zero carbon targets.

## Facilitating Collaborative Working

The City Deal process by its nature offers an ideal opportunity to break down many of the organisational boundaries currently in place and to identify opportunities for further collaboration, enabling new and innovative approaches to the challenges facing the region. The City Deal process has revealed the extent to which stronger collaboration at a regional level has enhanced our ability to cut through traditional boundaries

and work together to shape priorities and deliver on the many issues that can more effectively be addressed by collaborative working. The economies of scale associated with sharing of resources are likely to encourage longer term investment.

## Leadership and Direction

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government and is a critical role fulfilled by Councillors in the Belfast region. Councils work in partnership with local communities and other organisations to develop and deliver a vision for their local area, working together to improve the quality of life of citizens. In developing the BRCD, the six participating councils have brought forward proposals to reflect local priorities and opportunities within the context of a collective vision for inclusive growth across the region. This shared approach to tackling economic challenges, bringing together key economic partners to develop an agreed programme of investment that unlocks the potential of the region's economy, is central to all City Deals.

## Enabling Community Engagement

Partners will continue to engage with local communities to help inform and shape the delivery of their projects and other associated activity and take into account all equality and rural needs considerations.

## Ensuring Private and Third Sector Involvement

The region has strong private and third sector relationships that will help inform the delivery of the Deal. Harnessing their understanding of regional strengths and opportunities is critical to the city region's success. Business and third sector voices will help to realise our overall ambitions to drive efficiency and inclusive growth and stimulate sustainable economic development. Projects will continue to develop and strengthen their arrangements for engaging with relevant private sector business to ensure that plans align with and reflect the needs and opportunities of those industries. We will also continue to engage existing industry reference panels at the overall programme level.

<sup>21</sup> A digital twin is a complex virtual representation of an exact physical object or system that spans its lifetime, is updated with real-time data, and uses simulation, modelling, machine learning and reasoning to aid decision-making

## 8 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Effectively delivering the ambitions of the BRCD requires alignment between local, regional and national ambitions, policies and resources. The governance arrangements for the Deal empower partner organisations to:

- operate strategically and collectively to fully realise the economic potential of the region;
- respond to issues critical to the economic wellbeing of the region;
- unlock economic assets; and
- decide on the alignment of resources in projects and programmes with the greatest potential to support inclusive economic growth.

A separate document detailing the arrangements for the oversight and delivery of the Deal has been agreed by the BRCD partnership to ensure a robust governance framework is in place. These are in line with the Northern Ireland City / Growth Deals Governance and Funding Arrangements. These governance arrangements will enable decisions to be taken in an open and transparent way, across the partnership while remaining in step with individual organisational decision-making structures. With an Executive Board and Pillar Boards to support the continued development of each of the pillars of the Deal, they build on the structures already in place for BRCD and comprise roles for a BRCD Council Panel, the individual councils and universities.

### Council Panel

The Council Panel, made up of Councillors from each of the six Councils, is central to the BRCD governance arrangements, ensuring that the Deal remains aligned to the vision of inclusive economic growth and to the ambitions of each of the Councils in this regard; providing political leadership and helping to build wider political consensus.

### Executive Board

The Executive Board, comprising Chief Executives of the partner Councils, the Vice Chancellors of the two universities, the Chair of the Employability and Skills Board, the Chair of the Digital Board, the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Deal and observers from the NI Civil Service, is responsible for the ongoing development and implementation of the Deal. It also has a wider role to facilitate collaboration more broadly to support the continued economic growth of the region. The Executive Board is supported by a number of Boards and officers including finance directors, communication leads and senior officers from all partner organisations and NI Civil Service departments.

### Accountable Body

Belfast City Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means it carries out a range of functions that support and enable regional partnership working, such as employing the BRCD Programme Management Office (PMO) and providing administrative, professional and technical support as required to support the Deal. It is also the Accountable Body for the Deal, ensuring that the partnership makes decisions in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements. As the Accountable Body for the Deal, all grant funding from central Government will be channelled through Belfast City Council. The Accountable Body will manage the overall range of projects to ensure the Deal remains within the overall funding envelope available, which may mean that figures may change slightly from that shown in the document. It will also have the authority to hold to account any of the members of the bodies within the governance structure or projects, should they present a risk to the overall programme.

### Individual Councils and University Boards

Individual Councils and University Boards will retain responsibility for decision making in relation to approval of key frameworks guiding the development of the BRCD. Councils and Boards will also be required to approve decisions on their own proposed investments in BRCD projects whilst remaining in line with agreed change management processes.

### BRCD PMO

The PMO is a team of officers hosted by the Lead Authority to coordinate the operational tasks needed to implement the delivery of the Deal and will provide the overall day-to-day support for the programme. The Programme Director is appointed to lead the delivery of the programme and works under the direction of the Executive Board.

# 9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Performance Reporting

The PMO will produce regular performance reports on project milestones highlighted in the Deal Implementation Plan. Financial reports, monitoring returns and evaluations will also be provided to central Government in line with the Deal Financial Plan and requirements set out in the Letters of Offer and any other necessary requirements from central Government. The PMO will present an Annual Report covering all projects to the Executive Board, Finance Directors' Group and Pillar Boards. This report will inform the Annual Conversation between the BRCD and central Government. The Annual Conversation will allow the NI City / Growth Deal Delivery Board to engage with the Deal to celebrate success and discuss progress.

## Risk and Audit

A Risk Management Framework has been developed for the programme. An overall Programme Risk Register report will be compiled by the PMO and considered by the Executive Board and Finance Directors' Group every quarter throughout the delivery phase of the programme. All partners to the Deal are responsible for responding to any recommendations set out by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in relation to any audit undertaken on the Deal. The partners will also take account (where appropriate) of recommendations in relation to audits of the wider City/Growth Deals programme and will put in place and adhere to their own internal audit arrangements. The partners commit to working collaboratively to respond to recommendations in a constructive and proportionate way.

## Benefits Realisation Plan

The partners will work with central Government to agree a Benefits Realisation Plan for the Deal. The partners will consider with central Government the need to conduct check-point or gateway reviews at appropriate intervals throughout the Deal at project or programme level. These reviews will enable progress towards prescribed milestones as set out in the Implementation Plan to be reviewed and evaluated.

## Change Process

It is expected that projects may change over time. The partners will work with central Government to agree a consistent and transparent change management mechanism for the Deal, with appropriate tolerances and thresholds.





Images courtesy of Tourism Northern Ireland and partners.

 #BRCityDeal

 [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal](http://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**



**belfast met**

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