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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Purpose and ambition

The Belfast Region enjoys significant economic, business, and employment strengths. However there is considerable untapped potential within the local economy. Historically, the region's potential has been hampered by persistent barriers which include physical, digital, and connectivity constraints and a growing mismatch between available skills and employer needs.

In recent years it became clear that a collaborative, cross organisational approach would be required to effectively address these issues.

The Belfast City Region partnership emerged from the shared ambitions of a coalition of partners who recognised that many of the region's economic and social challenges and opportunities cut across geographic and organisational boundaries.

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) was conceived as the vehicle that would help deliver a shared and coordinated programme of inclusive and sustainable investment activity.

The BRCD is focused on addressing the region's challenges and maximising its opportunities in order to deliver a transformative and lasting impact on its economic landscape; driving innovation, creating more and better quality jobs, improving physical and digital connectivity, boosting tourism, regenerating key urban areas, and leveraging further private sector investment.

Impact of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD)

- support the creation of up to **20,000 jobs**
- connect local people to new and better jobs
- place the region at the **top table of digital innovation**
- deliver **£400 million in GVA** directly on-site and within the region
- target delivery of almost **£1 billion of private sector leverage**
- create compelling **world-class visitor attractions**
- help to **regenerate major towns and cities**
- foster **collaborative working**

With a funding package of £1bn, the overall ambition of this Deal is to create:

/// 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. ///

Understanding the Region

In order to help partners shape a Deal that would respond to the region's long standing structural challenges, while also positioning it to be capable of seizing future opportunities, the process to agree an appropriate investment proposition hinges on establishing a clear understanding of the region's economic and social profile.

Belfast city region accounts for almost 60% of Northern Ireland's total population and generates approximately £32.6 billion in GVA - 65.2% of Northern Ireland's total (ONS, 2024). Its economic base is diverse, with strengths across digital technologies, creative industries, financial services, advanced manufacturing, life and health sciences, and engineering. This mix of high value sectors underpins the region's strong economic output and its capacity for further growth.

Spanning six council areas and encompassing cities, towns, villages, rural hinterlands, and coastal destinations, the region's tourism potential is also significant.

While many of the region's persistent challenges mirror wider Northern Ireland trends, recent indicators show rising economic output and growing appeal to both tourists and investors. Major improvements in digital connectivity and ongoing infrastructure developments continue to enhance competitiveness and investment potential.

Since the City Deal process began in 2018, the economic, social, and political landscape has shifted dramatically, both nationally and globally, in ways that continue to shape labour markets, skills needs, and business models.

Westminster and Stormont continue to emphasise a renewed commitment to devolved decision making and empowering local and regional leaders. This direction of travel aligns strongly with the collaborative and innovative ambitions of the BRCD.

Meanwhile, the 2025 refresh of the UK's Industrial Framework confirms that many of the issues highlighted in 2018, from productivity gaps to skills mismatches, remain central to the region's current economic trajectory.

The NI Executive's most recent Programme for Government also reflects a changed local context. Its ambition to *Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy* - reinforced by the Economy Minister's economic vision prioritising regional balance, good jobs, productivity, and climate action - places emphasis on infrastructure and innovation.

Delivering Inclusion and Sustainability

Delivering growth that is both inclusive and sustainable by balancing social, environmental and economic outcomes, remains at the heart of this investment. When prosperity is shared, inequality is reduced, wellbeing improves and communities become more resilient. Inclusive Growth commitments are built into every project from design through to delivery. Embedding social and environmental value into our investment ambitions will help to ensure that today's progress does not come at tomorrow's expense.

In addition to social and community related benefits that social value creates, the BRCD investment is already leveraging additional benefits through the collective value placed in the programme and the collaborative strengths of the partnership. Where possible, we will also use additional policy levers to encourage and promote inclusivity and sustainability.

The BRCD directly supports and strengthens these ambitions, providing a platform for long term, inclusive, and sustainable economic transformation.

Refining the Opportunity

As we move through the delivery phase of the Deal, the economic and social landscape continues to shift. However, the region's long-standing challenges around economic inactivity, lower productivity, labour shortages, infrastructure weaknesses and skills mismatches, continue to shape our priorities. And so too do our strengths.

We recognise the need to scan the horizon as the programme continues to embed, in preparation for what may come next in an uncertain and challenging economic and political global context. Remaining aware of our external environment allows us to sharpen and restate the Deal's focus towards areas where the region can genuinely lead.

On the back of the investment activity up to the end of 2024, the BRCD partners commissioned an updated analysis of the competitive strengths and the key economic challenges facing the region. To this end a refreshed Industrial Strategic Framework was completed for the BRCD region in April 2025 which used data analysis, the evolution of other Growth Deals, and consultation feedback to supplement and refine the existing bank of evidence and to help inform the potential future direction of travel for the Deal.

As delivery of the Deal accelerates, it will be important that we lean ever more into our strengths; backing high growth sectors, exploring the potential of dual market access, driving a stronger tourism offer, and pushing ahead with regeneration that can revitalise our towns and cities.

With an eye to the net zero agenda, we are supporting innovation, staying ahead in advanced manufacturing and healthcare, and creating the funding pathways needed to unlock future digital solutions.

And to make this work for local people, we're continuing to map out the employability and skills opportunities emerging from the Deal and encouraging delivery partners to realign resources, so communities are ready to seize them.

DELIVERING THE BRCD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Now in year four of delivery, 2025-26 has been another encouraging year. The BRCD is continuing at pace, with the programme of investment already delivering clear results.

Programme Summary

The 2025-26 financial year has seen significant BRCD funding drawn down and claims paid out to project partners. The number of claims processed was highest between January and March 2026, reflecting the BRCD investment programme's increasing pace of delivery.

In all, over £674m total investment has now been committed to the BRCD in signed Contracts for Funding (CfFs).

More than £100m funding has been drawn down to date, with more than £86m claims paid, of which £45m have been paid in the current financial year alone.

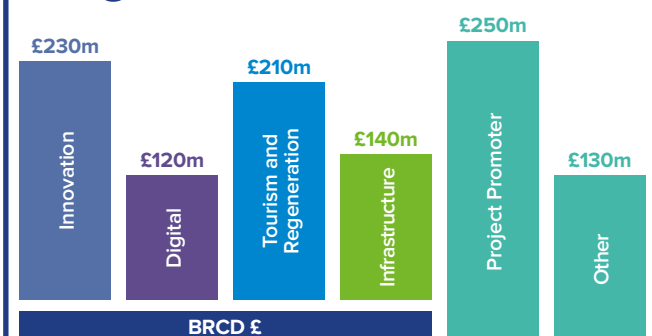
The Financial Statement in Section 4 summarises the total capital investment and the BRCD investment categorised by both pillar and project to the end of March 2026.

Over £674m
Total investment committed in signed CfFs

Over £100m
Funding drawn down to date

Over £86m
Claims paid to partners to date

Over £1bn Programme of investment



By the end of March 2026, three projects are operational, three are at construction or fit-out stage and 12 are at design stage. In addition, 22 Outline Business Cases and five Full Business Cases have been approved and 16 Contracts for Funding have been signed.

Ensuring Inclusive Growth - Delivering Social Value

BRCD projects are making significant inroads towards achieving programme benefits through social value procurement activity. The majority of projects apply the Strategic Investment Board's (SIB) Social Value points-based approach to their procurement processes, which requires that for every £1million of spend, contractors must deliver 100 social value points.

To date, 22 contracts with a value of more than £158 million have committed in excess of 15,100 Social Value points - of which more than 10,000 have now been delivered¹ across the four Social Value themes of:

- Increasing Secure Employment and Skills
- Building Ethical and Resilient Supply Chains
- Delivering Climate Action
- Promoting Wellbeing

Over £158m
Total Value of contracts signed with Social Value

Over 15,100
Social value points committed to date

Some of the Social Value benefits supported through these contracts are outlined in the Benefits section of this report.

Supporting Projects and Sharing Learning

Over the past year, the Programme Management Office (PMO) has continued to provide advice and support to the Executive Board through its secretariat role, ensuring that governance, coordination and decision making processes remained robust and well informed. This included regular reporting on the progress of funded projects to offer clarity and maintain transparency across the programme both to the Board and to Government Partners.

To support the tourism and regeneration projects within the BRCD - and indeed those of other NI City and Growth Deals that are now in the process of considering their operator models - the PMO organised an operator workshop in December 2025. As well as sharing learning across the City and Growth Deal projects on work undertaken to date, attendees learned about the experiences of Fingal County Council, which has responsibility for a range of tourism products.

The PMO continues to support the Executive Board and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council by helping to guide the assessment and decision making required to identify an alternative tourism project.

Reflecting the Board's commitment to accountability and continuous improvement, this year the PMO also supported audits of the BRCD Programme and commissioned an independent governance review. The PMO refreshed the Programme's Governance and Assurance Framework so that it continues to reflect the

outworkings of the governance review and to provide a strong foundation for programme delivery, further strengthening the overall governance environment of the Programme.

As the Deal moves closer to real world impact, the importance of communication is growing. Over the past year the PMO began to refocus the work of the BRCD Communications Forum on programme delivery and undertook a full update of the BRCD website to ensure it remains current and accessible and that it continues to reflect programme progress.

Our commitment to sustainability was further strengthened through the sharing of 'net zero' information, including integrating sustainability considerations into ICT documentation, promoting training opportunities and disseminating emerging departmental guidance.

The PMO also facilitated a range of engagement and training sessions to meet partner needs, including dedicated social value training and a workshop to support the development of Full Business Cases.

To reinforce programme oversight, the PMO updated its approach to Subsidy Control and completed the necessary assessments for several key projects, including supporting DfE in the completion of the assessment for Belfast Stories. During the past year work also began to track and monitor employability and skills activity across projects more closely.

¹ Note: 5 contracts are using an alternative scoring system that does not include SIB points

Regional Balance - Project Locations



8 **Ards and North Down Innovation Hub**

State-of-the art innovation space for the creative industries in Holywood.



9 **Augment the City**

Enabling innovators to develop ideas, using immersive technologies. This investment will also help support the design of new visitor attractions for NI.



10 **Bangor Waterfront**

This redevelopment will make the city a 'destination of choice' once again, reflecting the location's individuality and shared heritage and culture.



11 **Belfast Stories**

A landmark £100 million public space, visitor attraction and creative hub close to Cathedral Quarter, which will speak to the essence of Belfast and its people.



12 **Destination Royal Hillsborough**

Establishing a high quality, leading visitor experience, while regenerating the village with an enhanced, sustainable culture and heritage offer.



13 **Carrickfergus Regeneration**

Regeneration as an authentic heritage-led tourism hub; the 'must-visit' starting point of the internationally recognised Causeway Coastal Route.



14 **The Gobbins Phase II**

A transformational natural-heritage experience, with access for all and environmental stewardship, at the heart of the project.



15 **Newry City Centre Regeneration**

This investment will deliver a civic and regional hub, theatre/conferencing facilities, public realm improvements and Grade A office provision.



16 **Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge**

This iconic pedestrian and cycle bridge over the River Lagan will connect south and east Belfast to the city centre, further activating our waterfront.



17 **Newry Southern Relief Road**

High standard relief road to improve traffic flow and connectivity.



18 **Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2**

Developing the system to the north and south of the city and extending the existing CITI route to serve Queen's University and City Hospital.

Project stages

- Project operational**
- Project at construction /fit out stage**
- Project at design stage**

Delivering the Pillars of Investment

Innovation



The BRCD investment in innovation involves the creation of new innovation centres that span the advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences and digital and creative sectors, bringing together great minds and creative thinking to solve some of the biggest global challenges, while also creating real-world impact through connected, purpose-driven innovation.

A high performing innovation system is a critical success factor for strong economic performance, particularly within small economies such as Northern Ireland².

In addition to unlocking private sector investment, the City Deal innovation centres will enable access to an estimated £250m of research and development funding from which Northern Ireland has previously been unable to benefit³.

The projects will support businesses as they attempt to access major funding opportunities from outside the region to reap the benefits of distinctive, long-term sectoral strengths.

- Construction was completed at **AMIC's Factory of the Future**, and staff moved into the Factory at Global Point Park in Newtownabbey with a view to launching in Autumn 2026.
- At **iREACH Health** on the Lisburn Road in Belfast, construction has continued to progress well with completions due in mid 2027 across the two buildings respectively.
- Progress also continued on-site at Ulster University's CDHT, the innovation **Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology**, with associated 'living labs' planned in the areas of cardiology, diabetes, respiratory and stroke. At year end, the demolition works in Belfast city centre were nearing completion and planning permission had been granted.
- Meanwhile **Studio Ulster** was well into its operational phase at year end, with the first productions filmed using the facilities, including *Titanic Sinks Tonight*, broadcast on BBC during the 2025 festive period.
- In relation to **Momentum One Zero**, construction work commenced in September, with completion due by November 2027.

Digital



A successful digital innovation ecosystem has a key role to play in contributing to economic inclusion and sustainable growth for the region. The BRCD's £120m long-term, challenge-led, flexible programme has been developed to enable partners to keep pace with the rate of technological and societal change.

The programme of digital investment will help to address key areas of challenge such as artificial intelligence and data, health and wellbeing and sustainability and resilience - and will complement the investments being made by the Deal in innovation centres and research and development, with a consistent focus on areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive.

- The **UK Digital Twin Centre**, successfully completed its first Industry Accelerator with very high demand and strong SME engagement, including strong representation from local SMEs and at year end was working towards the launch of its first Academic Accelerator call.
- Work on the **i4C Innovation & Cleantech Centre** made good progress, and an operator was also appointed for the facility during the year - a critical step that will enable co-design of the facility going forward.
- Within the **Innovation Challenge Fund**, the £1m fund for innovation in immersive technology, Augment the City was successfully delivered its final showcase event in Belfast City Hall in January. An Outline Business Case has also been approved, and a funding agreement signed, for the £4.4m **Regional Contracts for Innovation initiative** to allow development to accelerate towards delivery of a range of challenge programmes across the six councils.
- In addition, a £2m **BRCD Innovation Centre Collaborative Grants Programme**, supported by Invest NI expertise, was approved. This Research and Development funding is designed to encourage Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to engage and collaborate with the BRCD Innovation centres.
- Within the **Enabling Infrastructure fund**, an Outline Business Case was approved, and a Contract for Funding signed to support research on Advanced Wireless Investment Models.

The Digital Programme will be delivered through the lifetime of the Deal and is at an earlier stage of development. It is divided into three distinct areas of investment:

Innovation Challenge Fund

A £55m investment utilising agile financial instruments which could include R&D grant funding, risk finance and SBRI-style challenge programmes to help address the agreed regional Grand Challenges.

- Artificial Intelligence and Data
- Health and Wellbeing
- Sustainability and Resilience

Augment the City		BRCD contribution: £0.9m	
Description	Supporting the futureproofing of our large-scale tourism investments through investment in cutting edge research and innovative technologies.		
Status update	Successfully completed in January 2026 with a showcase event at Belfast City Hall.		
Regional Contracts for Innovation Programme		BRCD contribution: £4.4m	
Description	Building from Augment the City, to support a range of challenge fund programmes, using the Contracts for Innovation programme.		
Status update	Outline Business Case approved and funding agreement signed in March 2026, ahead of the first challenge being launched in 2026-27.		
BRCD Innovation Centres - Collaborative Grants Programme		BRCD contribution: £2m	
Description	An R&D Grants programme, supported by Invest NI, to encourage SME engagement with the BRCD Innovation Centres.		
Status update	Investment case approved and launch expected during 2026-27.		

Enabling Infrastructure

£25m to support the investment in advanced wireless infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure to support digital innovation across the region.

Advanced Wireless Investment Models		BRCD contribution: £70k	
Description	Investment in research into advanced wireless investment models, to support an investment pipeline which encourages adoption of 5G and advanced wireless technologies across the region.		
Status update	Business case approved, funding agreement signed and project well progressed towards completion.		

Regional Innovation Hubs

A £40m investment in 'Regional Innovation Hubs' to ensure diffusion of innovation and skills throughout the region, building further on sub-regional strengths including the creative sector, digital twin technologies and cleantech.

2 The strategic integration of skills & innovation policy in Northern Ireland: An international small economy perspective, David Skilling, July 2019
3 The Missing £4 Billion Making R&D work for the whole UK, NESTA, May 2020

Tourism and Regeneration



The investment in Tourism and Regeneration aims to create regional, sustainable, year-round tourism products that will provide standout offers in international markets and create spillover benefits for local economies, including delivery of a range of employment opportunities across all skill levels.

The proposed Tourism and Regeneration projects will help to address a legacy of under investment, building on key areas of economic strength and creating resilience to future shocks and stresses.

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

- **Bangor Waterfront** has been progressing concept designs and key survey works for Ballyholme Yacht Club and Pickie Fun Park. Procurements for the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm and Marina design teams are ongoing.
- Progress also continues on **Destination Royal Hillsborough** and LCCC and Historic Royal Palaces are working with Tourism NI to develop a Destination Management Plan for the village.
- The Theatre and Conference Centre element of the **Newry Regeneration** programme is ongoing, with construction scheduled to commence in June 2026.
- Public engagement to refine design proposals for the **Carrickfergus Regeneration** project is continuing, in preparation for submission of planning applications in May 2027. Works to procure an Operator for Carrickfergus and **Gobbins Phase II** have also been progressing.
- The OBC for **Belfast Stories** was approved and design development has continued to progress. Procurements are underway for the Integrated Supply and Exhibition Design Teams.

Infrastructure



Modern, world-class infrastructure enables economic growth, builds connections to markets and opportunities, gets people to jobs in a sustainable way, and is a key consideration for inward investors.

However the Belfast region continues to wrestle with the consequences of under-investment in transport infrastructure, particularly public transport, and the resulting high levels of car use, pollution and congestion.

Improvements to inter-regional and intra-regional transport are vital to facilitate continued economic growth. Connectivity will be key to providing access to jobs and increasing the talent pool for business recruitment.

The BRCD infrastructure projects will help prime the region to support these efforts.

- Department of Finance approval of the Outline Business Case for the **BRT Phase 2** project has been granted and the Department for Infrastructure are progressing the development and delivery of the project in a phased approach to match the available funding.
- Procurement of a Contractor for **Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge** is ongoing and the Department is considering the implications of the A5 judgement on this and all DfI projects.
- Following completion of a public consultation exercise for **Newry Southern Relief Road**, the Department for Infrastructure is awaiting a decision on whether a public inquiry will be required for the project.

Employability and Skills



The BRCD Programme seeks to rebalance the local economy by building on existing competitive strengths, enhancing productivity and supporting the creation of high quality employment.

Delivering inclusive economic growth will depend on the appropriate skills being in place to enable local people to benefit from the opportunities generated by this investment. Effective preparation for emerging opportunities will therefore be critical to achieving the inclusive growth ambitions that underpin the Deal.

- Five cross-Deal **skills assessments** for the BRCD's key investment sectors have been completed, with work ongoing to agree an associated action plan.
- Projects across all pillars are demonstrating good progress in promoting **inclusion, growth, and digital futures** through their skills-related activities.
- Engagement is underway to strengthen understanding of **projects' contributions to inclusive growth**, particularly through the skills pathway and social value activity.
- Relationships are being strengthened with other City and Growth Deals to support the development of their **employability and skills programmes**.
- **Knowledge exchange and shared learning** with other UK City and Growth Deals continue through the Benefits Network, with particularly strong links being developed with the Edinburgh and Cardiff City Region Deals.

Skills Assessments

Shaping effective BRCD Employability and Skills activity requires a clear understanding of the skills landscape across key growth sectors. In 2021, through the BRCD Employability and Skills Proposition, Further and Higher Education Partners outlined their commitment to *assess the skills needs aligned to BRCD investment projects and seek to determine where gaps in provision exist*.

Mapping current and future skills gaps is essential to aligning workforce development with economic need, enabling targeted investment, reducing skills mismatches, and supporting more inclusive skills planning.

To date, skills assessments have been completed for the Construction, Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries and Digital sectors, with the most recently completed Skills Assessment for Life and Health Sciences published in November 2025.

The Skills Assessments recommendations shape the development of coordinated actions that will support skills provision and align it to future job creation and priority growth sectors.

Employability and Skills activity is now mapped and tracked across partner organisations to ensure alignment, avoid duplication, and maximise how well recommendations can be addressed through existing and planned delivery.

To ensure a future workforce capable of capitalising on Deal related job opportunities is in place, the Employability and Skills Proposition also established three strategic priorities:

- Skills for Inclusion
- Skills for Growth
- Skills for a Digital Future

As the Programme has matured, employability and skills activity within projects is now systematically tracked against these priorities, supporting new upskilling and reskilling opportunities in preparation for future job creation.



Employability and Skills Interventions

The case studies below offer a selection of the activity underway and demonstrate the Programme's commitment to employability and skills initiatives that have been designed to strengthen the skills pipeline, develop progression pathways and support business growth.

Together, they will help to drive inclusive economic growth and ensure that investment benefits are accessible across the region.

Skills for Inclusion

Skills for Inclusion focuses on addressing skills imbalances and widening access to employment opportunities through the development of socially inclusive progression pathways.

Engagement with schools to support earlier, better informed career choices - by raising awareness of both the BRCD projects and the priority growth sectors - is a key mechanism in promoting these pathways.

- In partnership with Queen's University Belfast's School of Natural and Built Environment, the design team for the Carrickfergus Regeneration Project led a regeneration and placemaking exercise with Carrickfergus Academy. Queen's University Belfast Masters students supported GCSE / Key Stage 3 pupils in exploring regeneration challenges and opportunities within Carrickfergus town centre.

The project involved a place-based analysis of Carrickfergus town to identify areas young people currently use, enjoy or avoid. As well as exposing pupils to potential higher education career paths related to the built environment, student findings were compiled into formal academic reports and are being reviewed to inform design development and ensure that youth perspectives are embedded in the regeneration proposals.

- During the past year, Studio Ulster has offered more than 190 young people from a wide range of schools - including St Malachy's College, Banbridge Academy, and Royal Belfast Academical Institution - together with organisations such as Cinemagic and the Nerve Centre, an opportunity to step into the world of virtual production and experience cutting-edge ideas brought to life on screen.

These workshops, visits, and immersive on-site experiences are helping to raise early awareness of potential creative industries careers among school and community groups, ultimately widening access, supporting progression pathways, and building a sustainable local talent pipeline for the region's growing creative economy.



Skills for Growth

Skills for Growth focuses on working with employers and delivery partners to align skills provision with employment opportunities in BRCD supported growth sectors. It includes enabling new apprenticeship pathways. Projects are continuing to play an active role in supporting and sustaining these opportunities.

As part of its commitment to developing next generation talent, AMIC, working with Belfast Metropolitan College and industry partners, has recruited two Apprentice IT Technicians - a crucial component to support advanced manufacturing innovation.

AMIC is also working with Belfast Metropolitan College to help strengthen Northern Ireland's advanced manufacturing skills base through dedicated composite-focused apprenticeship training to 20 more apprentices, to support the aerospace industry in NI.

These collaborations offer apprentices industry relevant skills, practical experience in real-world manufacturing processes, a clear pathway into high value careers and demonstrate the strength of Northern Ireland's apprenticeship ecosystem.



Skills for a Digital Future

Skills for a Digital Future focuses on building digital literacy from the grassroots up while also strengthening digital transformation across businesses.

More than 330 learners have now been supported through Digital Skills Academies, delivered by the Centre for Digital Innovation and Technology (CDIT).

At a recent event hosted at Digital Catapult, academy participants had an opportunity to gain valuable insights into future career pathways arising from BRCD-funded projects, including opportunities within Studio Ulster, CDHT, AMIC, Digital Twin, and other projects.

Meanwhile the £7.5 million Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF), led by Newry Mourne and Down District Council, also had its origins within the BRCD.

This digitally driven innovation to accelerate business growth operates across all four City and Growth Deal regions and reflects the shared ambitions of central and local government to stimulate digital innovation and transformation among small and micro businesses and social enterprises.

To date, 270 letters of offer valued at almost £4.5m have been issued to SMEs across the BRCD region.



Project Summary

 Operational

 Fit-out

 Construction

 Design

 Pre-design

 Approved

 Signed

 Approved

Dates are indicative
IST=Integrated Supply Team

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL																	
Project		Delivery stage	Outline Business Case	Contract for Funding	Full Business Case	Planning approval	Design Team	Supply Team		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030		Partners	
Innovation	AMIC							Arcadis	Henry Brothers	Fit out	Operational					Lead	  
	iREACH Health							Turner & Townsend	Graham	Construction	Operational					Lead	 
	Momentum One Zero							Atkins Realis	Henry Brothers	Construction	Operational						
	CDHT							Arup	Procurement live	Procurement Supply Team	Clinical Living Labs (BHSCT sites) - Operational						
	Studio Ulster							RPP Architects	Graham Nant Studios	Operational							
Digital Regional Innovation Hubs	Digital Twin					N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Operational							
	i4C Cleantech Centre							WH Stephens	Expected to go live in Winter 2026	Procurement Supply Team					Construction	Operational	
	ANDBC Hub							Expected to go live in Winter 2026	Expected to go live in Autumn 2027	CfF agreement	Procurement Supply Team	Procurement Design Team	Construction		Operational		



Dates are indicative
IST=Integrated Supply Team

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL																					
Project				Delivery stage	Outline Business Case	Contract for Funding	Full Business Case	Planning	Design Team	Supply Team	Operator	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Partners			
Tourism and Regeneration	Bangor Waterfront	Pickie Fun Park							McAdam	Expected to go live in Autumn 2026	Crumlin Road Gaol		Procurement IST	Construction	Operational			Ards and North Down Borough Council			
		Ballyholme Yacht Club							WH Stephens	Expected to go live in Summer 2026	Ballyholme Yacht Club		Procurement IST	Construction		Operational					
		Urban Waterfront and Public Realm							Live	Expected to go live in Winter 2027	N/A	Design Team		Procurement IST	Construction		Operational				
		Marina							Live	Expected to go live in Autumn 2027	ANDBC	Design Team		Procurement IST	Construction		Operational				
	Belfast Stories								Snohetta - TODD	Live	TBC	Procurement IST		Construction		Operational		Belfast City Council			
	Destination Royal Hillsborough	Public Realm								Atkins Realis	Expected to go live in Summer 2026	N/A		Procurement IST	Construction	Operational			Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council		
		Car Parks									Expected to go live in Summer 2026	N/A		Procurement IST	Construction	Operational					
		Park St Hub									Expected to go live in Autumn 2026	LCCC		Procurement IST	Construction	Operational					
		Court House							Consarc	Expected to go live in Winter 2026	HRP		Procurement IST		Construction	Operational				Historic Royal Palaces	
		Fort									Expected to go live in Winter 2026	HRP		Procurement IST		Construction	Operational				



Dates are indicative
IST=Integrated Supply Team

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL																
Project		Delivery stage	Outline Business Case	Contract for Funding	Full Business Case	Planning	Design Team	Supply Team	Operator	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Partners
Tourism and Regeneration	Carrickfergus Regeneration	The Castle					McAdam Design	Expected to go live in Summer 2026	TBC	Procurement IST	Construction	Operational				
		New Visitor Centre						Expected to go live in Summer 2026	TBC	Procurement IST	Construction	Operational				
		Public Realm						Expected to go live in Summer 2026	N/A	Procurement IST	Construction	Operational				
		Historic Walls Walk						Expected to go live in Summer 2026	N/A	Procurement IST	Construction	Operational				
		Arts and Culture Venue						Expected to go live in Summer 2026	N/A	Procurement IST	Construction	Operational				
	Gobbins Phase II						Hood McGowan Kirk	Expected to go live in Summer 2027	TBC		Procurement IST	Construction	Operational			
	Newry City Centre Regeneration	Theatre / Conference					Hamilton Architects	Woodvale Construction	TBC	Construction	Operational					
		Civic Hub						Pending	N/A	Construction (subject to JR)	Operational (subject to JR)					
Infrastructure	Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2				N/A	TBC	Atkins Realis	Expected to go live in Autumn 2027	N/A	Detailed Design of routes	Procurement of Contractor and Construction: Phase 1					
	Lagan Pedestrian Cycle Bridge				N/A	TBC	Amey Consulting	Ongoing	N/A	Procurement IST	Detailed Design and Construction	Operational				
	Newry Southern Relief Road				N/A	TBC	AECOM	Expected to go live in Spring 2028	N/A			Procurement IST	Construction			

EMERGING BENEFITS AND REAL WORLD IMPACT

As we move deeper into delivery, the BRCD partnership remains committed to achieving the full range of benefits and outcomes that the Deal is designed to deliver. This includes a focus not only on the benefits arising directly from individual projects, but also on the wider value generated through partnership working across the region.

A programme level Benefits Realisation Framework to showcase the overall impact of the Deal across the region is now being developed. While this work is continuing, partners are developing Benefits Realisation Plans as part of the business case process and where appropriate are also starting to capture early benefits associated with their individual projects.

Real World Impact - Case Study Examples

Investment in our Innovation Centres is already supporting our ambition to enhance key growth sectors and place the region in the top table of digital innovation.

The COSMIC (Cybersecurity for Operational Systems in Manufacturing and Industrial Control) project, developed by Angoka, in partnership with AMIC and Invest NI, will deliver a **cyber security solution** to protect organisations from the risk of cyber-attacks arising from the digitalisation of manufacturing systems. The initiative brings the best of Northern Ireland's strengths in manufacturing and cyber security together to create a market leading technology.

Addressing members on the transformational innovation investments being delivered through the Belfast Region City Deal, Momentum One Zero recently demonstrated to the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils, how **place-based innovation** can translate research strength into productivity and high-quality employment. A strategic cross-border partnership between Momentum One Zero and CeADAR, Ireland's National Centre for Applied AI, will support joint bids, shared infrastructure opportunities, and accelerate industry adoption of digital technologies across the island.

However, the BRCD partnership also recognises the importance of identifying and reporting on wider, cross cutting benefits; whether they have been planned or are emerging organically through collaboration.

A range of programme level benefits have already been realised over the last year. The sections below offer an example of how the Programme is starting to deliver against its overall ambitions, particularly through the most advanced projects which at this stage are within the Innovation pillar.



Momentum One Zero is also supporting a Digital One Health Hub, an innovative approach to **improve human, animal and environmental health outcomes** using data and digital technologies drawing on the interdisciplinary expertise of a range of schools within the university. The project will support 32 SMEs operating in health and agri-technology, by helping them to integrate digital tools and artificial intelligence into their growth strategies.

Led by the Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator and managed within the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT), Graphic Medicine is exploring how to better **tell the story of health inequality in Belfast**. Through a creative collaboration with an illustrator from the School of Art, complex social determinants of health will be translated into visual storytelling to create more impactful, human-centred narratives that will encourage stakeholders not just to understand inequality, but to rethink how they respond to it.

Another of CDHT's projects is the BT Ireland Innovation Centre (BTIIC), a new £6m initiative that will focus on AI, Machine Learning, Data Science, Cybersecurity and the Internet of Things to **transform ideas into technological solutions**. A key aspect of the research will be to develop digital healthcare technologies.

The CDHT team at Ulster University also co-leads on the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's (EPSRC) £3M Digital Twin Network Plus project to find Digital Twin projects involving **advanced wireless network systems with health delivery**.

A £1.2 million grant from the Wolfson Foundation will enable the creation of a specialist, state-of-the-art ophthalmology suite within iREACH Health - the BRCD funded clinical research innovation centre - to **accelerate eye research and support the translation of clinical trials into new treatments**.



This will facilitate advanced eye research focused on ageing, early disease pathology and the impact of conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), Down's Syndrome and Alzheimer's on eyesight.

The City Deal Investment is also focused on Leveraging Additional Funding.

Led by AMIC, in collaboration with the Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) centre, the €8.3m PEACEPLUS funded DATUM project focuses on **digital transformation for small and medium sized (SMEs) manufacturing businesses**. Launched in February 2026, it helps manufacturers to understand their digital readiness and to build capabilities needed to become more competitive, data-driven and future focussed.

SMEs across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland will receive support to develop a clear, guided pathway to digital transformation, including funding and expert support to implement solutions that will strengthen their long-term competitiveness.



As part of the international **'Improving Inclusive Outcomes' (i3o)** programme, Queen's University researchers led by Queen's Communities and Place (QCAP) together with innovation centres, policy-makers from Belfast City Council and Innovation City Belfast, and representatives from the NI Community Research and Innovation Network, have been exploring models and practices to make innovation investment more inclusive.



Study visits to i3o partners in Newcastle, UK, Medellín, Colombia and Pittsburgh, USA enabled knowledge sharing and learning about delivering more inclusive innovation through components such as art and culture, infrastructure and access to public spaces and education.

Opportunities to build a more inclusive innovation ecosystem will be maximised if communities and voluntary sector organisations are recognised as equal partners in shaping the region's future.

Ulster University has been awarded €9.1 million in funding supported by PEACEPLUS to support the development of the Health Frontiers Technology Innovation Centre (HF-TIC), a **multidisciplinary initiative focused on advancing MedTech and digital health solutions**. As part of CDHT, it unites over 20 partners from Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland to drive innovation in medical devices, healthcare digital transformation and AI-driven health solutions, strengthening collaboration between academia, industry, and clinical partners.

Health Frontiers have a range of deliverables that are focused on industry innovation outcomes. Focusing on industry-led challenges will allow Health Frontiers to improve business competitiveness and to contribute to a more economically active region.

While many of the projects are still at developmental stage, we are already focusing our efforts to Regenerate Major Towns and Cities and Create Compelling World Class Visitor Attractions.



The design team lead for Carrickfergus Regeneration awarded one of their Community Investment Scheme Grants to Silverstream Primary School and Nursery Unit in Greenisland. The £7,500 funding will enable the Primary School to develop a **new Outdoor Learning Space and Nature Nook** in the school playground and transform the outdoor learning space into a place where curiosity and creativity can thrive.

In addition to the contribution being made through the Employability and Skills Pillar, progress across the programme is supporting our commitment to Connecting Local People to More and Better Jobs.

Ulster University is playing a key role in addressing the growing skills demand around virtual production and emerging screen technologies. The access to specialist facilities that Studio Ulster offers has enabled the establishment of the University’s Masters Degree in Film and TV Production. The programme introduces students to virtual production workflows and explores how these technologies can be used creatively alongside more traditional filmmaking approaches. The first cohort of graduates in December 2025 marked an important moment in the development of a **longer-term talent pipeline aligned with the needs of the screen industries.**

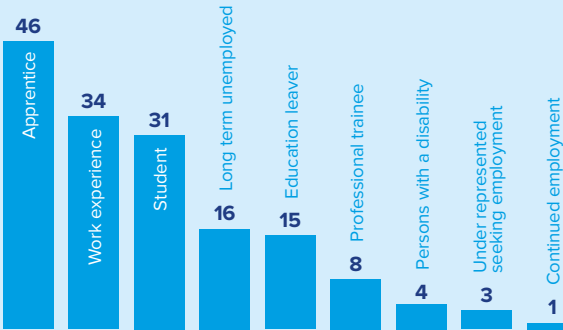
Since the beginnings of Belfast Stories, ongoing engagement with communities and stakeholders has been integral to its success.

At the heart of this ambitious project is a love for Belfast, its people and their stories. As well as the stories to be told across the Belfast Stories site, the project has always recognised the opportunities for stories to be discovered, retold or imagined and for skills to be developed, retained and supported across the city.

To support this, the Belfast Stories project launched a **£300k Community and Cultural Grants** programme in February 2026 to help communities develop a stories-based approach to participation and to create a legacy that extends beyond the physical building.

Social Value benefits delivered to date through contracts included 158 people accessing employment related training and development opportunities, such as apprenticeships, work experience, student placements and trainee roles.

Through its Design Team, Newry Southern Relief Road, for example, is equipping five Civil Engineering BEng **Degree Apprentices**, equipping them with technical expertise in structural design, geotechnics, and sustainability, as well as project management and communication skills.



Breakdown of employment-related training and development emerging through social value

158 People
in Training or Development through Social Value delivery

Showcasing the Opportunity

As well as overseeing the BRCD programme, the BRCD partnership recognises the wider contribution it can make to the region’s inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Partners understand that by working collaboratively they can achieve more and prepare better for potential future shocks and stresses.

The partnership is keen to learn from others and to extend its own influence in ways that might further their shared ambitions. This includes supporting the other NI Growth Deals by sharing learning and taking account of planned mutually beneficial growth activity.

Throughout the year partners have engaged with counterparts from other jurisdictions whose Deals are further developed. As well as ongoing participation on a UK-wide City Deal Benefits Network, BRCD welcomed representatives from Cardiff City Deal to a recent study visit to share learning and exchange insights on skills, employability, innovation, and inclusive growth.

In June 2025, to ensure that local businesses are aware of the significant opportunities the BRCD will create for the construction sector over the next 10 years, BRCD partners hosted an event - in conjunction with the Construction Employers Federation - to promote the construction pipeline arising from the investment programme. Businesses learned about upcoming projects and about the Deal’s inclusive growth ambitions. The event also presented details of types of support available to help the sector respond to labour and skills challenges.

This was followed in March 2026 with a Meet the Buyer Event in the City Hall where Belfast City Council, in conjunction with InterTrade Ireland, brought together more than 60 public sector buyers and 400 suppliers from small and medium businesses, offering a further platform for the opportunities emerging from BRCD projects.

The Augment the City Challenge Fund provided a range of funding, skills development and business support to local SMEs working across innovation and creative industries sectors to help build their capacity to explore the future role of immersive technologies in visitor experiences. In outreach to local businesses, and as part of ‘Augment the City’, delegates from across the region gathered to learn about the successful projects emerging from the Industry Competition in January 2026. The three finalist companies, each of which received £100k to develop a prototype of their idea, were unveiled at the event where representatives shared insights on the potential of their ideas.

Beyond the BRCD partnership, the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership is also delivering a structured programme of activity to help ensure that the region is positioned to continue attracting investment and delivering sustainable, inclusive growth. This includes supporting delivery of BRCD projects by attracting collaborative partnerships. Over the past year, this has included ensuring a presence at international real estate investment conferences, such as UKREiF 2026 and MIPIM 2026 to highlight our city region’s proposition to a global audience.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Pillar	Project	BRCD capital investment £'000	Partner capital investment £'000	Other capital investment £'000	Total planned capital investment £'000	Contract for Funding and Funding Agreement signed	BRCD Spend Prior Years £'000	BRCD Spend FY25-26 £'000	Total BRCD Spend to Date £'000
 Innovation	AMIC	78,700	9,300	10,000	98,000	Jan 2023	13,556	27,891	41,447
	Momentum 1.0	52,400	21,200	-	73,600	Mar 2023	1,904	2,175	4,079
	iREACH Health	39,700	19,000	5,700	64,400	Mar 2023	5,729	8,481	14,210
	CDHT	34,000	4,100	-	38,100	Dec 2024	-	1,000	1,000
	Studio Ulster	25,200	3,600	2,900	31,700	Jul 2022	15,685	1,941	17,626
 Digital	Challenge Fund Programme	55,000	110	-	55,110	Individual agreements signed	343	566	909
	Enabling Infrastructure	25,000	-	-	25,000	Individual agreements signed	-	-	5,297
	Regional Innovation Hubs:	40,000	5,000	22,970	67,970	See below	2,219	3,078	5,297
	UK Digital Twin Centre	15,000	-	22,600	37,600	Mar 2024	2,219	3,078	5,297
	Ards & North Down Council Digital Hub	8,920	1,100	370	10,390		-	-	-
 Tourism & Regeneration	i4C Innovation and Cleantech Centre	20,500	3,570	-	24,070	May 2025	-	-	-
	Bangor Waterfront	40,000	20,000	12,800	72,800	Jan 2023	56	234	290
	Carrickfergus Regeneration	26,400	14,400	1,400	42,200	Nov 2022	858	442	1,300
	Newry City Centre Regeneration	8,000	40,000	-	48,000	Jan 2023	190	-	190
	Belfast Stories	65,000	35,000	-	100,000		-	-	-
	Destination Royal Hillsborough	20,000	4,325	2,350	26,675	Jun 2024	-	-	-
	The Gobbins Phase II	12,600	1,000	-	13,600	May 2024	162	21	183
	Mourne Mountain Gateway	30,000	14,600	-	44,600	May 2024	295	162	457
 Infrastructure	Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge	12,100	13,340	-	25,440	N/A	778	134	912
	Newry Southern Relief Road	93,400	28,750	-	122,150	N/A	1,220	545	1,765
	Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2	35,000	13,610	75,970	124,580	N/A	-	242	242
Totals		699,500	247,335	134,090	1,080,925		42,995	46,912	89,907

NEXT STEPS

Over the next year as the Programme progresses, the BRCD Partnership will continue to focus on delivery and on maximising the benefits of this transformative investment.

It is important that the projects can be delivered at pace and we expect significant progress across all pillars of investment as we move into 2026-27.

The opening of Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre's Factory of the Future at Global Point Newtownabbey over the coming months will be another exciting milestone for the Programme. AMIC will become a hub for manufacturing innovation projects and collaboration activities, enabling companies to develop capability and access new technology to inform their own investments.

AMIC's growing team of 80+ engineers and technology specialists are working with a range of businesses across multiple sectors in projects both large and small including:

- Invest NI funded Project 4WARD (£4.8m to support Industry 4.0 enabled welding automation research and development)
- PEACEPLUS funded DATUM Project (€8.3m to support Digital Manufacturing Transformation)
- Several live Knowledge Transfer Projects



In addition we expect that:

- Construction will commence on CDHT and Newry Regeneration Theatre and Conference Centre
- Construction will continue for iREACH Health and Momentum One Zero
- Design Teams will be appointed for Bangor Waterfront Urban Waterfront and Public Realm and Marina
- Belfast Stories Contract for Funding will be signed, the planning application submitted and a Contractor appointed
- Carrickfergus Regeneration planning applications will be submitted and the Supply Team Contract packages issued to market
- The BRCD Regional Contracts for Innovation programme and the BRCD Innovation Centres Collaborative Grants programme will be launched
- Further business cases to support adoption of innovative projects utilising advanced wireless and AI technologies to be submitted and approved
- The OBC Addendums for Destination Royal Hillsborough, i4C Innovation & Cleantech Centre and The Gobbins Phase II will be approved, enabling design development and submission of planning applications
- Our final Skills Assessment on the Tourism and Hospitality sector will be produced

Another key priority for the Programme in the year ahead will be to progress the Digital projects and unlock significant funding opportunities to support local businesses across the city region.

Building on a period of engagement with central government, which has recognised the unique characteristics and opportunities within the Digital pillar, the Programme will bring forward a series of targeted funds aimed at supporting cutting-edge innovation and strengthening the capability of small and medium sized enterprises across the city region.

This will include support for the adoption of emerging technologies such as 5G and Artificial Intelligence, helping to enhance regional competitiveness and productivity and the launch of a series of challenge funds to help address sustainability, resilience, and health and well-being related challenges.

To support the Digital Programme, we will enter into an agreement to appoint a senior staff member from Connected Places Catapult to work within the BRCD team supporting innovative businesses - to include SME engagement and the procurement of innovative solutions - on their growth journey towards commercial success.

BRCD partners continue to look to the future and explore further investment opportunities. Given the recent announcements in relation to investment in innovation through the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund and Enhanced Investment Zones and the City Deal's own funding commitment to its innovation centres, the partnership is keen to realise the region's full potential in this area.

To support this, we are commissioning a more in-depth exploration of the region's innovation potential, to better understand how well we are performing in terms of the sectors identified in the UK Modern Industrial Strategy. As well as helping to

inform conversations with our Government partners about the role of the region in contributing to these ambitions, the information this data analysis produces will help focus our efforts and future investment towards any relative specialisms or emerging areas of growth identified.

Over the coming year we will also work across the programme on the development of benefit realisation plans as well as engaging with partners to strengthen understanding of projects' contributions to inclusive growth, particularly through the skills pathway and social value activity.

We will collaborate with partners to develop action plans emerging from our skills assessments and projects will continue to identify opportunities to work with training and upskilling providers - including universities, Further Education colleges, and Labour Market Partnerships. Efforts to develop employability and skills related funding proposals - at local, cross-border, and all-island levels - will also continue.

As we move further into delivery, the significant issues presented by the current global economic environment - and in particular the impact this will have on our tourism, regeneration and infrastructure projects - continue to challenge us. These projects are central to the Deal's ambition to deliver inclusive economic growth and to ensure regional balance across the programme.

Construction inflation and time delays have had significant cost implications for these investments and council partners are securing additional funding to address the shortfall and ensure delivery. Over the coming year we will continue to work with government partners to address the ongoing cost pressures, explore options for projects to progress more quickly and mitigate risk to maximise the realisation of benefits for the whole region.



COUNCIL PANEL 2025/26

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council








Councillor Matthew Magill

Alderman Mark Cosgrove

Councillor Jay Burbank

Councillor Michael Goodman

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council








Alderman Allan Ewart MBE

Councillor Claire Kemp

Councillor Tim Mitchell

Councillor John Lavery BEM

Ards and North Down Borough Council








Alderman Alan McDowell

Councillor Alistair Cathcart

Councillor Tom Brady

Councillor Craig Blaney

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council








Alderman Billy Ashe MBE

Alderman Robert Logan

Councillor Matthew Warwick

Councillor Robin Stewart

Belfast City Council







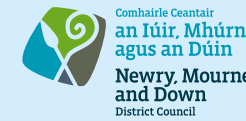

Councillor Sarah Bunting

Councillor Ronan McLaughlin

Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown

Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Newry Mourne and Down District Council








Councillor Oonagh Hanlon

Councillor Declan Murphy

Councillor Pete Byrne

Councillor Henry Reilly

SUPPORTING ARRANGEMENTS
PARTNERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The governance arrangements in place for BRCD ensure that decisions are taken in an open and transparent way, while remaining in step with partner organisations’ individual decision making processes.

The BRCD operates under a set of Governance arrangements which includes:

- A Council Panel with representatives from all six councils, providing political oversight to help ensure that the Deal continues to align to the vision of inclusive economic growth and ambitions across the region.
- An Executive Board, responsible for driving the delivery of the BRCD Programme in accordance with the requirements of the Deal document.
- A number of Boards with responsibility for overseeing each of the pillars of investment, programme finances and programme communication.

These arrangements align fully with the NI wide arrangements for City and Growth Deals which are overseen by the Northern Ireland City/Growth Deals Delivery Board on behalf of the UK Government and the NI Executive.

The BRCD Partnership understands the need to evolve and improve its structures and processes

internally and with government partners. During the last year the Executive Board commissioned independent expert support to explore the most appropriate mechanisms to achieve this and will be implementing the recommended changes in a phased way over the next year to ensure they are best placed to deliver the Deal as it moves forward.

The Board also continues to work with other Deals locally to share its learning and to attend stocktake exercises and conversations with government partners to consider options for more efficient and streamlined ways of working.

Role of the Accountable Body

In addition, Belfast City Council acts as lead authority and Accountable Body for the Deal. To support the responsibilities of the lead authority, the BRCD Programme Management Office (PMO) comprises a small team of officers tasked with coordinating the development and day-to-day management of the BRCD Programme. Under direction of the Programme Director, the PMO also works to access opportunities identified and agreed by the Executive Board that have the potential to enhance and augment the Deal.



GLOSSARY OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

The BRCD has a number of frameworks and plans that sit behind the main Deal Document agreed in December 2021 and help describe the arrangements in place to ensure we deliver an effective Programme.

Document	Purpose
Deal Document	Document that confirms the joint partner commitment to full implementation of the BRCD. The Deal Document represents the statement of commitment to support and deliver the Deal.
Financial Agreement	Outlines the collective financial commitment of all partners over the lifetime of the deal to deliver the project outcomes as detailed in each approved business case.
Financial and Implementation Plan	Outlines detailed funding profiles for each project and programme and the appropriate financial stewardship, protocols and controls to ensure accountable delivery.
Governance and Assurance Framework	Outlines the procedures that BRCD partners will follow in relation to decision making and delivery of the Deal.
Communication Protocol	Sets out an agreed framework for BRCD communication protocols to ensure areas of responsibility and working practices are clearly defined.
Risk and Issue Management Framework and Registers	Outlines partners’ commitment to good corporate governance and helping to improve decision making, enhance outcomes and strengthen accountability.

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



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