

- 1 To facilitate more open and transparent government, Belfast City Council would like your permission to publish your consultation response in the public domain. Should you prefer us to treat your submission as confidential - either by publishing it as an anonymous response or by not publishing it at all - please indicate accordingly. Please indicate your publishing preference by selecting the appropriate box below.

Please select only one item

Yes, please publish my response with my name

Yes, please publish my response, but only include my organisation's name (for those responding on behalf of an organisation)

This response is written in consultation with:

- South Belfast Community Support Group – A group consisting of number of elected nominees from the community and voluntary groups that operate across South Belfast and seeks to coordinate and promote collective views for the communities they represent

- Forward South Partnership – A Board which brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle in partnership the economic, social and environmental problems which affect people in the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast

Yes, please publish my response, but do so anonymously

No, please do not publish my response (treat as confidential)

- 2 If you are interested in learning more about the Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Belfast Open Spaces Strategy and would like to be included on future mailing lists or if would like us to contact you to discuss issues relating to these, please indicate your consent for this to happen and also how you prefer to be contacted. Please note, your contact details will only be used as part of the development of the Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Belfast Open Spaces Strategy and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

Please select only one item

I give consent for you to contact me by Email

I give consent for you to contact me by telephone

I give consent for you to contact me by post

I do not wish to be contacted

If you have given your consent above to be contacted in the future about the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy and Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, please provide us with your preferred contact details below:

azadeh.sobout@forwardsouth.org

Introduction

3 What is your name?

Azadeh Sobout

4 What is your email address?

azadeh.sobout@forwardsouth.org

5 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation?

Please select only one item

- Individual
- Group/organisation ✓

6 What is your organisation? **Forward South Partnership**

GBIP - Draft vision statement

By 2035 green and blue infrastructure will be strategically planned to enhance ecosystem services that benefit all living, working in and visiting Belfast.

7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft vision statement above is appropriate? Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

GBIP - Strategic Principles

The GBIP vision will be supported by five strategic principles for green and blue infrastructure delivery. These are:

SP 1. Biodiverse

Although not all green and blue infrastructure assets will be delivered and managed primarily for biodiversity, all green and blue infrastructure should help enhance biodiversity. This is because biodiversity underpins the effectiveness of ecosystem services and the range of benefits that green and blue spaces provide to everyone.

SP2. Planned, interconnected networks

To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning to target delivery against the needs of the local communities. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan sets out a strategic framework for the future delivery of green and blue spaces.

SP3. Integrated into the urban environment

As with all urban systems, green and blue infrastructure should not be seen as independent. It needs to form an integrated part of the urban fabric of the city. This Plan highlights a range of opportunities for integrating green and blue infrastructure into the public realm and buildings through, for example, the use of sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water.

SP4. Well designed and managed

To work effectively, all infrastructure, including green and blue assets, need to be well designed and regularly maintained. This Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan sets out nine design principles for the provision of all green and blue spaces.

SP5. Appropriately funded

Green and blue infrastructure brings considerable value to the city. This value needs to be recognised and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits continue to be felt. The delivery of the Plan will require collaboration and resource from a number of sources, including working with developers and the use of Section 76 developer contributions.

9 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these five strategic principles are the correct ones to achieve the vision?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

10 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

One of the Strategic Principles of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan is “Planned, interconnected networks”. The GBIP acknowledges that formation of an interconnected network requires strategic planning to connect the needs of the local communities with all urban systems, green and blue infrastructure. The Plan however fails to make any reference to transport infrastructures for integrating green and blue infrastructure into the public realm, for example, the use of active and sustainable transport.

11 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these five strategic principles address your priorities?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (2015) highlights the lack of publicly accessible green space. On other note the NI Friends of Earth¹ records that 80% of Northern Ireland's transport budget is spent on roads. Dominance of the motorcar has become a defining feature of many urban places in Belfast. The high number of vehicles on our roads has a negative environmental impact through emissions and economic impact through congestion. Whilst private car access remains important, it should sit within a hierarchy of sustainable transportation. It is in this context that Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan should create opportunities for integrating green and blue infrastructure into the public transport.

In their approach to promoting active travel, the major transport development plans in Belfast (Transport Hub, etc.) have primarily focused on provision of bike schemes and other small-scale interventions. The green and blue infrastructure needs to be strategically planned to promote and support active travel as part of the ongoing transport development plan rather than an afterthought. It is therefore important for the strategy to provide stronger advocacy

¹ <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/northern-ireland>

for active travel elements (including infrastructure, promotion, etc.) alongside major development projects and transport schemes.

GBIP - Further comments

- 13 If there are any further comments you wish to make on the draft Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, please do so here:

Further comments

GBIP - Screenings

- 14 An Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment have been undertaken on the draft Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan. Are there any aspects of these that you would like to comment on? Please detail below.

BOSS - Draft vision statement

By 2035 Belfast will have a well-connected network of high-quality open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our city.

15 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft vision statement above is appropriate?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

BOSS - Strategic Principles

Seven strategic principles (SPs) have been agreed to support the protection, improvement, creation, accessibility and connectivity of our open space network. These are:

SP1. Provide welcoming shared spaces

Our high-quality open spaces are inviting and safe for everyone to use. There will be enough space to meet the needs of our growing city and our open spaces will be used to encourage community cohesion and social interaction.

SP2. Improve connectivity

Well-connected and accessible open spaces will form a green network to support safe and sustainable movement across the city.

SP3. Improve health and wellbeing

Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.

SP4. Support place-making and enhance the built environment

Our open spaces will positively contribute to the distinct setting and character of our neighbourhoods and the built environment, helping to retain and attract investment.

SP5. Increase resilience to climate change

Our open spaces will help us to minimise the impacts of climate change, including more severe rainfall events.

SP6. Protect and enhance the natural environment

By protecting and managing a wide range of habitats, our open spaces will strengthen biodiversity and benefit from the ecosystem services a healthy natural environment provides.

SP7. Be celebrated and support learning

Ensuring that events, activities and educational opportunities within our open spaces are well promoted, well used and valued by future generations.

17 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these seven strategic principles are the correct ones to achieve the vision?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

Lack of connectivity or consideration for the community in major developments such as the Gasworks and Lanyon Place has only served to cut the working-class communities off further from the city centre and effectively creates economic interfaces to the North and South. There are number of possibilities to integrate green and blue infrastructures in creating greenways and corridors in South Belfast. The strategy needs to provide a framework for a more integrated approach across government and in partnership with key stakeholders, to deliver the vision for green pathways and a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport.

19 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these seven strategic principles address your priorities?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

BOSS - Making it happen

We have agreed a set of headline actions that are currently underway or are planned for the next five years. The headline actions under each of the strategic principles are outlined in the following questions.

SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces

- Develop planning policy to protect existing open spaces.
- Identify specific opportunities within neighbourhoods to enhance and improve access to existing open spaces.
- Identify open space creation, enhancement and access improvements to inform Section 76 developer contribution policies and agreements.
- Use the planning process to ensure open spaces are well-designed, incorporate principles of 'Secured by Design' principles and have a long-term management arrangement secured.
- Ensure that new development proposals and regeneration plans contribute to improving our open spaces network (for example North Foreshore, Sirocco Quays).
- Continue to invest in new open space provision where possible across the city to meet growing demands and local needs.
- Work in partnership to encourage the creation of temporary or meanwhile uses of open space across the city.
- Actively support the development of a sustainable approach to the management and promotion of shared spaces.
- Update our bye-laws and improve enforcement within our parks and open spaces.
- Continue to work with the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and other stakeholders to improve safety in our open spaces.
- Facilitate stronger community involvement in the management and enhancement of open spaces; for example by working in partnership with Friends' groups, volunteers, community groups and user groups.

21 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

The strategy has identified a range of opportunities and headline actions to be delivered over the next five years. Infrastructure Investment Plan need to accord with sustainable travel policies and planning of active travel needs to be wider than just local schemes. The green and blue infrastructure needs to be linked with Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy to provide a long-term vision for the future of active travel in Belfast.

SP2: Improve connectivity

- Work to improve access and connections to our existing open space network for example the creation of a pedestrian-cycle bridge at the Lagan Gateway and Ormeau Park.
- Work in partnership to help remove or improve access through peace lines (for example Navarra Place).
- Continue to work with partners to support the creation of greenways across the open space network, such as the 'PEACE IV Shared Spaces, Connecting Open Spaces project'
- Work with partners, where appropriate, to develop under-utilised spaces across the city.
- Deliver planned physical, environmental and ecological improvements to the existing greenways network for example Holywood Arches Greenway's project.
- Develop a strategy to improve legibility of our greenways and community paths across the city, using methods such as consistent design and good signage.
- Improve linkages to the countryside from our open space network and support the creation of better pedestrian-cycle facilities within the countryside around Belfast (for example better public access to the Belfast Hills).
- Promote unique landscapes as destination open spaces, for example Belfast Lough, Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belfast and Castlereagh Hills.
- Work with partners to improve public access to restricted open spaces (dual usage of playing fields).
- Identify opportunities to work with partners to improve the functionality of amenity open space.

23 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

SP3: Improve health and wellbeing

- Develop an ongoing programme of activity focused on using open spaces to improve health and wellbeing, prioritising efforts in areas of health deprivation with the lowest open space accessibility.
- Identify and create opportunities for natural and informal play.
- Continue to encourage passive recreation by providing appropriate facilities (such as seating areas and shelters) across the open spaces network.
- Continue to maintain, invest and source funding to keep our sports facilities well maintained and affordable, for example physical investment in 3G pitches.
- Continue to encourage active recreation in our open spaces; for example walking, running, cycling, outdoor gyms, growing food and outdoor play.
- Encourage schools to use parks for active recreation and provide greater access to their sports facilities by local communities.
- Continue to work with the health and activity sector to develop programmes in our open spaces for at-risk groups.
- Target urban greening to help improve air quality in the city.

25 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

SP4: Support place-making and enhance the built environment

- Work with partners to create more green open space in the city centre, for example pocket parks.
- Encourage developers and partners to create meanwhile open space for sites awaiting redevelopment.
- Work with partners to green derelict land across the city.
- Work with partners to animate our public spaces across the city.
- In partnership continue to plan and fund the restoration of heritage assets in open spaces, for example the City Cemetery.

27 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

28 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

SP5: Increase resilience to climate change

- Work with Northern Ireland Water's 'Living with Water Programme' (LwWP) to identify open spaces that will help manage drainage and reduce flood risk.
- Identify ways to store rainwater for reuse in the management of our open spaces.
- Develop sustainable management practices in our open spaces for example increase wildflower planting and composting and reduce the use of fertilisers and chemicals.
- Increase tree and shrub planting where appropriate to provide shelter from extreme weather.
- Incorporate an appreciation of climate change risks and opportunities within open space management planning.

29 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

Active travel should be a crucial element of the green and blue infrastructure Strategy and it should be taken into consideration 'not just for transport and alleviating congestion, but town planning, public health, obesity, mental wellbeing, air quality, the environment and, of course, climate change'².

² Robert Courts (Witney) (Con) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-07-09/debates/C1FCA47F-DCB1-428B-9C9E-B3EF56A3E2F1/ActiveTravel>

SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment

- Develop planning policies and management practices that protect existing and work to enhance areas of ecological importance, including priority habitats.
- In partnership, support research that prioritises ecological improvements.
- Improve and create new habitats and natural features that enhances native biodiversity, help enable species movement and meet the objectives of the LBAP.
- Identify opportunities to adopt more sustainable land management practices such as planting species rich meadow to reduce mowing or creating woodland coppice.
- Train and upskill staff on habitat management and maintenance regimes.
- Continue to work with our partners to extend and enhance vegetation along the greenway network.
- Manage and control factors affecting habitat management regimes for example invasive alien species, habitat fragmentation, lighting and disturbance.
- Educate users about habitats and species that thrive in our open spaces, for example by developing and promoting eco-trails.

31 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

SP7: Be celebrated and support learning

- Work with universities and SMEs to develop solutions to explore innovative ways to understand usage and the needs of local people.
- Continue to provide and fund a range of community events and programmes within our open spaces.
- Continue to work with our partners and the education sector to encourage more outdoor learning.
- Actively promote the range of activities, festivals and events taking place in our open spaces.
- Identify opportunities to increase income generation activities and funding that will help sustain our open spaces network.
- Celebrate the heritage value and culture of our open spaces through the delivery of community events, guided heritage walks and talks and civic celebrations.
- Continue to work with partners to develop volunteering and training programmes that promote lifelong learning.
- Improve engagement and communications with our open space users and non-users.

33 To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the correct headline actions under this strategic principle?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree ✓
- Neither/nor
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34 If you would like to comment on your answer, please do so here:

Additional comments

BOSS - Further comments

- 35 If there are any further comments you wish to make on the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, please do so here:

BOSS - Screenings

- 36 An Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment have been undertaken on the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy. Are there any aspects of these that you would like to comment on? Please detail below: