

IMPROVING THE
PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT

URBAN VILLAGES FOCUS MAGAZINE

CAPITAL SUPPLEMENT | SEPTEMBER 2021

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IMPROVING AREAS | STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES | LIVING BETTER TOGETHER

**URBAN
VILLAGES**

Thriving Places

IT IS EXCITING TO SEE THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMING SPACES AND PLACES ACROSS THE FIVE URBAN VILLAGE AREAS IN BELFAST AND DERRY~LONDONDERRY.

PROJECTS LARGE AND SMALL, LED BY COMMUNITY, ARE ALL DESIGNED WITH PURPOSE; AND IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT IMPROVING THE AREAS, BUT TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES AND CREATE SPACES WHERE PEOPLE CAN LIVE BETTER TOGETHER.

THE URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE IS CONTINUING TO INVEST IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES, CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES AND HELPING TO CREATE **#THRIVINGPLACES** IN URBAN VILLAGE AREAS **#BETTERTOGETHER**

 @URBANVILLAGESNI

SEPTEMBER 2021 URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE CAPITAL UPDATES



This supplement has been developed to begin to pull together the story of transformation across the many capital build projects that have been delivered by the Urban Villages Initiative, across the five Urban Village areas, over the past four years.

Read the stories of growth and development, working with dedicated community partners and delivery partners from across Government, Councils and Housing Associations, to make a difference, and have a positive impact on people's lives.



The impact across the areas is not only one of physical improvement, it is also about the way these projects create shared space, inside and out, to make more room for inclusive, welcoming and diverse experiences, connecting people and places. These new and redeveloped facilities will be supported by Shared Space action plans to realise their good relations ambitions.

There have been 44 Urban Villages capital building projects completed, and many more will be underway over the next year, as together we invest in creating thriving places.

LINSEY FARRELL, DIRECTOR,
THE URBAN VILLAGES
INITIATIVE

IMPROVING THE
PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT

BUILDING
COMMUNITY
CAPACITY

FOSTERING
POSITIVE
COMMUNITY
IDENTITIES

RANGE OF PROJECTS - Play parks; community space; integrated services; public realm; training cafés; health & wellbeing; childcare; gyms; performance space; extensions and improvements; large public parks, and much more.

URBAN VILLAGE AREAS - Derry-Londonderry: Bogside, Fountain & Bishop Street. South Belfast: Sandy Row, Donegall Pass & The Markets. North Belfast: Ardoyne & Greater Ballysillan. East Belfast: Newtownards Road, Grampian Avenue to Bridge End. West Belfast: Colin Area.

Front cover image is of the Leap of Faith Community Sculpture that is being reinstalled as a feature at the entrance of the recently constructed Páirc nua Chollann funded by the Urban Villages Initiative. Image by Pacemaker.

MEET THE TEAM

While it takes a whole team effort, and full engagement from the Urban Villages team, working with community and a range of partners to deliver the capital build programme across the Urban Village areas, there are a few key players that have kept the programme moving.

Through significant investment from the Executive, the Urban Villages Initiative has already been able to deliver a range of projects across the five Urban Village areas including play parks, community hubs, destination parks, community centres, building extensions and public realm, projects large and small. These are not just about improving the physical environment they are helping build stronger, more resilient and connected communities.



CIARAN MCGURK
CAPITAL DELIVERY
MANAGER

“Working in the Urban Villages Capital Team gives me great satisfaction as I have worked on projects from the very beginning, and seeing them come to life and having a positive impact on people’s lives. The projects we work on create shared spaces and help to develop thriving places.

It is hugely satisfying seeing a community organisation stepping outside their comfort zone and embracing a capital build, and great to see their energy to engage with new partnerships and new ideas.”



CARL SOUTHERN
TECHNICAL PROJECTS
SPONSOR & ARCHITECT

“Good design is life enhancing. It has the potential to improve our quality of life and wellbeing and enables us all to fulfil our dreams at work, at play and at home. In my role, I add value by improving and enabling good design decision-making to improve the physical environment across the five Urban Village Areas.

We have now demonstrated this on many completed projects and will continue to do so through some amazing projects to come, across the five Urban Villages areas.”



STEVEN TRAINOR
CAPITAL PROJECTS
SPONSOR

“The Urban Villages Initiative is helping to improve the physical environment in areas of high deprivation in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry where these improvements can make such a difference to people’s lives, and I am really pleased to be a part of that.

I enjoy working with people from local communities and our partners across government and councils, and that collaborative approach is what makes these projects such a success.”



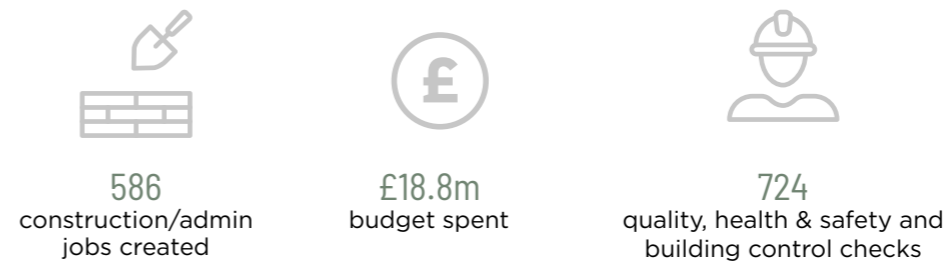
FIONNUALA FRENCH
DEPUTY PROGRAMME
DELIVERY MANAGER -
CAPITAL

“The Urban Villages capital team works across five Urban Village areas and with a range of partners from government and community. My role enables me to support the capital team in relation to finance and governance and ensuring that the programme is achieving the objectives for the people who will benefit from the new facilities in their communities.

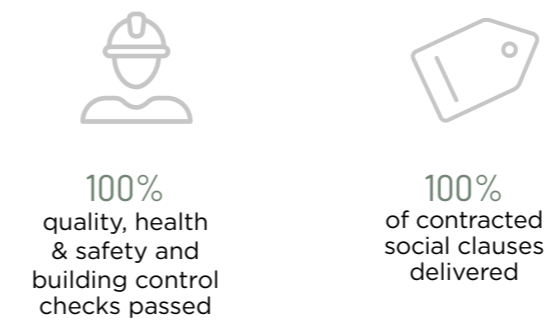
I enjoy the challenge of working with different partners to ensure successful delivery of each project.”

EVALUATION

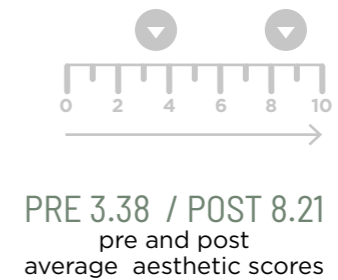
CONSTRUCTION PHASE - How much did we do?



CONSTRUCTION PHASE - How well did we do it?



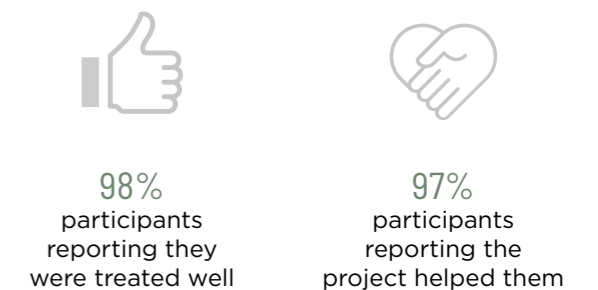
CONSTRUCTION PHASE - Is anyone better off?



POST - CONSTRUCTION - How much did we do?



POST - CONSTRUCTION - How well did we do it?



IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?



THIS IS SUCH A POSITIVE BOOST FOR THE COLIN AREA. IN ADDITION TO THE NEW TRANSPORT SYSTEM WHICH HAS MASSIVELY IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY ACROSS BELFAST, THE CIVIC SQUARE HAS PROVIDED US WITH A GREAT VENUE TO HOST A RANGE OF EVENTS.

Annie Armstrong, Manager, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP)

AWARD WINNING COLIN CONNECT TRANSPORT HUB AND COLIN TOWN SQUARE

The award-winning Colin Connect Transport Hub and Colin Town Square were completed in 2019.

The Urban Villages Initiative worked collaboratively with community partners on this development. The Executive invested £1.75 million in the Transport Hub and Town Square, with almost almost £1 million contributed by Department for Infrastructure, who were also delivery partners.

Annie Armstrong, Manager, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP), said: "We are delighted to see our ambitious plans come to fruition."

The state-of-the-art, multi award-winning Colin Connect Transport Hub has integrated community capacity, and with Colin Town Square provides quality shared spaces to host a variety of events and activities for the local community and visitors to the area.

This project has allowed the community to connect better with each other and the rest of the city, and the rest of the city can connect with Colin. We can invite people to visit Colin now to show how positive, vibrant and welcoming it is.

All the events we have held here to date have been very successful but the defining moment for me as a community worker was the very first event we held.

The excitement was not only on children's faces but adults too, it was overwhelming! From that first event, it has continued to be a key location for events and more recently it has been key for us to provide safe activities during the covid pandemic including an outdoor cinema.

JOHN PAUL (JP) RUSSELL, ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, CNP

 The first ever event at the Colin Town Square 'Santa Comes to Colin'
https://youtu.be/sH_eg-iA-1

AWARDS

Architect: Hall McKnight

- ★ 2019 Liam McCormick Prize for Northern Ireland's Best Building of the Year
- ★ 2019 RIBA National Award
- ★ 2019 RSUA Living Places award
- ★ 2019 RSUA 'Project Architect of the Year' award



“The completion of the new park in Colin will have a tremendous impact locally. Having access to walking trails, skate park and play facilities on your doorstep is amazing. The health and wellbeing benefits for the community will be the legacy of this project. I have no doubt that community relations will also be stronger with many new community projects being planned to utilise the new space.”

MÁIRE SCOTT, LAGMORE COMMUNITY FORUM

“A SYMBOL OF THE NEW COLIN”

{Isobel Loughran, Chief Executive, Footprints Women’s Centre}

This project is transforming a vacant 17-acre site on Stewartstown Road into a high-quality destination park.

The Park will include, a play park; teen space and pump track; event space, and environmental learning and wetland habitat. Events and activities in the park will provide opportunity for better engagement, bringing people of all ages together in this fantastic new shared space.

Following a local naming consultation this new park is now officially called, ‘Páirc nua Chollann’. It will provide a high quality, safe space for locals and visitors to the Colin area.

The renovated community sculpture, the Leap of Faith will be a feature at the new entrance to the park.

The Urban Villages Initiative has invested £5 million in this transformational project which is being delivered by Belfast City Council, on land transferred to the local authority by the Department for Communities.

On completion of the park, Belfast City Council will manage the facility, this will include running events and activities for both local community and visitors to the park.

This is an artist’s impression and not the final design

GROWING COLIN ALLOTMENTS AND HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE

The upgrade to the Colin Allotments and Healthy Living Centre has been a real success. The investment of £90,000 by the Urban Villages Initiative has delivered improved functionality and accessibility at the Healthy Living Centre.



At the opening, early in 2020, Junior Minister Kearney and the Lord Mayor enjoyed joining pupils from Oakwood Integrated Primary School at a nutrition and horticultural class at the Allotments. The facility offers a range of classes, and is used by schools, Men’s Shed groups and public bodies to support innovative approaches to health and well-being and community engagement.

The Colin Allotments is an important community asset used by both the Colin community and people from outside the area. Before the Covid-19 crisis, children from schools across the Colin and North Belfast Urban Village areas were regular visitors.

Matthew McKinley, Manager, Colin Allotments said, **“The improvements have shaped the allotment project to deliver more favourable outcomes for the Colin area and beyond, and it has helped to future proof the capacity of the project.”**

This capital upgrade project was delivered by Belfast City Council on behalf of The Executive Office’s Urban Villages Initiative.

SUPPORTING GROWTH AT FOOTPRINTS WOMEN’S CENTRE

Footprints Women’s Centre provides a range of vital services for women from the local community, including Syrian women who settled in the area as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

The Centre has been transformed with £103,000 funding from the Urban Villages Initiative. The funding has enabled the Centre’s social supermarket to double in size and created a new entrance to the supermarket allowing access for disabled users.

Also, new office space and more flexible meeting rooms are being used for a range of activities including, private counselling and a social economy business, which has the potential to generate income and improve the centre’s sustainability.

Footprints is also part of a collaborative capacity-building programme in Colin supported by the Urban Villages Initiative.



“The extension of the centre has enabled our services to grow and provide the expansion of vital services to women and their families in Colin. Our Social Supermarket provides support and engagement for families including newcomer Syrian families, which has proved vital during this past year.”

ISOBEL LOUGHRAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, FOOTPRINTS WOMEN’S CENTRE



NEW GATE ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Plans are being finalised for the extension and reconfiguration of the existing New Gate Arts and Culture Centre building at Hawkin Street. This significant enhancement of the facilities will be delivered by Derry City and Strabane District Council.

An investment of £1.7 million by the Urban Villages Initiative will create a state-of-the-art performance space that will support a variety of arts and cultural activities, while working with community partner, the NW Cultural Partnership.

The extended New Gate Arts and Culture Centre will be a welcoming, inclusive space for locals and visitors to share and participate in theatre, music, dance and other activities. This new space will support

the Urban Villages 'Streets Alive' events programme that continues to bring collaboration across the Fountain, Bishop St and the Bogside through the Fringe Festival and the Féile and other ventures.

The new facility will invest in the community by providing a range of services and activities that will help to build the community capacity. Including, accredited training programmes, music classes, numeracy & literacy, tour guide training, a parenting programme 'Dads and Lads', and 'Employment Links', linking young community members with a range of employers.

"It will enable us to increase community participation, promote citizenship, social inclusion and advance community development. Regenerating and revitalising our community; creating a proud, resilient and confident community; one which is content to engage positively with other communities."

KYLE THOMPSON,
CO-ORDINATOR, NORTH WEST
CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

THE PLANS

- Welcome area, reception & office and meeting space
- Development of a new build 140 seat flexible performance space, dance studio, exhibition space, rooftop breakout space, art room & café



CATHEDRAL YOUTH CLUB (CYC) RENOVATION

“This building will not only serve the Fountain area but provide an open door for the wider community, promoting and building good community relations.”

JEANETTE WARKE MBE,
PROJECT MANAGER, CATHEDRAL YOUTH CLUB

The youth club is firmly rooted within the Fountain community and works towards empowering young people to develop into mature, responsible and active citizens both within their own community and in the wider community.

CYC provides a safe and secure environment where young people, in and around the area, can come to take part in bespoke youth activities and family events.

The extended and newly equipped centre will facilitate additional activities that will be

This project has been funded and delivered by the Education Authority with a contribution from Urban Villages.

developed to encourage youth into the area who may have never have been in the Fountain previously, helping to reduce fear and suspicion.

The new programmes will encourage young people from the area to become more aware of their own culture and that of others, helping to improve good relations in the area and to create a thriving youth community.



GASYARD CENTRE EXTENSION WITH NEW HERITAGE & EXHIBITION CENTRE

This investment will extend and improve the community facilities in the Gasyard Centre and create a state-of-the-art Heritage & Exhibition space. This work will completely transform the existing centre and create a welcoming, inclusive space for locals and visitors to the centre.

The Gasyard Centre will continue to deliver a range of much needed community services, including arts & culture, health & well-being, education, children’s services, volunteering and community safety programmes.

The Gasyard Trust are the community partner and the Urban Villages Initiative is investing over £1 million in this redevelopment project.

The project is being delivered by Derry City and Strabane District Council with additional support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is expected to be on site in 2022.

“I am delighted that our vision of developing the Gasyard Centre to its full potential is currently being realised through this project.”

LINDA MC KINNEY,
GASYARD DEVELOPMENT
TRUST MANAGER

THE PLANS

- New contemporary entrance to create a more welcoming reception
- New ‘front-of-house’ Café space with outdoor terrace
- A dedicated heritage museum
- Flexible auditorium & exhibition space
- Office and break-out meeting space & social area
- Full accessibility throughout



This is an artist's impression and not the final design



REDEVELOPMENT OF PITT PARK

The redevelopment of Dr Pitt Memorial Park (Pitt Park) will provide a shared space for local community and visitors to the area, and it will have space to host events and activities.

The upgrade to Pitt Park will support and celebrate the local culture and heritage of the Ballymacarrett area, taking inspiration from the Yardmen and Harland and Wolff shipyard.

The new Park will be an attractive, safe and accessible area where families, children, and people of all ages can get active, have fun and enjoy the rich heritage of the area.

Funded by the Urban Villages Initiative working with project partners in a co-design approach, features of the upgraded Pitt Park will include:

- New pathways and paving
- Community container hubs
- New and improved play spaces for all ages
- Accessible and safe entrances
- Celebrating local culture
- Preserving history and improving the physical landscape

At the end of last year there was a public consultation in partnership with the delivery partner, Belfast City Council, to hear the views of local community on the redevelopment plans. The feedback will help shape a space that everyone in the local community can be proud of.

“The project will create a welcoming space, fit for purpose for people of all ages and abilities. The visually impressive project will transform the main gateway to the Newtownards Road. It will create a key site for community events which will attract both local and international visitors. The much-needed development will aid the regeneration of the area and add to the emerging tourism sector in East Belfast.”

ROZ SMALL, BALLYMAC FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

Plans for the Park proposal
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3218956584890581>



This is an artist's impression and not the final design

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TOURISM EXHIBITION

FOSTERING
POSITIVE
COMMUNITY
IDENTITIES

SHORT STRAND TRANSFORMING SPACES

“The outdoor space has been a crucial resource to our neighbourhood, particularly during Covid. It provides good relations projects with a safe place to carry out their activities, and it has been key in the development of local environmental projects such as the Let’s Grow Garden Project.”

BERNIE MCCONNELL,
MANAGER, SHORT STRAND
COMMUNITY CENTRE

First came a new outdoor sensory play park and classroom for children at the Short Strand Community Centre. It expanded what was a tight space to facilitate play programmes for children from across the wider community.

Then, a Tourism Exhibition project, transforming the inside of the centre into a welcoming informative space. The displays focus on the local social and cultural history, and are part of the EastSide Voices local walking tours.

Bernie McConnell, Manager, Short Strand Community Centre said, “The upgrade to the community centre has allowed us to develop a tourist trail, and the display units with narrative, add to the stories told on local tours; it brings it to life. This project blends together the stories from across the divide, it offers inspiration. Great friendships and working relationships have developed with a potential of developing sustainable community organisations for those involved.”

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

This transformational scheme provides much improved connectivity for people and places across the EastSide Urban Village area.

The newly upgraded Ballymacarrett Walkway has dramatically improved the physical environment and connectivity for locals and visitors; creating safe, shared and welcoming access for all.

This is the first section of an environment improvement project that will link from C.S. Lewis Square via the Ballymacarrett Walkway across Dee St and along Island St to the Titanic Halt, providing easy access to the Titanic Quarter, and towards Pitt Park, the next step towards increased connectivity.

This newly improved accessible route will also support the community led tourism products that link and span the EastSide Urban Village area, connecting into an area-based approach that supports community to deliver thriving, connected places.

This is a joined-up approach, working with community partner, EastSide Partnership, this project is funded by the Urban Villages Initiative and the Department for Infrastructure, and delivered by Belfast City Council.



BALLYMACARRETT
WALKWAY

REJUVENATING A SMALL VACANT SITE

This innovative project has provided a much-needed shared space, bringing people together through a varied programme of activities; and helping to further develop community relations in the wider EastSide Urban Village area.

The Diamond Health Club is a functional, modern, adaptable space for community events, a community gym and has a bicycle workshop space.

Karlene McCann, Community Development Worker, Charter NI, commented, “It has brought the anti-social behaviour down in the area, by offering a range of classes for young men and ladies, mixed classed and classes for older people.”

This capital project was funded by the Urban Villages Initiative through a £241,000 investment and was delivered by Belfast City Council.



“The Diamond Health Club has encouraged many people to look after their health and well-being, before many didn't realise how important this was. They have welcomed members that have never used a gym before, due to feeling insecure, and they are now more relaxed as it is a small, friendly community gym.”

KARLENE MCCANN,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
WORKER, CHARTER NI,
WOMEN'S CENTRE



THE PLANS INCLUDE:

- 3G pitch and changing facilities
- Series of informal play stations for children of all ages and abilities
- Existing playpark
- Pump track for BMXs, bicycles and scooters
- Dog exercise areas
- Open green space events space
- Opening up of rivers
- Creation of wetland areas
- Dedicated pathways for cycling, running and walking

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

This is an artist's impression and not the final design

A PARK FOR EVERYONE

The new park in Ballysillan will see improved facilities, which will create a welcoming space that caters for a wide range of interests and age groups.

The Urban Villages Initiative is investing in the redevelopment of the Council owned Ballysillan Playing Fields, transforming it into a park with something for everyone.

Working in partnership with the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure's River's Agency, Living With Water Programme, and the park will be delivered by Belfast City Council.

This project will create a new leisure and recreational facilities where families, children and people of all ages can get active and

have fun in an attractive, safe, accessible and ecologically diverse parkland setting.

Accessibility and safety of the park will also be improved through widened and improved paths and lighting throughout the park to create a safe space, including during the hours of darkness.

A main route lined with cherry blossom trees will wind its way through the park connecting one side of the community to the other. Adjacent to it will be the newly exposed rivers flowing from the mountains through Ballysillan on to Ardoyne and down to the city, a free-flowing connection across the city.

There will be improved entrance points, including new lighting to create a welcoming, safe space for local people and visitors.

"The new park will offer opportunities, resources and recreation for everyone, the young and the older members of our communities. The new features and facilities will cater for all groups, sporting clubs and schools and will be a great asset for local people."

JOAN TOTTEN, MANAGER NORTH BELFAST ALTERNATIVES

▶ **Urban Villages North Belfast - Ballysillan Park Audio Plan**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONtWzWWIMA8&t=9s>

▶ **Urban Villages North Belfast - Ballysillan Big Park Event**
<https://youtu.be/FRLx-Rbjz20>



IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Marrowbone Community Hub will offer the following:
- Boxing Club
 - Youth Club
 - Dance Studio
 - Wellbeing Shed
 - Multi use Space
 - Outdoor Community Area

A THRIVING MIXED USE COMMUNITY FACILITY

A vacant former parochial hall in the North Belfast Urban Village area is now a thriving mixed use community facility @Marrowbone Community Hub Teach Eilís.

Work was completed on the restoration and redevelopment of building during the first lockdown, which stalled the opportunity to open to the public.

This £1.3M investment by the Urban Villages Initiative in partnership with the Department of Education and the Social Investment Fund has created a fantastic new community hub, including youth facilities and outdoor space, which will provide a wider range of activities to the whole community. The new facility will be home to Sacred Heart Boxing Club, a youth club and a dance studio. There are also meeting spaces, rooms for training and a multi-purpose area for community events.

A new 'Men's Shed' group is also being established, only this group will welcome women, and will be known as the 'Wellbeing Shed', where men and women who are interested in gardening, sewing, crafts and DIY can join in together. A new covered outdoor space has been created with a pizza oven and raised flower beds, which will allow for outdoor gatherings, while following the current COVID-19 restrictions. This project was delivered by Belfast City Council.

"This wonderful new facility will enable us to carry on providing vital services for people who live in the local area for years to come."

It will also allow us to continue building cross community partnerships with our friends in Sunningdale Community Centre in Ballysillan, and we look forward to welcoming them here when restrictions are relaxed."

BILL MCCOMBE, MARROWBONE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

"A highlight for the community has been the new footpaths and the bright, fresh look to the area."

Community consultation on the hoardings has representation from both Ballysillan and Ligoniel areas and takes people down memory lane.

The hoarding and street furniture will enhance good relations around the junction with people from both communities shopping and coming together for community events."

DALE HARRISON, MANAGER, BALLYSILLAN COMMUNITY FORUM



The Crumlin Road and Ligoniel Road public realm scheme has improved the prominent junction in the North Belfast Urban Village area, known as the 'Turn of the Road'.

This environmental improvement works and remedial works to adjacent derelict sites have created a safe and welcoming environment for residents, local businesses and visitors.

A co-design process has been used with the community to design the semi-permanent hoarding that frames the junction.

This capital project was funded jointly by the Urban Villages Initiative and Department for Communities. The scheme was delivered Department for Communities.

A PARK THAT THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY CAN BE PROUD OF!

The revitalised Marrowbone Millennium Park will be a shared public park with new entrances, lighting and safety features.

This Park redevelopment will offer a focal point for the whole community to engage in events and activities.

It will provide recreational facilities which are welcoming to all, including; an improved 3G pitch, new Pavillion/Community Hub, event space, MUGA and play area. The project will be delivered by Belfast City Council.

3 ZONE PARK

- Community Connectivity Zone
- Play & Imagination Zone
- Sport & Physical Recreation Zone

"There has always been a lack of green space locally. I am excited about the opportunities that the 'new and improved' Marrowbone Park will give to the local community.

The improvements will provide a park that the entire community can be proud of, I look forward to hosting events that will attract the wider community. There are great opportunities to develop good relations and I aim to use this space to bring people together."

SEAN DEVLIN, MANAGER OF YEHA (YOUTH EDUCATION HEALTH ADVICE)





▶ Blythefield Primary School - School of Sanctuary
<https://youtu.be/OnRPqOuVvmk>

**BLYTHEFIELD
 PRIMARY
 SCHOOL**

GROWING UP IN A CONCRETE JUNGLE

The capital works at Blythefield Primary School and Arellian Nursery School in South Belfast have not only created essential additional accommodation, they have been designed as welcoming, attractive, shared spaces to support the children and their families.

The works at Blythefield PS included a new outdoor meeting space with digital information point and a bicycle parking area, as well as a refurbishment of a parents' room within the school.

This project has provided an opportunity to develop and increase opportunities for parents, particularly newcomer families to connect with their community.

In 2016, Blythefield PS received funding from the Urban Villages Initiative to create a 'sanctuary garden'. A shared, green space with huge benefit to the local families who are living in an inner-city area, surrounded by concrete with very limited green areas.

In 2017, Blythefield PS, supported by the Urban Villages Initiative in partnership with EA and the City of Sanctuary, was the first school in N. Ireland to achieve School of Sanctuary status; an accreditation in recognition of inclusive approaches towards promoting cultural awareness, celebrating diversity and partnership working with local communities to create welcoming schools.

This project provided a green space within the safety of the school for children living in the concrete jungle of inner-city.

"Blythefield Primary School's eco garden project was used as part of the School of Sanctuary, parents potted plants and these were used to brighten up outside, and it was used as a shared reading area."

**CATHERINE ROLSTON,
 PRINCIPAL, BLYTHEFIELD
 PRIMARY SCHOOL**

SUPPORTING HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

The works at Arellian Nursery School included an outdoor all-weather community classroom with a canopy roof. The outdoor area offers a unique shared space which will be used with Arellian's cross community partners at New Lodge Nursery School, and other local community groups.

These capital works have provided an opportunity to create a shared space that allows children and their families to play, learn and connect with their community in a safe and welcoming environment that supports and celebrates diversity.

The facilities are frequently used by other community organisations enabling people from a range of community backgrounds to meet and build new and lasting relationships.

Jenny Pogue, Principal, Arellian Nursery School, said; "The development of a canopied all weather outdoor classroom has made an immeasurable positive impact upon our children. It supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles.

"For many of our children with no gardens or safe green areas to play, our space may be the only opportunity they have to play safely and freely while they learn to assess risk and develop the skills to manage new situations."

Arellian NS and Blythefield PS, have funding from the Urban Villages Initiative for a part time parent worker.

"A parent's questionnaire discovered that one of the main things highlighted was the need for more mental health and wellbeing services and activities.

This year has been a difficult one for arranging programmes and group activities, however the Urban Villages capital projects at Arellian Nursery School & Blythefield Primary School provide a space that is Covid friendly that families used when restrictions allowed."

JAMIE-LEE, PARENT SUPPORT WORKER

These capital projects were funded by the Urban Villages Initiative and were delivered by the Education Authority (EA).



**ARELLIAN
 NURSERY
 SCHOOL**



AN IMPORTANT SIGNAL OF RENEWAL AND INVESTMENT

“The development of the Good Relations Hub is an important signal to the local community of renewal and investment. Our mission is to make this place a more vibrant and thriving area in inner city Belfast - a place that is welcoming and open to all.”

SHARON O’CONNOR, CHAIR, DONEGALL PASS COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES (DPCE) Project Community Partner

DONEGALL PASS GOOD RELATIONS HUB

This multi-million pound investment will realise a transformational multi-use development, including a good relations community hub along with social and affordable homes for the South Belfast Urban Village area.

- Social economy childcare provision
- Up to 19 new homes

Once completed, the Donegall Pass Good Relations Hub will be a safe and inclusive space for locals and visitors to share and to participate in a range of activities.

The renovation of the former Donegall Pass PSNI station, and development of a small NIHE owned adjacent site, into a new build community space, will provide facilities for cultural activities, events and essential services to support the local and wider community.

It will host exhibitions, activities and events, and accommodate a range of community tenants, providing childcare facilities, a social enterprise training Café, youth provision and social and affordable homes.

The new facility could include:

- A Community hub with, exhibition space, courtyard
- meeting rooms, social enterprise training café and space for tenants providing services

The development will be delivered in partnership with the community partner, Donegall Pass Community Enterprise (DPCE); the delivery partner and part funder, Clanmil Housing Association and Executive Office’s Urban Villages Initiative, as the main funder.

SOUTH BELFAST PLAY PARK TRANSFORMED

An extensive refurbishment of the Reverend Robert Bradford Memorial Play Park was completed during lockdown 2020.

The former rundown community park was redesigned to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive play park for people from different cultures and backgrounds across and within the local community.

The Park is a rare public space in a very dense, heavily populated area of Donegall Pass. It required a substantial upgrade to create a better, healthier and safer place for local residents and visitors to the area, which included lighting the space.

This project was delivered by Belfast City Council through investment by the Urban Villages Initiative and Department for Communities.

“Donegall Pass is a diverse neighbourhood with people from many different cultures living within it, the park is used by people from various nationalities. I believe the park is seen as a safe, shared space that can be used by all residents and visitors to the area.”

LISA WILSON, MANAGER AT DONEGALL PASS COMMUNITY CENTRE



SANDY ROW PLAY PARK

Sandy Row Play Park has had an extensive upgrade of the existing multi-use games area and a great new play space.

This is a shared space to bring people and communities together, providing opportunities for children and young people to mix in a safe accessible space.

Margaret Gibson, Sandy Row Residents Association, commented, “Young people from the area can meet with friends and get some exercise as there is a lack of green space.”

This project was funded by the Urban Villages Initiative and was delivered by Belfast City Council.



“The new play park is a fantastic facility for young people in the area, especially during this past year. They now have somewhere to go and meet up in a safe space, and it is just lovely to see young people of all ages playing together and having fun in the play park.”

MARGARET GIBSON, SANDY ROW RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



ABOUT US - THE URBAN VILLAGES INITIATIVE



The Urban Villages Initiative is a headline action of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy. It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places.

• To foster positive community identities

• To build community capacity

• To improve the physical environment

The Urban Villages Initiative is shaped and delivered in partnership with local communities and has three core aims:

The Urban Villages Initiative is continuing to invest in the five areas by supporting organisations in the development of projects aimed at improving the lives of people in these areas.

For more information contact: info@urbanvillagesni.org

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

FOSTERING POSITIVE COMMUNITY IDENTITIES

IMPROVING AREAS | STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES | LIVING BETTER TOGETHER

OUR PARTNERS

None of this would be possible if we were not able to work in a positive joined up way with our dedicated local community partners, and the delivery partners from across other Departments, Councils and Housing Associations.

DELIVERY PARTNERS





WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you would like to know more about the Urban Villages Initiative capital projects, please contact info@urbanvillagesni.org or at The Urban Villages Initiative, Knockview Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SJ

For further information about projects in your area, contact:

Colin: **Philip Magee** Philip.Magee@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

South: **Arlene McCreight** Arlene.McCreight@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

East: **Julia Harkness** Julia.Harkness@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

North: **Joe Hinds** joe.hinds@urbanvillagesni.org

Derry~Londonderry: **Maureen Fox** maureen.fox@urbanvillagesni.org



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