

••• The Department for Social Development



Belfast City Centre is undergoing regeneration on an unprecedented scale. The skyline dotted with construction cranes reflects the wealth of projects underway aimed at transforming the city into a high quality, attractive urban destination.

At the heart of DSD's vision is a sustainable and vibrant city centre

The Department for Social Development (DSD) is responsible for implementing Government's regeneration and renewal objectives for Belfast city centre; working with business, the community and government partners to regenerate and promote it as the premier regional centre for shopping, leisure and business in Northern Ireland. There has never been a more exciting time for the city. At the heart of DSD's vision is a sustainable and vibrant city centre – a high quality, safe, urban environment attractive to investors, employees, residents and tourists. The regeneration offers many jobs, investment and economic opportunities for both businesses and local communities. And there has been much progress in recent years.

The Government's Regeneration Policy for Belfast City Centre was published in April 2004 and set a vision for economic growth in the City Centre outlining a course to achieve that action. It promised a public realm strategy for the heart of the city and regeneration master-plans for the Castlecourt and Cathedral Way areas. The strategy's intention is that these efforts will, in time, bring more private investment in retail and office jobs, city centre living and help to kick-start economic activity in neighbourhoods adjacent to the shopping core, all designed to build on a decade of investment in Laganside and the £320 million flagship scheme underway at Victoria Square. This integrated approach to regeneration has provided a comprehensive route map and guide for investors. It emphasises the importance of consolidating the shopping core and maintaining a compact city centre.

Political developments too have affected business in the region and have brought stability in Northern Ireland that has boosted prosperity. The new Assembly has a clear economic focus and is intent on working closely with the business sector. The past two years have already seen a steady flow of investment come back to Northern Ireland and government stability will increase this trend.



New Developments

Belfast is a positive thriving city and within the overall development there are several jewels that will build Belfast's base for future generations.

Victoria Square

The flagship Victoria Square development, Belfast's new retail hub opened in March 2008, the £320 million scheme is one of Europe's largest urban renewal projects and a milestone in the revitalization of Belfast city centre. This imaginative project, which includes 680,000 sq ft of retail floor space and 106 residential units, will create 3,000 temporary construction jobs, 3,000 permanent leisure and retail jobs, 5 acres of redevelopment and £100 million net additional retail turnover.

Victoria Square is planned out as a new urban neighbourhood. It incorporates 17 buildings with existing historic structures being refurbished. At the centre of the scheme is a new square and gardens. This central square is covered by an immense glass dome, with a viewing gallery from which the public can enjoy breathtaking views across the city. The completed dome is now part of the city centre skyline, an iconic symbol of Victoria Square.

The opening of Victoria Square in March this year has consolidated Belfast's position as the second largest retail centre in Ireland. Home to the largest House of Fraser in the UK and bringing some of Europe's top retail and leisure names to Northern Ireland for the first time, Victoria Square has significantly increased the attractiveness of Belfast for shoppers, particularly because the scheme has brought together Belfast's shopping district with its waterfront by providing a much needed link between the City Centre and Laganside. The transformation of the Lower Chichester Street link, in front of the High Court, has provided not just a much-needed facelift – with a landscaped pedestrianised area – but also signals the removal of the last security barriers in the city.

Laganside

Victoria Square builds on the successful regeneration that been achieved on the banks of the Lagan over the past fifteen years. The Laganside Corporation, which was wound up in 2007, rejuvenated the riverfront and the Cathedral Quarter, attracting over £1 billion private investment; building nearly 3 million sq. ft. of office accommodation, over 1 million sq. ft. of retail/leisure space and nearly 900 residential units; and creating

nearly 15,000 jobs. The Corporation also developed 39 acres of public space and 15,000 ft of walkways along the River Lagan and made major streetscape improvements in Cathedral Quarter.

The Waterfront Hall and The Odyssey are now well-established visitor attractions. Sites such as Belfast Gasworks, Lanyon Place, Clarendon Dock and Mays Meadow have been developed into thriving areas of economic activity, with a range of employability initiatives successfully encouraging local communities to take advantage of new job opportunities in this revitalised area.

St. Anne's Square and the development at Four Corners in Cathedral Quarter are underway. With the new OBEL Tower at Donegall Quay beginning to rise over the riverfront, new developments will soon move forward to complete Lanyon Place in 2008.

The North East Quarter

Since the onset of the peace process, commercial development market interest and demand, which had been pent-up for many years, is now being realised. Victoria Square and Laganside are just the first steps in a much longer journey. The North East Quarter ►



The redeveloped Laganside

► The Department for Social Development continued...

of Belfast city centre will be the next area for major retail-led regeneration following Victoria Square. The scheme has the working title 'Royal Exchange' and is based on proposals submitted by Leaside and its development partners ING. The visionary £360 million plan will transform the historic heart of Belfast, providing two new department stores plus retail opportunities for local independent traders and international brands new to the City, office space for arts and cultural industries, a hotel, 200 apartments and 2,000 jobs.

The Titanic Quarter

There is also further development planned for Belfast's waterfront. Titanic Quarter Ltd has launched an outline framework for the development of 185 acres of former shipbuilding land. The £1 billion proposal will transform the birthplace of the Titanic into a new maritime quarter with the mixed uses of housing, business, leisure, tourism and education combined to create a vibrant new community for Belfast. Expected to generate 20,000 new jobs over the next 15 years, the new Titanic Quarter will be a major building block in creating the new economy jobs in information services and technology. The potential of the Quarter is as extraordinary as the many historic ships built by the world famous shipyard on the site.

Web. www.dsdni.gov.uk
Tel. 028 9082 9456



Inset Picture: Artist's impression of the redeveloped North Street part of the royal exchange project

Main Picture: Artist's impression of the view of Victoria Square Dome

