

LINEN QUARTER BID PIONEERS CITY'S FIRST PARKLET DEVELOPMENT IS PART OF ONGOING REGENERATION PROGRAMME IN THE AREA

2 July 2021: Linen Quarter BID has pioneered the Belfast City Centre's first parklet, in conjunction with partners from Belfast City Council, the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities. The 10 metre parklet, located on the corner of Linenhall Street and Clarence Street, was officially launched today by DFI Minister Nichola Mallon MLA and Belfast Lord Mayor, Cllr Kate Nicholl, alongside Peter Johnston, Director of BBC Northern Ireland and Chris McCracken, MD Linen Quarter BID.

The parklet is a green oasis in the heart of the city, offering tremendous views of City Hall. The development provides an enjoyable social space and promotes the contemporary city environment that citizens have come to demand.

Linen Quarter BID is a not-for-profit business improvement district, that focuses on the long-term regeneration of the Linen Quarter area. The parklet represents one part of a £600,000 initiative to improve and enhance outdoor social spaces across the area, as part of the NI Executive Revitalisation Programme administered by Belfast City Council.

Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon MLA, commented: **"Since becoming Minister I have made clear my desire to change the way we use our roads and streets and make sure they work for the whole community. This new parklet is an outstanding example of how we can transform our public realm to offer thoughtful spaces that reflect the needs of people today. I have an ambition to significantly increase opportunities for active and sustainable travel, to give everyone the freedom and confidence to be able to walk, wheel or cycle in our city safely so I am pleased that the parklet provides new bike racks as this will support more people to cycle into the city for work or leisure.**

"My Department will be working with Linen Quarter BID over the coming months to review additional cycling storage provision in Belfast. This beautiful new green space will be enjoyed by tourists too. I am delighted that my Department was able to support this innovative initiative and I look forward to seeing residents and visitors putting it to good use."

The parklet, which is free for people to utilise, boasts a steel safety frame, non-slip composite wood boards and enhanced planting within a contemporary design. It provides cycle storage along with 15 seating spaces for public use - three of which are connected to

an innovative outdoor work bench, facilitating a contemporary mobile work environment, whilst 12 seats are focused on providing opportunities for tourists and locals to socialise.

Lord Mayor of Belfast, Kate Nicholl, commented: **“It’s more important than ever that we think about how we use our outdoor spaces; this parklet is a great example of how an area can be reimaged and the aesthetic changed to create a welcoming, vibrant space in the heart of the city centre for those who work and live here, and for those visiting the city.**

“We’re working with Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities to roll out the next phase of A Bolder Vision - a wide-reaching vision that will significantly transform Belfast city centre. The parklet is a great example of that vision in action, reflecting the values and goals of A Bolder Vision, re-thinking how the city’s streets and places are used offering new opportunities to connect. We look forward to collaborating with Linen Quarter BID on the innovative developments it will introduce throughout the year.”

Enhanced planting throughout the parklet also extends to include hedging and flowers at the front and rear of the historic Thomas Thompson Fountain, providing a more pleasant urban experience in this busy pedestrian area, whilst also drawing more attention to the Victorian heritage of Belfast’s built environment.

Director of BBC Northern Ireland, Peter Johnston, said: **“We have just announced plans that will make Broadcasting House more welcoming and accessible. We know the difference that the built environment can make for people who work in an area or are visiting it. And we are delighted that our plans are complemented by initiatives like this - and the wider transformation that is taking place within the city’s Linen Quarter.”**

Linen Quarter BID partnered with local contractors to bring its vision of the parklet to life including Decking NI, McQuillan Companies, and Cameron landscapes.

Chris McCracken, Managing Director of Linen Quarter BID, said: **“The parklet is an innovative representation of our understanding of the post-pandemic world and the on-going demand for outdoor shared places where people can safely socialise and enjoy their city. A recent public consultation we carried out revealed that 91% of people are in support of the removal of car parking spaces, if doing so enhances**

pavement space and pedestrian areas, so this is a true reflection of the progress people want to see.

“To restore economic vitality to Belfast, we need to create a public realm that is focused on health and well-being and the parklet has been well thought out to ensure it contributes to how the diverse demographics of our city live their lives. We have ensured it incorporates opportunities to work and socialise, all against a background of enhanced greenery.

“We are delighted to work in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities and Belfast City Council to deliver projects that will continue to meet the city’s aspirations. Over the summer, we will be installing a Boardwalk at Linenhall Street which will extend service opportunities for hospitality businesses, enhanced lighting in Blackstaff Square, and new planting right across the Linen Quarter. Our largest project, a new social hub at Brunswick Street, will include a container café, open air seating, an outdoor stage and games area, creating an entertainment hub for families, friends and tourists to enjoy.”

For more information on upcoming developments across the Linen Quarter, please visit linenquarter.org.