

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

31 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place and Prosperity Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on **Thursday 07 November** commencing at **7.00pm**.

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. Notice of ANDBC withdrawal from European Association of the Columban Way (2014) (Report attached)
4. International Relations (Report attached)
5. Renewed Ambition & UK Real Estate Infrastructure & Investment Forum (Report attached)
6. Event Locations 2025 – Deferred from Council – Consideration around Sea Bangor (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

7. Local Economic Partnerships - Sub Regional Economic Plan (Report attached)
8. Prosperity Budgetary Control Report (Report attached)
9. Place Budgetary Control Report (Report attached)
10. Kinnegar Logistics Base Update (Report attached)

- 11. Regeneration Working up Projects 2024/25 (Report attached)
- 12. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 24/24 Update (Report attached)
- 13. Peace Plus EBR – Mini Digi Hub Programme (Report attached)
- 14. Notices of Motion referred to Committee by Council
- 14.1 From Councillors Blaney and Hollywood

Council notes with deep concern the fraudulent activity impacting local businesses through the manipulation of bank account information on Just Eat partner centre accounts, resulting in substantial financial losses; recognises the critical role these businesses play in supporting the local economy and acknowledges the severe impact these losses have on their ability to operate and resolves to write to Just Eat, expressing our deep concern over the financial harm caused to local businesses and calling on the company to urgently engage with affected businesses to resolve this devastating issue and prevent further incidents.

- 14.2 From Councillors Harbinson and McCracken

That this Council should:

1. Prepare a visual map for all public sector land in Bangor City Centre and Ards Town Centre and colour code holdings that are potentially connected with future developments (even if not yet fully agreed), including Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade, Newtownards Citizen's Hub and the Council's Car Park Strategy. This includes public land belonging to the Council and NI Executive Departments.
2. To further identify public sector land that is currently unproductive and outside the scope of wider strategies, which could be made available for future private sector development. This includes land that is either vacant, contains empty or derelict buildings, or contains buildings that are under-utilised or dated to the point that redevelopment is required. The map should also include land that is facilitating meanwhile use.
3. Prepare a summary report to highlight how unproductive public sector land could be re-purposed and how such a process could be progressed within the bounds of current planning considerations and Council/Executive disposal policies.

ITEM 15 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

- 15. Pickie Funpark Operator Tender (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McDowell	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Ashe (Vice Chair)	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Edmund	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Gilmour (Chair)	Councillor Smart
Councillor Hennessy	Councillor Thompson

Unclassified

4

ITEM 3**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	17 October 2024
File Reference	TO/TD11
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: n/a
Subject	Notice of ANDBC withdrawal from European Association of the Columban Way (2014).
Attachments	n/a

Background

In 2014, the legacy North Down Borough Council signed up to become a founding member of the European Association of the Columban Way ('the Association') at a ceremony in Bobbio, Italy.

During the period of the Covid 19 pandemic it was not possible to hold annual general meetings nor levy membership fees for the Association, these being core to the statutes of the Association for it to continue to function. As such, it was the view of most members of the Association that it had subsequently defaulted and was no longer a functioning entity.

As Council is aware, in June 2023, the then Deputy Mayor attended a ceremony in Gallen, Switzerland, marking the foundation of a replacement body to the Association through the signing of a Charter of the Via Columbani Partnership, by organisations and bodies from the nations that make up the route of the Columban Way. This new

Not Applicable

5

initiative has the same aim of seeing the Columban Way become recognised formally as a European Cultural Route in the near future.

Development

Whilst it was the understanding of the non-Italian signatories of the 2014 Association that it had become defunct due to the issues stated, it has become apparent that, due to the Association being under Italian law, that formal “withdrawal” should be issued by members to the authority in Bobbio, where the statutes are registered. The local authority in France has recently sent its notice, with ROI and non-local authority members across various nations currently in the process of furnishing Bobbio with formal letters.

These notices will allow for the replacement Via Columbani Partnership to proceed in moving forward to develop the work of the Columban Way, and progress toward application to the European Association of Cultural Routes.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the content of this report and writes to the authority in Bobbio notifying it of the formal withdrawal of ANDBC from the 2014 European Association of the Columban Way.

Unclassified

6

ITEM 4**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	04 September 2024
File Reference	RDP112
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	International Relations Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Draft Terms of Reference on Pg 4

1. Background

Members will be aware that in January a report went to Corporate Services Committee updating the Council on work that had been undertaken on international relations.

It was agreed to close down the formal relationships with Peoria, Arizona and Kemi, Finland, in the light of inactivity and maintain the 'Twin' and friendship relationship with Bregenz and the Sister City relationship with Virginia Beach with the view to develop these relationships in a meaningful way and re-form an International Relations Sub-Committee under the Place and Prosperity Committee.

The Committee, using the recommended Assessment Framework as outlined in the report, would review the Council's current links to ensure the Council are getting the most from each relationship and identify any future Sister City or Twinning relationships. The Sub-Committee would also be tasked with developing an International Relations policy for Council consideration.

Not Applicable

7

The Council also agreed the inclusion of a small international relations budget of £5,000 in the 2024/25 budget.

2. Update on International Relations

A short update is provided on actions that have taken place since January:

Sister City/Town Twinning

As agreed, Council has closed down the formal relationship with Kemi, Finland and Peoria, Arizona, USA.

US Consul General visit

On 28 August 2024 the US Consul, James Applegate visited the Borough; alongside the Mayor and the Chief Executive, he visited three local businesses that have economic ties with the United States and received a presentation from Glenlola Collegiate pupils on their 2023 visit to Tallwood High School. The visit was an opportunity to build upon the relationship that the Council have with the US Consul General's Office, in line with Council's Sister City relationship with Virginia Beach.

Glenlola Collegiate, Bangor and Tallwood High School, Virginia Beach

Following from the visit of pupils from Glenlola Collegiate to Tallwood High School in September 2023, a reciprocal visit of pupils from Tallwood High School took place in March 2024. The pupils visited the City Hall in Bangor and met with the Mayor.

At the end of September, Council received a request from Glenlola Collegiate for financial assistance ahead of the next round of their exchange programme which would contribute towards the cost of their visit to Virginia Beach in September 2025 and the hosted return visit in March 2026. The return visit would also include a hosted lunch and tour of the Council Chamber by the Mayor.

In line with what has been granted in the past, it is recommended that £1,000 is contributed. The Council provided the same amount of funding in 2018 and 2019. The exchange programme was paused during the pandemic period, restarting again in September of 2023. In September 2023, the Mayor and Chief Executive visited Virginia Beach following an invitation from the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach.

This cost would be taken from the small international relations budget that Council agreed to in January of this year.

Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra

Some progress has been made to further the plans to hold a concert in Bangor as part of the Orchestra's planned tour of Ireland in 2025 and it has been agreed to hold the concert on Saturday 28 June. The group will comprise of around 30-35 musicians from the Orchestra and a Compere, and they will be joined by Bangor Ladies Choir, who are Ambassadors for the City of Bangor. To accommodate the size of the group, a scoping exercise of suitable venues was undertaken, and it is proposed that the event be held in Bangor Elim Church. The cost to hire the venue would be £1500.

Not Applicable

8

Council is asked to approve the costs for hiring the venue which would be taken from the International Relations budget for 2025/26. The Orchestra do not intend to charge for tickets to their events, so it is proposed that ticketing is marketed at a nominal fee of £5 per ticket, which would cover costs incurred to hire the venue and help ensure attendance. Members of the Council and VIP guests would be provided with complimentary tickets.

In addition to the concert, it is proposed that an evening event take place on Friday 27 June to help promote the event, as well as a small group performance at Bangor Castle or the Walled Garden where the Orchestra will debut a bespoke piece written for Bangor. Marketing costs to promote the event will be covered from within existing budgets.

Following the event, an 'End of Tour' reception will be hosted on Sunday 29 June by the Mayor in Coffee Cure with the group and selected guests. Costs for the Mayoral reception will be covered from within existing budgets.

3. Governance

Following further review, it is recommended to set up a Working Group, rather than a Sub-Committee to develop and oversee Council's International Relations Policy. The proposed draft Terms of Reference are included in Appendix 1.

As outlined in the report in January, the Working Group should, using an assessment matrix, review the Council's current links: Bregenz, Austria and Virginia Beach, USA, to ensure the Council are getting the most from each relationship as well as identify any new potential relationships. The Working Group would also be tasked with developing an International Relations policy for Council consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the update and:

- a) Agrees to setting up a Working Group rather than a Sub-Committee, and subsequently agrees to the proposed Terms of Reference outlined in Appendix 1.
- b) Nominates 5 Members to the Working Group.
- c) Agrees to contribute £1,000 towards the cost of the Glenlola Collegiate School visit to Virginia Beach in 2025 and the hosted return visit from Tallwood High School in 2026 as part of the Sister Cities programme.
- d) Agrees to pay for hire of the Elim Church to host the 2025 Symphonicity Orchestra concert and to charge a nominal fee for ticketing the event to offset costs.

Not Applicable

9

Appendix 1

**ANDBC International Relations Working Group
DRAFT Terms of Reference****Name of Group**

International Relations Working Group

Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of the Working Group is to develop and manage Council's International Relationships Policy; including:

- Review and agree international relationships assessment matrix
- Review and management of Council's current links to ensure they are delivering to their full potential.
- Identify and establish any future international relationships, in line with the agreed criteria.
- Oversight and management of Council's International Relations Policy.

Membership

The International Relations Working Group will comprise of 5 Members. The Officer membership will include the Chief Executive, Director of Prosperity and Head of Economic Development, and other Council officers / external partners as required.

Reporting

The International Relations Working Group will report directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee. Recommendations from the Working Group will be brought to the Committee for consideration and approval.

Frequency of Meetings

The Working Group will meet twice a year, or as required.

Administration

Meetings will be chaired.

Agenda and associated papers should be distributed at least three working days via email in advance of the meeting.

Minutes/note of the meeting will be taken as a record and reported to Place and Prosperity Committee.

Decision making typically by consensus with majority vote, of those in attendance, used when required.

Budget

Cost of administration support covered within the Prosperity directorate.

£5,000 agreed for activity (2024/25 budget) – future budgets to be agreed as part of rate setting and/or in line with Council Reports and decisions.

Review

The terms of reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Unclassified

10

ITEM 5**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity and Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	25 October 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: N/A
Subject	Renewed Ambition & UK Real Estate Infrastructure & Investment Forum
Attachments	Belfast City Region Place Partnership 2024-2025 Programme

Renewed Ambition Background

Council agreed a number of years ago to be a member of the Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP). This is a joint public/private sector led initiative that aims to work collaboratively to showcase investment and development opportunities across Belfast City Region, seeking to deliver on shared ambitions for the city region as an exciting place to work, live, visit and invest.

RAP is delivering a year-long programme focused on activities that help to ensure the place is positioned to continue to attract investment and deliver on inclusive growth. Together the Partnership will:

- continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region
- continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland

Not Applicable

11

- increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders; in particular, investors and government
- support delivery of Belfast Region City Deal projects by attracting collaborative partners
- support delivery of our shared ambition to drive inclusive, sustainable growth

All five Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partner Councils have invested in RAP, in partnership with Belfast City Council (BCC) since 2019 and it has been an important forum to showcase the real estate investment potential for the wider Belfast City Region and forthcoming BRCD projects.

Benefits achieved through the Programme

Through the previous RAP programme the Council has been able to promote opportunities within the Borough to investors and developers at events such as:

- UKREiif May 2024 Leeds– UK’s Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum. The interim Director Prosperity and acting Director of Place attended the event, which brought together over 13,000 (an increase of 7,000 from previous year) attendees from across the public and private sectors involved in regeneration of the UK’s city and regions including investors, funders, developers, housebuilders and government bodies. The Borough’s investment sites were uploaded onto the UKREiif investment portal, which is accessible to all attendees. The Directors undertook 1-1 meetings with a number of potential investors including potential hotel chains/hotel management companies who were interested in learning more about the opportunities within the Borough. They also attended seminars including on ‘Offices for Good’ and ‘At Your Leisure’ (ingredients for a successful destination creation) at which examples of major redevelopment schemes were discussed, including
 - Aberdeen beachfront
 - Wrexham Gateway
 - Copr Bay, Swansea
 - Marine Lakes Events Centre, Southport
- All six Council RAP partners development sites are featured in joint marketing and sales collateral, a digital version of which was promoted on the Belfast Region stand at both MIPIM and UKREiif.

Belfast City & Regional Place Partnership 2024-2025

The launch of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership 2024-2025 programme on 18 September at Belfast Grand Central Station, highlighted how collaboration between the public and private sectors is not just beneficial – it's essential for our region’s future.

The recent publication of the draft Programme for Government marks a pivotal moment for Northern Ireland, providing a clear roadmap for our region's development. The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership is well positioned to play a key role in realising these ambitions. In today's challenging economic climate, it's

Not Applicable

12

more important than ever that we work together across sectors to create spaces and places that benefit all our communities.

Subject to Council approving continued partnership in RAP, it is intended to send two officers again to UKREiff which will take place again in Leeds in May 2025, as well as exploring further the examples of the redevelopment schemes referred to above, in the context of the Bangor Waterfront scheme. Flights and accommodation costs can be met from existing budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves continued participation in the Renewed Ambition Programme (Belfast City & Regional Place Partnership) at a cost of £15,000 for 2024-25.



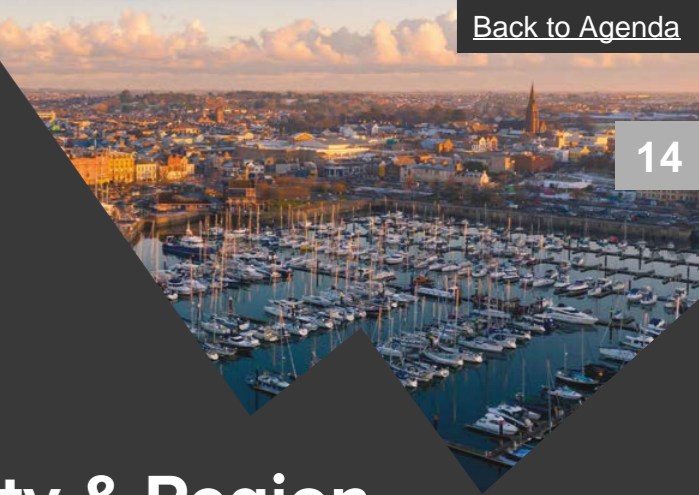
Belfast City & Region Place Partnership

**2024 - 2025
Programme**

[INVESTINBELFAST.COM](https://www.investinbelfast.com)

2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM



Belfast City & Region Place Partnership

This is an exciting time for the Belfast region.

Home to Northern Ireland's capital city - Belfast - and a well-connected, compact network of vibrant towns and cities. Located between Europe and the rest of the UK, we are perfectly positioned to grow significantly as a trading hub and global centre of innovation.

As the powerhouse of Northern Ireland's economy, we are home to a thriving ecosystem of global brands, world-class researchers and start-ups.

Our two outstanding universities, network of further education colleges and skills academies ensure the highly educated, adaptable talent pipeline needed to meet industry's demands.

A £1bn Belfast Region City Deal is creating world-class visitor attractions, regenerating our towns and cities and enhancing regional connectivity and infrastructure. We are also investing in our digital innovation capability through regional innovation hubs and testbeds.

The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership brings together key public, private and third sector representatives who are all passionate about creating places and presenting a compelling vision for our future where people want to live, study, work, visit and invest.

This initiative brings together local authorities, developers, and professionals from various industries to highlight our area's potential.

Our partnership is both energetic and ambitious. By collaborating across multiple sectors and bringing together local authorities, developers and professionals from various industries, we're showcasing the city region's expanding portfolio of transformative opportunities. And it's amplifying our reputation for innovation in a place that's open for business and investment. Already, we're seeing growing confidence in the Belfast region and a deep commitment to the future.

With an enviable track record of attracting global investors, significant growth ambitions and a £5.5bn investment and development pipeline available over the next decade, we invite you to join us as we build a greener, more inclusive, region, together.



Joe O'Neill
Chair,
Belfast City & Region
Place Partnership



John Walsh
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council

2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Place Partners

The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners from Belfast and the wider city region who work collaboratively as 'Team Belfast' to showcase the region as an attractive investment location.

Thank you to our 2024-2025 partners for their continued commitment to promoting Belfast and wider city region, on a global stage.



Structured Year-Round Programme of Activity

The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership is delivering an annual place-based promotional programme to help ensure that the Belfast region is positioned to continue attracting investment and delivering sustainable, inclusive growth.

A year-round approach ensures partners benefit from established working relationships and the ability to help shape wider conversations.



Investment Focused Events

The programme includes a presence at international real estate investment conferences, UKREiIF 2025 and MIPIM 2025, to showcase the Belfast region to a global audience. Additionally, we are exploring the potential for a Dublin / London real estate investment showcase event.



Engagement & Advocacy

An engagement and advocacy programme will facilitate two-way conversations with policy makers and showcase real estate opportunities to the investor community. It will positively position the Belfast region as a place that's open for business and investment - and support development and regeneration.



Research

Research aligned to the impact of real estate investment to inform the city and wider city region proposition and narrative.

All research is subject to approvals and financial viability.



Communications

Media engagement reinforcing positive messaging around the Belfast region's investment proposition through international marketing and communication campaigns, targeting the national and international real estate investment and development community.



2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Programme Objectives

- continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region;
- continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland;
- increase engagement and advocacy with key stakeholders, in particular investors and government;
- support delivery of the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment by attracting collaborative partners;
- deliver our shared ambition to drive inclusive, sustainable growth.



2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Partnership Packages

The 2024-2025 pillared programme of activity will continue to deliver an exciting collaborative programme of activity across the key pillars of Investment Focused Events, Engagement and Advocacy, Research and Communications.

The programme includes a presence at international real estate investment conferences, UKREiF 2025 and MIPIM 2025, as well as a Dublin / London real estate investment showcase event, to highlight our city region's proposition to a global audience.



2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM



2025

MIPIM, the world's leading real estate market event, brings together the most influential players from all sectors of the international real estate industry and gives unrivalled access to the greatest number of development projects and sources of capital worldwide.

10 – 14 March 2025
Cannes, France
www.mipim.com

Meet the real estate community through a programme of seminars, panel discussions and networking receptions which will showcase investment opportunities.

- 20,000+ attendees
- Investors
- Occupiers
- Developers
- Cities and local authorities
- Three days of activity
- Exhibition stand
- Unrivalled networking opportunities
- Fringe events
- UK Cities Dinner



2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM



2025

The UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiif) is a three-day real estate and infrastructure event.

20 – 22 May 2025
Royal Armouries Leeds & Leeds Dock
www.ukreiiif.com

UKREiif connects people, places, and businesses to accelerate and unlock sustainable, inclusive and transformational investment.

- 16,000+ Event attendees
- 60+ Stages
- 150+ Fringe Events
- 275+ Local Authorities Attending
- 1,750+ Investors Attending
- 1,000+ Occupiers Attending
- 1,750+ Developers Attending

Supported by a high number of regional combined authorities, local councils and Government departments – as well as the largest developers and investors from across the UK and internationally – this event will gather all the key players, influencers and decision makers in the investment and real estate markets to highlight investment and development opportunities, whilst connecting and facilitating new relationships to drive economic growth through development and regeneration.

- Three days of activity
- Exhibition stand in main hall
- Belfast Region showcase event
- Fringe events
- Private Investor Event



2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Dublin / London Real Estate Investment Showcase

With strong north-south and east-west relations, the Belfast region offers a secure investment landscape in a post-Brexit world.

A dedicated investment showcase will present opportunities for the sector, underscored by a strong foundation of cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

Showcase is dependent on financial viability.

2024 – 2025 PROGRAMME
INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Partnership Package

BRCD Partners

£15,000

Includes:

- 3 x delegate passes to UKREiIF 2025
- Access to reduced rate delegate passes for UKREiIF 2025
- 2 x delegate passes to MIPIM 2025
- Invitation to join dedicated investment showcase in Dublin / London
- Participation in dedicated BRCD showcase
- Invitation to join Belfast City & Region Place Partnership's Taskforce
- Invitation to join Advocacy & Engagement Workshops
- Logo and listing on all branding, as appropriate
- Opportunity to promote investment and regeneration activities through BCRPP marketing activities

All events, initiatives and programming are subject to approvals and financial viability. Additional opportunities may arise throughout the year.

To register, visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/investinbelfast/connections/belfast-city-and-region-place-partnership

Contact

For further information, please contact Lanyon Group:

Katie Doran
katie.doran@lanyongroup.com
T: +44 (0) 28 9018 3242
M: +44 (0) 78 6661 6720

Gavin Williamson
gavin.williamson@lanyongroup.com
T: +44 (0) 28 9018 3242
M: +44 (0) 79 2804 6925



Belfast City & Region Place Partnership

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity/Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism/Head of Administration
Date of Report	31 October 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Event Locations 2025 (Previously presented to Council)
Attachments	

1. Background

A number of events have been approved by Council, subject to the rates setting process for 2025/26. The forthcoming Queen’s Parade development works will result in site limitations at Bangor Waterfront for direct Council events delivery during 2025. Thus a review of the programme is required, taking due consideration of existing resource. Officers have reviewed the summer programme, and in particular the events affected in this context.

Armed Forces Day 2025 - At the Place and Prosperity Committee on 9 November 2023 it was agreed that *Council accepts the honour to host the main Armed Forces Day as part of Sea Bangor on 21 June 2025 with a musical event in Newtownards on 20 June, and approves officers to liaise with the RFCA to confirm programming opportunities and to budget accordingly, subject to lead in to Estimates process for 2025/26.*

Not Applicable

23

VE Day 80 – At the Corporate Committee in June 2024 it was agreed via Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gilmour and Councillor Martin that:

*8th May 2025 will be 80 years since **VE day**- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.*

Veterans' Day Parade 2025 - At the Corporate Committee in September 2017 it was agreed via Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors McIlveen, Armstrong-Cotter and Kennedy that *this Council proposes reviving the Veterans' Day event (which was previously hosted by Ards Borough Council) to recognise the invaluable contribution of men and women from this Borough who have served their country at home and abroad and tasks officers to begin conversations with the Royal British Legion, relevant regimental associations and other appropriate bodies with a view to hosting the first event in June 2018.*

Pipe Bands 2025 - At the Place and Prosperity Committee in January 2023 it was agreed *that officers submit a bid for the Council's Pipe Band Championship 2023 to the RSPBANI at £14,000 with a total Council allocated budget to a maximum of £26,500, subject to the Rates Setting process and confirmation of bid by RSPBANI. It was further agreed that the Council proceeds with Option 3 to rotate the hosting of the event in Bangor and Newtownards Airfield, the event being at the Newtownards Airfield in 2023 and Bangor in 2024, subject to annual negotiations with the Ulster Flying Club and the bidding process.*

A further report was brought to Place and Prosperity Committee in February 2024 outlining the opportunity to host the UK Pipe Band Championships at Ward Park Arras, seeking an additional budget of £12,860 to deliver the event (total budget £34,360). Officers have been working on the premise that the rotation is implemented annually by Council going forward and have been scoping costs and delivery within Newtownards for the event in 2025 (as per previous further rotation arrangement approved at Regeneration and Development Committee, October 2018).

Sea Bangor (annual) - Sea Bangor is included in the annual tourism events programme as per Borough Events Strategic Direction. It is hosted annually at Eisenhower Car Park and Pier.

Other Council Direct Delivered Annual Events include:

- Hollywood May Day
- Ards Guitar Festival - April
- Comber Earlies Food Festival - last Saturday in June
- Creative Peninsula – August
- Portavogie Tide & Turf – early September
- Aspects Literary Festival – September

Not Applicable

24

- Ards Puppet Festival – October
- Shorelife Celebration Festival – early October
- Bangor and Newtownards Christmas Light Switch On – November

(note Council also deliver a range of other events and activities throughout the year.)

2. Proposed event locations

Given the limited availability of suitable event space in Bangor, as a result of the Queen's Parade development for the upcoming year, it is proposed that the following locations are agreed for each relevant event to allow necessary planning with external organisations.

Event	Date	Proposal	Notes	Comments
VE Day 80	Friday 9 May 2025	Castle Park, Bangor	Concert by the Band of the Royal Irish Regiment Beacons will also be lit on 8 May in Bangor, Newtownards and Ballyhalbert	
Armed Forces Day (incorporating Veteran Parade)	Saturday 14 or 21 June (tbc) 2025	Ards Airfield/ Parade from Conway Square leading to Airfield	One day event (final date subject to ongoing liaison with RFCA) Incorporate parade into AFD to maximise audience	This will require a new Council decision due to previously agreed location for AFD at Bangor (incorporated at Sea Bangor on the Saturday). Parade subject to asking Market to relocate
Pipe Bands	Saturday 19 July 2025	Regent House, Newtownards.	New location due to request for alternative	RSPBANI have been consulted and have confirmed this

Not Applicable

		Grounds at Comber Road/Castlebawn	options in Newtownards from RSPBANI.	site is their preferred option in Newtownards. Confirmation of the site is subject to approval by the school's Board of Governors.
NB **Comber Earlies Food Festival	Saturday 28 June 2025	Comber Leisure Centre Car Park	Part of Taste Summer Festival and annual programme	** for note only for planning/resource as event occurs in June.

The above table outlines how the events can be delivered due to the limitations of available event space at the Bangor Seafront in summer 2025. Due to the available staffing resource and other tourism events planned for June 2025 (Comber Earlies Food Festival – 28 June) Sea Bangor would be required to be paused for 2025.

Officers have considered how Bangor could be animated during June and are currently scoping an additional month of activity in Ward Park i.e. music/family activity in the Park at the weekend. The Music in Park event delivered by Open House at this venue, attracted an audience of 27,000 over an 8-week period in 2023.

It is anticipated that the additional activity of five extra weeks would be planned for Saturdays (to be confirmed) to encourage people to the city centre to eat, drink and shop. An additional passport scheme attracting footfall into local businesses could be extended to coincide with this entertainment. Offers and attractions in city centre businesses could attract families to spend the day.

Early officer discussions with Open House anticipate that Seaside Revival would take place at Ward Park and would be programmed as Summer Revival for 2025. Date and venue are to be confirmed by the organisers.

Open House Festival supported by Council would continue as normal animating key venues in the city throughout the month of August. Council has also approved the hosting of a concert in Bangor in June, subject to licence. It is anticipated this will attract a large footfall and business to the city.

3. Budgets

VE Day 80 will be funded through the Civic Events budget.

Armed Forces Day (AFD) 2025 incorporating Veteran Parade will be funded from a projected tourism budget of £115,000, subject to the rate setting process (an additional £10,000 is anticipated as a contribution from Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association) and the civic aspect from the Civic Events budget, subject to the rates setting process.

Not Applicable

26

The AND Pipe Bands 2025 event has an early scoped budget of £34,000 to deliver at the new site, taking consideration of potential traffic management fees, stewarding and a bid amount to Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI, subject to the rates setting process.

An additional budget of £10,000 is required to deliver the extra summer activity in Ward Park This would be included in projected tourism budgets as part of the rates setting process and would be subject to approval.

To deliver the reconfigured programme specific to VE Day 80, Armed Forces Day incorporating the Veterans' Day Parade and the Ards and North Down Pipe Band event the overall Tourism Events Budget requires an additional £50,000 in comparison to that approved in 2024. Costs to deliver events safely, aligned to corporate priorities while retaining quality programming, continues to be a challenge for Council and increases for the delivery of other tourism events will be further brought forward as part of the rates setting process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the following:

1. **VE Day 80** - A concert is held in Castle Park, Bangor on Friday, 9 May 2025, with beacons lit in Bangor, Newtownards and Ballyhalbert on the 8 May 2025 to mark the anniversary.
2. **Armed Forces Day 2025** is held at Ards Airfield on either 14 or 21 June 2025, incorporating the Veterans' Parade from Conway Square and further approves a tourism budget of £115,000 towards its delivery, subject to the rates setting process.
3. **AND Pipe Bands event 2025** is held at Regent House School Grounds (Comber Road/Castlebawn), Newtownards on 19 July 2025, subject to approval by the Regent House School Board of Governors and further approves a tourism budget of £34,000 towards its delivery, subject to the rates setting process.
4. Sea Bangor does not take place in 2025 due to anticipated site limitations in Bangor and an additional series of 'Family/Music in the Park' type events are held each Saturday (tbc) during June 2025 with a tourism budget of £10,000, subject to the rates setting process.

Unclassified

27

ITEM**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	07 November 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Addendum to Events Report
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Projected Borough-wide events Programme 2025 Appendix 2 - Projected Bangor-based events Programme 2025

Background

As Members are aware, at the Council meeting of 30 October, in relation to Report No. 18 entitled 'Event Locations 2025' Council approved the following:

1. VE Day 80 - A concert is held in Castle Park, Bangor on Friday, 9 May 2025, with beacons lit in Bangor, Newtownards and Ballyhalbert on the 8 May 2025 to mark the anniversary.
2. Armed Forces Day 2025 is held at Ards Airfield on either 14 or 21 June 2025, incorporating the Veterans' Parade from Conway Square and further approves a tourism budget of £115,000 towards its delivery, subject to the rates setting process.

Not Applicable

28

3. AND Pipe Bands event 2025 is held at Regent House School Grounds (Comber Road/Castlebawn), Newtownards on 19 July 2025, subject to approval by the Regent House School Board of Governors and further approves a tourism budget of £34,000 towards its delivery, subject to the rates setting process;

and furthermore that that the following be referred to the Place & Prosperity Committee - for further consideration:

4. Sea Bangor does not take place in 2025 due to anticipated site limitations in Bangor and an additional series of 'Family/Music in the Park' type events are held each Saturday (tbc) during June 2025 with a tourism budget of £10,000, subject to the rates setting process.

Purpose of Addendum

The purpose of this addendum is to provide some context to the recommendation and information on totality of events delivered by Council, in conjunction with Council, or through grant funding provided by Council, within the Borough and then specific to the city of Bangor, during the year.

Detail

Item 5 of Place and Prosperity Committee's meeting of 09 November 2023 updated Members in relation to the potential to host Armed Forces Day (AFD) in the Borough in June 2025. The report set out the opportunity to host the event in conjunction with the Sea Bangor event, held in June each year. The report further highlighted that AFD had previously been successfully hosted as part of Sea Bangor in 2017. The report further advised that incorporation of the event with Sea Bangor had been highlighted by both military representatives and senior council officers as presenting the best option regards financial and staff resourcing.

It was never the intention to hold a separate event for Armed Forces Day outwith Sea Bangor.

At the time of writing of the above report, Bangor Marine Ltd, developer of the Queen's Parade regeneration scheme, had been granted planning permission at the end of September the previous year and was fully expected to have commenced on site in relation to the public realm elements at Marine Gardens, with those works being completed well in advance of June 2025.

As Members are aware, redevelopment works are now expected to commence on Marine Gardens late 2024/start of 2025, with a programmed construction period of 12 months.

As reported to Members of Committee previously, when completed, it is the Council's aspiration that the McKee Clock arena and Marine Gardens events space will be recognised by event organisers as a unique venue for hosting a range of events. It is anticipated that more locals and visitors will benefit from McKee Clock

Not Applicable

29

and Marine Gardens where a wide calendar of events will bring increased social, economical and cultural returns for the Borough.

Proposed Family/Music in the Park Events, Bangor, June 2025

Further to the Council meeting of 30 October, in terms of the additional series of events proposed to be held on Saturdays across June 2025 officers have reviewed the concept and suggest that to enhance the programme elements across four Saturdays the budget required would need to be increased as outlined in the Appendix.

Programme of Events

It is useful for Members to understand the wide range of events, not just delivered by the Tourism Service, that are programmed across the year within the City, including those fully delivered by Council in line with the Council's adopted Borough Events Strategic Direction.

ANDBC Draft Programme of Events 2025

Date 2025	Council Event	Location	Budget 2024	Projected 2025 Attendees
April	Ards Guitar Festival	Newtownards	£28,000	1,800
Mon 5 May	May Day	Hollywood	£10,000	8,000
Fri 9 May	VE Day 80	Bangor	£2,000 (2025)	1,500
Sat 14 or 21 June tbc	Armed Forces Day	Newtownards	£115,000 (2025)	20,000
June	Summer Food Festival incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival, (Sat 28 June)	Borough-wide & Comber	£70,000	12,000
Sat 19 July	AND Pipe Bands (rotas Bangor & Newtownards)	Newtownards	£34,000 (2025)	10,000
August	Creative Peninsula	Borough-wide	£20,000	7,000
September	Autumn Food Festival, incorporating Tide and Turf at Portavogie (Sat 6 Sept tbc)	Borough-wide & Portavogie	£70,000	12,000
Sat 13 Sept tbc	Parks led with Tourism support (13/14 Sept) Chilli Fest in the Walled Garden (as above)	Bangor	£5,000	5,000
September	Aspects Literary Festival	Bangor	£30,000	2,000
Sat 4 Oct tbc	Shorelife Celebration	Mount Stewart & Castle Espie	£30,000	5,000
October	Puppet Festival	Newtownards	£20,000	1,500
Sat 22 Nov	Christmas Switch On	Bangor	£20,000	10,000
Sat 29 Nov	Christmas Switch On	Newtownards	£20,000	7,000

NB

2025 are allocated as per Council approvals to date, all subject to the Rates Setting process.

Projected ANDBC Bangor Events 2025

Bangor Events	Date	Organiser	Budget ¹	Notes	Projected attendees ²
VE Day 80	9 May 2025	Council	Existing civic budget circa £1500-2000	Concert by the Band of the Royal Irish Regiment at Castle Park, Bangor. Beacons lit on 8 May in Bangor, Ballyhalbert and Newtownards	Circa 1,000-1,500
Ward park Saturdays in June	7, 14,21 and 28 June 2025	Council	c£15,000- £20,000 revised budget to enhance activity	Programmed from 3.00 – 5.00 pm. This would be aimed at a family audience with a combination of music and complementary activity e.g. crafts and local food stalls. Running in parallel, officers would work with the Chamber to develop a passport scheme which has run successfully at other events through the city, as well as liaison with local hospitality providers to devise a range of pop-up activities to increase dwell time and spend.	Circa 8-10,000
TASTE Summer Food Festival Comber Earlies Food Festival (CEFF) – 28 June	June/July	Council	Campaign marketing cost £7,000	This is the umbrella food and drink festival supported by a range of events in the Borough to showcase Food and Drink – 20 shoulder events in 2024. One 3 rd party event delivered in Bangor in 2024. ** does not include 11,000 attendees for CEFF	Circa 300 – 500**

¹ Council budgets provisional and subject to rates setting

² Projected attendees or equivalent approximate baseline

Projected ANDBC Bangor Events 2025

Bangor Events	Date	Organiser	Budget ¹	Notes	Projected attendees ²
Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra Concert, Elim Church, Bangor	28 June	Twinning event - Council	c£2,500 To be approved	Orchestra's planned tour of Ireland in 2025 with the group comprising around 30-35 musicians from the Orchestra and a Compere, and joined by Bangor Ladies Choir	500
FORM Sculpture in the Walled Garden	Month of June	Council	£2,500	A month-long celebration and showcase of local sculpture throughout the walled garden	3,000
Picnic in the Park	6, 13, 20 and 27 July and 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31 August 2025	Open House	Grant	A series of music events each Sunday attracting locals and visitors	Circa 20,000 (18,200 based on 8-week period in 2024)
Open House Festival	1-31 August 2025	Open House	Grant	Events in The Court House and The Walled Garden plus other Bangor venues All data subject to post event evaluation.	Circa 57,000 as per projection for 2024
Seaside Revival replacement event (theme tbc)	Date tbc	Open House	Grant	Event to be reimagined in a different location/s – early discussions include possible changed theme and venue/s embracing the music scene in the city. This will be part of the post evaluation review.	Included in projection as above
Creative Peninsula	August	Council	£24,000	Range of creative events throughout the Borough.	3 events in Bangor at 4 venues Circa 6,200

Projected ANDBC Bangor Events 2025

Bangor Events	Date	Organiser	Budget ¹	Notes	Projected attendees ²
Range of events held in the Walled Garden and other City venues	Throughout the year	Council (Parks Service)	Budget allocated per event	Hallowe'en Trail, National Tree Week and Christmas Trails	Projected tbc
Awakening the Garden – The Walled Garden	Easter	Council (Parks Service)	Budget allocated per event	Family day out in the beautiful Bangor Castle Walled Garden in celebrating the 'Awakening of the Garden' with food and entertainment, as well as garden themed demos	Projected tbc
Love Parks Week (incorporating Garlic in the Garden event) – Borough-wide and City	End July/Early August	Council (Parks Service)	Budget allocated per event	This week brings together the Council, green space managers, landowners, residents and community organisations to celebrate and support our fantastic green spaces. 2024 started with a bird walk in Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards, and a bat night in Lisbane on Friday 26 July, with many more activities including a biodiversity walk at Whitespots, art activities in Bangor Castle Walled Garden and Holywood's Ballymenoch Park, environmental storytelling in Portaferry, a bird walk in Donaghadee, a history tour in Bangor's Castle Park, plus a series of events in Cairn Wood, Newtownards	Projected tbc
TASTE Autumn Food Festival inc. Tide and Turf and Chilli Fest - Sept	Sept/Oct	Council	Campaign marketing cost £7,000	This is the umbrella food and drink festival supported by a range of events in the borough either side of core event to showcase Food and Drink – 18 shoulder events in 2024. Two 3 rd party events delivered in Bangor in 2024.	Circa 300-500**

Projected ANDBC Bangor Events 2025

Bangor Events	Date	Organiser	Budget ¹	Notes	Projected attendees ²
				** does not include Tide and Turf at 11,000 nor any further TASTE Clondeboye event tbc (9,000 in 2024)	
Chilli Fest, Walled Garden	13/14 September 2025	Council	£5,000	Joint event collaboration between Parks and Tourism – showcase for entertainment, food demos and food traders.	5,000
Aspects Literary Festival	End Sept early October 2025	Council	£30,000	Irish writing, poetry and literature festival in a range of venues in Bangor.	28 venues, 2,000 attendees and 1,329 paying customers
Fun and Hallowe'en Activity at North Down Museum	March and October 25	Council	£2,000 and existing	Storytelling and fun at the Museum	500 and 160
Christmas Switch On	22 November 2025	Council	£20,000 (2024)	Bangor Christmas switch on entertainment (plus North Down Museum Twilight Christmas event)	Circa 10,000
Range of anticipated Tourism grant-aided Events (provisional)					
Camerata at Clondeboye Estate	Held August 2024	Council grant funded		Camerata Ireland Gala Concert	
Bangor Regatta	Held over 4 days in June 2024	Council grant funded			
Columbanus Folk Festival	Held over 8 days in June 2024	Council grant funded		Incorporated a wide variety of cross-community events, including Celtic Soul (Sir Van Morrison Tribute Band), The Sands Family Folk Band, Folk	

Projected ANDBC Bangor Events 2025

Bangor Events	Date	Organiser	Budget ¹	Notes	Projected attendees ²
				Night Concert, Rock Night Concert, Youth Concert, Music/Singing Sessions and a Trad Boat Tour	
Bangor International Choral Festival	Held over 3 days in 2024	Council grant funded		Choral Festival showcasing competing choirs of all abilities and backgrounds from school level to adult level including special school choirs.	
Range of tourism grant aided events (provisional)	Throughout season	Range of providers	Council grant aid Dependent upon applicants (circa £32,348 in 2024)	In 2024 five event were supported by Council and delivered in Bangor : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camerata at Clandeboye • Bangor International Choral Festival • Columbanus Folk Festival • Bangor Swimming event 	It is assumed a range of applicants will apply for 2025 and supplement the event offering in Bangor. Total attendees in 2024 circa 10,500

NB It is anticipated a range of Experiences Walks and Tours will also be delivered in Bangor in 2025 as part of the Experience Development Programme.

Unclassified

36

ITEM 7**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development (Acting)
Date of Report	18 October 2024
File Reference	TBC
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Local Economic Partnerships - Sub Regional Economic Plan
Attachments	Appendix 1 Sub Regional Economic Plan

Background

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has been developing proposals for Sub-Regional Economic Plans for a number of months as part of its vision to achieve a better regional balance across Northern Ireland.

This was highlighted in the recently published draft Programme for Government which has undergone an eight-week public consultation process, ending on 04 November.

The Minister for the Economy is now looking towards a bottom-up approach with the creation of 11 Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). LEPs would aim to provide increased support for businesses and to stimulate the economy in each Council area.

Not Applicable

37

In order to support these LEPs, DfE plan to set aside an annual NI budget of £15 million for the next three financial years (£45 million in total). Information on how the budget will be allocated across NI from DfE is expected shortly.

It is anticipated that the fund would support, but not be limited to, the following:

- Productivity
- Business base rate
- Economic inactivity
- Collaboration across government bodies
- Weak sector activity
- Reduction of greenhouse gases/sustainability

In order to start rolling out this fund by 1st April 2025, councils are being asked to set up their own Local Economic Partnership.

The membership of these LEPs is still unclear as DfE is currently developing guidance in regard to further detail and this has not been communicated to the councils yet. (It is expected imminently.) It is, however, anticipated that the LEPs will be managed by Council and that a portion of the fund will be awarded to Council for administration and staffing.

These LEPs further reinforce the intention of the Executive to forge a meaningful partnership with councils as local partners and to encourage flexible and tailored investment that meet the specific needs of each council area.

This represents a significant opportunity for councils and the areas of intervention highlighted are in line with the Corporate Plan's priorities.

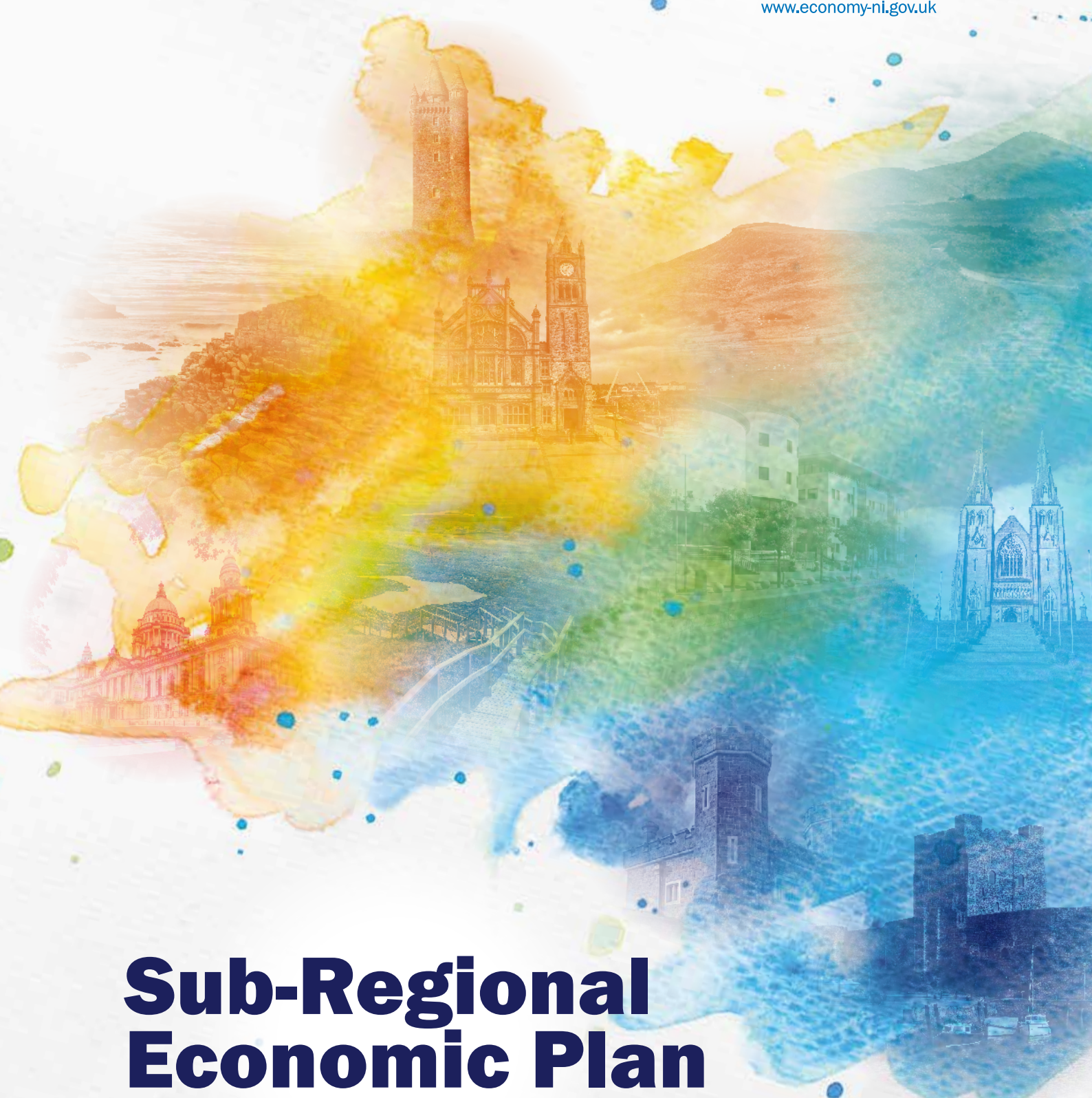
It is anticipated that further guidance as outlined will be provided by the Department over the next month.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the intention of the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships within the Department's attached Sub Regional Economic Plan, with a further report brought back to Council as the process develops and further details are received.



Department for the
Economy
An Roinn
Geilleagair
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

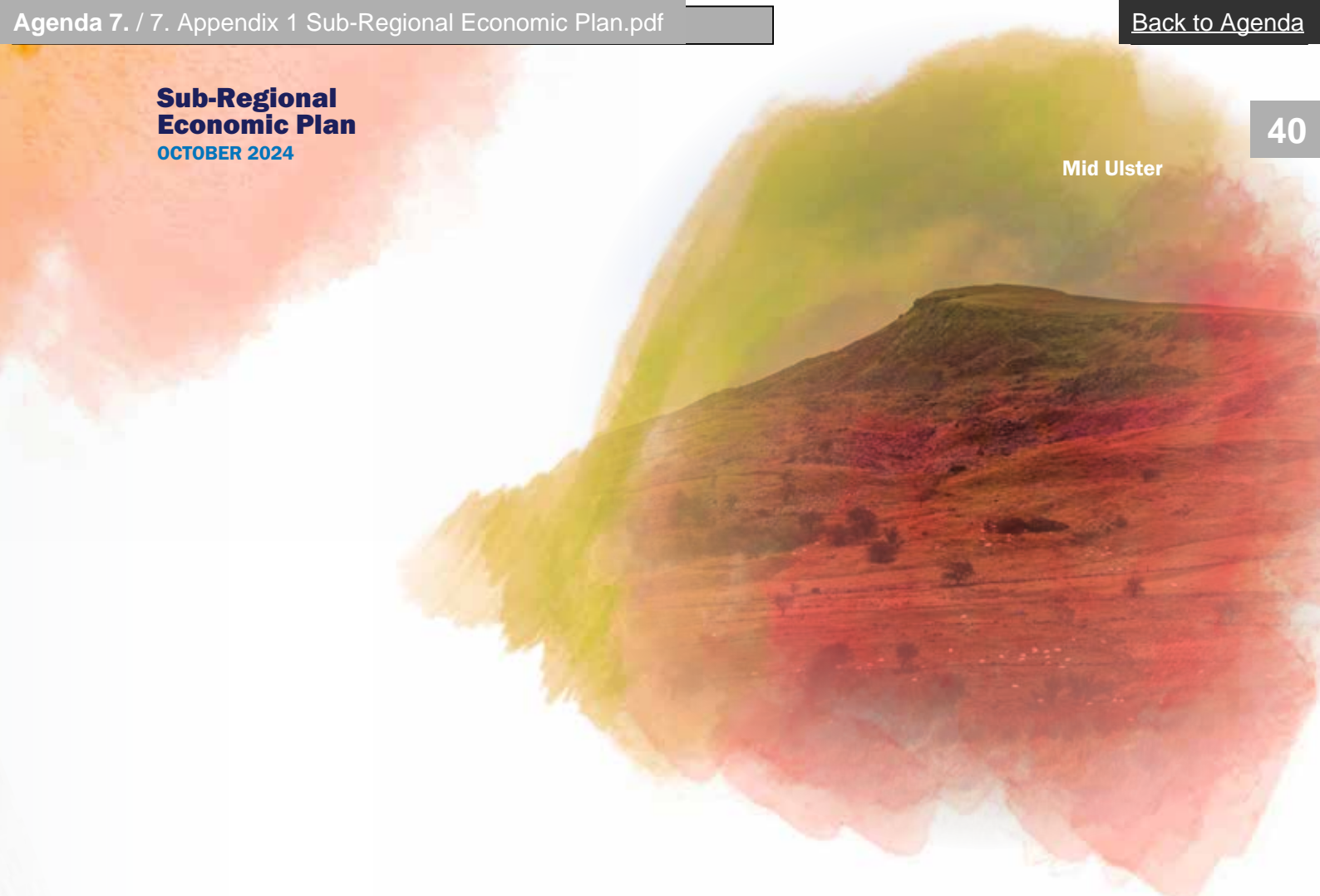


Sub-Regional Economic Plan

OCTOBER 2024



Mid & East
Antrim



Contents

Ministerial Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Economic Vision	5
Recognising Imbalance	6
Tackling Imbalance	9
Next Steps	16

**Sub-Regional
Economic Plan**
OCTOBER 2024



**Derry City
& Strabane**

Ministerial Foreword

This document sets out a new strategic approach to economic policy.

It is a locally-led approach which places regional balance at its heart, and which enshrines partnership working.

Local communities will be empowered to identify their own economic priorities.

Through local partnerships, central government, Invest NI, Councils, and our network of education providers and civic society, we will work together to identify the main barriers to economic development, and the interventions that will unlock the area's potential.

Interventions could involve support for local clusters, investment in skills programmes, or quicker planning decisions.

This may necessitate the recalibration of existing government programmes and budgets, supplemented by additional funding from my department.

As part of this new strategic direction, Invest NI will be reorientated towards developing local economies.

Invest NI's Regional Offices will work hand-in-hand with Councils and take on more functions, and more staff.

Working in partnership with my department, the Invest NI Board and Chief Executive will oversee this profound change in its approach, with clear and ambitious targets agreed to monitor performance.

In working together like this, in the spirit of true co-design and collaboration, we can start to reverse historical imbalances, and deliver prosperity throughout the region.



Introduction

We welcome the publication of the Minister’s Sub-Regional Economic Plan and its ambition to deliver improved regional balance across Northern Ireland. Our teams have worked closely with Departmental colleagues to co-design the plan.

Delivering this Sub-Regional Economic Plan will be a key feature of our new Business Strategy, which we will shortly publish. This strategy will see Invest NI introduce a new Regional Approach that will include an expansion of our regional footprint and increase our capacity and capability in the regions.

We will do more to collaborate with partners and stakeholders in the regions to promote and support local economic development by playing a greater leadership and advocacy role, both in, and for, our regions.

Our focus will be on building out a more regionally balanced, sustainable, productive, and prosperous Northern Ireland economy.

Through enhanced targeting and improved client service and supports, we will drive greater economic activity across Northern Ireland, achieve higher levels of entrepreneurship, new firm formation, R&D and innovation, export growth and productivity.

If you are a business working anywhere in Northern Ireland, with dreams of selling outside Northern Ireland and going to the next level, we will be there to help, advise and guide you.

By focusing on places and partnerships in collaboration with regional stakeholders, we will co-design solutions tailored to regional needs and accelerate the process of addressing deep seated economic challenges.

Invest NI has made regional development a key priority for the organisation, and we are confident that we can make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Minister’s Economic Vision for every part of Northern Ireland.



John Healy
Chair
Invest NI



Kieran Donoghue
Chief Executive Officer
Invest NI

Economic Vision

For too long our economy has been weighed down by structural weaknesses that have limited our ability to reach our full potential. Those weaknesses restrict opportunities for all in society to both contribute and benefit from true economic success. Ultimately, we want to improve the quality of life for all our people and this is where our four objectives come together to support real, life-changing outcomes for people. We want to see employment providing better rewards and to be fulfilling and accessible, we want to see people benefit from better jobs wherever they live, and we want those jobs and the lifestyles they support to be greener.



Productivity has been below the UK average for decades and although the gap has narrowed in recent years (from 17.4% in 2019 to 13.2% in 2022), it ranks at 10th amongst the twelve UK regions in 2022. The productivity gap is even more pronounced when compared to the rest of Ireland with the 2023 Northern Ireland Productivity Dashboard (based on 2021 data) reporting that output per hour worked in the Republic of Ireland was 8% higher than the UK average.



While almost 94% of employees are in permanent jobs with guaranteed hours, approximately 11,000 employees are employed on zero-hours contracts. 84% of working age employees in 2023 were paid on or above the Real Living Wage (RLW) rate, a proportion below most UK regions. Variation in pay varies across sectors and industries. The average pay for sales assistants and retail cashiers is below the RLW whereas IT professionals receive more than double the RLW rate.



Sub-regional disparities remain persistent. The employment rate (including students) in 2022 in Derry City & Strabane is 10 percentage points lower than Mid Ulster. Mid & East Antrim lags almost 16 percentage points behind Lisburn & Castlereagh for Level 4+ tertiary education attainment rates. Fermanagh & Omagh emits the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions yet generates not only the most renewable energy, but is almost 50% ahead of the next best performing LGD.



Greenhouse gas emissions have reduced, seeing a 26% reduction since 1990 while the Republic of Ireland saw a 7.2% increase in emissions over the same period. However, our reduction compares to a fall of 53% in England, 51% in Scotland and 36% in Wales. Our emissions reduction needs to go much further and faster if the targets set out in The Climate Change Act are to be achieved. Net Zero by 2050 or earlier is not just a legal imperative but a moral obligation.

Recognising Imbalance

Disparities across the region in economic performance have been getting worse; it's time to reverse this

Our whole economy faces a number of challenges with issues such as employment, productivity, disposable income, and economic inactivity all areas where we perform poorly compared to our nearest neighbours. These disparities are even more pronounced at a sub-regional level. When looking at the highest and lowest performing council areas:

- Labour productivity in Belfast is 31% higher than in Derry City & Strabane.
- Median wages in Belfast are 44% higher than in Ards & North Down.
- The employment rate in Mid Ulster is 10 percentage points higher than Derry City & Strabane.
- Export intensity in Newry, Mourne & Down is 11 percentage points higher than both Antrim & Newtownabbey and Ards & North Down.
- The tertiary educational attainment rate in Lisburn & Castlereagh is 15.9 percentage points higher than in Mid & East Antrim.
- The rate of employees stating they were in secure employment in Mid & East Antrim is 5 percentage points higher than in Causeway Coast & Glens.

Many of these areas suffer from an economic disadvantage despite all having potential for growth, and in many cases, there are areas of inequality common across neighbouring councils which suggests that collaborating and working together to tackle the problems at scale could be more effective. Even those that are doing relatively well compared to others still fall below the NI average due to the distortive effort of one or two areas that are disproportionately far ahead.



**Ards &
North
Down**



Performance of councils against the indicator is ranked from 1 (highest) to 11 (lowest). The three highest performing are highlighted in green, the three lowest in red

Considering the four headline indicators, only two council areas - Antrim & Newtownabbey and Lisburn & Castlereagh - show strong to fair performance across all main priorities. Mid Ulster performs well on productivity, employment and median wages although its proportional greenhouse gas emissions are significantly higher than other LGDs. Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry City & Strabane, and Fermanagh & Omagh mostly lag the NI average across these themes and are in need of focused support.

Area performance on some measures can be affected by adjacency to major hubs of economic activity. Weekly median wages in Ards and North Down are significantly higher for those living in the area compared to those working there, a reflection of its status as a major commuter area of Belfast. Productivity however remains significantly lower than average in the region and improving this will be important in maximising opportunities and improving outcomes for as many people as possible.

Sub-Regional Economic Plan

OCTOBER 2024

47

Areas performing relatively well such as Antrim & Newtownabbey face challenges too, such as a need to increase export intensity, investment is required in the near future for industrial land, and there is ongoing competition with Belfast for labour/skills. Although its performance in a number of areas is strong, Belfast continues to struggle with poor labour force participation and low employment rates amongst its resident working age population. There is also evidence that employment is comparatively less secure for those that are in work than in other areas.

Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry City & Strabane, and Fermanagh & Omagh produce more renewable energy, and their export intensity is much higher than the peripheral councils. Mid Ulster is a manufacturing powerhouse and yet has had the lowest rate of new jobs from Foreign Direct Investment. Despite the lowest tertiary attainment rates, Mid & East Antrim ranks among the highest areas for people in work, the lowest economic inactivity level, and more employees earning above the real living wage and who feel more secure in their job. Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, without the universities, has a proportional spend on R&D by businesses equalled only by Belfast.

In other words, we need to drill down beyond the data, and there are other factors in play. There are some macro level issues that the entire region faces that permeate into these indicators:

- transport links, or rather the lack of (particularly west of the Bann)
- the lack of supply of industrial land and property
- investment required in water and sewerage
- slow energy connection provision
- traditionally low paying sectors such as tourism and agriculture predominant in certain council areas
- ageing population; and
- health issues and care responsibilities/ childcare costs preventing the economically inactive entering the workforce.

This demonstrates the need for a joined-up approach across government; 'economic interventions' alone will not be enough.

Some of the indicators show considerable strengths. Each council area has opportunities for growth, assets to 'sweat', city and growth deal projects to cluster around as anchors for innovation and tourism, further education colleges working with employers, and cross-border and east-west dual market access to exploit.

Causeway
Coast & Glens

Tackling Imbalance

Fermanagh & Omagh

A profound change in how we deliver economic development is required. A change in structure. A change in culture. To support this change there are three key strands to delivery.

Formation of new **Local Economic Partnerships** with dedicated funding of £45m

Realignment of Departmental policies and programmes to **drive local growth**

Enhanced **Invest NI** sub-regional role with local targets

Local Economic Partnerships

Empowering local communities is fundamental in building a more regionally balanced economy; one characterised by inclusive, sustainable, and thriving local economies where people want to live and work, and where employers want to invest. At a local level this means attracting investment and capitalising on emerging opportunities that can create high-quality jobs for local people.

To ensure there is full engagement and involvement of local stakeholders, the Department will be inviting councils to establish Local Economic Partnerships supported with dedicated funding of £45m.

The importance of flexibility regarding the geographic area and structure of these partnerships is fully recognised. They must be right for local circumstances and that means there will not be a standardised approach – each council can decide whether their area is the extent of the Local Economic Partnership, or they can choose to collaborate with other council areas to create a bigger partnership.

It will also be for councils to decide where they build on existing partnerships such as Labour Market Partnerships or Community Planning Partnerships and integrate the Local Economic Partnership with those or keep it separate.

Whichever approach is chosen, it is essential to ensure that the Local Economic Partnership reflects the full breadth of local stakeholders. DfE will assist councils in shaping these with supporting guidance, and Invest NI will provide advice through its Regional Teams and their knowledge of local networks.

Invest NI and the Department will support the Local Economic Partnership in the identification of suitable projects and in developing proposals that access dedicated funding. Single points of contact for stakeholders, clear two-way communication channels, and true co-production will be put in place. There will also be the opportunity to tap into expert knowledge provided by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC).

**Ultimately
however, projects
will be agreed and
prioritised by the Local
Economic Partnership –
local decision making
is at the heart of this
new approach.**

UUEPC is currently engaged in an independent research project, “Delivering balanced regional growth in Northern Ireland”, due to be published by the end of 2024. At that stage, at the discretion of the Local Economic Partnerships, the UUEPC researchers will be keen to discuss their findings and recommendations with the Local Economic Partnerships, and any implications these may have for the development of local actions.

To support Local Economic Partnerships, £45m of dedicated funding will be provided over the next three years to kickstart this new approach.

It will be used to deliver local projects identified by Local Economic Partnerships that seek to improve productivity, to raise median wages, to increase the employment rate and to lower economic inactivity, and to take strides towards delivering Net Zero and industrial decarbonisation. Projects funded will depend on local economic priorities and may differ between different council areas.

The funding is not the answer to all issues; it will not close disparities in isolation. It is a small first step in building better partnerships with councils and putting more control in the hands of local decision-makers on economic development. Learning what works best will take some time and we will listen to councils and others as we progress this work to ensure we maximise the impact of spending. It also offers the Department the opportunity to work with other public sector funders to align sources of funding to deliver greater impact.

Funding to Local Economic Partnerships will be determined by need and this formula will be co-designed with councils by December 2024. Capital and Resource will be available, and there is potential to include Financial Transactions Capital depending on the demand from councils. Support from Invest NI Regional Offices to each Local Economic Partnership will be available.



**Belfast
City**

Sub-Regional Economic Plan

OCTOBER 2024

51

Refocused Invest NI

Regional development is a key priority within Invest NI's new strategic approach and the organisation will be restructured to ensure delivery in line with the Minister's Economic Vision. Invest NI has a fundamental role to play, and it will implement a new approach from October 2024 onwards with the new structure fully operational by April 2025.

A new **Regional Strategic Agenda** will drive collaboration through greater partnership working, measured with new ambitious targets. Central to this will be a target to increase the percentage of investments outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area¹, from an average of 56% over the last 5 years, to 65% at the end of the Invest NI Business Strategy in 2026/27.

Invest NI will significantly enhance the presence and functions in regional offices by expanding from four offices to five, increasing staffing levels and leadership in each, and playing a greater advocacy role for Local Economic Partnerships to ensure their voices are heard across government.

The introduction of a new **Regional Property Programme** will facilitate higher levels of business investment across the regions, and the integration of City & Growth Deals paired with new bespoke regional value propositions will underpin the Regional Strategic Agenda, supporting regions in becoming more attractive for local and FDI investment.

Current programmes, such as Ambition to Grow and Supporting Women, will be targeted in key regions, and a new Business Innovation Grant will be introduced. Regional cluster strengths will be prioritised and multi-agency cross-border collaborative working on green tech, clusters, and female entrepreneurship will be advanced. Regional offices will lead an enhanced R&D call.

The new approach will deliver more innovative start-ups, strengthen established firms, grow the regional base of export focused companies, increase FDI activity, and only support jobs above the Real Living Wage with good contractual conditions.

Invest NI Headquarters will provide specialist support, advice, and expertise, meaning that the whole organisation is reorientated towards delivering local economic priorities.

1 Belfast Metropolitan Area includes the Belfast, Antrim & Newtownabbey, Ards & North Down, and Lisburn and Castlereagh council areas.

DfE New Approach

Addressing economic disparities and inequalities at sub-regional level will be considered when developing all macro interventions. Enhanced regional competitiveness must not come at the expense of sub-regional balance. Utilising unique and bespoke solutions for place-based persistent problems will be developed alongside macro initiatives. Empowerment of localities and places will be at the forefront of regional balance. Building economic capacity and capability will start at local level. The new norm will be more balanced public sector investment, staff located and working in the regions, co-designing solutions, and strengthened local, sub-regional and national collaboration.

DfE will restructure to deliver. Additional staff in post, streamlined points of contact for stakeholders, and making central advice, analysis, and specialist support available. Advocating for local needs across government to build a coalition to deliver results.

Delivery not process, focusing on impact, additionality and making the most of limited resources. Targeted funding to ensure effective delivery, and flexibility to respond to new challenges rapidly.

The Department will establish a new Regional Balance Unit to work across DfE to mainstream regional balance. It will support the Local Economic Partnerships and Invest NI to drive effective delivery of locally chosen actions. The team will work across DfE and its partners, NICS, UK, and Irish government departments and agencies to press the case for local issues, to harness synergies in approach, and to bring more cohesion to public sector interventions.



Newry,
Mourne &
Down

This new direction of travel will be rooted in all we do

Sub-Regional Economic Plan

- Local Economic Partnerships set up to empower local stakeholders to harness their potential
- £45m of dedicated funding to kickstart actions and underpin the new approach
- Structural reform of DfE & Invest NI to ensure that local voices are heard and championed

Higher Education

- Magee Taskforce to increase Ulster University's Derry~Londonderry campus to 10,000 students
- Support a strong higher education offering in our Further Education Colleges, including through partnerships between Colleges, QUB, UU and OU
- Partnerships with City & Growth Deals to increase R&D and innovation outside Belfast

Further Education

- Having a curriculum offer for the delivery of professional and technical skills which is tailored to local business and learner needs. Supporting local employers by providing business development and innovation expertise
- Encouraging those with no or low qualifications to participate in education to improve their economic opportunities
- Reduce educational disadvantage and barriers to entry and qualification at local level, supporting progression through further and on to higher education or employment

Tourism

- Tourism Partnership Board refining Tourism Action Plan to ensure local focus
- Tourism NI will develop local action plans based on community strengths and potential
- Tourism NI will pilot a sub-regional Destination Stewardship Plan in 2025

Entrepreneurship & Enterprise

- Support closer partnership working between Invest NI and Go Succeed through a revitalised Invest NI regional office network
- Support greater participation of females and other underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship
- Support Local Economic Partnerships in developing cross-border partnerships and applying to competitive funds

City & Growth Deals & Telecoms

- City & Growth Deals to deliver world class innovation and tourism projects
- Accelerated delivery in 2025 with supporting pilot actions linked to Local Economic Partnerships
- Project Gigabit to provide near universal gigabit access

FDI & Invest NI Investments

- Incentivise delivery of Foreign Direct Investment and increase proportion of Invest NI investments outside of Belfast Metropolitan Area
- Develop updated Value Propositions for council areas and sub-regions
- Work with DETE to develop an MoU on all island economic priorities

Energy

- Develop an energy one stop shop to provide consumers, communities and local businesses with a single, trusted source of energy support, education and advice
- Deliver community benefit through a pathfinder community energy project and widen to support local ownership of renewable energy delivery projects
- Establish an Enhanced Investment Zone to harness £150m of available funding focusing on green technologies and skills

Inclusive Economy

- Work with Community Wealth Building Partnerships in Larne & the North West; Implement the Social Enterprise Action Plan to drive greater benefit at community level
- Co-design legislative changes to enhance local community owned Credit Unions; Consumer Council to examine the feasibility for a disability benefit linked loan pilot with Credit Unions
- Participate in cross-government People & Places pilot schemes in North Belfast and Derry~Londonderry

Innovation & Clusters

- Enhanced R&D Call led by business clinics in Invest NI Regional Offices
- Agree MoU with Innovation UK to deliver place-based actions
- Further develop regional clusters of economic activity in line with Sectoral Action Plans published in June 2024

Skills & Apprenticeships

- Skills Fund initiatives to develop childcare workforce, boost SME productivity, and support green skills, targeted at a local level
- Pre-Apprenticeship Academies to meet local skills demands. Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund. Skills academies to support SMEs are planned such as childcare, robotics and automation and welding
- Skill Up provides accessible online learning at colleges and universities, with flexible training opportunities available to all

Cross Border

- Develop North/South Fintech corridor to increase collaboration and cooperation
- Examine regulatory landscape to support cross-border financial services
- Review MRPQ/data transfer landscape to facilitate fully functioning all-island economy

Next Steps

Oct 24 – Dec 24

Over the coming months the Department and Invest NI will continue to engage with councils and local stakeholders to support the formation of the Local Economic Partnerships, which will be established between October and December 2024. During this time, the Department will co-design the funding allocation model with stakeholders.

Jan 25 – Mar 25

Local Economic Partnerships will be responsible for bringing forward projects that align with the Minister's key priorities; Productivity, Good Jobs, Reduce Carbon Emissions and Regional Balance. Invest NI will support the Local Economic Partnerships in the identification of suitable projects. Proposed projects should be agreed by the partnerships and brought to the Department by end March 2025, so that funding can begin to be drawn down from April 2025.

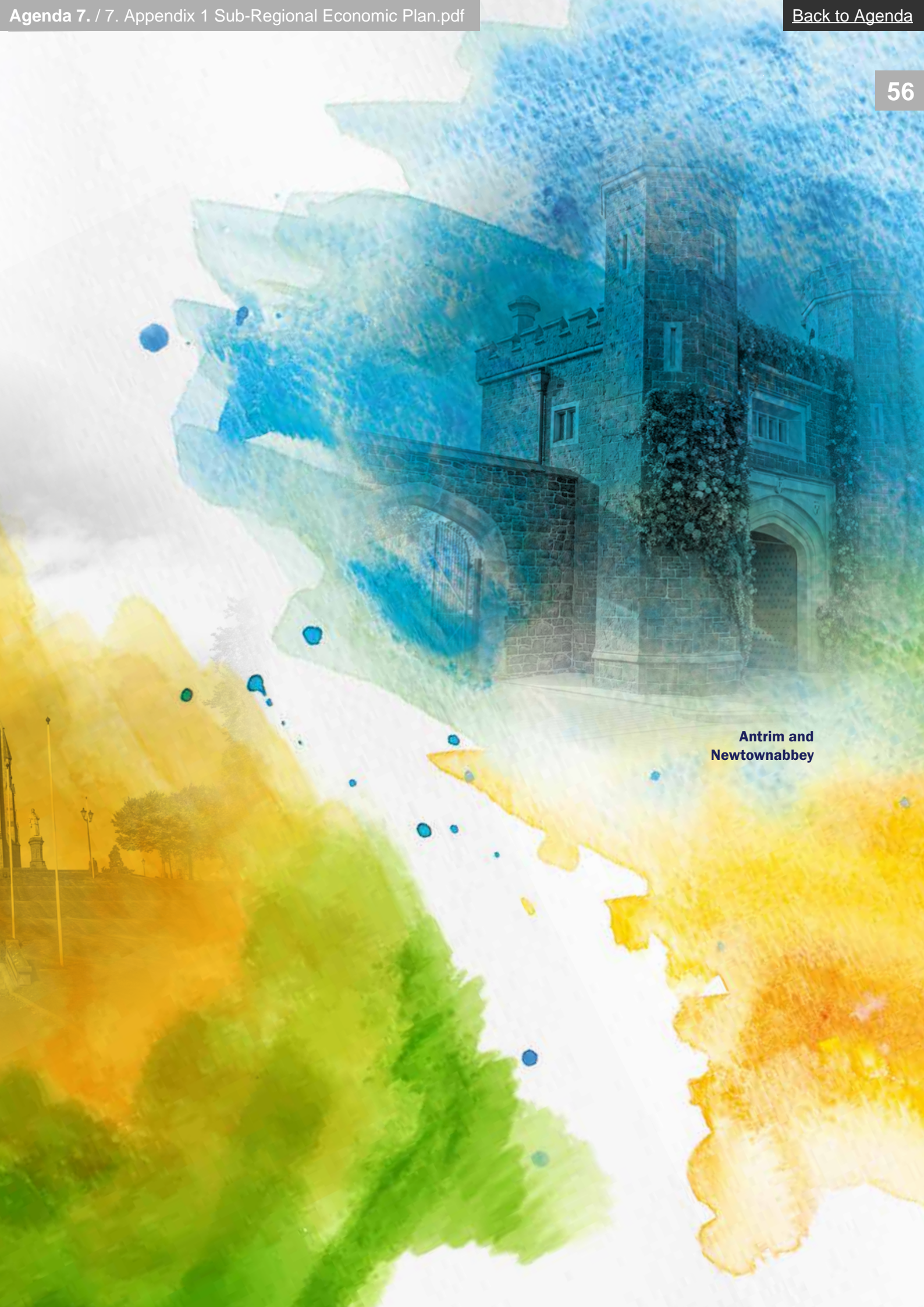
Apr 25 – Mar 28

Department and Invest NI to review and approve proposed projects. Approved projects will be funded for delivery through dedicated funding.

The Department understands these are ambitious timelines, however, by working together in partnership, we can deliver tangible change at a local level.



Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon



Antrim and Newtownabbey

Further Details

You can download a copy of this plan and supporting evidence from www.economy-ni.gov.uk/regional-balance

You can find more information on the Invest NI Regional Office Network at www.investni.com/about-us/where-we-are

If you would like to speak to a member of the team about the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, you can contact the Regional Balance Unit at RegionalBalance@economy-ni.gov.uk

Unclassified

58

ITEM 8**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	15 October 2024
File Reference	FIN45
Legislation	Section 5 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Prosperity Directorate Budgetary Control Report - September 2024
Attachments	

The Prosperity Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covers the 6-month period 1 April to 30 September 2024. The net cost of the Directorate is showing an underspend of £61k (3.7%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's budgetary performance is further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£29k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£105k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£138k favourable	3

Not Applicable

59

Explanation of Variance

The Prosperity Directorate's overall variance can be summarised by the following table: -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development – (£40k) vacant posts expected to be filled soon. Tourism – £12k. mainly due to extra staff costs for Tourism Events.
Goods & Services		
Economic Development	113	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go Succeed Programme grants. Offset by additional grant income.
Income		
Economic Development	(125)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional grant income for the Go Succeed Programme.
Tourism	(13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Experiences – (£6k). Tourism Events – (£7k).

Not Applicable

60

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 6 - September 2024					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	77,319	77,500	(181)	154,000	(0.2)
720 Economic Development	610,020	662,700	(52,680)	1,396,000	(7.9)
740 Tourism	883,348	891,500	(8,152)	1,868,200	(0.9)
Total	1,570,687	1,631,700	A (61,013)	3,418,200	(3.7)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Payroll					
700 Prosperity HQ	71,596	71,900	(304)	143,300	(0.4)
720 Economic Development	414,891	455,600	(40,709)	912,800	(8.9)
740 Tourism	513,502	501,000	12,502	987,600	2.5
Total	999,988	1,028,500	B (28,512)	2,043,700	(2.8)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Goods & Services					
700 Prosperity HQ	5,723	5,600	123	10,700	2.2
720 Economic Development	509,426	396,900	112,526	974,200	28.4
740 Tourism	405,844	413,100	(7,256)	916,100	(1.8)
Total	920,994	815,600	C 105,394	1,901,000	12.9
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Prosperity - Income					
700 Prosperity HQ	-	-	-	-	-
720 Economic Development	(314,297)	(189,800)	(124,497)	(491,000)	(65.6)
740 Tourism	(35,998)	(22,600)	(13,398)	(35,500)	(59.3)
Totals	(350,295)	(212,400)	D (137,895)	(526,500)	(64.9)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

Unclassified

61

ITEM 9**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Choose an item.
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	15 October 2024
File Reference	FIN45
Legislation	Section 5 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Place Directorate Budgetary Control Report - Sept 2024
Attachments	

The Place Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covers the 6-month period 1 April to 30 September 2024. The net cost of the Directorate is showing an underspend of £52k (7.1%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate's budget performance is further analysed on page 3 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£71k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£4k adverse	3
Report 4	Income	£16k adverse	3

Choose an item.

62

Explanation of Variance

The Place Directorate's overall variance can be summarised by the following table (variances over £10k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(71)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mainly vacant posts within Regeneration
Goods & Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none">No material variances.
Income		
Strategic Capital Development	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Levelling up Grant is expected to be less than budget.

Choose an item.

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT						
Period 6 - September 2024						
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance	
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place						
800 Place HQ	154,036	158,400	(4,364)	267,000	(2.8)	
810 Regeneration	341,228	395,400	(54,172)	1,128,800	(13.7)	
820 Strategic Capital Development	177,792	170,800	6,992	453,600	4.1	
Total	673,056	724,600	A (51,544)	1,849,400	(7.1)	
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Payroll						
800 Place HQ	82,317	86,700	(4,383)	173,100	(5.1)	
810 Regeneration	277,899	330,400	(52,501)	657,000	(15.9)	
820 Strategic Capital Development	170,905	185,200	(14,295)	371,900	(7.7)	
Total	531,120	602,300	(71,180)	1,202,000	(11.8)	
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Goods & Services						
800 Place HQ	71,719	71,700	19	93,900	0.0	
810 Regeneration	65,668	65,000	668	471,800	1.0	
820 Strategic Capital Development	6,887	3,600	3,287	206,200	91.3	
Total	144,275	140,300	3,975	771,900	2.8	
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT						
	£	£	£	£	%	
Place - Income						
800 Place HQ	-	-	-	-		
810 Regeneration	(2,339)	-	(2,339)	-		
820 Strategic Capital Development	-	(18,000)	18,000	(124,500)		
Totals	(2,339)	(18,000)	15,661	(124,500)		

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

Unclassified

64

ITEM 10**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	17 October 2024
File Reference	RDP 37
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Kinnegar Logistics Base update
Attachments	None

At the meeting of the Council held on 31st July 2024 Members were advised that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) had concluded the disposal process for Kinnegar Logistics Base and had agreed that the preferred bidder was the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Members were also advised that the Chief Executive had requested a meeting with the PSNI seeking information on the Organisation's plans for the site.

A meeting was held with a representative from the Estates Branch on 30th September 2024. He advised that the PSNI had now commenced the legal process for the transfer of the site. He felt this may take several months to complete. He did reiterate that the PSNI was keen to move at pace and, upon gaining the site, would be moving into occupation. He said the plans were being finalised and on completion the PSNI would be keen to come and present these to the Council. It was agreed to have a further meeting in a few months' time.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

Unclassified

65

ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	22 October 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Update - Regeneration Working Up Projects 2024/25
Attachments	N/A

Background

As Members will be aware, a budget of £200,000 (£100,000 Rural / £100,000 Urban) was allocated in this year's Regeneration Unit budgets to work up future projects. This budget provides the opportunity for Council to develop projects to the design stage and seek planning approval (where required).

A report was brought forward in May 2024 detailing the proposed Working Up Projects for the period 2024/25. At the time of the report the costs associated with each project were preliminary and required further work to refine these.

Update on Working Up Projects 2024/25

The following projects were approved to be taken forward.

<p>Donaghadee Commons Pump Track Design and Planning Application</p>

Not Applicable

66

The Donaghadee Commons Pump Track has been selected as one of five final projects to be considered for PeacePlus funding under *Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation of Ards and North Down*, offering a significant opportunity to bring this project to life and provide a unique recreational facility for the community.

The design and planning application will provide a critical foundation for the project, allowing it to move forward with the necessary approvals in place should it successfully secure funding under the PeacePlus programme.

Allocated budget: £10,000

Update: Surveys are underway, and the design is progressing. Officers are proceeding to carry out an application for a CLOPUD (Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development) to confirm if the pump track is considered permitted development.

The project is on track to be completed by March 2025 and no changes to the allocated budget are required.

Meetinghouse Lane, Newtownards Design and Planning Application

The project will seek to develop a design that incorporates resurfacing, improved lighting, decorative archways, and planting, enhancing the overall aesthetic and user experience of this well-used town centre location.

Allocated budget: £10,000

Update: Capital funding has been secured from the Department for Communities under the Urban Regeneration Programme to deliver this project. Due to the timescales associated with the funding package, the design will be completed inhouse.

Revised allocated budget: £2,000 (statutory consents and surveys)

Pedestrian Walkway (from Bingham Lane to Main Street), Bangor Design

The project aims to develop a design to transform this key connecting laneway into a vibrant and inviting public space, enhancing the overall experience for both visitors and residents by creating a design that provides a welcoming atmosphere that fosters social interaction, community engagement, and a sense of place.

Allocated budget: £10,000

Update: It is proposed to increase the allocated budget to £15,000. Recent quotation exercises have indicated a trend of rising costs for similar types of work, highlighting the need to reassess budget allocations. It should be noted that

Not Applicable

67

all quotation exercises will include an assessment of costs to demonstrate best value for money in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

Revised allocated budget: £15,000

Community Enterprise Hub, Comber

Feasibility Study

The proposed project will conduct a feasibility study to assess the demand for a community enterprise hub and identify suitable locations. It will also involve gathering data and insights to inform the development of a vibrant and sustainable hub that meets the needs of local businesses and residents.

Allocated budget: £8,000

Update: It is proposed to increase the allocated budget to £12,000. Recent quotation exercises have indicated a trend of rising costs for similar types of work, highlighting the need to reassess budget allocations.

It should be noted that all quotation exercises will include an assessment of costs to demonstrate best value for money in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

Revised allocated budget: £12,000

Urban Mapping Exercise

Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards Mapping Study

Following the recent review of the city/town advisory groups, it was highlighted the need to reinvigorate the Advisory Groups with wider representation.

The proposed project seeks to appoint consultants to conduct a mapping study that will provide a comprehensive overview of the community and voluntary groups in each town and city. This will enable the Council to establish more diverse and representative Advisory Groups that reflect the needs and interests of the local community, providing a more informed and effective decision making process that better serves the community, whilst also fostering improved relationships with groups, organisations and stakeholders.

The proposed project is a direct response to the findings and recommendations of the Advisory Group reviews.

Allocated budget: £15,000

Update: It is proposed to increase the allocated budget to £20,000. Officers recently conducted a quotation exercise and invited a number of local consultants to apply. No responses were received.

Not Applicable

It appears that the lack of response to the quotation is primarily attributed to budget constraints that do not align with the scope of the work needed, suggesting a review of the budget is necessary to attract consultants and ensure project feasibility.

Revised allocated budget: £20,000

Dereliction/ Vacancy Study

Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards

Identification of key properties / Identification of appropriate interventions / Explore options for short and long-term use

The Masterplans for each of the towns and city acknowledge the importance of addressing dereliction and vacancy.

The proposed project seeks to appoint consultants to undertake a study in each of the towns and city to identify properties, identify appropriate strategies/interventions to stimulate economic growth and explore options for short and long-term use.

Allocated budget: £40,000

Update: A tender will be issued in December 2024, with appointment of the successful supplier in January 2025. Project is on track with completion expected end of March 2025. No changes to the allocated budget.

Ballyhalbert Pathway

Design to include required surveys

Reference to NOM Request re Footpath provision at Shore Road, Ballyhalbert, 15th June 2023.

The proposed project will require officers to work with landowners and the caravan park to explore options to develop a safe pedestrian walkway at this location as a potential village renewal project.

Allocated budget: £20,000

Update: Officers continue to progress this project and are actively working to identify potential routes and research land ownership and have commenced engagement with key stakeholders to gather essential information and facilitate progress on the project.

Station Square, Helen's Bay

Revise existing Environmental Improvement Scheme and Planning Application

In 2019, the Council appointed consultants, AECOM, to complete a technical design for Station Square, this included preliminary costs. The design includes new paving, lighting, planting, and improved car parking.

Given the time since the technical design was completed, it is recommended to revisit and revise the design to ensure it aligns with the current community

Not Applicable

69

aspirations, incorporates updated costs reflective of the current economic climate, and submits a planning application to secure the necessary approvals.

Allocated budget: £15,000

Update: Recent quotation exercises have indicated a trend of rising costs for similar types of work, highlighting the need to reassess budget allocations. However, by appointing the initial design team, AECOM, officers envisage this will enhance budget efficiency given their familiarity of the background information and the previous work undertaken.

There are no changes to the allocated budget at this stage.

Main Street Square, Ballywalter

Design and Planning Application

The project aims to create a design for a vibrant public square in the heart of the village, serving as a hub for community events and activities, fostering social connections and a sense of community among locals.

Allocated budget: £15,000

Update: Officers have held discussions with representatives of Ballywalter Community Action Group and members of the public as part of the recent Village Plan engagement for Ballywalter and it has become evident that the community do not have a desire for the Square to be changed and are content with its current setup and usage. This project will therefore not proceed any further.

Environmental Improvement Scheme, A22 Killinchy Road, Lisbane (approx. 700m)

Design and Planning Application

The project aims to explore options to design an environmental improvement scheme that addresses safety concerns through a community-led design process, involving residents in the development of a design that incorporates their ideas and prioritises safety. Key elements to be considered include widening of footpaths, adding incidental tree planting, and exploring options for a pedestrian crossing.

Allocated budget: £20,000

Update: It is proposed to increase the allocated budget to £25,000. Recent quotation exercises have indicated a trend of rising costs for similar types of work, highlighting the need to reassess budget allocations.

It should be noted that all quotation exercises will include an assessment of costs to demonstrate best value for money in line with the Council's procurement procedures.

Revised allocated budget: £25,000

Not Applicable

70

Summary of Projects and Budget Allocation

Urban	
Donaghadee Commons Pump Park	£10,000
Meetinghouse Lane, Newtownards	£2,000
Pedestrian Walkway, Bangor	£15,000
Community Enterprise Hub, Comber	£12,000
Urban Mapping Exercise	£20,000
Dereliction/Vacancy Study	£40,000
TOTAL	£99,000
Rural	
Ballyhalbert Pathway	£20,000
Station Square, Helen's Bay	£15,000
Environmental Improvement Scheme, Lisbane	£25,000
TOTAL	£60,000
COMBINED TOTAL	£159,000

The budget allocated to the rural areas has not been fully utilised. Officers continue to work closely with the rural communities to identify projects and a meeting of the Ards Peninsula Village Partnership is scheduled to take place late October to identify potential projects.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

Unclassified

71

ITEM 12**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	22 October 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25 Update
Attachments	N/A

Background

As Members will be aware, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) approached the Council in July 2024 to assist with the delivery of the fifth round of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. The scheme is funded under DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI), which aims to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived areas.

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme (RBDGS) will support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses (less than 10 full-time equivalent employees) through the provision of a small capital grant of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a maximum of £4,999.

Not Applicable

72

A report was brought to the Council in July 2024 outlining the proposed timescale for the delivery of the RBDGS as provided by DAERA officials:

Pre-Application Workshops and Application Call Open	Week beginning 2 nd September 2024
Letters of Offer	By 29 th November 2024
Claims from Applicant to Council	By end of February 2025
Claims from Council to DAERA	By Mid-March 2025
Completion	31 st March 2025

Due to a delay in obtaining Ministerial approval for the scheme, the opening was postponed. Officers received notification on 15th October 2024 that the scheme would be opening at 9am on 16th October 2024.

The revised timeline is as follows:

Pre-Application Workshops Application Call Open	16 th October 2024
Closing date for Applications	12noon 8 th November 2024
Letters of Offer	10 th January 2025
Claims from Applicant to Council	31 st March 2025
Claims from Council to DAERA	28 th April 2025

Pre-Application Workshops for Ards and North Down took place on:

- 10am on Wednesday 23rd October 2024
- 6pm on Monday 28th October 2024
- 2pm on Thursday 31st October 2024

A dedicated mailbox rbdgs@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk and dedicated webpage [Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/2025 - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#) has been created.

Funding Allocation

DAERA has informed that it anticipates the total funding available to all Council's for delivery of the RBDGS across the region will be £180,000.

When the RBDGS call is closed, DAERA will:

- (a) Establish if any amendment is required to the £180,000 funding figure;
- (b) Establish the number of applications received by the Council for its area; and
- (c) Calculate the amount of funding to be made available to each Council for delivery of the RBDGS in its area based on the number of applications it receives. This calculation will be 10% of the total grant aid sought from the number of applications received, divided by the total number of applications received from all Council areas, multiplied by the number of applications received in the Council area.

Not Applicable

73

Councils will be paid 90% of the overall administration fee once all the grant aid claims from successful applicants have been submitted to DAERA. The remaining 10% will be paid on receipt of data collected from the survey which successful applicants will complete in March 2026. This survey will be commissioned by each of the respective Councils from the successful applicants in their Council area.

Once DAERA has carried out the steps outlined at (a)-(c) above, it will issue a formal Grant Award Letter and terms and conditions stating the amount of grant funding being offered to each Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

Unclassified

74

ITEM 13**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	07 November 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development (Acting)
Date of Report	22 October 2024
File Reference	Dev23
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Peace Plus EBR "Smart Towns and Villages" - Mini Digi Hubs project
Attachments	N/A

Members will be aware that from the February 2024 report that an application was made through the East Border Region (EBR) under the Peace Plus strategic priority "Smart Towns and Villages" in March 2024 for the "Mini Digi Hubs" project.

The Mini Digi Hubs project is made up of:

- East Border Region organisation
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Ards and North Down Borough Council.
- Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council.
- Meath County Council.
- Monaghan County Council
- Newry Mourne and Down District Council.
- Louth County Council.

Not Applicable

75

This project is designed to bring in capital funding to retro-fit an existing underutilised Council asset to accommodate digital transformation hardware and software. As Members will be aware the condition of the funding dictated that only one Community Centre could be chosen, and Council agreed the Comber Community Centre would be part of the application in the Ards and North area.

Prior to the application submission, officers explored the potential to use the funding to add Smart Meters (IoT) to the Community Centre for measurement of various metrics, such as people flow, energy and carbon emissions.

This is in addition to providing support to the business community in Smart Meter technology (IoT), with a current emphasis on the agricultural community. Awareness sessions, workshops and mentoring would be primarily carried out in the Community Centre where best practice and examples can be demonstrated using the Community Centre itself as an example.

The Peace Plus Steering Committee has now confirmed that the application for the project was successful, and it is intended to issue a letter of offer (LoO) in November 2024.

Following receipt of the LoO which is expected in November and the full funding details, the partnership agreement will be agreed. The award level has not yet been received and an update will be provided. The first steps of the project commencing with ANDBC includes recruitment for an additional Project Admin Officer to work alongside the existing team. This salary is accounted for as part of the funding package.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report with a further report brought back when details on the LoO and partnership agreement are known.