

April 24th, 2023


Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 26th April 2023 at 7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall & via Zoom**.

Agenda

Agenda

Attached

 *C 26.04.2023 Agenda.pdf*

Page 1

1. **Prayer**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Mayor's Business**
5. **Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month**


(Copy attached)

 *April 2023.pdf*

Page 5

6. **Minutes of Council Meeting held on 29 March 2023**

Copy attached

 *C 29.03.2023 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *C 29.03.2023 Minutes PM.pdf*

Page 9

7. **Minutes of Committees**

7.1 **Planning Committee dated 4 April 2023**

Copy attached

 *230404 PC Minutes.pdf*

Not included

 *230404 PC MinutesPM.pdf*

Page 57

7.2 **Special Planning Committee dated 5 April 2023**

Copy attached

 *Special PC Minutes 050423.pdf*

Not included

8. Charter of the Columban Way

Report attached

📄 *8. Charter of the Columban Way Report April 2023.pdf*

Page 73

📄 *8. Appendix 1 - The Columban Charter of Partnership.pdf*

Page 77

9. Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032

Report attached

📄 *9. Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032.pdf*

Page 79

📄 *9. Appendix 1 Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Report.pdf*

Page 85

📄 *9. Appendix 2 LBAP Actions.pdf*

Page 209

10. Arts Project Grants 2023-2024

Report attached

📄 *10. Arts Project Grants 2023-2024.pdf*

Page 218

11. Heritage Project Grants 2023-2024

Report attached

📄 *11. Heritage Project Grants 2023-2024.pdf*

Page 220

12. AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 - Tranche Two and Tranche 1 update

Report attached

📄 *12. AND Events and Festivals Fund 2023-24 Tranche Two and Tranche One update.pdf*

Page 222

13. Soccer Development Delivery April 2023 Onwards


Report attached

📄 *13. Soccer Development Delivery April 2023 Onwards.pdf*

Page 229

14. Response to Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services

Report attached

 **14. Response to Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services.pdf** **Page 233**

 **14.1. Appendix 1 Proposed Response to Consultation.pdf** **Page 234**

15. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG March 2023)

Report attached

 **15. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants - WG March 2023.pdf** **Page 236**

 **15. Appendix 1 Successful Coaching Report for Noting.pdf** **Page 238**


 **15. Appendix 2 Successful Goldcard Report for Noting.pdf** **Page 240**

 **15. Appendix 3 Successful Travel Accommodation Report for Noting.pdf** **Page 241**

 **15. Appendix 4 Unsuccessful Report.pdf** **Page 244**

16. Council Remote-Hybrid Meetings – Extension of legislation to 24 September 2023 - Sec 78 Coronavirus Act

Report attached

 **16. Council Remote-Hybrid meetings - extension of legislation.pdf** **Page 250**

 **16. Appendix 1 - Letter to Chief Execs re Remote- Hybrid Meetings - March 2023.pdf** **Page 251**

17. 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches

Report attached

 **17. 50th Anniversary of UDR Greenfinches Report.pdf** **Page 253**




18. Loan of Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement

Report attached

 **18. Loan of Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.pdf** **Page 255**

19. NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024

Report attached

-  *19. NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024.pdf* *Page 257*
-  *19. Appendix 1 Letter from the Permanent Secretary.pdf* *Page 265*
-  *19. Appendix 2 Letter from the Executive Office.pdf* *Page 267*

20. Consultations

20.1 EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Consultation.

Consultation will close on 26th May 2023. Document available at

<https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-plan-of-arrangements-for-special-educational-provision-consultation>.

Correspondence attached

-  *20.1. Consultation - EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Education Provision.pdf* *Page 269*

20.2 NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants Less than 5MW.

Consultation will close on 12th May 2023.

Document available at [Consultation on NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants less than 5MW](#)

Correspondence attached.

-  *20.2. Consultation - NIE Networks.pdf* *Page 270*

21. NAC Draft Constitution

Report attached

-  *21. Consultation on NAC Constitution.pdf* *Page 272*
-  *21. Appendix 1 NAC Draft Constitution Revised 15 March 2023.pdf* *Page 273*

22. Sealing Documents

23. Transfer of Rights of Burial

24. Notice of Motion Status Report

Report attached

 *24. NOM Covering Report.pdf*

Page 278

 *24. NOM Tracker April 2023.pdf*

Page 279

25. Notices of Motion

25.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure highlighting the benefits of Community Transport and the Dial a Lift Service for elderly, disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service. Further request that funding is allocated on a longer term basis to continue this vital transport service for our residents going forward.

25.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor T Smith and Councillor McKimm








That this Council brings back a report that looks at the restoration of much missed events namely the Bangor Easter activities (including the Easter parade), Donaghadee Lights Up and Groomsport Music Festival.

As part of this report, officers should engage and consult with local communities and business to gauge not only their support for the return of these events but also ask, if they do return, what could be done to improve these events to allow for more community involvement and also to maximize footfall and trade for local businesses.

Circulated for Information

- (a) Waterways Ireland Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025. (Correspondence attached)
- (b) Department for the Economy consultation on Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27. Consultation will close on 4th June 2023. Document available at; [Consultation launched on the Department for the Economy Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27](#) (Correspondence attached)
- (c) Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies. Consultation will close on 7th July 2023. Document available at [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) webpage](#) ([Correspondence attached](#))
- (d) Translink - Better Connected - Public Transport in Northern Ireland (Correspondence attached)

a)

 <i>(a) Disability Action Plan 2023-2025.pdf</i>	<i>Page 307</i>
 <i>(a) Equality Action Plan 2023-2025.pdf</i>	<i>Page 327</i>
 <i>(a) Waterways Consultation.pdf</i>	<i>Page 345</i>
 <i>(a) WI Consultation Feedback Report.pdf</i>	<i>Page 346</i>
 <i>(b) Consultation - DFE.pdf</i>	<i>Page 359</i>
 <i>(c) Consultation - Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies.pdf</i>	<i>Page 361</i>
 <i>(d) - Translink Better Connected.pdf</i>	<i>Page 362</i>

***** IN CONFIDENCE *****

26. Portaferry Environmental Improvement Scheme - Single Tender Action (Openreach)

*** IN CONFIDENCE ***

Report attached

 26. STA - Portaferry EIS STA (Openreach).pdf

Not included

27. Kinnegar Logistics Base Update

*** IN CONFIDENCE ***


Report attached

 27. Kinnegar Logistics Base - update report.pdf

Not included

 27. Appendix 1 Letter from DIO ref Kinnegar.pdf

Not included

 27 Appendix 2 Kinnegar Site Map 20190524-CRF310 Disposal area v2.pdf

Not included

28. Strategies Priorities and Resource Requirements

IN CONFIDENCE: STAFF, LEGAL AND COMMERCIAL

Report attached

 28. Strategic Priorities and Resource Requirements.pdf

Not included

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

20 April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 26 April 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Please note the Official Photograph will take place at 6.30pm.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of April 2023 (Copy to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 29 March 2023 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees
 - 7.1. Minutes of Planning Committee dated 4 April 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 7.2. Minutes of Special Planning Committee dated 5 April 2023 (Copy attached)
8. Charter of the Columban Way (Report attached)
9. Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032 (Report attached)
10. Arts Project Grants 2023-2024 (Report attached)
11. Heritage Project Grants 2023-2024 (Report attached)

12. Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 - Tranche Two and Tranche One update (Report attached)
13. Update on Model for Soccer Development (Report attached)
14. Response to Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services (Report attached)
15. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG March 2023) (Report attached)
16. Council Remote-Hybrid Meetings – Extension of legislation to 24 September 2023 - Sec 78 Coronavirus Act (Report attached)
17. 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches (Report attached)
18. Loan of Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (Report attached)
19. NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024 (Report attached)
20. Consultations
 - 20.1 EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Consultation. Consultation will close on 26th May 2023. Document available at <https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-plan-of-arrangements-for-special-educational-provision-consultation>. (Correspondence attached)
 - 20.2 NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants Less than 5MW. Consultation will close on 12th May 2023. Document available at [Consultation on NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants less than 5MW](#). (Correspondence attached)
21. Consultation on draft NAC NI Constitution (Report attached)
22. Sealing Documents
23. Transfer of Rights of Burial
24. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
25. Notices of Motion
 - 25.1 Notice of Motion from Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure highlighting the benefits of Community Transport and the Dial a Lift Service for elderly, disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service. Further request that funding is allocated on a longer term basis to continue this vital transport service for our residents going forward.

25.2. Notice of Motion from Councillor T Smith and Councillor McKimm

That this Council brings back a report that looks at the restoration of much missed events namely the Bangor Easter activities (including the Easter parade), Donaghadee Lights Up and Groomsport Music Festival.

As part of this report, officers should engage and consult with local communities and business to gauge not only their support for the return of these events but also ask, if they do return, what could be done to improve these events to allow for more community involvement and also to maximize footfall and trade for local businesses.

Circulated for Information:

- a) Waterways Ireland Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025. (Correspondence attached)
- b) Department for the Economy consultation on Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27. Consultation will close on 4th June 2023. Document available at; [Consultation launched on the Department for the Economy Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27](#). (Correspondence attached)
- c) Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies. Consultation will close on 7th July 2023. Document available at [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) webpage](#). (Correspondence attached)
- d) Translink – Better Connected – Public Transport in Northern Ireland (Correspondence attached)

IN CONFIDENCE

26. Portaferry Environmental Improvement Scheme - Single Tender Action (Openreach) (Report attached)
27. Kinnegar Logistics Base update (Report attached)
28. Strategic Priorities and Resource Requirements (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Gilmour
Alderman Carson	
Alderman Gibson	Councillor Irvine
Alderman Irvine	Councillor Irwin
Alderman Keery	Councillor Johnson
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor MacArthur
Alderman Smith	Councillor McAlpine
Alderman Wilson	Councillor McClean
Councillor Adair	Councillor McKee

Councillor Blaney (Deputy Mayor)	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Brooks	Councillor Moore
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Chambers	Councillor Smart
Councillor Cooper	Councillor P Smith
Councillor Cummings	Councillor T Smith
Councillor Douglas (Mayor)	Councillor Thompson
Councillor S Dunlop	Councillor Walker
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Woods

**LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS
FOR APRIL 2023**

Saturday 1 April

10:00 hours Paddle-Pick (Kayak) – Strangford Lough Activity Centre – Whiterock Road, Killinchy

Monday 3 April

16:45 hours Arts and Heritage Panel Meeting and Reception – Craig Room, City Hall, Bangor

Tuesday 4 April

13:15 hours Lunch for Monica McWilliams – Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Bangor

14:30 hours An Audience with Monica McWilliams – Council Chamber, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 5 April

10:30 hours Launch of the Bangor International Choral Festival – Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Bangor

11:30 hours Coffee Morning at Action Mental Health – Enterprise Road, Bangor

13:00 hours Visit by Home-Start North Down – Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 6 April

18:00 hours Visit by the Wizards Basketball Club – Craig Room, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 12 April

18:00 hours Visit by Polish Association (Bangor.pl) and Polish Consul of the Republic of Poland in Belfast Mr Mariusz StusVi – Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 13 April

11:30 hours Official Opening of Stairlift Solutions new premises – 144 Quarry Heights, Newtownards ; BT23 7SZ

14:30 hours Unfurling of the Northern Ireland Women's Bowling Association Flag – The Commons, Donaghadee

20:00 hours Meeting of Bangor Historical Society - Fountain Centre, Queen's Parade, Bangor

Saturday 15 April

18:00 hours Musical Tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth II – Waterfront Hall, Belfast

Monday 17 April

18:30 hours Meeting of the Rotary Club of North Down, Blackwood Golf Centre, Bangor

Tuesday 18 April

10.30 hours Denroy Group signing of the Armed Forces Covenant, Denman Showroom, Clandeboye Road, Bangor

13.00 hours Lunch for David Denvir - 50 years of Council Service, Mayor's Parlour City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 19 April

11:00 hours Official Opening of Refurbished Playpark, Castle Park, Portaferry

12.30 hours Blue Plaque Unveiling, Ards Arts Centre, Newtownards

14.30 hours Re-opening of Abbey View Nursing Home, Newtownards Road, Bangor

16.00 hours Planting of tree gifted by the Queens Green Canopy, City Hall, Bangor

19.15 hours Women's Institute of NI - Ards Peninsula Area Spring Meeting, Ballyblack Presbyterian Church; Ballyblack Road; Newtownards

Thursday 20 April

12:30 hours Reception for Bangor Ladies Choir, City Hall, Bangor

14:00 hours Photo to launch Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants programme, Londonderry Park, Newtownards

Friday 21 April

14.00 hours Afternoon tea with residents, Cuan Court, Donaghadee

Saturday 22 April

11.00 hours Tree Planting by Polish Saturday School, Castle Park, Bangor

Sunday 23 April

11.00 hours Almighty Women NI Awards Ceremony, Culoden Hotel, Cultra

Monday 24 April

13:30 hours 20th Anniversary Reception for Kilcooley Over 50s Club, City Hall, Bangor

19.30 hours Donaghadee Historical Society Journal launch & AGM, Donaghadee Methodist Church Hall, 2 Moat St, Donaghadee

Tuesday 25 April

19.00 hours Visit by Portaferry Women's Institute, City Hall, Bangor

Wednesday 26 April

12:30 hours Visit by Donaghadee Community Development Association, City Hall, Bangor

Thursday 27 April

09.00 hours Mayor's Charity Cheque Presentation, Sullivan Upper School; Belfast Road; Holywood

10:00 hours Bangor International Choral Festival 2023 - Opening, St Comgall's Parish Centre, Brunswick Road, Bangor

11.00 hours King's Coronation Tree Planting, Castle Park, Bangor (outside Marquis Hall)

15.00 hours Visit by Comber Regeneration and Community Partnership, City Hall, Bangor

18.00 hours About Holywood - exhibition opening, Holywood Library, High Street, Holywood

Friday 28 April

12.00 hours Visit by SERC Hospitality Department, City Hall, Bangor

14.30 hours Meeting with Talking Therapies NI, City Hall, Bangor

19.00 hours Bangor International Choral Festival 2023, St Comgall's Parish Centre, Brunswick Road, Bangor

Saturday 29 April

- 08.30 hours Start of Foodbank Cycle Race, House Church, 18
Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards
- 09.10 hours Opening of Celtic Challenge - North Down Petanque Club,
Plickie Bowling Club, Bangor
- 15.00 hours Linking Generations - Global Intergenerational Week, Portaferry
Sailing & Social Club, 38 Shore Road, Portaferry
- 18.15 hours Final Competitions - Bangor International Choral Festival 2023,
St Comgall's Parish Centre, Brunswick Road, Bangor

Sunday 30 April

- 19.30 hours Guest at North Down Petanque Club, Celtic Challenge Dinner,
Plickie Bowling Club, Bangor

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 29 March 2023 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Douglas)	
Aldermen:	Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
	Carson (Zoom)	McIlveen
	Gibson	Smith (Zoom)
	Irvine	Wilson (Zoom)
	Keery	
Councillors:	Adair	Kennedy
	Blaney (7.15pm)	MacArthur (Zoom)
	Boyle (Zoom)	McAlpine (Zoom)
	Brooks (Zoom)	McClellan (7.25pm)
	Cathcart	McKee (Zoom)
	Chambers (Zoom)	McKimm
	Cooper	McRandal
	Cummings	Moore
	Dunlop (Zoom)	Morgan
	Edmund (Zoom)	Smart
	Gilmour	Smith P
	Greer	Smith T
	Irvine	Thompson
	Irwin	Walker
	Johnson (Zoom)	Woods (Zoom)

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community & Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Douglas) welcomed everyone to the meeting and commenced with the Chief Executive reading the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage, and none were received.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

Councillor Morgan – Items 8.3. and 24
Councillor MacArthur – Item 13

NOTED.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

At this stage Alderman McIlveen stated that under Standing Order 13 Order of Business, he wished to propose to have the discussion and vote in relation to Item 25, Call-In of the Council Decision on the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag, taken Out of Committee.

Councillor T Smith indicated that he would be content to second the proposal adding that he had intended to make a similar proposal himself.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the reason the matter had been listed as to be heard In Committee was due to the legally privileged advice contained within the report from the Council's Barrister. As such if the matter was to be taken out of Committee Members could not refer to that legal advice and it would be difficult to see how the matter could be debated and voted upon without referring to the legal advice. As such his recommendation would be for the matter to remain In Committee given the legal advice contained within the report.

At this stage Alderman McDowell noted the important legal advice contained within the report adding that he believed it was important for Members to be able to consider this and as such he would be against the proposal. Alderman McDowell asked for a recorded vote to be taken on this matter.

The proposer, Alderman McIlveen recalled the numerous debates which had taken place on this matter noting that at that time legal advice had also been obtained on those occasions. He was however mindful there was significant public interest in this and as such constituents were keen for the majority of the Council to consider this issue.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor T Smith concurred with Alderman McIlveen particularly given the public interest in it.

Councillor Cooper commented that this issue had been one of the most emotive the Council had been asked to consider. He stated that it was important for the Council

to have this discussion in public and he encouraged Members to debate the matter in a mature manner.

(Councillor Blaney entered the meeting at this stage – 7.15pm)

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 25 voting For, 13 voting Against and 0 Abstained and 2 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (25)	AGAINST (13)	ABSTAINING (0)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Aldermen		Councillors
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell		Dunlop
Carson	Wilson		McClellan
Gibson	Councillors		
Irvine	Boyle		
Keery	Douglas		
Mcllveen	Greer		
M Smith	Irwin		
Councillors	McAlpine		
Adair	McKee		
Blaney	McRandal		
Brooks	Moore		
Cathcart	Morgan		
Chambers	Walker		
Cooper	Woods		
Cummings			
Edmund			
Gilmour			
Irvine			
Johnson			
Kennedy			
MacArthur			
McKimm			
Smart			
P Smith			
T Smith			
Thompson			

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Mcllveen, seconded by Councillor T Smith, with 25 voting For, 13 voting Against and 0 Abstained and 2 Absent that the discussion and vote in relation to Item 25, Call-In of the Council Decision on the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag, taken Out of Committee.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

At this stage Alderman Mcllveen referred to Item 6.1. South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust that under Standing Order 29, he would propose to suspend standing orders in respect of Item 6.1 on the agenda in relation to suspend those aspects of standing order 12 (iii) to allow the following:

The Trust would be permitted to attend with four representatives.
The Trust would be given 20 minutes (maximum) to present to the Council.

This would be followed by a period of 60 minutes (maximum) for questions and answers.

Each Member be allowed 2 minutes maximum to ask their question and following the answer the option of asking one brief follow up question.

RESOLVED, by a Qualified Majority Vote on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that Standing Orders be suspended in respect of Item 6.1 on the agenda in relation to suspend those aspects of standing order 12 (iii) to allow the following:

The Trust would be permitted to attend with four representatives. The Trust would be given 20 minutes (maximum) to present to the Council. This would be followed by a period of 60 minutes (maximum) for questions and answers.

Each Member be allowed 2 minutes maximum to ask their question and following the answer the option of asking one brief follow up question.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated that on behalf of the Council, she wished to extend her thanks and best wishes to Councillor Greer who had resigned from Council effective from 1 April 2023. She said that she would like to thank her for her service to the Borough and wished her the very best of luck in her future endeavours.

Continuing she stated that she was delighted to see that Donaghadee was named 'Best Place to Live in Northern Ireland' in the annual Sunday Times 'Best Places to Live Guide' last week. She added that it was wonderful to see the Borough recognised in this way as an attractive place to live.

Finally, the Mayor took the opportunity to utterly condemn the recent attacks on residential properties in Bangor and Newtownards. She stated that such disgraceful acts of violence with intent to endanger life within the local community would not be tolerated. She appealed to anyone who had witnessed those incidents or had any information in relation to them, to contact the PSNI immediately.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the Mayor's comments be noted.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2023

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of March 2023.

The Mayor expressed her thanks to those members who had supported her recent reception held in the City Hall for the K9 Search & Rescue NI. Continuing she also referred to a St Patrick's Day event hosted by Bangor Royal British Legion which she

had particularly enjoyed as well as the recent Ards and North Down Sports Awards ceremony at Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor.

Continuing, she also reported on a successful Consultative Panel lunch held at the City Hall, Bangor to acknowledge the great work of the volunteers. At this stage the Mayor took the opportunity to express her thanks to all of the volunteers who had joined in with the recent Spring Clean at which a total of 89 volunteers had attended. She added that she would look forward to welcoming those volunteers for a lunch at the City Hall, Bangor later that week.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the information be noted.

6. DEPUTATION

6.1. South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive stating that at the February meeting of the Council, members considered the proposed public consultation on the future provision of urgent and emergency care in the Borough and agreed to write to the South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to:

1. ask for an extension to the time frame for the consultation to give the Trust time to remove the current survey which, in the opinion of members, is 'hugely complex and biased, and fails to give the community an understanding of all 4 options'.
2. express concern around the expectation of the public to manage two large (consultation) documents whilst going back and forth to answer the questions. Members expressed that constituents had written to say that they had 'given up, finding it too complex'; and
3. request that the South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust send a clinician led delegation to present the Urgent Care Centre and Minor Injuries Unit proposals to the Council meeting on 29 March. Council would then respond to the consultation at its April meeting.

Included as appendices were the letter from the Chief Executive to Roisin Coulter, Chief Executive of the South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, and Ms Coulter's response.

Four representatives from the Trust would be in attendance at the March Council meeting to deliver a presentation and take questions from members on the proposals for the Urgent Care Centre and Minor Injuries Unit.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

At this stage the Mayor invited the delegation from the Trust to make their presentation.

In attendance from the Trust were:-

Dr David Robinson
 Dr Andrew Dobbin
 Maggie Magowan
 Naomi Dunbar
 Claire Campbell, Head of Strategic Planning

Ms Dunbar thanked the Council for the opportunity to attend the meeting and address Members on the Trust's proposal for the future provision of urgent and emergency care services. She guided members through a PowerPoint presentation (copy attached) which provided a background to those services in the Borough and current regional pressures and strategic direction.

(Councillor McClean joined the meeting at this stage – 7.25pm)

Dr Andrew Dobbin then proceeded to present details on the current services within the Emergency Department and Ards Minor Injuries Unit.

Ms Dunbar informed Members about the Trust's vision for the future of urgent care and outlined the options which the Trust was currently considering. Option 4 would see a new 'Urgent Care Centre' at the Ulster Hospital, co-located but separate from the Emergency Department. This new centre would provide:-

- Emergency Medicine led
- Wider Multi-Disciplinary Team
- Access to Advanced Imaging
- Access to Labs
- Dedicated Space and Waiting Area
- Co-located near Emergency Department
- Speciality Teams on site (Plastics /Orthopaedics/ Frailty)
- Future Recruitment / Career Pathways.

Dr Dobbin provided an overview of the benefits of this centre which would include:-

For those patients who currently attended the Emergency Department:

- One third of patients from 8am – 8pm were cared for in separate Urgent Care Centre
- Keeping Emergency Departments for emergencies
- Timely care in dedicated Urgent Care Centre (time to: triage/ treatment/ in department)
- Significant Reduction in Crowding in waiting areas.

For those patients who currently attended Minor Injuries Unit

- Increase in capacity (staff consolidation/ space/ demand)
- Increased scope
- Increased access longer hours / 7days per week
- Reduction in Multi-site visits to complete care.

Members were also advised that a consultation exercise had commenced with a number of public engagements already take place with a closing date of 3 May 2023.

It was noted that in June 2023 subject to Trust Board approval, Ministerial approval for the proposal would be sought.

The Mayor thanked the representatives of the Trust for their informative presentation and invited questions from Members at this stage. The following questions and comments were made:-

- Referring to the consultation documents Councillor Gilmour suggested that they were not very user friendly adding that for many it had proven difficult to cross reference documents in order to complete them. As such she asked if the Trust had any plans to make the consultation more accessible. Continuing she suggested that it was perhaps a done deal but queried whether it would be subject to further funding. In response Ms Dunbar confirmed that the consultation did meet the Trust's statutory guidance requirements. In respect of the consultation documents Ms Dunbar advised that consultation could be undertaken by letter, email, telephone or at one of the public engagement events. She added that hard copies of the consultation document could also be posted out if required.
- Alderman Irvine suggested that the proposals were more about cost savings measures and as such he asked how much money could potentially be saved as a result of the proposals. In response Dr Dobbin commented that the proposals were more about improving services rather than saving money. Alderman Irvine noted how the temporary closure of the Bangor Minor Injuries Unit had put extra pressure on the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department at the Ulster Hospital as well as local GP surgeries. Dr Dobbin indicated that the main issue was the build-up in the A&E Department and added that many patients could now seek telephone advice rather than attend their local GP surgery.
- Councillor P Smith commented as the Member who had proposed to invite the Trust representatives to attend the Council meeting, he asked if the Trust's preferred option would improve the service and its output. Dr Dobbin stated that there could be no doubt that the proposals would provide a better standard of care. Continuing Councillor Smith suggested that the increased travel time to the new facility could be an issue for some and asked if any mitigations had been made in respect of that. In response Ms Dunbar confirmed that had been raised as an issue but the reality was that it would be an additional journey of 4.7miles from Ards to the new facility at Dundonald.
- At one of the public meetings held by the Trust Councillor McKimm noted that figures previously quoted in 2012 for this had significantly increased. Continuing he referred to an email which he had received from the Trust's Chief Executive stating that an additional 51 cubicles would be provided by the new unit to meet demand. Councillor McKimm sought clarity on those matters. In response Dr Dobbin advised that there were 36 cubicles currently in the A&E Department and this proposal would be increase that capacity to 51 cubicles. He acknowledged that the current facility was inadequate with many patients having to wait a long time to get a bed and added that at a forthcoming visit to the new facility, which Members would be invited along to, they would be able to see for themselves the extra space which would be provided. He added that he was content with the capacity which would be provided through this proposal. Continuing Councillor McKimm read out an

email which he had received from the Trust's Chief Executive within which it alluded to the number of cubicles which would be required. He suggested that there were issues with the public messaging in respect of the proposals and suggested there may be design faults within the hospital. Dr Dobbin confirmed that a weekly email as alluded to by Councillor McKimm was circulated to a wide variety of Trust stakeholders. He added that the 51 cubicles within the new facility would significantly improve the needs of both patients and staff.

- Expressing his thanks to the Trust, Alderman McIlveen referred the public engagement event recently held in Newtownards at which the 'phone first' system was discussed and he noted that that service would not be available at the new unit. So in essence those people who previously would have been able to avail of that service would instead be presenting in person at the new unit in Dundonald. Dr Dobbin advised that some patients would be taken directly to the new facility on arrival at Dundonald and this in turn would reduce overall triage time. The 'phone first' system was introduced during the Covid 19 pandemic and he had advised that funding was no longer available to enable that to continue. In light of those comments Alderman McIlveen suggested that could place additional pressure upon the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) as people could use that easier option of calling for an ambulance rather than driving to the new facility at Dundonald. Dr Dobbin informed members that all calls made to the NIAS were screened and prioritised adding that the new facility would provide greater space within which to deliver a wider variety of services that were currently available within the MIU at Ards.
- Alderman McDowell also thanked the Trust for their presentation adding that the Alliance Party supported its plans for the new facility at Dundonald as it would provide better care for the residents of the Borough. Continuing he sought clarity on when the facility would be open. In response Dr Dobbin advised that the A&E Unit needed to move to its new space first and then the new unit would be able to open. He added that it would be a complex process which would require a significant amount of work to be undertaken behind the scenes.
- Councillor Edmund thanked the Trust for their presentation commenting that the additional 4.7 miles to travel to Dundonald could be an issue for those living on the Ards Peninsula. Ms Dunbar acknowledged that some people would have to travel further adding that the Trust was aware of that. Continuing she clarified that the additional travel of 4.7 miles was the distance between the existing MIU at Ards to the new facility at Dundonald.
- In response to comments raised by Councillor Chambers, Dr Dobbin stated that the proposals in respect of the delivery of the service included an element of staffing which would enhance and provide a better overall service for all residents of the Borough. He added that it would also help to improve emergency care. Councillor Chambers asked for the Trust representative's thoughts on a document which had been signed off by Dr Robin Swann which stated that 'Urgent care units would not replace existing MIU's'. Dr Dobbin indicated that he was aware of that statement adding that the MIU was one of only two remaining in the province and suggested his comments may have related to the MIU in Fermanagh given the remoteness within that area. Again he reiterated that the proposals before Members were about providing a better overall service to the residents of the Borough.

- Councillor Woods commented that while on a visit to Bangor Academy earlier that day this issue had arisen and she asked how the Trust had engaged with children about the proposals. Ms Dunbar confirmed that children and young people could engage in the consultation process either online or by attending the public engagement events. She added that the Trust would also be happy to meet with those children who were members of special interest groups and could contact the Trust via telephone or email. Continuing Councillor Woods welcomed the comments and suggested that perhaps in the future the Trust could notify local schools and youth groups about future consultations to be undertaken.
- Thanking the Trust representatives for their presentation, Councillor McKee noted that health workers were already underpaid and overworked and as such consultation with staff and Trade Unions was very important. In light of that he asked how many meetings of that nature had taken place so far, had Agency workers been included in the consultation process and what the Trade Unions views were on the Trust proposals at this stage. In response Mr David Robinson confirmed that a series of meetings had already taken place, three to date with a fourth still to take place. He confirmed that conversations remained ongoing with Trade Union and Human Resources representatives adding that there had also been opportunities to talk to groups of staff as well as individuals. In respect of Councillor Wood's comments about children and young people, he thanked her for that confirming that would be something which he would endeavour to follow up on.
- Councillor Boyle thanked the Trust for their presentation, commenting that he was confused about a number of matters. Bangor MIU was closed for what Members were led to believe on a temporary basis but then it was closed permanently. On that basis, a potential for a lack of trust had been created between residents and the Council and the Trust itself. Continuing, Councillor Boyle suggested that what was being proposed could be considered by many to be a cut in services and he noted the comments made by Dr Dobbin about associated costs, funding, and car parking issues. He sought clarity that the current Ards MIU would not close until the new facility was to open. In response Dr Dobbin stated that due to the Covid 19 pandemic and staffing issues the services offered at both the MIU and A&E had changed. As such he believed the proposals before Members were transformational and would make significant changes to the care which could be offered. Stage I of those proposals was moving the MIU from Ards to the Ulster Hospital site at Dundonald and Stage II would be setting the new unit in the space below the new ED Department. In response to a further query from Councillor Boyle about timeframes Dr Dobbin confirmed that the consultation would close on 3 May 2023 and approximately six weeks later the outcomes of that would be reported to the Trust Board. He added that a lot of work would need to be undertaken to make the proposals happen.
- Councillor Cathcart referred to previous reform proposals recalling that those had been much easier to explain to the public. As such he felt this consultation was more difficult to explain and he asked why the Trust felt this proposal would be a much better option for the MIU to be relocated to Dundonald. In response Ms Magowan commented that the current MIU in Ards had highly skilled specialised nurses based there but they were limited to their scope of practice. They could not deal with head injuries in those aged

64 and over or x-ray young children and she was aware how many calls they had received about older relatives falling and having to redirect them to attend A&E at Dundonald. She added that what those nurses did in Newtownards they did very well but there were frustrations as they were effectively standalone workers who did not have the back up of medical colleagues and other clinicians. Under the new proposals this would enable a much more enhanced service to be provided for everyone with clinical backup on site. Councillor Cathcart asked for examples of where the proposed operating model had already enjoyed success. In response, Dr Dobbin reiterated that activity at the A&E in Dundonald was incredibly busy currently with up to 345 patients being seen every day in the last few weeks. The proposals would enable those patients to be processed more efficiently and he added that other areas within the Trust had successfully streamlined their services.

- Alderman Keery suggested that what was being proposed was essentially a new hospital for East Belfast. He referred to Belfast City Council's ongoing proposals to get more people into the City adding that similarly within the Council's Borough there was ongoing development which would ultimately increase the population which would be using this new facility. He expressed the view that current arrangements at the Ulster Hospital were a shambles with lengthy queues to get in and out of the car park. He suggested that it was a case that the Trust did not have the funding to build the new primary care and community centre and as such the proposals presented to Members tonight were simply 'pie in the sky'. He suggested the proposals needed further consideration. In response Dr Dobbin advised that 45% of patients visiting the Ulster Hospital came from the Ards and North Down Borough adding that the role of the acute hospital was to serve many more, indeed up to over 300,00 patients. Members were advised that the new facility being proposed would help to improve current service delivery for all patients throughout the Southern Eastern Trust area as well as those throughout all of Northern Ireland.
- Alderman Armstrong-Cotter indicated that she wished to focus on the reasons why the Ards MIU could not continue in its current format in tandem as alluded to in one of the options presented by the Trust. She reported that she had spoken to some nurses and asked them if they had a job offer to work in Ards MIU or at the Ulster Hospital which would be their preference. She advised that every single one of the of the nurses she had spoken to had stated they would not touch the Ulster Hospital with a barge pole. Continuing she indicated that she would like to ask about the recruitment which had taken place for Ards MIU as it was her belief that the Trust should continue with its vision but she could not understand how it could all be done at once without keeping the Ards MIU open. In response Ms Magowan stated that she could not disagree with the additional 4.7miles to be travelled from Newtownards to Dundonald, acknowledging that may be an issue for some of the Council's constituents. However she would completely disagree with Alderman Armstrong-Cotter's comments that she had spoken to many nurses who had stated they did not want to work at the Ulster Hospital. Ms Magowan stated that was simply untrue and added that many of her colleagues had been working at the Ulster Hospital for many years and had been proud to do so. However, she did agreed that car parking was an issue for staff and most of her colleagues at the Ards MIU did not have car parking at the Ards site

either. Continuing she stated that staff and emergency practitioners were extremely excited about the new proposals and added that her colleagues in Ards MIU were very much in agreement that change needed to happen and despite the Trust being tied due to viability as to where any new facility should be located. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter clarified that she had spoken to a large number of nurses not all of whom were based in Ards so it was not actually untrue and they had all expressed the same opinion. Continuing Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked why nurses could not be recruited for the Ards MIU to retain it there until the new space at the Ulster Hospital was ready for occupation. In response Ms Magowan advised that recruitment and retention was extremely difficult across the region and particularly in the area of emergency practitioners given their specialist role. The Trust had struggled to recruit staff to the Ards site primarily as it was a standalone unit which had no medical support and the feedback from staff was that they did not want to do that. Members were advised that a recruitment campaign was however carried out last summer following which two emergency practitioners were appointed.

- Councillor Cooper referred to reference throughout the last hour being made to timeframes and the process to be followed and noted in the absence of a Health Minister the final decision would be for the Board of the Trust to make. He asked if the consultation feedback was not in favour of the Trust's preferred option what reassurance would be given to Elected Members and the general public who had taken part in the consultation. Ms Dunbar reminded members that the consultation period would close on 3 May 2023 following which all of the comments would be summarised and a consultation report produced which would summarise that feedback. She added that would then be subject to Health Minister or Trust Board approval. If approved the Trust would then publish the outcome report which would be shared with all key stakeholders. Ms Dunbar added that the Trust was invested in genuine consultation and as such it wanted to hear the views of everyone and all of the feedback would be carefully considered. Councillor Cooper asked if all of the responses received would be made available and published to all relevant stakeholders. Ms Dunbar confirmed that the consultation feedback would be themed and collated together and included in a summary report which would be shared with each of the Trust's 6,000 stakeholders.

The Mayor thanked the representatives from the Trust for attending the meeting and for fielding all of the questions from Members. She advised that any questions that Members still wanted to ask should be put in writing and sent to the Chief Executive and they would be forwarded to the Trust and the responses circulated.

(The representatives from the Trust left the meeting at this stage – 8.50pm)

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the minutes be adopted.

Page 9 - Item 7.6. – Minutes of Meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 15 February 2023

Councillor Gilmour referred to the Council's decision to award delegated powers to the Committee to deal with Item 13 which was a Notice of Motion about the cost of living crisis to ensure funds were distributed as quickly as possible. She noted that Councillor MacArthur had proposed that the £20,000 underspend in funding was to be allocated to the Kilcooley Women's Centre for the provision of their Social Supermarket. Councillor Gilmour added that as far as she was aware they had still not received any funding and that was disappointing.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that he was aware of this and offered his apologies to the Members adding that there was a procedure to be followed in terms of the administration of that. He added that he hoped to have the matter rectified as quickly as possible.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the minutes be adopted.

7.1. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 22 FEBRUARY- INVITE TO MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive stating that at the February meeting of the Council, members considered a Matters Arising report, from the Minutes of the Corporate Services Committee dated 14 February 2023. The report detailed an invitation received from The Viscount Brookeborough KG, Hon Regional President of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, to the tribute concert at the Waterfront Hall on the 15 April 2023, as a commemoration of Her Majesty's long reign, through the medium of music and to raise funds for soldiers, ex-soldiers and their families.

At the meeting, it was agreed that:

"the invitation be noted and that the Armed Forces Champion (Councillor Cummings), the Mayor (Councillor Douglas) and Councillor Greer be nominated to attend".

Since then, Councillor Greer had tendered her resignation from Council effective 1 April and would no longer be in a position to attend the event. This seat would remain vacant until the Local Government Election on 18 May.

As such, a nomination was now sought to re-allocate this place at the concert. **RECOMMENDED** that Council nominate a Member to attend the concert in the place of Councillor Greer, who will have ceased to be a Member from 1 April 2023.

Councillor Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that Councillor Cooper be nominated to attend the tribute concert at the Waterfront Hall on the 15 April 2023.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irvine, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the recommendation be adopted and that Councillor Cooper be nominated to attend the tribute concert at the Waterfront Hall on the 15 April 2023.

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Planning Committee dated 7 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the minutes be adopted.

8.2. Environment Committee dated 8 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Alderman McDowell proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 4.2 - Waste and Cleansing Services

Councillor Thompson took the opportunity to congratulate those members of staff who had been received Cleanliness Awards. Continuing he did express some disappointment that the Council's street washing machine was currently out of commission due to equipment failure and sought some further clarity on that from the Director.

In response the Director of Environment confirmed that the new street washing machine acquired through DAERA grant funding was experiencing a few problems as it was unlike the conventional street cleaning machines previously used by the Council. He confirmed that officers were working alongside the suppliers to try to resolve the situation but there appeared to be an issue with parts as well as repeated failures generally with the machine. He agreed that it was frustrating for all but he hoped to have it resolved in the near future.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the minutes be adopted.

8.3. Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Walker proposed, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 24 - ND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 – Tranche One

Alderman Irvine asked that this item be considered In Committee.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the minutes be adopted, subject to the above.

8.4. Corporate Services Committee dated 14 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor P Smith proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be adopted.

Page 24 – Item 9a - Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor P Smith and Councillor Smart

Councillor Adair proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that this Council is concerned that recent data shows that the Ards and North Down Borough Council area has the highest level of potholes in Northern Ireland and calls on DfI Roads Service to produce an action plan to improve the quality of roads in the Borough. Further That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of The Department for Infrastructure expressing concern that Ards and North Down continues to receive the lowest Roads investment across Northern Ireland Councils and requests an increase in funding to make road repairs a priority and for fair allocation in funding for roads pavements resurfacing and Street Lighting investment across our Borough as a matter of urgency.

The proposer Councillor Adair stated that this matter needed to be urgently addressed particularly as the Borough received the lowest amount of funding roads in Northern Ireland. Currently many of the roads throughout the Borough were in a very poor state and as such he been contacted by many constituents about this.

RECESS

At this stage 9.10pm the meeting went into recess and recommenced at 9.20pm.

NOTED.

The seconder, Alderman McIlveen expressed his support for the amendment adding that he too was only too well aware of the condition of many of the roads throughout

the Borough. He added that the street surfaces in many of the Borough's towns and villages were also in a bad state of repair but ultimately, he acknowledged that it was all due to a lack of funding. As such he agreed that the amendment was a useful addition to the proposal.

Councillor Boyle commented that he had travelled the roads throughout the Borough for over 18 years and now they were worse than ever. Indeed he expressed the view that he lived in the worst DEA area in the Borough with roads in a terrible state of repair. He added that it would undoubtedly be helpful to have a Minister in place to discuss such matters with as many were aware that Permanent Secretaries would not step out line. Councillor Boyle also acknowledged that DfI did not get a large share of funding generally despite its costings increasing.

Councillor Morgan commented that the roads in and around the Comber area were equally in a poor state of repair and agreed that it would be helpful to have a working Executive in place at Stormont which would be able to put the necessary funding into place.

Commenting in support of his colleague, Councillor Edmund recalled how previous correspondence sent to Ministers on this very same matter when the Executive had been functioning had not been responded to. He added that Members would be able to recall who those Ministers were at that time.

Councillor Thompson stated that this issue had been ongoing for many years and was now getting progressively worse. He advised that many constituents were of the opinion this was something which the Council was responsible for and as such he agreed that continual lobbying was required to try to resolve the issue and reinstate many of the roads throughout the Borough.

At this stage Councillor P Smith indicated that he was content to accept the amendment however he acknowledged the challenge would be the blackhole currently within the budget but he agreed that it was important that the Department got its fair share.

AGREED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of P Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be adopted, subject to the above amendment.

8.4.1. Matters arising from Item 8 Corporate Services Committee, 14 March 2023 - Equality Consultative Panel Constitution (File EQ33)

At this stage the Mayor informed members that this item would be considered 'In Committee'.

NOTED.

8.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 15 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Edmund proposed, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 3 - Update on Play Area Refurbishments 2023-2024

Alderman McIlveen welcomed the update particularly on the play area in Ballygowan as this was something which he and his sister Michelle McIlveen MLA had lobbied for. He added that they had both also been lobbying for more effective fencing around the playpark and sought an update on that particularly given its close proximity to the Northern Ireland Water facility adjacent to it and the car park.

In response the Director of Community and Wellbeing indicated that he was content to ask for that but reminded Members of the fixed budgets in place for each of those facilities.

NOTED.

Item 12 - Dementia Friendly Update

Alderman McIlveen welcomed this update adding that he had previously discussed the matter with officers and as such he was delighted it finally moving in the right direction. He added that he looked forward to receiving regular update reports on this in the future.

NOTED.

Item 15 - Movilla Coffin Lids response to Notice of Motion

Alderman McIlveen proposed an amendment, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that officers write in response to HED expressing concern that a reinstallation of the Movilla Stones to the Movilla Abbey walls might risk further damage to the stones, what reassurance can HED give that this will not be the case, whether alternative means of display of the stones has been given consideration and, if so, that Council offers assistance in this regard.

The proposer Alderman McIlveen expressed surprise that it was planned to reinstall the stones at Movilla Abbey adding that he would have some concerns they could be subject to further damage. As such he would be keen to establish if they could be displayed at an alternative location to preserve them in a better manner. He noted that the stones had only been placed at Movilla Abbey in Victorian times and as such he would have concerns that to simply reinstate them there would cause further damage to those important items.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter acknowledged her colleague's passion about this matter particularly as they were of historical interest to the town of Newtownards. Continuing she expressed her thanks to officers for their work to date on this matter which was something she felt everyone should be incredibly proud of adding that the Council should be custodians of the Borough.

AGREED.**Item 25 - Update on Future Model for Soccer Development**

Alderman McIlveen thanked officers for the report adding that the recognition of the cliff edge date of 31 March 2023 was in no way a satisfactory situation. He suggested this was something which could have been highlighted further during the rates setting process and he acknowledged that Alderman Irvine had asked many questions during that process. Reassurance had been provided to Members at that time and as such the report had come as a bit of a surprise the previous month and he had queried what would happen to those casual coaches who worked in football development. He asked if opportunities would continue to be made available for them during that transition period.

In response the Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that would be a staffing matter and as such he would not have those details to hand at this meeting. He indicated that he would be happy to provide that information to the Member in due course.

Councillor Irvine proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Cooper, that this Council allocates appropriate funding to deliver our soccer development programmes and throughout the incoming year it consults with all local clubs, the Irish Football Association, and the Education Authority to ease the transition from the Council's responsibility over to them for the following fiscal year and explores all revenue streams including funding to alleviate running costs going forward for all.

The proposer, Councillor Irvine stated that to retain this important Programme for one more year for young people would be seen as an investment from by the Council in the next generation of young people. He stated that he could discuss the benefits of soccer development all day, adding that those benefits included physical health, mental health, social skills, cultural exchange, economic benefits and community building. Continuing he suggested that ultimately the Council should not be seen to rob Peter to pay Paul and as such it was essential to secure buy in from individuals, clubs and schools' sponsorship to try and fill those gaps.

Councillor Irvine agreed that a transition year was required before the Council could hand this over and he asked why young people should suffer as the result of this decision. In summing up he suggested that it would take up to a year to bring clubs, the IFA and the EA on board for the hand over.

At this stage Councillor Greer indicated that she wished to raise a point of order and reminded members of the Council' earlier decision taken as part of the rates setting process that this would not take place this year. She referred to Standing Order 26.1. "No motion to rescind any resolution passed within the preceding six months, and no motion or amendment to the same effect as one which has been rejected within the preceding six months, shall be proposed by a Member unless the notice thereof given in pursuance of Standing Order 17.1 bears the names of at least 15% of the Members of the Council". She added that she was happy to be guided by the Chief Executive on that matter.

The Chief Executive indicated that he would need to check with the Director if the amendment was exactly the opposite what had previously been agreed.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing suggested that based upon what the Member had said it would appear to be a reinstatement of what had been taken out during the rate setting process. He added that everything the Member had said was correct and this year would be a transition year.

The Chief Executive alluded to the two separate issues, being the budget and the policy. These were separate matters and the decision not to make provision in the Rates did not make it a policy decision. Therefore he was not of the opinion that the amendment would require a Rescinding Motion.

At this stage Councillor Gilmour indicated that Members had previously been advised that it was the budget which had been removed from the Programme rather than the budget itself.

The seconder Councillor Cooper sought clarity on whether or not funding was available for this. Continuing he also commented that the effect sport had within the Borough could not be ignored particularly given the opportunities it provided for many young people. As such to remove those opportunities would be a backwards step and instead the Council should be considering how best to reach out to those other statutory bodies during the transition period. The amendment was in his opinion strategic, sensible and logical and as such he encouraged Members to support it.

Rising to support the amendment Alderman Irvine noted the grant was being removed and that would impact how the programme would be delivered. He added that it was only after the completion of the rate setting process it had come light that no discussions had taken place. As such he would be supportive of funds being allocated through this transition year to enable clubs and schools to have more capacity.

Councillor Boyle commented that he was an avid sports fan and as such was only too well aware of the good work undertaken by sports clubs. He reminded Members that the whole Council voted for the removal of £60,000 of for Sports Development. He noted the previous success of the programme and as such having recently set the rate he would question where the funding would now come from.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter indicated that she had previously raised this matter at the last Committee meeting in respect of interaction with schools. She noted that it now appeared the Council was not in a position to deliver the Soccer Development Strategy and parents were expecting the summer schemes to be in place. As such she would be supportive of the amendment which would enable them to have time to put the Strategy into place.

Councillor T Smith rising in support of the amendment stated that during the rate setting process he had suggested that consultation should take place in respect of this matter but regrettably that had not been taken forward. Continuing he stated that consultation could have addressed issues such as this and as such he stated that

greater consideration should be given to carrying out consultation particularly in relation to the provision of Council services.

Reminding Members of the robust rate setting process which had just been completed Councillor Greer noted the removal of this funding had been part of those considerations. If a decision was taken tonight to reinstate this she would question where the required £60,000 would come from.

At this stage the Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed that £15,000 had been secured but if agreed then officers would need to consider where the additional funding could be obtained. He added that detail would be the subject of a future report for Members to consider.

Councillor Greer asked then if Councillor Irvine would be willing to include that a report outlining that was included within his amendment.

Councillor Irvine indicated that he would not be willing to do so.

In response to a further query from Councillor Greer the Director of Community and Wellbeing reiterated that other budgets would need to be considered to achieve the outstanding funding amount of £45,000.

Concurring with Councillor Greer's comments Councillor McRandal also stated that he was sympathetic to the issue but noted that Members now appeared to be back tracking on previous decisions made. He acknowledged the work officers had undertaken on how to fill those funding gaps but sought clarity on how much of what was previously provided would now not able to be provided.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised all of that detail had been included in the report presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee. In principle the programme would be moving from direct delivery to facilitation. The figure of £60,000 had been derived from previous delivery costs and to carry out the new revised function would cost less.

Councillor McRandal also asked Councillor Irvine to reconsider his amendment to await the outcome of the report referred to by Councillor Greer to be presented to the April Council meeting. He added that from what he had heard it would appear that £60,000 would not be required to deliver the programme in its new format.

Councillor P Smith acknowledged the impact that could be felt by schools and welcomed the £15,000 which officers had allocated to the programme. He noted that it would cost £45,000 to give the programme an additional year and while he sympathised with Councillor Irvine the issue really lay with the process and best practice. As such he agreed that the report which had been asked for would be a good mitigating measure and enable the Council to make a more informed decision on this matter.

At this stage Alderman McDowell stated that he felt torn in respect of this matter being supportive of local football but yet the Council only a number of weeks ago had set its budgets after a robust rate setting process. He added that the difficulty for

Members at this stage was that they did not have all of the information available to them but he acknowledged the will within the Chamber to continue to support local football.

Councillor MacArthur thanked Councillor Irvine for bringing forward his amendment adding that at the Committee meeting while she had seconded the proposal, she had done so with the proviso that it did not sit well with her, and as such had grave concerns with it. Continuing she reiterated her view that there would be too many moving parts under the proposed arrangements and she had felt very uncomfortable with the proposals particularly as sport was such a great leveller. She also noted that schools currently did not have any extra capacity and as such she would be supportive of the amendment.

Councillor McAlpine indicated that she had spoken to officers about this matter as she had great concerns about it. Sport was very important and she was aware that funding was currently an issue and as such she asked how much engagement had been undertaken with the various stakeholders. She added that information could be included within a report which could be further considered by Members at the April Council meeting.

The Director Community and Wellbeing commented that he would envisage a four way partnership being undertaken and while he had no further information to report on that presently he would do so in the future.

Councillor McAlpine also asked Councillor Irvine at this stage if he would delay the matter to enable a report to come back with further information to enable Members to make a more informed decision.

At this stage Councillor Smart expressed his support for soccer development and Councillor Irvine's amendment adding that it would appear the Council had been a victim of its own success. He too noted that this had been one of many difficult decisions which had to be taken as part of the recent rate setting process and he agreed that if the Council had engaged in more consultation, it may have provided the Council with an opportunity to test out the programme going forwards. Continuing he agreed that it did appear to be the case that Soccer Development had fallen off a bit of cliff edge this year and if it could be maintained in more cost effective manner that would be helpful. He also would like to know what the next steps would be if the amendment was to go through.

In response the Director of Community and Wellbeing sought clarity if it was the wish of Members for the Programme to continue.

Councillor McKimm expressed the view that this was about revisiting budget cuts and instead he would suggest that the Council had inadvertently made a cut to a service which meant a lot to many people. He acknowledged the will for the amendment within the Chamber and as such he did not believe there would be any benefit to delay taking a decision on this. Continuing he asked if there would be any possibility of securing any additional budget for this which could be applied to this situation as he believed the Council had dropped the ball in respect of this matter.

He added that he agreed that it was imperative to retain the momentum rather than delay for a further month.

By way of summing up Councillor Edmund stated that sport was iconic throughout the Borough and as such he agreed there was a need for this to be reconsidered. He acknowledged that it was a large sum of money which was being sought but if the Directors could report back to the Council meeting in April, he would encourage Councillor Irvine to support that in order to get that right.

AGREED.

Items 32 & 35 – Northern Community Leisure Trust Quarter 3 2022 and Portavogie 3G Update

Councillor Woods indicated that she wished to raise a number of queries on both items 'In Committee'.

NOTED.

Item 3 - Update on Play Area Refurbishments 2023-2024

Councillor Gilmour welcomed the update report and in particular welcomed the progress for the play area at Kilcooley Square, Bangor adding that she was aware the proposed completion date for this was Autumn. Continuing she asked when the details of the proposed upgrade would be made available to the local community.

In response the Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed the contractors concerned were now on call and as such the Council could ask it to provide the design and that could be made available in advance of the works being carried out.

Councillor Gilmour welcomed this update from the Director.

NOTED.

Item 20 - Community Development Grants

Councillor Cummings referred to the application submitted by Comber Youth for Christ Group – The Net and asked if that had been turned down purely on the faith basis.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed that it was ruled to be ineligible due to the criteria surrounding religious groups which was something which was embedded within DfC's criteria.

Councillor Cummings thanked the Director for his comments stating that it was becoming clear that faith was becoming an obstacle to obtaining funding and he acknowledged that officers had to adhere to any required criteria. However in recent weeks similar situations had arisen and the question asked was it based upon faith or community and in his opinion the two were not mutually exclusive. At this stage Councillor Cummings referred to a document which had been shared with the

Northern Ireland Assembly a number of years ago that being 'Acting in Good Faith' within which it recognised community faith based Groups. As such he would ask officers to highlight this issue when providing feedback to those Groups that there was in place an effective delivery method and encouraged officers to provide such Groups with equity.

Councillor McKimm referred to a similar discussion which had taken place at another Committee where it was clear that when considering political or faith based groups there was no clear operational definition of how those would be defined. He added that he was aware in one such case an officer had found themselves just having to go for it and as such he felt the Council needed to take the opportunity to reflect on matters such as this in order to achieve a usable working definition.

Alderman McIlveen stated that the key issue was that the Council was assessing the organisation rather than the programme. As such just because an organisation was run as faith based it should not be ruled out if it had the potential for community benefit.

At this stage the Director of Community and Wellbeing acknowledged those concerns adding that those projects which were being delivered in the community could be considered for Council funding including all Groups included which were faith based. What was before Members for consideration in this case was for running costs for those organisations and as such the Council needed to exercise caution that it was not contributing to that, especially as the DfC have stated that was not something which the Council could contribute to.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted that Councillor Cummings was suggesting that such representations were made to the DfC. By way of example she referred to a church in Newtownards which ran a lunch club for anyone within the local community who was in need as well as making available clothing and some food maybe coming up to its use by date. She stated that faith was the driving force behind their decision to make all of that available for the local community and as such she felt that the DfC needed to be challenged on this and made aware of the massive impact churches had within local communities.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the minutes be adopted subject to the above amendments.

8.6. Audit Committee dated 20 March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be adopted.

(Councillor Morgan left the meeting at this stage – 10.35pm)

9. CONFERENCES & INVITATIONS

9.1 NAC UK CONFERENCE LEARNING WEEKEND 14-16 APRIL 2023 – SCARBOROUGH – MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive advising that the National Secretary of the NAC had invited members to its NAC UK Learning Weekend 14–16 April 2023 in Scarborough on Mental Health & Wellbeing.

Information on the event was included in the attached correspondence and booking form. Delegate fees were £350 plus VAT, accommodation was £85 plus VAT per night, plus there would be costs associated with flights and travel.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the NAC Learning Weekend – Mental Health & Wellbeing.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the correspondence be noted.

10. RESOLUTIONS

10.1. FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL – SOUTH WEST ACUTE HOSPITAL

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Correspondence from the Chief Executive of Fermanagh & Omagh District Council advising that at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 15 February 2023, members asked that she write to the Council with regard to the WHSCT Public Consultation on the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) and ask that the Council respond to the consultation in a positive manner and argue for the retention of the full suite of services at the Hospital. The Council trusted that the issue would be given due consideration and looked forward to receiving your response.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence be noted.

10.2. NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL – REDUCTION IN VOTING AGE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Correspondence from the Chief Executive of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council advising that at a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 6 March 2023 the following motion was agreed: "Newry Mourne and Down District Council calls for the voting age of 18 to be reduced to 16 and if this motion is adopted seeks the support of the remaining councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Secretary of State calling him to amend the necessary legislation to enable 16 year old and upwards to vote."

On speaking to the motion, many members agreed this would be a positive way forward and would encourage young people, who were the future, to engage more fully in political life. The proposer of the motion asked that the motion be circulated to the other 10 Council Chief Executives asking them to table at a future meeting of their Council.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence be noted.

10.3. ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL – ENERGY COMPANY PROFITS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Correspondence from the Chief Executive of Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council advising that the Council at its meeting held on 27 February 2023 agreed the following Notice of Motion –

“That this Council notes the obscene profits recently announced by energy companies such as BP who have announced profits for 2022 of £22bn. At a time when families are facing the worst cost of living crisis in living memory these profits and the resultant increasing dividends for wealth investors are an affront.

That this Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt MP, requesting that he look as a matter of urgency at a meaningful windfall tax on the profits of energy companies so that the money can be diverted to help workers and families during the challenging times we all face.

Also, that this Council writes to the Chief Executives of the other Councils asking them to also write to the Chancellor in similar terms.”

The Council would ask that a letter be sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in similar terms.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, with the exception of Councillor Woods, that the correspondence be noted.

11. GRANT OF ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE (FILE LR100)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Environment stating that an application had been received for the grant of entertainment licence as follows:

Barn, Adjacent to 3 Lisbane Road, Kircubbin

Applicant: Mr Brian McCarthy, 46 Rowreagh Road, Kircubbin

Days and Hours: 16 & 17 June 2023

Type of entertainment: Indoor dancing, singing and music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

The Environmental Health, PSNI and NIFRS had been consulted and there were no objections.

RECOMMENDED that Council grant the application.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

12. GRANT OF OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE (FILE LR100)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Environment stating that applications for outdoor entertainment licences had been received from:

1. Let's Rock Northern Ireland

Applicant: UK Live Limited, 14a Spittal Street, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 1DB

The event was proposed for 5 August 2023 and would be similar to the event held by them in August 2021.

The proposal was for an audience of over 19,999.

2. Parkway Outdoor Concerts

Applicant: Roy Murray, 29 Dermott Avenue, Comber BT23 5JE

The events were proposed for 23 June 2023 & 2 September 2023

The proposal was for an audience approximately 3000.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the applications subject to the following:

- 1 The applications being completed satisfactorily with all the Council's requirements being met.
- 2 The PSNI, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service or members of the public not objecting to the issue of the licence.
- 3 The applicant foregoing his right to appear before and be heard by the Council.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Having declared an interest in the next item, Councillors Morgan & MacArthur left the meeting at this stage – 10.37pm)

13. APPROVAL OF GRANTS FOR KINGS CORONATION (FILE CW-157) (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community & Wellbeing stating that Council agreed in January 2023 to put in place a simplified grants scheme to mark the Coronation of King Charles III in May 2023. The scheme enabled locally constituted community organisations within the Borough to avail of grant assistance from the Council to celebrate the King's Coronation, with grants to the value of £500 being made available to local constituted community /voluntary groups and residents associations.

The purpose of the grant scheme was to enable groups to mark the Coronation with a street party or organising volunteering events around the Coronation weekend.

A total of £30,000 was allocated to the grant scheme and a further £3,000 was made available for part packs for groups who were deemed ineligible to apply for more substantial funding for example, un-constituted groups etc.

Applications were considered by an officer panel and their recommendations were detailed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1 Successful applications - pass mark 45%					
#	Name Of Group	Score mark	Score %	Eligible Amount	Amount Awarded
1	1st Newtownards Somme & Historical Society	9	45%	£500.00	£500.00
2	Ards Local Voluntary Welfare Group	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
3	Ards Rangers Football Club	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
4	Ballycrochan Presbyterian Church	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
5	Ballygowan & District CA	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
6	Ballygowan Ulster Scots Association	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
7	Ballyhalbert & District Community Association	15	75%	£500.00	£500.00
8	Ballywalter Community Action Group	15	75%	£500.00	£500.00
9	Bangor District LOL No 18	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
10	Bangor Ex Services Club	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
11	Bangor Free Presbyterian Church	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
12	Bees Nees Early Years	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
13	Bowtown Community Development Group	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
14	Bowtown Friendship Community Association	9	45%	£500.00	£500.00
15	Branch Out Community Group Ltd	12	60%	£200.00	£200.00

16	Carrowdore & District CA	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
17	Comber Chamber of Commerce	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
18	Comber District LOL15	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
19	Comber Regeneration Community Partnership	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
20	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
21	Cottown LOL 1029	12	60%	£450.00	£450.00
22	Crawfordsburn LOL 1091	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
23	Discover Groomsport	17	85%	£500.00	£500.00
24	Donaghadee Community Development association	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
25	Donaghadee Primary PTA	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
26	Donaghadee Youth for Christ	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
27	Eastend Residents association	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
28	First Bangor Presbyterian	15	75%	£500.00	£500.00
29	Friends of West Winds Primary School	13	65%	£461.00	£461.00
30	Glen Ward Community Development Association	9	45%	£500.00	£500.00
31	Greyabbey PS PTA	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
32	Harmoni	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
33	Helens Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents Association	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
34	Hollywood Shared Town	15	75%	£500.00	£500.00
35	Kilcooley Community Forum	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
36	Kilcooley Womens Centre	16	80%	£500.00	£500.00
37	Kirkistown Primary PTFA	10	50%	£400.00	£400.00
38	Ladybird Childcare Services	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
39	Lisbarnett & Lisbane CA ltd	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
40	Loughries Men's Shed	14	70%	£488.07	£488.07
41	Millisle and Ballycopeland Presbyterian	12	60%	£440.00	£440.00
42	Millisle & District Community Association	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
43	Millisle British Legion	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
44	Millisle Health & Wellbeing Group	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
45	Millisle Regeneration	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
46	Movilla Abbey Brownies and Guides	13	65%	£500.00	£500.00
47	Newtownards Melody Flute Band	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
48	Newtownards Royal British Legion	9	45%	£500.00	£500.00

49	Newtownards Salvation Army	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
50	Parish of Greyabbey and Kircubbin	14	70%	£400.00	£400.00
51	Portaferry Sailing Club	14	70%	£500.00	£500.00
52	Portaferry WI	10	50%	£500.00	£500.00
53	Portavogie Trinity Free Presbyterian	12	60%	£500.00	£500.00
54	Portavogie PTA	15	75%	£500.00	£500.00
55	Seahaven Park homes Residents Association	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
56	Somme Memorial Flute Band	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
57	St Andrew's Presbyterian Bangor	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
58	The Regimental Association of the Ulster Defence Regiment (Bangor Branch	11	55%	£500.00	£500.00
59	Towerview Church	11	55%	£465.00	£465.00
	Totals			£28,804.07	£28,804.07

Table 2 Ineligible applications

	Name of Group	Score mark	Score %	Reason for unsuccessful application
1	Bangor Abbey Parish	N/A	N/A	No essential documents submitted
2	Killard Residents Association	N/A	N/A	Not all of requested essential documents submitted (Bank Statements and audited accounts)
3	Killinchy Parish Union	N/A	N/A	No essential documents submitted

Of the 62 organisations which applied for funding, 59 were deemed eligible and 3 applications could not be scored as they did not supply the required essential documentation.

A budget of £30,000 was ringfenced for the fund and subject to Council approval £28,804.07 would be awarded, leaving a small underspend of £1,195.93.

Members would be aware that the Coronation Grant Scheme was one element of the Coronation programme of events and activities approved by Council. A number of the approved events and activities were being delivered with a reduced budget, so that the total expenditure did not exceed the total Coronation budget of £50,000 It

was therefore recommended that the slight underspend in the grants scheme, was reallocated across the existing approved Coronation programme.

It was further recommended that those groups who were not recommended for funding in Table 2 above were prioritised to receive Party Packs, following which the availability of the Party Packs would be advertised for distribution on a first come first served basis.

Members should also be aware that the Community Development (CD) Team had been contacted by a representative of the Eden Project, of which the Queen Consort was the patron of the Eden Project's biggest community outreach initiative The Big Lunch. Representatives from the Eden Project along with officers from the CD Team, would be at Hamilton Road HUB on Friday 14 April between 10.00hrs-14.00hrs to discuss sustainable ideas for celebrating the Kings Coronation weekend as well as distributing party packs, supplied by the Eden Project, to non-constituted community groups.

A joint letter from a number of Community Associations dated 20 March was received by all members with regard to concerns about the adequacy of the size of the available grants. The letter and its response were attached at appendix 1 and 2 respectively, for information.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

1. The eligible and ineligible applications detailed in Tables 1 and 2 above.
2. The underspend in the grants scheme, is reallocated across the existing approved Coronation programme.
3. Those groups who were not recommended for funding in Table 2 above are prioritised to receive Party Packs, following which the remaining Party Packs will be advertised for distribution on a first come first served basis.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Gilmour stated that she was happy to propose the recommendation and welcomed the fact that so many groups had been able to avail of the funding. She sought some clarity around any post grant evaluation process.

In response the Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed that such a process normally would take place which would take into account any future grants or programmes.

Also rising in support of the report, Councillor McKee indicated that he wished to make comment about those community groups which felt they could not apply for funding due to their limited numbers or potentially having to supplement the funding to put on a suitable event. Continuing he stated that he welcomed the proposed evaluation process which would take place and suggested that further consideration was given to the establishment of a Community Grants Working Group at the Council's Annual Meeting.

Councillor Thompson also welcomed the report and the money which had been allocated to so many Groups including a number of Churches. He wished all those Groups well for a successful Coronation weekend of festivities.

Alderman Irvine welcomed the proportionality of the Grants on this occasion adding that it was important to take on board the views of those Groups which had written to the Council about the level of funding in comparison to that which had been made available for the Queen's Jubilee. Continuing he noted that the Borough would not be hosting one large event to bring everyone together and suggested that was something which was potentially missing on this occasion.

Alderman McIlveen indicated that he was somewhat confused by some of the comments which had been made particularly as this matter had already been pre agreed by the Council. He stated that on speaking to the many Groups within his own District Electoral Area (DEA) they were happy with any funding received from the Council and happy to work with other organisations within the community. Continuing he reminded members that the Council had recently agreed a very tight budget in relation to this in light of the Council's very serious financial situation and ultimately this was ratepayers' money. In summing up he welcomed the report adding that he hoped all those Groups which had applied would have a fantastic Coronation weekend.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Councillors Morgan, MacArthur and P Smith rejoined the meeting at this stage – 10.50pm)

14. LBAP OUTCOME OF CONSULATION (FILE EHPD-FWK/MSER-CR-22-23) (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community & Wellbeing stating that the purpose of this report was to seek Council agreement to the updated Service Level Agreement between the Department of Justice and District Councils.

Background

This Service Level Agreement (SLA) was between the Department of Justice (the Department) and District Councils. It concerned Environmental Health Officers acting as Warranted Officers (WOs) on behalf of the Department of Justice, enforcing –

- a) The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and
- b) The Explosives (Fireworks) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002 in relation to the licensing of fireworks displays.

The Service Level Agreement was an existing arrangement, and the current version updated the previous agreement dated 2016. The agreement had been

updated to increase the costs payable to the Council in respect of inspections completed under The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (as amended).

Other details in relation to Firework Display Inspections, MSER and Fireworks Training and warranting, Meetings, Review and Termination remain unchanged.

As with other similar documents, due to the increased scrutiny of governance arrangements, it was agreed by EHNI that when the agreement was reviewed, each Council should agree to it with individual Chief Executive's signing the document, rather than it being signed off by EHNI.

A copy of the Service Level Agreement between the Department of Justice and District Councils was attached as Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to the Service Level Agreement between the Department of Justice and District Councils, which shall be signed by the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. BATTLE OF SOMME PILGRIMAGE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive stating that the Council has participated annually in the commemorative events and wreath laying at the Thiepval Monument, Ulster Memorial Tower and the Memorial at Guillemont, to mark the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July.

This had usually also included wreath laying at the Menin Gate, Ypres, a visit to the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines and lay a wreath in the honour of Edmund de Wind VC, from Comber, at the Pozieres British Cemetery. In addition, a visit to the Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux, where the Australian National Monument of the Great War was located. There had been the opportunity to view this Centre as a case study for the planned redevelopment and investment in the Somme Museum, Newtownards.

In line with previous years, it was recommended that the Council approved the attendance at the commemoration events departing on 30 June and returning on 4 July 2023 of the Mayor (or if unable to travel, the Deputy Mayor), another Member and an Officer.

In the light of the upcoming Local Government Elections on 18 May, the nominations for the member attendee would be decided at the Annual Meeting on 7 June.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attendance at the annual Battle of the Somme Commemorations in 2023 of the Mayor (or Deputy Mayor) plus one additional Member, to be chosen at the Annual Meeting, and an Officer.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

16. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES OF COUNCILLORS (FILE FIN23)
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that Regulation 3 of the Payments to Councillors regulations required district councils to prepare and publish a scheme of allowances payable to its members for each year.

Scheme of Allowances

The Department for Communities had issued updated statutory guidance in respect of Payments to Councillors in Circular LG 23/2019 and rates for allowances in Circular LG 3/2023. The maximum Basic Allowance was £16,394 (subject to review in line with the NJC 2023/24 pay award).

However, in light of the up-coming local government elections no changes had been made to any allowances or maximum expenses threshold from version, with the exception of dependant carers allowance which in line with the National Living Wage on 1 April 2023.

It would seem appropriate that following the election, the new Council may choose to reconsider and revoke this new version and put in place a further revised version. This could be done at the Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023.

Both the scheme of allowances and the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities form Part 5 of the Council's constitution and therefore needed updating following approval of the new scheme.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves version 11 of the Scheme of Allowances to replace the previous version 10, with effect from 1 April 2023 and updates its constitution accordingly with the new scheme.

Councillor Greer proposed, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor T Smith stated that he was not happy with the wording of the report particularly as the question had previously been asked if there would be any change and the response had been no. Yet within the report it indicated that the matter may be looked at after the local Council elections and in light of that he asked as there was no budget for this then where would the funds come from.

In response the Director of Corporate Services stated that when it came to pay, assumptions were made and as such an assumption was made that this would not change. Similarly when it came to staff pay assumptions were made around what that could potentially be agreed and as such that was yet to be determined.

Councillor Smith reminded the Director that during this year £2M had been put into the pot for a staff pay rise and during the rates setting process it was indicated there

would be no increase to Councillors Allowances yet that was not what it said in the report before them.

The Director indicated that would be a discussion for June 2023 at which time various options could be considered.

Councillor T Smith stated that he was not happy with the wording which he considered to be misleading and as such he would propose an amendment to remove the words, "However, in light of the up-coming local government elections no changes have been made to any allowances or maximum expenses threshold from version, with the exception of dependant carers allowance which in line with the National Living Wage on 1 April 2023. It would seem appropriate that following the election, the new Council may choose to reconsider and revoke this new version and put in place a further revised version. This can be done at the Annual Meeting on 7 June 2023." And replace with, "in line with decisions made during the rate setting process, there will be no increase in allowances for the incoming year, with the exception of dependents care allowance which will rise in line with the National minimum wage on 1 April 2023."

There being no seconder the proposal fell.

At this stage Alderman McIlveen suggested that Councillor T Smith was 'tilting at windmills' as it was his understanding the purpose of the new Council looking at this was to possibly reconsider the Special Responsibility Allowances only.

Councillor T Smith asked to be recorded as not agreeing with the recommendation.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Greer, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

17. REQUEST FROM MARKET FRESH TO USE FORMER HAMILTON HOUSE SITE, HAMILTON ROAD, BANGOR
(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the Council had received a request from Market Fresh to use the green area at the former Hamilton House site on Hamilton Road, Bangor (see Appendix 1). They would be holding an Artisan food and craft market on the second Saturday of every month from April to December in 2023 in the Royal British Legion premises at 41 Hamilton Road.

While most of the market and food stalls would be inside the Royal British Legion building, Market Fresh had requested use of the old Hamilton House site for an overflow of between 10 and 15 stalls. They also requested to set up inflatables, including a bouncy slide, entertainment, a picnic area and children's activities.

Council officers had been consulted and had made the following comments:

- The ground at this site was unsuitable for vehicular use, therefore this usage should not be permitted. When the old Hamilton House site was demolished, it had a covering of topsoil put down as an interim measure. The site was only designed for grounds maintenance vehicles to access, however pedestrian access and stalls set up should not be an issue.
- The site was not suitable for the use of inflatables, so this should not be permitted. As a former site for large buildings, it may have rubble or solid foundations below the grass. This may make fixing with stakes to secure inflatables impossible. As a newly laid surface, even if the depth was there, it may not have sufficient compaction to hold stakes.
- There were slight concerns raised about the impact on local residents in terms of parking and footfall on what was a relatively small site. Members should note that the market would be going ahead within the RBL building, and Council approval was only being sought for the overspill. There were two pay and display car parks near the site.
- To mitigate any other issues, it was recommended that Council initially approved usage on this site for April and May 2023 only and reviews at that point. If there were no issues, officers had the authority to give approval for the usage up to December 2023, but this approval could be withdrawn if any issues arose.

Therefore, approval should be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- I. Providing a list of all traders attending the event and paying the appropriate fee in line with Council policy (£30 for up to 3 traders and £10 per trader after this).
- II. Providing a risk assessment and event management plan.
- III. Display public notices before the event to notify the public that said event was due to take place in the area. Signage to be agreed in advance with appropriate Council officer.
- IV. Public notices must be removed after the event within seven days.
- V. Provide evidence of relevant insurances and fully indemnifying Council against all risks associated with the use of land or property.
- VI. Make good any damage caused during the use to the satisfaction of Council officers. Should the Council have to undertake remedial works the costs would be recovered from the organiser.
- VII. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage was present.
- VIII. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal of all litter and other debris from the main event and adjacent areas during the event, as well as once the event had concluded, however, should the Council have to do any additional cleaning the costs would be recovered from the organiser.
- IX. Put in place plans for recycling waste.
- X. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the event.
- XI. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the event.
- XII. Obtain and provide evidence of permits/licences/registrations and approvals.

- XIII. Indemnify the Council against all claims which may result from the event or use of the area, and to provide the Council with a copy of the relevant insurance policy.
- XIV. Ensure that only the designated area, or areas specified by Council officers were used for the event.
- XV. Ensure that no vehicles were allowed access to the site.
- XVI. No inflatables were permitted on this site.
- XVII. Ensure that adequate marshals/staff were placed throughout the designated area to ensure that members of the public were not endangered by the event.
- XVIII. Where electrical supplies were being used, this must be agreed in advance with Council officers. Additional costs may apply depending on the services required.
- XIX. No petrol generators were to be used.
- XX. Provide the Council with a list of any suppliers/food providers for the event in advance of the event taking place.
- XXI. Approval was given for usage on this site for April and May 2023 only. If there were no issues, further approval up to December 2023 could be given, but Council reserves the right to withdraw this at any point.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the request to use the green area at the former Hamilton House site by Market Fresh for a market overspill, entertainment, a picnic area and children's activities, for April and May 2023 initially, and after review by officers, to December 2023, subject to the terms and conditions above.

Councillor Cathcart proposed, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Welcoming the recommendation Councillor Cathcart noted the success Market Fresh had already enjoyed in Bangor and continuing he noted the intention to set up inflatables on the former Hamilton House site. He asked officers to consider that request further to ascertain if inflatables could be set up on that piece of ground.

The seconder, Alderman Irvine also welcomed the recommendation and offered his best wishes to Market Fresh for their proposals.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

18. CONSULTATION

18.1. Department for Energy Security & Net Zero – Stakeholder Letter on UK Policy on management of radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence from the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero detailing that the UK Government and devolved governments were publishing a consultation on proposals for a revised UK-wide policy framework

for nuclear decommissioning and the management of radioactive substances, including radioactive waste.

They would welcome the Council's views on the proposals being put forward and would encourage it to respond to the consultation. If the Council wished to discuss the proposals further, please get in touch via the email address below. The consultation would close on the 24 of May 2023 and could be accessed at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-radioactive-substances-and-nuclear-decommissioning.

It had been 25 years since the overall policy in this area was last updated and there were now new challenges for nuclear decommissioning and radioactive substances management across the UK, new structures and responsibilities in place, and new advances in waste management techniques.

As such, the UK Government and Devolved Governments considered it was time to update and replace those policies with a consolidated UK-wide policy framework. In doing so it aimed to set out clearly those policies that were pursued jointly by the UK Government and Devolved Governments and any separate policies that apply in any one nation.

The proposals aimed to update, clarify, and consolidate a number of policies into a UK-wide policy framework and facilitate speedier and more cost-effective decommissioning and radioactive waste management. They aim to create clearer and more consistent policy objectives across the UK, reduce unnecessary burden, unlock more innovative and sustainable ways of working realising significant savings for industry and the taxpayer, whilst maintaining high standards of safety, security, and environmental protection.

As well as consolidating radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning policy into a single policy framework it was also consulting on proposals to achieve more proportionate and cost-effective waste management and disposal routes for some less hazardous intermediate level radioactive waste. The current policy of the UK Government and Devolved Governments of Wales and Northern Ireland was to place this waste in a geological disposal facility which on current estimates was expected to be operational in the 2050s. We are proposing to amend this policy to allow less hazardous intermediate level waste to be disposed of in near surface disposal facilities where it was safe to do so. Developing an alternative disposal route which could be available within the next 10 years, had the potential to achieve significant savings without compromising safety and security, though a geological disposal facility would still be necessary for the most hazardous radioactive waste. Other consultation proposals included updating policies on managing spent fuel to reflect changes in the new and advanced nuclear power sector and a policy statement on managing uranium to provide clarity on how the UK Government expected it to be managed.

The Department looked forward to hearing the Council's views on those proposals.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence be noted.

19. SEALING DOCUMENTS

Councillor Woods indicated that she had a number of queries about the NCLT Contract Extension Document.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing indicated that item would need to be discussed 'In Committee'.

NOTED.

20. TRANSFERS OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The following transfer applications were received: -

- Clandeboye GX 2801 Dowling to Dowling
- Loughview Section B Grave 20 Haslam to McCleary

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the information be noted.

21. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Chief Executive detailing that the Status Report in respect of Notice of Motions was attached.

This was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep members updated on the outcome of Motions. Please note that as each Motion was dealt with it would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor MacArthur that the recommendation be noted.

Councillor MacArthur sought an update on her Notice of Motion considered in October 2022 about a review of health and safety process for community groups.

The member was advised that would be followed up via email.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the recommendation be adopted.

22. NOTICES OF MOTION

22.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Smart and Irvine

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Councillor Irvine that in acknowledging the many negative impacts of long term commercial and residential dereliction, officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change.

As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.

Any potential pilot would have relevance for all of the Ards and North Down Borough and may highlight the need for additional powers for council or new partnerships with central government departments. The research of officers would be expected within a reasonable timeframe but would not be time limited. Should other professional expertise be required for elements of this research, a report seeking consent to spend would be returned to committee for consideration.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place & Prosperity Committee.

22.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gilmour and Cathcart

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Cathcart that this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost and potential delivery partners.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

22.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Thompson and Adair

Councillor Thompson proposed, seconded by Councillor Adair, that this Council recognises the issues and concerns detailed in the letter sent to the Chief Executive by The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group and agrees to write to the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities, asking them to provide details of the responsibility they have in ensuring the public safety of the

harbour and listing any details of dealings their departments have had with the owner.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place & Prosperity Committee.

Circulated for Information

- a) Census 2021 Further results released (Correspondence attached)
- b) Department of Justice - Publication of a new draft protocol governing the use of restorative interventions in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland (Correspondence attached)
- c) March Housing Council Bulletin & February Housing Council Minutes (Correspondence attached)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the items which were Circulated for Information be noted.

RECESS

At this stage 11.00pm the meeting went into Recess and recommenced at 11.10pm.

NOTED.

25. CALL-IN OF THE COUNCIL DECISION ON THE EQIA ON THE FLYING OF THE UNION FLAG (APPENDIX XII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Please note that while this item was discussed in open Council the report is legal in confidence.

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 5- Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

(Councillor McKimm left the meeting at this stage – 11.15pm)

The Mayor reminded Members of their earlier decision to consider this item 'Out of Committee'.

At this stage the Chief Executive reminded Members that on the Agenda this item had been listed as being heard 'In Committee' and the subsequent decision of Council to take it 'Out of Committee'. As such he reminded Members of the report's content and the comments of the Barrister contained therein which was that no reference was to be made to the legally privileged advice and this was something which must be strictly adhered to by Members. If any Member strayed into that area of debate, they would be asked by the Mayor to refrain from doing so, as this would be deemed to be a very serious breach of confidence The Chief Executive also

reminded Members of the legal advice which had been provided to the Council and that it could not be released to the public or press or commented about it outside of this meeting.

Councillor Cooper proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Council, having taken into account the final draft EQIA report attached at Appendix 3, approves the proposal to:

- (i) Amend its flag policy to include the flying of the Union Flag at every war memorial all year round; and
- (ii) Amend its flag policy to include the flying of the Union Flag at the Church Street, Newtownards Council building, all year round".

The proposer Councillor Cooper outlined the back story to the proposal previously agreed by the Council at its meeting held in January 2023 which had subsequently been 'called in'. In respect of the war memorials element of the proposal he recalled how proud he had been in January when all of Unionism had stood together to support this. While he respected the opinions of those who did not agree it was disappointing. He also recalled that whenever the Duke of Edinburgh had passed away the Council had been left in a very embarrassing situation in that the Union flag could not be flown at half-mast and as such it was something which he had hoped to rectify. Similarly he recalled that the Council had found itself in the same dilemma upon the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

Continuing he expressed the view that it was indecent not to have flags flown at war memorials throughout the Borough which was one of the most highly populated by veterans, Royal British Legions, military cadets and ex-servicemen and women. He urged members to leave aside their political differences and make the right decision out of decency for those who had made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives.

Church Street, Newtownards he stated was the only Council building where the Union flag was not flown 365 days a year and that was as the result of previous policies implemented by the former Ards Borough Council. This was something he wished to rectify out of logic and uniformity and which would also bring it into line with the rest of the Council's buildings. He added that he did not believe it was wrong to do this and indeed fully respected others' opinions on the matter. Councillor Cooper stated that the salient point remained that it was the national flag and it was the democratic wish of the people of the Borough to have it flown. Similarly, it was the democratic right of the Unionist population to decide if they wished to remain within the United Kingdom. So far, he added despite decades of bombings, shootings and murders they still remained steadfast within the United Kingdom. In summing up he expressed his hope that Members could have a mature debate with the utmost respect shown for the subject matter, rather than have it descend into a debate on orange versus green.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McIlveen suggested that this had the potential to be a fruitless debate given that the matter had been called in and as such required 80% of Members to vote for it. He added that it would only take nine members to block the decision from having a successful outcome. As such he stated that this was effectively a plea to those nine members to respect the wishes expressed within

the EQIA and also the democratic wishes which had been expressed within the Council Chamber.

The proposal consisted of two elements:

- The flying of the Union flag at War Memorials all year round
- The Union flag being flown 365 days a year at Church Street, Newtownards

He questioned where the issue was with that, particularly as Church Street was one of two Civic buildings which the Council had where it held all of its Council Committee meetings and as such a civic function was carried out there. Continuing Alderman McIlveen stated that it was an anomaly within the Policy that the Union Flag was not flown there 365 days a year. In summing he noted that Councillor Cooper had referred to the number of years this matter had been debated adding that it was now especially disappointing that despite all of the correct processes being undertaken the matter had been called in. Alderman McIlveen stated that ultimately Church Street was a civic building and as such he could see no issue with the Union Flag being flown there 365 days a year.

Councillor T Smith noted that on page six of the Alliance Party's 'call in' submission it was important to note that they had stated the proposal to fly the Union flag at Church Street and on war memorials year round would make Council flag policy "more extreme". He suggested that the fact was that the Alliance Party regarded the current policy which included the flying of the Union Flag outside this building, in Conway Square and of course on the Moat in Donaghadee as "extreme".

Continuing Councillor T Smith stated that he had no doubt that across the Borough the vast majority of people had no issue with the policy, yet the Alliance Party seemed to think that the flying of the Union flag all year round on Council property was an extremist position to hold. Therefore, he was not surprised by the Alliance Party's decision to call the matter in. He reminded Members that the decision to fly the Union flag at Church Street and war memorials was democratically reached by a majority within the Council and even though consultation was carried out where over 80% of those responded were content with the proposals, the Alliance Party were intent on overturning the democratic will of the Council and the expressed views of the public.

At this stage Councillor T Smith sought to deal with the two issues at the heart of the 'call in'. Firstly the proposal to fly the Union Flag at Church Street. He stated that it seemed once again that it was necessary to remind all that this Council was a British Council, an arm of British government rule here in Northern Ireland. He added that of course it was right for this part of the Government in Northern Ireland to fly the Nations flag on its Civic building in Newtownards. In regard to both the EQIA and legal advice he still held that this was an entirely reasonable position to take.

Next, he turned to the flying of the flag at war memorials noting that this did already happen at some and again, he believed that it was a reasonable step to have this consistently applied across the Borough. Flying the Union Flag year-round over war memorials, he believed, would be another demonstration of the nation's unwavering gratitude and respect for the sacrifices made by service members. This daily tribute

would ensure that their bravery and dedication were never forgotten, and that their memories were honoured in a visible and meaningful way. Continuing Councillor T Smith stated that the flying of the Union Flag there would be an additional reminder to all of the unfathomable and unpayable debt that this country owed to its fallen, and indeed to all who choose to put on the uniform of their country in defence of our freedoms, despite the dangers that awaited them.

He added that we only had the opportunity to fly the Union Flag because of their sacrifices, and it should not be within the ability of any political party to erode or restrict that precious freedom..

Councillor T Smith felt it was entirely fitting and appropriate that the flag, for which so many were willing to give their lives, continued to fly in their memory after death. Councillor Smith stated that was why he supported the original motion and why he continued to support it tonight. By way of summing up he indicated that he found it incredibly sad to be here discussing this matter again particularly as some had made a political issue out of it. It was also sad that some were choosing to ignore the expressed, democratic will of the Council as well as the views of the majority of the public within the Borough. While he was saddened, he stated that he was not surprised.

Alderman McDowell stated that the Alliance Party supported the flying of the Union flag on Council civic headquarters on those designated days and alongside the war memorials at the remembrance period around the 11 November. He added that Alliance did not vote in support of the Council's current flag policy and could not vote for the amended additions. The current policy of flying the Union flag permanently at the seven sites throughout the Borough went against Alliance's long-standing policy on the flying of the Union Flag on designated days and at Council headquarters. Adherence to that policy promoted good relations and ensured good and harmonious working environments were retained. Referring to the proposal Alderman McDowell stated that the Alliance Party was conscious of the contents of the EQIA and the legal advice which had been received. He added that regrettably as the matter was being considered 'out of committee' he was unable to highlight some of the legal advice which had been obtained but added that it was important for all Members to be aware of its significance and any risks which there may be.

In relation to war memorials, Alderman McDowell stated that Alliance continued to support the flying of the Union flag during the remembrance period and at remembrance events throughout the year. The proposal to fly the flag 365 was, in his opinion, contrary to good relations legislation. Continuing he referred to the Royal British Legion and its desire to have the Union Flag flown 365 days a year at the cenotaph in Belfast but a desire which was rejected by Belfast City Council. Alliance believed this was purely a political move which could not be supported.

Turning to Church Street, Alderman McDowell stated that this was a place of work and as such there was a serious risk of legal challenge. Instead, the Council needed to achieve a harmonious workplace in order to meet various legislative requirements and the Equality Commission Guidance.

In respect of the matter of the 'call in' and discussions which had taken place in respect of that, Alderman McDowell noted complaints from some parties suggesting

that the Alliance were using this mechanism to its advantage but yet those very same parties had also on occasions used this very same mechanism. Continuing he expressed the view that if parties were genuinely wishing to resolve the issues within the Council's Standing Orders then the Northern Ireland Assembly the Executive needed to be restored as that was the only way the legislation could be changed. In conclusion Alderman McDowell stated that it was undeniable that the proposal before them would only serve to make the Council's flag policy much more expansive and it could result in the Council acting outside of its duties in respect of good relations and creating an harmonious working environment with legal challenges being made.

Councillor P Smith acknowledged that the Council had adhered to all of its legal requirements and procedures in respect of this matter. He referred to the two issues in question commenting that he had hoped they could have been decoupled to enable at least one decision to have successfully been taken but noted that was not going to be the case. In terms of Church Street, Councillor Smith concurred with Alderman McIlveen's comments that it was a civic building and at the time when the decision had been taken not fly it 365 days a year, he stated that he had been one of the Members who had voted to retain it. He reminded Members that currently more civic time was spent in Church Street than the City Hall as all Committee meetings took place there. As such he felt it was not unreasonable for the flag to be flown there 365 days a year. Therefore, he felt both proposals were reasonable while understanding of the sensitivities around that and as such he was supportive of the proposal made by Councillor Cooper.

Councillor Edmund expressed great surprise at the stance adopted by the Alliance Party in relation to this matter. He reminded members that during the First World War both British and Irish soldiers had fought together and similarly during the Second World War men from this part of the world had taken a stance against Hitler. Those brave men rallied round the Union flag at that time to provide us all with the rights and freedoms which everyone had today. He encouraged Members to show respect and let the flag fly at war memorials.

At this stage Alderman Irvine expressed his support for the proposal put forward by Councillor Cooper adding that it was balanced and proportionate. He agreed that Church Street was very much a civic building and as such the Union flag should be flown there. He added that this something which was supported by a large majority of the people of the Borough which had always promoted good relations. Alderman Irvine also noted that as far as he was aware the Council had always enjoyed harmonious working conditions. He agreed that it was disappointing that the Council found itself in this situation as the result of the Alliance Party and others and suggested the general public would be disappointed with the outcome of the debate.

Rising in support of Alderman McIlveen's comments, Councillor Gilmour expressed some confusion in respect of Alderman McDowell's comments about matters at Belfast City Hall, questioning what relevance that had. Continuing she referred to the 'call in' requisition form and in particular page 3 Item 5 commenting that it appeared to be a case of 'clutching at straws'. She reminded Members that at Holywood War Memorial the Council in 2014 to 2016 as part of the public realm works, the area had been completely reconstructed and at the time there had been no objections to that.

Instead, she suggested that it was simply a case that the Alliance did not want yet another Union flag to be flown all year round in Holywood. She felt that it was entirely appropriate for the Union flag to be flown at war memorials 365 days a year in recognition of the sacrifice made by so many. Councillor Gilmour stated that while she was disappointed, she not surprised by the actions of those who had brought the 'call in'.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to the most recent edition of the Council's Borough Magazine which she had just received to her home and noted within it residents were encouraged to provide any feedback they had on any of the Council's services to put the heart at the community at what it does. She stated that she had very much enjoyed the comments made tonight in relation to the history of the Union flag but she reminded Members that the debate was about the following of a process. The Council had gone to extreme lengths to ensure that when the original vote was taken it was done so in the knowledge that it had carried out the correct consultation. The stance adopted by the Alliance Party in respect of this matter she suggested demonstrated that the feedback received by those who had voted for Council Members meant less than an obscure policy of the Alliance Party. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that the Borough had spoken on this matter and wished for the anomalies within the Council's flag policy to be amended and as such had asked their elected representatives on Council to respond accordingly.

At this stage Councillor Irwin called for a recorded vote to be taken.

Councillor Brooks stated that the colours within the Union flag made up the colours of the Union and everyone from Northern Ireland benefited from the Union by way of the NHS, furlough payments during the Covid19 pandemic and the recent payment of £600 towards energy costs. As such from a practical point of view he expressed disappointment that the debate had even had to take place as everyone was quite happy to benefit from the Union but he acknowledged there was a section within the community which found the flag offensive. As that was something he found very difficult to understand and accept he would be supporting the proposal put forward.

Councillor Adair rose to express his disappointment like many others that the discussion was having to be undertaken. He asked what the point was of consulting with members of the public if their responses were not going to be taken on board. Continuing he appealed to those Members who had signed the 'call in' to think again and do what was right as the majority of the people within the Borough supported the proposal which had been put forward. Indeed he noted that throughout the majority of many countries their national flag flew from civic buildings and as the Union flag was our national flag it should not be offensive to anyone. Councillor Adair sought the support of Members for the proposal before them.

At this stage Councillor Kennedy read out a list of names and then continued to state that he could understand why the Green Party may have an issue with this matter as they unashamedly communists. As to why the Alliance Party could not support this, he was not clear. He acknowledged the debate which had taken place and included much commentary about those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country, stating that it was nothing short of an insult to them. Continuing Councillor Kennedy stated that he was unsure if the Council had ever had such a reasonable and sober

debate compared to that which had taken place this evening in quite such time. He stated that there could be no doubt that the majority of Members had bent over backwards to do this properly but yet there was now a situation where there was a handful of individuals who were able to stymie what was essentially morally right. He feared for them that what was happening was that Sinn Fein were sitting over their shoulders and were worried about causing offence. Councillor Kennedy stated that the names which he had read out were the names of some of those who appeared on war memorials throughout the Borough and as such it was a dishonour to their names and reputation that the matter was being discussed by the Council.

By way of summing up Councillor Cooper expressed the view that this was a sad night not only for the Council but for democracy generally. On a positive note he took the opportunity to thank Members for their positive, mostly respectful comments and sombre tone adopted throughout the debate. He stated that he personally respected policies which had been laid down by political parties and as such he respected the Alliance Party and its policy in this regard even though he did not agree with it. However, he suggested that it had taken a decision which was thoroughly disrespectful and short sighted as the Council had listened to its residents and over 80% were behind this Policy that he was advocating through his proposal. He added that the EQIA findings had been positive and supportive of the proposal also.

Addressing those who had called the matter in he advised that there was still another option for them to consider which was to respect democracy similarly to how they had respected their own policy. Instead, he suggested that tonight democracy had been turned on its head and as such it set a precedent which in his opinion was immoral, undemocratic and one which brought shame on this Council term. Councillor Cooper stated that it was with a heavy heart that he would be sitting down for the recorded vote to be taken and he urged Members to think hard about what they were about to do. He urged them to respect the wishes of those within the Chamber and of those within the Borough. He thanked Members and the Mayor for her decorum in handling the debate and urged his colleagues to his left hand side of the Chamber to reconsider.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that due to the nature of this item being 'Called In' a Qualified Majority Vote was required (being at least 80% of those Members present and voting) to pass. He also noted that Councillor Irwin had requested that a Recorded Vote be taken.

On the proposal being put to the meeting, with 22 voting For, 14 voting Against and 0 Abstained and 4 Absent. The Chief Executive advised that under the requirements of the Qualified Majority Vote with 38 present it would require a qualified majority of 29 and as such that fell short and therefore the 'Call In' proposal falls.

FOR (22)	AGAINST (14)	ABSTAINING (0)	ABSENT (4)
Aldermen	Alderman		Aldermen
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell		Carson
Irvine	Wilson		Gibson
Keery	Councillors		Mcllveen
Mcllveen	Boyle		Councillor
Councillors	Douglas		McKimm

Adair	Dunlop
Blaney	Greer
Brooks	Irwin
Cathcart	McAlpine
Chambers	McKee
Cooper	McRandal
Cummings	Moore
Edmund	Morgan
Gilmour	Walker
Irvine	Woods
Johnson	
Kennedy	
MacArthur	
McClellan	
Smart	
P Smith	
T Smith	
Thompson	

At this stage Councillor Edmund shouted 'traitors' as the result was recorded. The Mayor asked the Councillor to withdraw that unacceptable remark and Councillor Edmund did so and apologised for it.

RESOLVED, that the called-in decision was defeated and the existing policy stands.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, that the public/press be excluded from the undernoted items of confidential business.

8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 9 March 2023

Item 24 - AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 – Tranche One

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

NOTED.

(Councillor Walker left the meeting at this stage – 11.15pm)

8.5. Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 15 March 2023**Item 35 – Portavogie 3G Pitch Update****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*******IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

Item 32 - Northern Community Leisure Trust Quarter 3 2022**NOT FOR PUBLICATION*******IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

8.4.1. Matters arising from Item 8 Corporate Services Committee, 14 March 2023 - Equality Consultative Panel Constitution (File EQ33)**NOT FOR PUBLICATION*******IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

19. SEALING DOCUMENTS**NOT FOR PUBLICATION*******IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 5 - Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

(Councillor Blaney left the meeting at this stage – 12.30am)

23. PORTAFERRY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME - APPOINTMENT OF INTEGRATED CONSTRUCTION TEAM (FILE REG66) (Appendix X)*****IN CONFIDENCE*******NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

C.29.03.2023 PM

56

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

24. SEAFLAG – PORTAVOGIE HARBOUR EIS – PROJECT UPDATE (FILE RDP189) (Appendix XI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Keery, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 12.35am

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Planning Committee was held (hybrid) on Tuesday 4th April 2023 at 7.00 pm via Zoom and at Council Offices on Church Street, Newtownards.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Gibson

Aldermen: McIlveen

Councillors:	Brooks	McRandal
	Cathcart	Moore
	McAlpine	P Smith
	McClellan	Thompson
	McKee	Walker

Officers: Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Planning (G Kerr) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Interests were declared.

NOTED.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7TH MARCH 2023

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the minutes be noted.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2015/0677/F – REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING STRUCTURE WITH 1 NO. SINGLE STOREY UNIT TO ACCOMMODATE STABLES, COACH HOUSE, TACK ROOM, WORKSHOP AND TOILET – 251A BANGOR ROAD, WHITESPOTS, NEWTOWNARDS

(Appendices I - III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Newtownards

Committee Interest: A local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to the officer's recommendations.

Proposal: Replacement of existing structure with 1 No. single storey unit to accommodate stables, coach house, tack room, workshop and toilet.

Site Location: 251a Bangor Road, Whitespots, Newtownards

Recommendation: Approval

The Head of Planning outlined the above application, advising that it was for a replacement of an existing structure with 1 No. single storey unit to accommodate stables, coach house, tack room, workshop and toilet.

The application was before Members as it was an application with 6 or more objections. The application also had a Section 76 legal agreement associated with the proposal with delegated authority being sought to finalise.

All material objections had been considered within the case officer report and addendums.

Consultees had expressed no objections with some recommending conditions.

The site was located in the countryside as the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 for the area. The site was also located within a Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA): 'Whitespots, lead mines, Golden Glen and associated lands.'

Slides were shown to provide some context to the site and its surrounds.

The proposal was being considered under policies CTY 1 PPS 8: Open Space, Sports and Outdoor Recreation (PPS 8).

To provide some context for Members it was indicated that the proposal was originally for three new buildings on site and was associated with a business use. An amended application form and plans were received for the replacement of the existing structure with 1 No. single storey unit to accommodate stables, coach house, tack room, workshop and toilet. The agent stated on behalf of the applicant that the stables were for the use of the applicant only and would not be open to clients, customers or members of the public. Whilst the applicant would use part of

the stables for commercial work connected to his business, the actual business use was carried out off-site. The following was stated within an email from the agent:

'Furthermore; I can confirm all lands and buildings are used solely by the Finnegans for equestrian and equine purposes associated with the breeding of horses (and all activities associated with this, including occasional visits by a vet and/or delivery of supplies), the training of horses (by Mr Finnegan) for carriage promotional work (this work being carried out off-site, on surrounding roads, in towns and villages) and the maintenance of carriages/coaches by the Finnegans.'

The proposed shed measured 11m x 11m and would have a pitched roof with a ridge height of 4m which was only 0.3m higher than the existing outbuilding currently on site. The shed would be a lightweight steel framed building finished in green corrugated cladding. Other finishes included clear translucent roof panels, timber sliding main central door and upvc windows.

There would be no loss of high value agricultural land as a result of the application. The current condition of the site, with dilapidated structures and old horse boxes, took away from the visual amenity and character of the landscape.

There would be no adverse effect on residential amenity. Environmental Health offered no objections in relation to noise issues.

With regard to Road Safety and Access DFI Roads was consulted on the proposal and stated they would have no objections *providing this application is non-commercial with little or no intensification in use of the existing access.* As the main use of the building was for private stable use with a workshop/tool store and given the stables would not be open to members of the public it was considered there would no intensification in use of the existing access.

Planning Agreement

A planning agreement was considered to be the most robust mechanism required to ensure the proposal remained as domestic use rather than commercial. The agreement would be registered on the statutory charge register.

The recommendation was to approve planning permission with delegated powers sought for legal agreement with decision to issue once legal agreement was finalised.

Alderman McIlveen referred to the lack of enforcement of the existing shed and wondered if the planners knew how old it was.

In response the planner informed the committee that there was a long history of enforcement on the site with unauthorised activities and a change of use in the land. Planners could not force a landowner to submit applications but what was now proposed was a betterment of the site.

There had been other applications that had come before the committee which the planners could not take into consideration. The application was for an infill shed

and previously there had been a horse carriage building but this was for domestic purposes. Section 76 would be applied to offer the planning service extra protection and offer a faster route to court.

Councillor Cathcart asked about plans for housing five horses which to him appeared to be a lot for domestic and recreational use. He had some concerns regarding the principle of development argument and betterment since he believed that the existing structures should not have existed in the first place.

Councillor McRandal also referred to the future use of the site and the approval granted for domestic use. The Planning Manager had investigated horse passports which showed that the applicant owned the horses.

The Chair of the Planning Committee asked Members to make a recommendation on the application before them. There was no proposer and seconder for the recommendation.

Alderman McIlveen proposed that the application be deferred to a future meeting until further information was brought forward. That was seconded by Councillor Thompson.

Alderman McIlveen felt a bit of discomfort concerning the application mainly in relation to when matters became enforceable and he would appreciate some further information before a decision could be made. There were concerns that business activity could be carried out in the future.

Councillor P Smith was in agreement that there was a degree of ambiguity of whether the application was for domestic or business purposes and asked for further clarification to be made.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that a decision be deferred for additional information and clarification.

4.2 LA06/2021/0506/F SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SYSTEM CONSISTING OF 26 NO. GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PANELS, A CONTAINERISED BATTERY BUILDING (TOTAL BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY OF 28 KWH) BACK UP GENERATOR, FUEL TANK AND ASSOCIATED SITE WORKS – CAIRN WOOD, 21 CRAIGANTLET ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS
(Appendices IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Holywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Sustainable energy system consisting of 26 No. ground mounted solar panels, a containerised battery building (total battery storage capacity of 28KWh), back-up generator, fuel tank and associated site works.

Site Location: Cairn Wood, 21 Craigantlet Road, Newtownards

Recommendation: Approval

The Head of Planning outlined the above application, advising that it was for a sustainable energy system consisting of an array of 26 no. ground mounted solar panels, a containerised battery building (total battery storage capacity of 28 kWh), backup generator, fuel tank and associated site works at Cairn Wood in Craigantlet. It was being brought before Members since it was an application being made by the Council. All consultees were content and no objections had been received.

Members would recall previous applications brought before the Committee including the extension and enhancement of existing trails permission, new WC facilities and extension and enhancement of the car park all granted in 2020.

Members were shown images of the surrounding area which was rural and was characterised by agricultural fields and a scattering of rural dwellings. The site was within zonings for Existing Community Woodland (ND/CW02) and a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (ND 02/04). The site was accessed from a protected route.

Due to the small scale of the development proposed and its location adjacent to the existing car park and main road, planners were satisfied that the proposal would not result in any adverse effect on the nature conservation interests of the SLNCI. The proposal would not result in the loss of any existing trees or vegetation which contributed to the SLNCI.

The proposal was for a sustainable energy system that had been designed for the adjacent car park which would comprise of 26 no. solar panels which would charge a battery system to provide enough energy to power the pumps for the car park drainage system and the toilet block (heat/lighting) in the car park.

The proposed site layout plan indicated the arrangement of the solar panels and container and included the landscaping details which were all existing and included the wooden fencing and mature trees associated with the woodland as well as some new planting of trees.

The solar panels were located centrally and positioned to the north-west of the site with the container positioned to the south-east. A backup generator was provided for winter months should there be insufficient energy created or stored in the solar and battery system.

Consultation had been carried out with the NI Fire and Rescue Service which had not raised any concerns. It had recommended measures in the event of fire and advised that any application for battery storage should take cognisance of battery storage guidance notes 1 and 2.

An emergency response plan had been submitted and referred to an overview of activities on site including a list of waste management contractors who would handle any wastes arising from maintenance, remediation, or removal. The planner was

therefore satisfied that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact on public safety, human health, or residential amenity.

The size and scale of the proposal was small and would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on visual amenity or landscape character. The container was green in colour and located to the rear of the site closer to the woodland and the ground mounted solar panels would not appear prominent with height limited to 2.9m high from ground level.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) by Aulino Wann & Associates had been provided in support of the application. The PEA stated that the application site had been cleared and that there were no signs of badgers, bats, birds or invasive species within the site. The PEA also confirmed that there were no trees on or immediately adjacent to the site that could support bat roosts.

Consultation was carried out with NED which advised that it was content with the proposal subject to a recommendation regarding the planting of new woodland of native species.

In summary, given the proposal complied with planning policy, there had been no objections from consultees and given the sustainable aims of the proposal the recommendation was to grant planning permission.

Members were invited to ask questions.

Alderman McIlveen had a general question around the risk of damage to the equipment given the secluded nature of that area. Members were informed that there was a temporary generator in the area currently that was separate from planning matters. This was expensive equipment and the dark secluded area could pose a potential risk. The Planning Manager indicated that she would raise that with the Head of Assets and Property Services and refer back to the Committee on that matter.

Proposed by Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Cathcart that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McRandal welcomed this sustainable energy source and Councillor Cathcart echoed that.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the planning application be approved.

4.3 LA06/2021/1472/LBC LIGHTENING PROTECTION SYSTEM – TOWN HALL (NOW CITY HALL), THE CASTLE, BANGOR (Appendices VI & VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: Council Application

Proposal: Lightning protection system

Site Location: Town Hall (now City Hall), The Castle, Bangor

Recommendation: Consent

The Head of Planning outlined the above application, advising that the site consisted of the Town Hall (now City Hall) in Bangor. The building, known as The Castle, was a Grade A listed building on account of its special architectural merit. The building was set amidst mature parkland and was the administrative headquarters of the Ards and North Down Borough.

Images of the site were shown to provide context.

The proposal would involve a number of features to ensure the building was protected in the event of a lightning strike: conductor tapes would be located on roof pitches and on a number of surface mounted 'strike plates'; air rods were to be positioned at chimney stacks and pinnacles; and, a number of down conductors would be attached to the exterior of the building.

The works would be almost imperceptible. The features referenced above would be sympathetically placed along the ridge, along guttering, behind chimneys etc. Following submission of proposed visuals/photomontage, HED was now content with the proposal subject to the conditions listed below. The essential character of the building would not be materially affected. The architectural details and features of the building would not be impaired and there would be no impact on the setting of the building.

The recommendation was to grant consent.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

4.4 LA06/2023/1426/F TEMPORARY SITING AND OPERATION OF 34M ILLUMINATED PANORAMIC VIEWING WHEEL AND 5 ADDITIONAL ATTRACTIONS BETWEEN MAY AND SEPTEMBER 2023 – OPEN SPACE APPROX. 33M NW OF MCKEE CLOCK, BANGOR

(Appendices VIII & IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Bangor Central

Committee Interest: Application relating to land in which the Council has an interest

Proposal: Temporary siting and operation of 34m illuminated panoramic viewing wheel and 5 additional attractions between May and September 2023

Site Location: 33m NW of McKee Clock, Bangor

Recommendation: Approval

The Head of Planning outlined the above application, advising that it was for the temporary siting and operation of a 34m illuminated panoramic viewing wheel and 5 additional attractions between May and September 2023.

The proposal was located approximately 33m northwest of McKee Clock, Bangor. The application was being presented at Planning Committee as it lay on land in which the Council had an interest.

Members would be aware there was a precedent for approval of temporary attractions at that location and consultees had no objections to the proposal.

The planner showed images of the site which was within the Town Centre, a Local Landscape Policy Area, and the Bangor Urban Waterfront. Draft BMAP also identified the site as being in an area of 'Existing Recreation and Open Space.'

The proposed layout plan was shown indicating the position of the fairground attractions.

Given the city centre waterfront location and the proximity to Pickie Fun Park, the proposal was considered compatible with the surrounding land uses and would not detract from the landscape quality or character of the area. The proposal would not adversely impact upon the listed McKee Clock Tower. The proposal offered an attraction that would reinvigorate the area by attracting people into the space.

With appropriate conditions, it was recommended that the proposal be granted temporary planning permission.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing the following:

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was dismissed on 16 March 2023.

PAC Ref	2021/E0051
Application ref	LA06/2021/0150/LDP
Appellant	Mr John Spratt
Subject of Appeal	Refusal to issue Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use of Development (CLOPUD) - commencement of development of X/2010/0034/F in accordance with approval
Location	Land adjacent and north of 27 Ballybeen Road, Comber

Planning permission X/2010/0034/F was granted on 14 April 2010 for a change of house type to a previously approved farm retirement dwelling (X/2004/1658/O & X/2008/0827/RM). Condition 1 of the approval required development to have been started prior to 14 January 2011 – that being the critical date by which the development should have commenced. The appellant sought certification through the submission of a CLOPUD to demonstrate the approval granted under X/2010/0034/F could be lawfully completed, as it had been commenced in time.

As the appeal related to an approval under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 ("the 1991 Order"), the appeal was considered within the context of the prevailing legislation at that time.

The appellant provided evidence to demonstrate that the works undertaken at the site constituted a lawful commencement of development alongside evidence of Building Control records of site visits with the appellant arguing that site levelling, rock breaking, and construction of the access and hardstanding constituted works of construction in the course of the erection of the development.

The appellant argued that the planning gain of allowing a partially erected structure to be fully completed should be considered with there being no demonstrable harm in completing the dwelling on site; however, the Commissioner opined that the matter of planning gain was not a determining factor in the consideration of the lawfulness of development.

The Commissioner was of the opinion that the evidence submitted did not demonstrate that works carried out prior to 14 January 2011 constituted works of construction in the course of erection of the buildings as required by Article 36 (1) (a) of the 1991 Order, and thus the approval had been lost and a Certificate could not be issued.

2. The following appeal against an Enforcement Notice was quashed on 20 March 2023.

PAC Ref	2019/E0031
Enforcement ref	LA06/2015/0159/CA
Appellant	Mr William Morrow & Mrs Noleen Morrow
Subject of Appeal	The alleged unauthorised raising of land with waste material and unauthorised erection of agricultural building and lean-to thereon.
Location	Land at 102 Ballydrain Road Ballydrain Comber

The appeal was brought on grounds (a) [deemed planning application], (f) and (g) as set out under section 143(3) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. This appeal followed an appeal against the service of a Regulation 34 Notice where the Council had considered it necessary for the appellant to submit an Environmental Statement regarding the infilling of land with waste material. However, the PAC did not consider that necessary and dismissed this element following an earlier hearing.

The grounds of appeal were heard at a remote hearing on 25 October 2022.

In its decision the PAC noted that the Council withdrew its draft reasons for refusal and objections based on nature conservation, rural character and impact on residential amenity following the submission of the necessary, outstanding information within the appellant's statement of case.

The remaining issues considered in the appeal were whether: -

- the development was acceptable in principle in the countryside;
- the size and scale of the development was inappropriate;
- it integrated into its surroundings; and
- if it would be unsympathetic to its location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The Commission found that the development met Policies CTY 1, 12 and 13 of PPS 21 as well as Policy NH6 of PPS 2 and as such the above issues did not warrant the reasons for refusal to be sustained. As such the appeal succeeded under ground (a) [deemed application] subject to the following condition –

The hereby approved agricultural shed shall only be used to house a maximum of 25 cattle at any given time. The cattle shall only be housed in the cattle pen area of the building.

Given that planning permission was being granted, the Enforcement Notice was quashed.

New Appeals Lodged

3. The following appeal was lodged on 02 March 2023.

PAC Ref	2022/A0204
Application ref	LA06/2018/0996/F
Appellant	Cedarville Limited
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for 8no. dwellings with associated car parking and landscaping
Location	Lands to the West of 7 Main Street and South of 6a Ballyrawer Avenue, Carrowdore

Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings could be viewed at www.pacni.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

The Planning Manager explained that the report provided an update on the previous month and it was recommended that the Council noted the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. NIW – UPDATE ON COASTAL FENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that the following:

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report was to update Members in respect of the fencing erected by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) around the Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) at Seacourt, on the North Down Coastal Path, sometime during 2019.

Background

2. Further to erection of the fencing and investigation by Planning Enforcement, a retrospective planning application was received from NIW, under LA06/2019/1007/F. Further to processing a recommendation to approve planning permission was presented to Planning Committee in August and September 2021, and April 2022, then further to receipt of legal advice requested by Members, finally in July 2022, at which the Council voted to refuse the application.
3. NIW submitted an appeal against the refusal of planning permission on 16 November 2022 – PAC reference 2022/A0145. As yet no hearing date had been confirmed by the PAC.

Submission of applications for Certificates of Lawfulness

4. Members were advised of the submission of two separate Certificates of Lawfulness, one for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use of Development (CLEUD) and Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) for consideration by the Planning Service in respect of both the existing fence and gate as erected (subject of the refused planning application) and for an increase in height of fencing to the Seacourt WwPS.

Certificates of Lawful Use or Development

5. If any person wished to ascertain whether–
 - a. any existing use of buildings or other land was lawful; or
 - b. any operations which had been carried out in, on, over or under land were lawful,
 that person may make an application for the purpose to the Council specifying the land and describing the use, operations or other matter.
6. For the purposes of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 uses and operations were lawful at any time if no enforcement action may then be taken in respect of them (whether because they did not involve development or require planning

permission or because the time for enforcement action had expired or for any other reason). A CLEUD had been submitted on behalf of NIW in that regard in respect of the existing fencing and gate around the Seacourt WwPS.

7. If any person wished to ascertain whether—
 - a. any proposed use of buildings or other land; or
 - b. any operations proposed to be carried out in, on, over or under land, would be lawful,
 that person may make an application for the purpose to the Council specifying the land and describing the use or operations in question.

8. If, on an application under this section, the Council is provided with information satisfying it that the use or operations described in the application would be lawful if instituted or begun at the time of the application, (i.e. complies with 'permitted development' it must issue a certificate to that effect; and in any other case it shall refuse the application. A CLOPUD had been submitted on behalf of NIW in that regard in respect of a proposed fence and gate around the Seacourt WwPS.

Permitted Development Rights

9. The Schedule to the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 ("the GPDO") lists development that could be undertaken without the need to seek express planning consent from the planning authority. However, any such proposal in the first instance must be assessed in accordance with Article 3(8) of the above Order, as to whether or not the proposal amounted to EIA development (in accordance with The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 to consider the likely environmental impacts of any development before acting upon such PD Rights.

10. Subject to a negative EIA screening, it was a condition of the PD Rights under Article 3(1) of the GPDO that one attains confirmation prior to commencement of development that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of any designated site under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995(a). Confirmation of such was normally via consultation by the Council with the Shared Environmental Service for confirmation of any findings in that respect, through the CLOPUD application process, referred to above.

11. At the time that the Planning Service was investigating the fence, officers had considered the fence and gate as erected under Part 3 (Minor Operations) Class A relating to 'The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure'. Given that Class A (1) specified that development is not permitted if 'The height of any other gate, fence, wall or means of enclosure erected or constructed exceeds 2 metres above ground level' the Planning Service considered that PD could not apply. Planning Service did also at that time consider the proposal under Part 14 of the GPDO (see details below) but considered it could not apply as the Council was

not in receipt of a Habitats Regulations Assessment relevant to the site as it was within a designated site (ASSI).

12. NIW did not seek a factual determination by way of an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of the Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) at this time and moved to submit the planning application which was determined and refused by the Council.
13. Such a factual determination was the proper course of action in that regard as any planning advice given by officers, either verbally or in writing in the course of their duties, was offered in good faith and was based on the information and evidence provided. Advice was normally offered without the benefit of an EIA screening or shadow habitats assessment, site visit or the involvement of other consultees (both statutory and non-statutory), neighbours or other interested parties. Such views were therefore the personal opinion of that officer and were not a formal decision of, nor were they binding on, the local planning authority. The local planning authority was only bound where a formal application was submitted, and a formal decision was issued in writing.
14. NIW **now** considers that the Council erred in its assessment of the PD rights in respect of Part 3 – Minor Works, and that the works should have been assessed against the rights available under the GDPO Part 14 – ‘Development by Statutory and Other Undertakers’, Class H – ‘Water and sewerage undertakings’ part (h) – ‘Development by water or sewerage undertakers consisting any other development in, on, over or under operational land, other than the provision of a building but including the extension or alteration of a building’. Class H(h) does not contain any limitation on height.
15. The purpose of the submissions of the Certificates of Lawfulness was to provide the Council with the entire rationale as to why the works, the subject of those applications, are/would be Permitted Development and to allow it to take a fully informed view.
16. The planning agent acting on NIW’s behalf had contacted the Planning Appeals Commission requesting delay of the appeal hearing into the refused planning permission to enable the Council to determine those Certificates accordingly. To date the Commission had not confirmed acceptance prior to imposing a date for a hearing.
17. The Planning Service considered it prudent to bring the matter to the attention of the Planning Committee, and also to the general public, including those who had submitted objections to the planning application, as Certificates of Lawfulness were not subject to statutory advertisement in the same manner as a planning application, or available to view on the Planning Portal.
18. Officers were currently considering the submitted information for the applications, and liaising with legal representatives, and would advise Members of outcomes accordingly.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

The Planning Manager explained that this was being brought to Members on the basis of openness and transparency. The application had been refused and appealed and up to now there had been no date for a hearing by the Planning Appeals Commission. The Council was in receipt of supporting information and would provide further information when it became available.

Councillor McClean hoped that the matter would be resolved and Councillor Cathcart thanked officers for bringing the information to the attention of Members.

It was recognised that with any policy or legislation there would always be loopholes which needed to be investigated.

RESOLVED; on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

CLOSE OF MEETING

In closing, the Chair thanked Members and officers for the support they had shown while he was in that role and remarked that this would be his final meeting.

Alderman McIlveen had not realised that this would be the Chair's final meeting and thanked him for the way he had carried out that role so fairly and well.

Councillor Cathcart stated that the Chair had held the position of Councillor for many years and he was aware that the role had become more complicated with the arrival of new technology and ways of meeting. He wished the Chair well for his future.

Councillor McRandal congratulated the Chair on behalf of the Alliance Party on a job well done and acting as Deputy Chair of the Planning Committee he had thoroughly enjoyed working with him.

Councillor P Smith agreed with those comments wishing the Chair well for his future and thanking him for his significant contribution over the years.

Councillor McKee added his voice to those comments and was aware that the Planning Committee was a particularly difficult one to Chair.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.04 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Special Planning Committee was held (hybrid) on Wednesday 5th April 2023 at 7.00 pm via Zoom and at Council Offices on Church Street, Newtownards.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor McRandal

Aldermen: McIlveen (Zoom)

Councillors: Cathcart (Zoom) McClean
 Kennedy P Smith
 McAlpine (Zoom, 7.15pm)

Officers: Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Acting Head of Planning (G Kerr), Principal Professional & Technical Officer (L Maginn) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Alderman Gibson and Councillors Brooks, McKee, Moore and Walker.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Interests were declared.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor Kennedy, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted item of confidential business.

3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

*****NOT FOR PUBLICATION*****

SCHEDULE 6(5) – Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10:00pm.

Unclassified

73

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	07 April 2023
File Reference	TO/TD/11
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Charter of the Columban Way
Attachments	Appendix 1- The Columban Charter of Partnership

Background

A request has been received from the Friends of Columbanus Bangor, for Ards and North Down Borough Council and individual Members, to sign a new "Columban Charter of Partnership", for further details see Appendix 1.

The Charter is a declaration of intent to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and those of his followers, including Gall, in all the regions and countries where their memory remains alive.

In particular, the Charter will support the development of the Columban Way, a pilgrim route that traces the footsteps of Columbanus from Mount Leinster in County Carlow, where he was born in 543, through eight European countries to Bobbio in Italy where he died in 615.

The Charter has been produced by the European Columban Way Partnership Group which comprises representation from the countries that the route passes through, including United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Liechtenstein, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy.

Unclassified

74

Friends of Columbanus groups across Europe are obtaining signatures from local authorities, cultural, leisure, music, education, businesses, tourism and hospitality and community groups, historical and heritage societies and churches. In Northern Ireland, the group hope to collect over 1000 signatures and present these at the official launch of the Columban Charter of Partnership on 7 July 2023 in St Gallen, Switzerland.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves this request for the Mayor of Ards and North Down to sign the Charter of the Columban Way on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council, with individual Members considering signing the Charter themselves.

Unclassified

75

Appendix 1: Columban Charter of Partnership

We, the undersigned, declare our intention to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and to his travels and those of his followers, including Saint Gall, in all regions and countries where their memory remains alive. In particular, we commit to the following aims and purpose:

To develop and promote the pilgrimage routes that link the territories that celebrate Columbanus, Gall and their followers and that broadly follow the many journeys they took, in particular through, Ireland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy. Many of these pilgrimage routes are mapped out in the Via Columbani website.

To promote cultural activities that relate to these themes or are in support of the project, on an interregional and international level. To encourage cultural, educational, spiritual, and scientific exchanges of all kinds between these territories, for people of all ages and origins.

To work with scientists, scholars and teachers, to have a broader understanding of the life, historical context, work, heritage and spirituality of Columbanus, Gall and their disciples, and more generally of the Irish monastic movement in Europe.

In all of the above, to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect, following the example of Columbanus and his disciples, who cherished the natural world, all creatures that inhabit it and all people, whatever their origins and beliefs. Also, to encourage partnership, peace and reconciliation between all territories, organisations and peoples.

To develop and maintain relations with European Union institutions, in particular with the Council of Europe, with the goal, in due course, of requesting certification of the Columban Way/Via Columbani as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. In addition, to foster dialogue and exchange of good practices with other Cultural Routes on all subjects mentioned above.

The Context

In the sixth to eighth centuries of our era, a time of upheaval throughout continental Europe, the monastic communities of Ireland were a haven of stability, promoting literacy and learning. These centres sent monks to mainland Europe, to found or develop communities that were later to become the great monasteries of the Middle Ages. This period is known by historians as that of the Irish Monastic Movement.

Among the first to travel across Europe were Saints Columbanus and Gall, to whom we owe the great monasteries of Luxeuil, Saint-Gallen, Bregenz and Bobbio, and the convent of Jouarre, still operating today. Many other centres were founded by their followers and disciples.

Columbanus was also a poet and writer of letters and sermons, a number of which have survived. His values were founded on peace and tolerance. He was the first to give voice to the concept of 'Europe' as a single united entity, overcoming ethnic and cultural barriers.

1400 years later, the memory of these journeys and of these teachings is still alive wherever Columbanus and Gall travelled and settled. From Columbanus' birthplace in

THE COLUMBAN CHARTER OF PARTNERSHIP

We, the undersigned, declare our intention to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and to his travels and those of his followers, including Saint Gall, in all regions and countries where their memory remains alive. In particular, we commit to the following aims and purpose:

To develop and promote the pilgrimage routes that link the territories that celebrate Columbanus, Gall and their followers and that broadly follow the many journeys they took, in particular through, Ireland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy. Many of these pilgrimage routes are mapped out in the Via Columbani website.

To promote cultural activities that relate to these themes or are in support of the project, on an interregional and international level. To encourage cultural, educational, spiritual and scientific exchanges of all kinds between these territories, for people of all ages and origins.

To work with scientists, scholars and teachers, to have a broader understanding of the life, historical context, work, heritage and spirituality of Columbanus, Gall and their disciples; and more generally of the Irish monastic movement in Europe.

In all of the above, to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect, following the example of Columbanus and his disciples, who cherished the natural world, all creatures that inhabit it and all people, whatever their origins and beliefs. Also to encourage partnership, peace and reconciliation between all territories, organisations and peoples.

To develop and maintain relations with European Union institutions, in particular with the Council of Europe, with the goal, in due course, of requesting certification of the Columban Way/Via Columbani as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. In addition, to foster dialogue and exchange of good practices with other Cultural Routes on all subjects mentioned above.

THE CONTEXT

In the sixth to eighth centuries of our era, a time of upheaval throughout continental Europe, the monastic communities of Ireland were a haven of stability, promoting literacy and learning. These centres sent monks to mainland Europe, to found or develop communities that were later to become the great monasteries of the Middle Ages. This period is known by historians as that of the Irish Monastic Movement.

Among the first to travel across Europe were Saints Columbanus and Gall, to whom we owe the great monasteries of Luxeuil, Saint-Gallen, Bregenz and Bobbio, and the convent of Jouarre, still operating today. Many other centres were founded by their followers and disciples.

Columbanus was also a poet and writer of letters and sermons, a number of which have survived. His values were founded on peace and tolerance. He was the first to give voice to the concept of 'Europe' as a single united entity, overcoming ethnic and cultural barriers.

1400 years later, the memory of these journeys and of these teachings is still alive wherever Columbanus and Gall travelled and settled. From Columbanus' birthplace in Mt. Leinster on Carlow/Wexford border, from Bangor Abbey (Northern Ireland) where they set sail to Bobbio, where Columbanus' tomb can still be visited; in Ireland, France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, their memory lives in the names of towns, villages and churches; in associations, cultural events and celebrations.

THE NATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

This partnership is formed between public and private organisations, large and small, including faith communities, private groups, clubs and voluntary associations, with cultural, sporting, spiritual or charitable goals; as well as public bodies such as libraries and museums; but also regions, towns, local authorities or protected natural areas.

Any private or public body may put forward their desire and intention to join this partnership; and will be accepted if they actively support and work towards the aims and purposes listed above. It is understood that the purpose of this partnership is to facilitate exchange, collaboration and friendship between these organisations. It is specified that no member will have authority over any other as a result of this partnership; each member of the partnership maintaining their full independence and freedom of action.



Unclassified

79

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks & Cemeteries
Date of Report	20 March 2023
File Reference	PCA1
Legislation	The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032
Attachments	Appendix 1 Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Report Appendix 2 LBAP Actions

The purpose of this report is to provide council with an update on the outcome of the Draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032 online public consultation and to seek approval for its adoption and publication.

Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life in the world, or in a particular place or habitat, and includes all species of plants and animals, and the habitats in which they live. Humans are a part of biodiversity, and the way we make use of the land and manage various habitats can have a knock-on effect for many other species.

The biodiversity of Northern Ireland is of international importance and around 20,000 species are found here in a wide variety of habitats. In the Ards and North Down Borough Council area a vast range of habitats can be found including saltmarsh, rivers & lakes, fens, sand dunes, woodland, and grassland. Urban habitats within parks, cemeteries and gardens are also important for biodiversity. Notable habitats within this Borough and the species they support are outlined in this plan.

Unclassified

80

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) places a statutory duty on all public bodies to "further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any function." The production of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan will assist in demonstrating Council's compliance with the statutory duty. Under the WANE Act, the Council is responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity. These are:

- Protection of Biodiversity
- Maintenance of Biodiversity
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Restoring Biodiversity
- Promoting Biodiversity

The development of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is an important step in recognising the importance of our local biodiversity. It aims to ensure that international, national, regional and local biodiversity objectives are achieved through a range of partnerships.

Public consultation on the draft LBAP commenced on the 19th January 2023 with residents, businesses, the community / voluntary sector and NGO's encouraged to respond. The consultation was published on the online digital platform Citizen Space which recorded responses through an online questionnaire. The consultation was publicised across a variety of channels including:

- Council social media platforms
- Council website
- Council's News & Info
- Advertisements in two local newspapers i.e. Spectator and Chronicle
- An electronic copy of the report, associated actions and link to the consultation was forwarded to 20 LBAP consultee's & the Northern Ireland Environment Link to distribute with their member organisations for comment.

The draft report and accompanying action plan was made available to read publicly on the website and a link to the report was also provided in the citizen space survey.

The initial closing date for public consultation was 26th February. A request to extend public consultation was made through the council social media platform as well as a request by e-mail on the 20th February from local group Greenspaces. An extension for public consultation was granted until the 16th March. To publicise the extension adverts were placed in the Chronicle and Spectator on the 2nd March with updated posts placed across council social media platforms and the website. In its entirety the LBAP public consultation ran for total 8 weeks and 1 day.

The online survey had a total of 17 questions divided across 4 parts, listed below:

- Part 1: About you
- Part 2: Biodiversity in Ards and North Down
- Part 3: LBAP Themes and Actions
- Part 4: Further Comments

Unclassified

81

As all the questions in the survey were not mandatory, not every respondent answered every question.

Part 1 Results:

A total of 77 participants including 68 individuals and 9 organisations took part in the online survey with 3 additional organisations submitting a response by e-mail. The number of participants included a total of 8 key wildlife including the National Trust (NT), Woodland Trust (WT), Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT), Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), NI Badger Group, NI Swift Group and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group (NIRSG). All responses were reviewed individually.

A total of 56 respondents wish to be 'added to a database to be informed of future biodiversity opportunities within the Borough'. The desire to be 'informed' is a familiar term used by respondents throughout the consultation and mentioned frequently in Part 3 of the survey.

Out of the total number respondents the greatest response came from those within the 55-64 age group, 31%, and the Over 65 age group, 31%. The lowest number of respondents fell within the 18-24 age group, 3%.

Part 2 Results:

99% of the respondents believe 'Action for our natural environment is important', 83% stated that 'Biodiversity is extremely important to them' whilst 96% also believe that 'Biodiversity action is important for climate change'. The results indicate a notable level of connection between the respondents and their natural environment, understanding in relation to the importance of biodiversity the link between biodiversity and climate change.

Biodiversity is affected by climate change, with negative consequences for human well-being however through the ecosystem services it supports, biodiversity can make an important contribution to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. Consequently, conserving and sustainably managing biodiversity is critical to addressing climate change.

Part 3 Results:

A total of 77 Actions were proposed across four Themes in the draft LBAP, the actions were drafted to help protect, conserve, and enhance those priority habitats and species within the Council area identified through the audit process. LBAP Actions were listed under one of the following four broad themes:

Theme 1: Education and Awareness

Theme 2: Research and Monitoring

Theme 3: Land Management

Theme 4: Building Partnerships

In this part of the survey, questions were asked to gauge level of support for each Theme and the actions contained within them. A question, with an open text field for

Unclassified

further comment and recommendations for action, was also included. The results are summarised below:

Theme 1: Do you agree with Theme 1 and the actions contained within it - 87% responding 'agree' with 13% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 15 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comment and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it is not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to fly tipping and littering, pollution, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, biodiversity education, reporting and informing the public on actions taken for biodiversity.

Theme 2: Do you agree with Theme 2 and the actions contained within it – 88% responding 'agree' with 10% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 12 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it is not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to litter, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, recently revised NI priority species list, reporting, monitoring of ongoing success of actions and mapping of habitats on council owned land.

Theme 3: Do you agree with Theme 3 and the actions contained within it – 86% responding 'agree' with 13% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 14 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it is not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to littering, pollution, use of pesticides and herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, the impact of fencing on wildlife, the impact of public access on biodiversity, greater protection for trees and retention of deadwood, woodland management for biodiversity, timescales for action, the reporting, informing, and mapping of actions taken for biodiversity.

Theme 4: Do you agree with Theme 4 and the actions contained within it – 91% responding 'agree' with 8% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 10 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it is not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to littering, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, ensuring open and clear engagement and communication across all stakeholders and local community, expanding the list of delivery partners, establishment of steering group, adequate management of 'Friends of Groups', reporting and informing the public of on actions taken for biodiversity.

Part 4 Results:

This part of the survey offered an open platform for the respondents to comment without being limited to specific elements of the draft plan. A total of 45 respondents provided further views to the plan. As the responses were written comments it is not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following

Unclassified

83

are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to fly tipping and littering, pollution, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, building biodiversity into new planning applications, the local development plan, biodiversity education, ensuring engagement and communication across all stakeholders and local community, timescales for action, expanding the list of delivery partners within the action plan, reporting, and informing the public of on actions taken for biodiversity.

Following the consultation process a total of 7 additional actions were included in the plan, increasing the number of actions from 77 to 84. These additional actions are as follows. (Number refers to its location in the action plan overall list)

14 Raise awareness on danger of rodenticides to non-target wildlife and the importance of using rodenticides correctly. (in association with NIRSG, RSPB, BTO, Ulster Wildlife).

15 Engage with the PSNI Wildlife Officer to promote the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAWS) and raise public awareness of the threats and persecutions that face some of our most vulnerable and iconic species. (ANDBC, PSNI, DAERA, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations).

28 Raise awareness of the Borough's oldest and most important trees through the promotion of the Ancient Tree Inventory. (in association with Woodland Trust).

29 Facilitate and support survey work to understand current distribution and condition of priority habitats and priority species populations within the Borough. (in association with stakeholders including DAERA, UWT, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations).

67 Ensure all council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of badgers and/or setts prior to the commencement of any works, including maintenance works such as the removal of vegetation or scrub (in association with NI Badger Group).

83 Engage with stakeholders to facilitate the reduction in ammonia and nutrient run-off across landscapes. (in association with multiple stakeholders).

84 Identify potential peatland restoration sites and engage with stakeholders to identify opportunities for restoring of sites into a semi natural state. (in association with multiple stakeholders including Private Landowners).

Other actions in the draft plan were reworded and/or expanded to allow for broader scope, several delivery partners were also added. At the request of some of the wildlife organisations information on specific species was added to the main body of the draft LBAP. No further significant changes were made following the consultation. Officers made every attempt to adjust and include as many actions and edits as possible to address both individual and organisational requests.

Feedback from the consultation indicated some level of concern in relation to engagement, communication and input from local stakeholders into the delivery of the

Unclassified

84

proposed actions and the reporting of these actions. Although there was overwhelming support for the current Themes and actions in the draft plan, there was formidable support for other actions to be included. It should be highlighted within the main body of the attached LBAP it states this document will be dynamic and subject to constant review. This review will involve council officers and the LBAP Partnership, which will consist of stakeholders, conservation and wildlife organisations and local environment champions which will be established within the first year of the LBAP. Considering the plan is due to have a life span of ten years it is not intended to be static. The intention is for the plan to be flexible to allow actions to be added or removed once targets have been met, to allow for the inclusion of new concepts once they develop such as Nature Recovery Networks or new land management approaches such as Biodiversity Net Gain. Progress on proposed actions will be assessed and reported annually by the Partnership and the LBAP will be reviewed in its entirety after five years.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the respondents for taking the time to complete the survey and provide feedback on the draft plan. We look forward to working with the Partnership to deliver biodiversity actions for the benefit of our local environment and the people of Ards and North Down.

To conserve our habitats and the species they support; we must take ownership and get involved now in protecting them.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Ards and North Down up to 2032 (Appendix 1) and associated Actions (Appendix 2) for adoption and publication. And that reporting on progress of this document will be undertaken annually through the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

<INSERT COUNCIL LOGO>

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

<INSERT COVER PHOTO>

<http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk>

<INSERT COUNCIL LOGO>

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Contents

Foreword 4

1.0 Introduction 5

2.0 What is Biodiversity and Why is it Important? 8

3.0 What Threatens Biodiversity? 10

4.0 Developing Our Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)..... 14

5.0 What is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan? 15

6.0 The Need for a Local Biodiversity Action Plan within Ards and North Down
Borough Council 15

7.0 International, National and Regional Legislative and Policy Framework 18

 7.1 International Commitments 18

 7.2 National Commitments 19

 7.3 Regional Commitments 21

8.0 Development of the LBAP 25

 8.1 Biodiversity Audit..... 26

 8.1.1 Internationally, Nationally and Locally Designated Sites..... 27

 8.1.2 Habitats within Ards and North Down Borough Council Area 30

 8.1.3 Local Species Selected for Action 55

 8.2 Partnership and Community Involvement..... 85

 8.3 Selection of Priority Species and Habitats for Action..... 88

 8.4 Objectives and Actions..... 89

 8.4.1 Habitat Actions..... 92

8.4.2 Species Actions 92

9.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Actions 93

10.0 What You Can Do to Help Biodiversity 94

11.0 Useful Contacts 99

Glossary 100

Acknowledgements..... 102

References 103

Appendix 1: Designated Sites in Ards and North Down Borough Council Area 104

Appendix 2: List of NI Priority Species in Council Area..... 111

This list will be revised during the first year of the LBAP in accordance with the revised 2023 NI Priority Species List..... 111

Appendix 3: List of Locally Important Species Relevant to the Council Area 120

Foreword

1.0 Introduction

Ards and North Down Borough Council area stretches from the shores of Belfast Lough to the north and the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula to the south.

The Borough covers almost 330 km² with nearly 350 km of coastline, which combines attractive coastline with many pleasant open spaces.

The largest population centres are Bangor and Newtownards together with the small towns of Holywood, and Donaghadee and other small settlements. There are many groups of residential dwellings scattered along rural roads throughout the area. Settlements are also often clustered at intersections to roads. There are also numerous scattered occupied and abandoned stone dwellings and farms, often prominent on upper slopes and connected by a network of winding, hedged roads.

Figure 1 illustrates the extent of the Borough Council Area.

INSERT MAP

Figure 1: Map of Council Area

The Ards and North Down Borough Council area has a rich diversity of scenic countryside ranging from the Strangford Shores in the west to the Outer Ards Peninsula to the east, reflecting local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. It is the interactions between geology, vegetation, and soils as well as topography in combination with a long history of settlement and land use which have formed the visually attractive landscapes that are part of our shared cultural heritage.

The Borough is notably rich in historic heritage supporting a number of large iconic land estates, most of which are included on the Register of Parks Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest. One of the largest estates is Mount Stewart, owned and managed by the National Trust which is open to the public for recreation. Many of these estates are known to support important wildlife habitats including mature broadleaved, conifer and mixed woodland, parkland and lakes with fringing wetlands such as wet woodland and reedbeds as well as veteran or ancient trees of important for invertebrates of the deadwood habitat and fungi. These sites reflect planned and managed landscape enhancement carried out since the 17th century.

The unique geological landscapes of the Borough have been shaped over millions of years as a direct result of the erosional and depositional effects of the impacts of water, wind and ice. Some of these unique geodiverse sites have been designated as ASSIs on account of their important geological features.

Scrabo Hill is the highest peak (540 feet (160 m) in the Council area and is a prominent local landmark of significant amenity and geological value making it of national importance. The Hill also has areas of nature conservation interest which are designated as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) which support important heath and grassland communities.

The east coast of the Borough is gently sloping, with an exposed rocky coastline that extends into the sea to form small off-shore rocky islands. The intertidal foreshores supply a wide range of habitats and support a high diversity of wildlife. This coastal strip alternates between open, exposed pastures and wooded areas including stands of pine and beech, usually associated with country estates.

The Borough area also includes the Copeland Islands with their rocky shores, cliffs and internationally important breeding sites for gulls and terns.

Strangford Lough, which is of global environmental importance, forms the central geographical and landscape feature of the area. This island studded Lough, part of the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is a key feature with downed drumlin swarms in the lowlands.

The Craigantlet escarpment, Hollywood Hills and Scrabo Hill make up the higher ground. The Bangor coastline consists of a rocky shore with gorse scrub, stands of Scots pine and steep, narrow glens. The fields and uplands of the Craigantlet Hills are mostly farmed with livestock with lands grazed from April to October. This extensive type of farming and local ground conditions give rise to a wide variety of bog and fen, species rich grassland and rush pasture.

Within the District agriculture is the basis of the rural economy, farms being mainly owner-occupied family units. In total there are 696 farms in Ards and North Down which is 3% of the total number of NI farms. Of those, most farm businesses in Ards and North Down are classified as very small (64%).

Arable land, which includes land under grass re-seeding, is scattered through the Council area with some concentration in areas that are relatively well drained, as for example the Ards Peninsula. Arable land is often of low biodiversity interest but can be significant for farmland birds; priority species such as tree sparrow *Passer montanus* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* have been recorded in areas classed as arable.

Cairn Wood in North Down covers an area of 40 hectares (98.84 acres) supporting a semi-natural woodland of oak *Quercus* sp., beech *Fagus sylvatica*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, willows *Salix* sp, and alder *Alnus glutinosa*. There are fine views from the top of the hill over the County Down countryside. Cairn Wood supports the threatened and legally protected red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* and pine marten *Martes martes* which appears to be spreading in Northern Ireland.

The Council has made significant investment in their open spaces and parks. Five locations in Ards and North Down have achieved a Green Flag Award, an internationally recognised certification for environmental quality management.. Hollywood's Ballymenoch Park, Newtownards' Kiltonga Nature Reserve and Londonderry Park, as well as Bangor's Castle Park and Linear Park, have each received the prestigious award supplying excellent open space and recreation opportunities.

These parks also support a diverse range of grassland, woodland and wetland habitats. In the summer, the swift *Apus apus*, a bird in serious decline, can be seen and heard flying over these public parks. Threatened and legally protected bats also forage over the grasslands and woodlands of the public parks.

Fishing rivers such as the Comber, Enlar and Ballystockart within the Borough supply coarse, game and trout fishing. These rivers support kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* and Irish dipper *Cinclus cinclus hibernicus* as well as the elusive otter *Lutra lutra*.

The Walled Garden at Castle Park in Bangor is managed by the Council. It has a diverse range of trees, shrubs and perennials that sustain declining pollinating insects.

2.0 What is Biodiversity and Why is it Important?

Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life in the world, or in a particular place or habitat, and includes all species of plants and animals, and the habitats in which they live.

Humans are also a part of biodiversity, and the way we make use of the land and manage various habitats can have a knock-on effect for many other species. All living things are dependent upon each other and the environment around them for survival; this is called an ecosystem. Each species within an ecosystem has an important role to play – for example most plants have a special link with fungi living in the soil, without which they could not grow and reproduce.

The biodiversity of Northern Ireland is of international importance and around 20,000 species are found here in a wide variety of habitats. It is the duty of us all to protect this biodiversity for current and future generations, to ensure the continued survival of other species.

A vast range of habitats can be found throughout the Ards and North Down Borough Council area including saltmarsh, rivers & lakes, fens, sand dunes, woodland, and grassland. Urban habitats within parks, cemeteries and gardens are also important

for biodiversity. Some notable habitats and the species they support are outlined in this plan.

The challenge is to encourage everyone to enjoy and access the natural environment without degrading biodiversity. Some habitats are more fragile than others but generally most problems can be avoided with some planning and forethought.

Many habitats managed for the benefit of biodiversity also provide us with relaxing and picturesque places to relax or exercise; research shows that such places are also beneficial for both our physical and mental health and well-being.

Reference has been made to recreation and health as two important reasons for improving biodiversity. Equally important are the cultural aspects of our Biodiversity. Many of the habitats and species that we wish to conserve and enhance are valued because people can remember them and related to them in days past.

Our wild places are embedded in our culture and our wish to enhance them is because they existed and were important to earlier generations and because we wish to pass these values and treasures onto our children and future generations.

Many of these habitats are also 'outdoor classrooms' for us all to learn about the natural world. Conserving biodiversity is part of living in a sustainable way, something we must all learn to do. This is essential as otherwise many resources we need to thrive will become scarce and more costly to acquire; an example would be the importance of pollinating insects in the apple-growing industry. Insects pollinate our crops and can supply natural pest control. If we did not have insects such as bumblebees to pollinate our food crops, growers in the UK would have to find an extra £220 million - £400 million every year to fund this service themselves.

Grasslands provide habitats for insects which in turn provide natural pollination and pest control services to our agriculture industry. The decline in bumblebees, a vital economic pollinator, is linked to a decrease in traditionally managed grassland habitats.

A natural, appealing landscape with a range of habitats also attracts tourists, which provides a direct benefit to the local economy.

The natural environment also helps regulate the climate and buffers against high water flows and weather extremes. Wetlands provide flood defence services worth £1,279 per hectare per year and storm defence services worth £722 per hectare per year. Without them we would have to pay for these services. Over-development of wetland habitats leads to the loss of natural flood defences which then must be replaced by inadequate, and extremely costly, engineered solutions.

Marine environments are important for providing food (fish, shellfish), reduction of climate stress (carbon and other biogas regulation), genetic resources (for aquaculture), bio-technology (medicines), fertiliser (seaweed), coastal protection, waste detoxification as well as disease and pest control. The waste processing and purification services provided by marine habitats ensure that food from the sea is safe to eat and the water is clean enough to use for recreation.

3.0 What Threatens Biodiversity?

Many of the habitats present in Ards and North Down, such as unimproved grasslands, species rich hedgerows and inter-drumlin wetlands are under severe risk of severe damage or loss. When damaged or destroyed many of our habitats are impossible to restore or re-create. Most significant risks to our biodiversity are often caused by human activity. Fortunately, this means that we can change our behaviour to stop the damage we are doing to these habitats and the biodiversity they support. Nature recovery networks aim to address these treats through creating, enhancing and linking habitats.

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

The biggest threat to biodiversity at a global, regional and local scale is the loss of natural habitats and fragmentation of existing habitat into smaller pockets. Much habitat loss and fragmentation has occurred because of our increasing human population which has required us to replace natural habitats with land that is used for agriculture, housing, leisure activities, commercial units and industrial complexes.

Many species require habitats of a certain size to thrive and when this habitat is lost or becomes too small to sustain such species, local extinction of that species can result.

Building and development can lead to habitat destruction, fragmentation and loss. Even on a smaller scale, building single dwellings in inappropriate places can have a negative impact on the biodiversity of an area. When a number of these dwellings are added together, they have a significant impact. The removal of hedgerows for development or sightlines also has a significant impact on the local wildlife. Hedgerows act as wildlife corridors and allow many species to travel from one habitat to another.

Invasive Species

The arrival and spread of invasive non-native species is also a major threat to biodiversity. This includes pest species, which often arrive with no natural diseases or predators and so spread without any natural methods of control, often to the detriment of our native biodiversity. As global travel and trade continues to increase, the risk of greater numbers of invasive species arriving and harming our natural and built environments will also increase.

Invasive Non-native Plant and Animal Species

Non-native invasive plant and animal species are one of the greatest threats to Ireland's native biodiversity, second only to the threat posed by habitat destruction. Invasive species have negative impacts on human health, the economy and biodiversity. These impacts include altering local food webs by making food resources for native flora and fauna scarce, preying on native species thereby reducing or eradicating populations of native species, out-competing native flora and fauna, possessing toxic substances that impact on human health, acting as a reservoir for new parasites or a vector for pathogens. They are spread from one continent to another via the global agricultural, horticultural, aquaria and pet trades - or by transportation in ballast water and on the hulls of ships.

Many invasive non-native species have been introduced into our environment intentionally in the past; others have escaped from private gardens or estates. These species were imported without their natural pests, diseases or predators which would usually help to control their numbers. The result is that they often spread rapidly through the countryside, to the detriment of native species.

Council has begun to map the distribution of invasive species on Council-owned land as a first step to their effective control. Those posing the greatest threat to local biodiversity include Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

In addition to damaging our natural habitats and species, invasive non-native species can often also have a significant impact on the local economy.:

Ash dieback *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* and Larch Tree Disease *Phytophthora ramorum*, both of which are fungal diseases have been recently introduced on imported trees. Japanese Larch disease (*Phytophthora ramorum*) is a major problem which has affected larch stands at Cairn Wood. These diseases often arrive with no natural diseases or predators and so spread without any natural methods of control, often to the detriment of our native biodiversity.

Pollution

Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment and can take a variety of forms. Water bodies can become polluted through the introduction of sewage, industrial waste, agricultural run-off and litter.

Pollution is a further threat to biodiversity and includes acts such as chemical pollution of our waterways, illegal dumping of rubbish, illegal poisoning of wildlife, agricultural intensification, increasing industrialisation, and air pollution caused by our continued reliance on fossil fuels. The inappropriate use of rodenticides, for example, can poison non-target animals such as birds of prey and owls.

Litter is a problem particularly in our marine and coastal environment. Sea based sources include fishing vessels, pleasure craft and commercial shipping. Marine litter

can be consumed by marine animals when they mistake it for food and can cause entanglement and smothering of seabed communities.

Climate Change

Climate change also threatens our biodiversity. This has happened many times in the Earth's history, however research shows that this is currently occurring at a faster rate than ever before. As a result, many species do not have time to adjust to these changes and are at significant risk of extinction. Our continued reliance on fossil fuels is contributing to climate change.

Although climate change is largely accepted, the specific impact it is having, and will have in the future, is difficult to predict. The distribution of species and valued habitats may contract or expand or be wiped out completely. Non-native species may expand their range and provide a threat to native biodiversity.

Increased storm surges are predicted to be one of the impacts of climate change. Fully functioning coastal and wetland ecosystems will help to absorb some of the impact, such as flooding, but the storms themselves may cause damage to habitats making it difficult for them to perform other functions such as regulating water quality.

Insects are very sensitive to climate change: our changing climate results in plants flowering at slightly different times of the year and insects are slow to adapt to these changes, perhaps emerging from hibernation too early or too late to find flowers to pollinate.

Northern Ireland faces changes to its climate with the prospect of hotter, drier summers, warmer winters, and more frequent extreme weather events.

Nature-based solutions to climate change are urgently required. Nature-based solutions to climate change, involve conserving, restoring, or better managing land to remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Examples include allowing forests to regrow, restoring wetlands, and switching to agricultural practices that support healthy soils. They also provide a wide range of other important benefits, such as cleaner air and water, and increased biodiversity.

Land Management

In the past changes in agricultural practices leading to farm intensification have resulted in the loss of important habitats and species, in particular hedgerows and species rich hay meadows. An important challenge is to implement measures improving biodiversity on agricultural land and to remove native invasive species such as gorse *Ulex europaeus* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* from semi-natural grassland sites and non-native species such as balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* from river corridors. Countryside Management Schemes are helping to improve these issues and landowners are key to halting biodiversity loss in the area.

Most woodland in North Down and Ards need to be actively managed by either planting new trees or managing natural regeneration of existing woodland to maintain biodiversity. Diseases such as Ash dieback disease pose an added threat to our woodlands and the species which inhabit them.

4.0 Developing Our Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

The LBAP seeks to address the biodiversity and closely related Climate Change crisis through targeted actions over a 10-year period. The LBAP development timeline is presented in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: LBAP Development Timeline

1992

UK signed up to the Convention on
Biological Diversity at the Rio de
Janeiro Earth Summit

1995

UK Biodiversity Strategy

2002

Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy

2011

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011

2013

Publication of the first
Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2017 for the
North Down and Ards Borough Council area

2022

Publication of the second Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2032
for the North Down and Ards Borough Council Area

5.0 What is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan?

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) sets out how the Council can work alongside a number of governmental and non-governmental partner organisations to develop and complete actions and fulfil targets which promote and enhance biodiversity within the Council area.

With time these partnerships will grow, and the Action Plan will naturally evolve; the Action Plan is designed to create real changes that benefit local biodiversity.

6.0 The Need for a Local Biodiversity Action Plan within Ards and North Down Borough Council

Biodiversity can be used to improve relationships between staff, local stakeholders, and the community. Biodiversity can be used as a driver for stakeholder involvement and engagement.

Although the Local Biodiversity Action Plan is led by Ards and North Down, it is a Plan which everyone can become involved with; everyone can do something to contribute to the Plan and make a difference for local biodiversity.

The Council has produced this Local Biodiversity Action Plan which aims to ensure that international, national, regional and local biodiversity objectives are achieved through a range of partnerships that will benefit both current and future generations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to the protection of the natural environment. Under the WANE Act, the Council is responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity. These are:

- **Protecting Biodiversity:** ensuring that biodiversity is protected from removal, damage, and disturbance on Council-managed lands
- **Managing Biodiversity:** ensuring that existing biodiversity is maintained using appropriate management techniques such as removing invasive species
- **Enhancing Biodiversity:** where possible, biodiversity is enhanced by actions such as the planting of native trees, creating wildflower meadows, creating wetland habitats, or erecting bat roosting and bird nesting boxes
- **Restoring Biodiversity:** actions are taken where and when possible, to restore former biodiversity where it has been lost from a site by e.g., restoring an area of wetland or woodland, or extending the habitat available for priority species
- **Raising Awareness of Biodiversity and its Importance:** Council engages in several internal and external events which raise awareness of biodiversity issues such as littering, habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change, often in partnership with other public, private, community and charitable organisations

The development of a LBAP is an important first step in recognising the importance of local biodiversity.

The LBAP has enabled us to identify the habitats and species that are important to our area; either because they appear on the Northern Ireland priority habitats and species list or because they are local iconic species that have a strong association with the Ards and North Down area.

Community Planning is a new function for councils which came into effect in April 2015. The Council must initiate; and having done so, maintain, facilitate and participate in, Community Planning alongside a number of named partners. Sustainable development is one of the guiding principles underpinning the Community Plan. The plan recognises that wild better places to live and while our environment is vital to our wellbeing, the wellbeing of our environment relies on our sense of stewardship. Therefore, the Plan stated that the Council will produce a comprehensive and achievable Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) to protect, maintain, enhance, restore and educate on biodiversity issues.

The LBAP aims to conserve biodiversity through local partnerships, considering both national and local priorities by involving local people and local community and conservation organisations through practical delivery of biodiversity conservation.

Local people know and appreciate their own resource and for this reason alone a local plan is necessary. The plan provides the opportunity for local people to decide on the priorities in their area and to have a full say in the development and implementation of the plan. It provides the opportunity for everyone to be involved and contribute to the actions that we are all agreed upon. The LBAP helps to ensure that national and Northern Ireland targets for species and habitat conservation in the Northern Ireland Action Plans are translated into effective action at the local level on the ground. It includes species and habitats that are not included on the national or regional plans but are of local importance.

This Biodiversity Action Plan is an integral part of the Local Development Plan. The Local Development Plan (LDP) for Ards and North Down Borough Council is the Council's first statutory spatial Plan which will provide a framework for the future development of the area.

7.0 International, National and Regional Legislative and Policy Framework

The Ards and North Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) derives from a number of international, national and local processes.

7.1 International Commitments

International obligations which are adopted in Northern Ireland legislation and policies require the protection of biodiversity including flora, fauna, and habitats as well as protection of green and blue infrastructure to enhance the services that natural resources provide.

As international concern grew over loss of Biodiversity, 178 countries, including the UK and Ireland, signed the Convention on Biodiversity at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The aim of the Convention was to obtain formal commitment from all governments to act to conserve the world's biodiversity, considered to be under threat as never before. It was agreed to work towards the sustainable use of the earth's resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of the range and variety of animals and plants.

In the same year, the European Union adopted the Habitats Directive which requires member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to protect some of the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. Although Brexit has resulted in the UK leaving the EU, environmental legislation to date still applies in Northern Ireland.

Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is a United Nations-led initiative to tackle the root causes of biodiversity loss. Set to be completed in early 2022, the GBF's draft sets out targets for protecting marine and land habitats, reducing pesticides and plastic waste, and increasing investments.

7.2 National Commitments

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand through habitat creation or enhancement after avoiding or mitigating harm.

The provisions for BNG only apply to England at present and won't kick in until after a two-year transition period, i.e., from late 2023 at the earliest. However, the principles are fast gaining momentum amongst developers and landowners, and certain local authorities already have policies in place for BNG requirements. It is widely expected that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will follow suit.

Natural capital is the world's stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. Some natural capital assets provide people with free goods and services, often called ecosystem services. All of these underpin our economy and society, and thus make human life possible. It is expected that biodiversity gain will result in the creation and the avoidance of loss of several thousands of hectares of habitat for wildlife each year, which represents annual natural capital benefits of around £1. 4 billion.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)

To meet the UK's obligations under the Convention to "develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity", the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) was launched in 1994. Its overall goal is "to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK, and to contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms". Through a steering group, it identified a list of species and habitats which were priorities for action. Targets set nationally for species and habitats of conservation concern will be translated into actions which are achievable in a local context. In addition, BAPs will provide a focus for the conservation of locally-valued species and habitats.

Nature Positive 2030

In response to the crisis of biodiversity loss, many Heads of State around the World have recently made hugely significant commitments for nature, notably through the Leaders' Pledge for Nature launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2020, and the 30by30 commitment to protect 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030. These commitments are far reaching, requiring transformational change across sectors in the way we protect, value, use and engage with nature.

The UK has committed to become Nature Positive by 2030 which means reversing the current declines in biodiversity, so that species and ecosystems begin to recover. This is an essential first step on the path to full nature recovery. If species populations are to begin recovering by 2030, wildlife habitats need to be restored and created now. Nature recovery is within our grasp: we know what to do and how to do it.

In combination with more sustainable management across Northern Ireland, 30x30 could create the foundation for recovery of habitats and species, provide the backbone of a country wide Nature Recovery Network, and foster a nature-positive economy for everyone.

Existing protected sites alone will not achieve wildlife's recovery or help us in our fight against climate change. A network of wild places that are bigger, better, more and joined up is needed. Recent research has shown that NI ranks as the 12th-worst performing country for biodiversity loss out of 240 countries. We have lost more wildlife than anywhere in the UK, with 97% wildflower meadows gone, 11% species at risk from extinction from the island of Ireland, and just 1 of 21 lakes in good quality. 74% of people across Northern Ireland are demanding a nature rich Northern Ireland. Scientific evidence proves that protecting at least 30% of land can have a significant impact on extinction risk and climate change.

Nature-based Solutions

'Nature-based solutions' look to protect or enhance nature in a way that helps tackle climate change and other challenges, while benefitting biodiversity and improving

human wellbeing. A wide variety of nature-based solutions, such as tree planting, peatland restoration and coastal salt marshes, have the potential to help.

Green/blue Infrastructure

Green/Blue infrastructure allows the essential benefits of nature to be provided to people. These essential benefits are known as ecosystems services and include the provision of food, clean air and water, regulating the effects of climate change, and cultural benefits such as providing opportunities for recreation and exercise.

7.3 Regional Commitments

An important product of the 1992 Earth Summit was 'Agenda 21' - a comprehensive programme of action needed throughout the world to achieve more sustainable development into the next century. Local Agenda 21 is the local community element of a national and international initiative of the United Nations to protect and preserve planet Earth and the way of life of its people.

The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 introduced a number of offences relating to killing, injuring or removing wild birds or wild animals listed in Schedule 5, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection. Additionally, the Order makes it an offence to uproot or trade in any wild plant listed in Schedule 8. The Order aims to prevent the spread of non-native species (i.e., Japanese Knotweed) which may be detrimental to native wildlife.

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011, sometimes known as the WANE Act, is the main piece of legislation in Northern Ireland concerned with protecting our biodiversity. It has also tightened control on invasive non-native species and has increased the penalties for wildlife crime. This legislation places a statutory duty (called the Biodiversity Duty) on public bodies such as local councils to further the conservation of biodiversity in ways that are consistent with carrying out their main functions.

Under the WANE Act, the Council is responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity. These are:

- **Protecting biodiversity**
- **Managing biodiversity**
- **Enhancing biodiversity**
- **Restoring biodiversity**
- **Raising awareness of biodiversity and its importance**

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy 2020

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy 2020 includes national targets and actions for a range of important habitats and species. To achieve these targets local biodiversity action must also be taken.

This report approaches the conservation of biodiversity from an ecosystem services approach, meaning that it recognises the need to conserve biodiversity in a way that provides us with the materials and services we depend upon for our own survival.

It includes recommendations on how to best sustain biodiversity within an international and national context. Priorities in terms of habitats and species were identified and set out in the strategy.

Many sites in the Council area support habitats which are of particular importance for declining, rare and protected priority species.

This strategy has become the reference point in the development of LBAPs and identifying priority habitats and species within local areas.

The strategy sets out the role of the work that businesses, local government, and the voluntary sector do to achieve the overarching aim of halting biodiversity loss. Halting such loss will allow us to continue to benefit from all that nature has to offer, particularly at a time when the planet's climate is changing, with all the challenges that such change brings. It sets out the role of the LDP in this process and the principle of taking forward biodiversity issues in the LDP preparation. The LDP must consider its impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites (these comprise SACs and SPAs as well as Ramsar Sites).

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

One third of our bee species is threatened with extinction from Ireland. This is because we have drastically reduced the amount of food (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is about all of us, from farmers to local authorities, to schools, gardeners and businesses, coming together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive. The first Plan covered the period 2015-2020 and a new version has been developed for 2021-2025.

Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2021-2040

The Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy identifies the ecosystem services provided by healthy peatlands, including climate regulation and adaptation, specialised biodiversity, good water quality, flood alleviation and a historical archive. Peatlands also provide a unique landscape for recreation and education.

A cross-sectoral group, the Northern Ireland Peatland Partnership will provide oversight and ensure delivery of the Strategic Objectives and Actions contained within the Strategy.

Draft NI Environment Strategy

The Environment Strategy is intended to be an overarching document setting out Northern Ireland's environmental priorities for the coming decades and will form part of the Green Growth agenda (the Green Growth Strategy will provide more detail on actions in respect of climate change & greenhouse gas emissions).

Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Green Growth Strategy is the Northern Ireland Executive's multi-decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy in Northern Ireland. It sets out the long-term vision and a solid framework for tackling the climate crisis in the right way.

Nature Recovery Networks

The previous Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) (2013-2017) was the first ever biodiversity plan for the Borough. It involved a comprehensive desk-based biodiversity audit of the local area and extensive stakeholder consultations which allowed the steering group to develop specific local habitat and species action plans. The previous LBAP can be found on the councils website:

https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/images/assets/Local_Biodiversity_Action_Plan_2013-2017.pdf.

This revised plan covering the period 2022-2032 will reflect changes in the national and international approach to conservation by moving towards a Nature Recovery Approach of protecting and enhancing our local biodiversity.

To reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature's recovery at scale, we need to work together and on the landscape-scale to embed the principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up into our policies and strategies. This means protecting and enhancing our existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, creating new areas of species-rich habitat, and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive.

A Nature Recovery approach will provide ANDBC with a comprehensive picture of the habitats and species within our Borough and allow us to work closely with partners and stakeholders to produce actions on a larger and connected scale than within the previous LBAP. Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT) and their partners were awarded Heritage Lottery Funding in 2020 to carry out a Northern Ireland wide Nature Recovery Network Study. As a part of the project, they completed a large mapping exercise to understand what current land cover looks like in Northern Ireland, how connected it is, and how this could be improved, at a landscape-scale. Many biodiversity corridors have been identified and through this LBAP, such networks can be protected, enhanced and managed to assist in conserving our biodiversity **(Figure 3)**.

(To Be Inserted)

Figure 3: Nature Recovery Network (Source: Ulster Wildlife)

This includes the protection and enhancement of green spaces within urban areas which provide 'green oases' for residents, businesses and visitors.

There are great opportunities for a local nature recovery network in the ANDBC area where governmental, local authority, landowner, non-governmental partners and community groups could come together and achieve more, bigger, better and more joined up spaces for nature.

The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (The Marine Act), require the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) as the Marine Plan Authority (MPA), to prepare marine plans. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of Northern Ireland's marine area. It is a single document made up of two plans, one for the inshore region and one for the offshore region. The marine area comprises all marine waters including seabed, subsoil, sea loughs and tidal rivers, so far as the tide flows at Mean High Water Spring Tide.

The draft Marine Plan takes account of the economic, social, and environmental needs of the marine area, and provides guidance and operational policies.

A Marine Mapviewer (<https://apps.d.aera-ni.gov.uk/marinemapviewer/>) which shows the uses and activities and protected designated sites that occur in the Northern Ireland Marine Area is available.

8.0 Development of the LBAP

The key stages in the development of our LBAP are presented in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Key Stages in the Development of our LBAP

Audit of biodiversity

Consultation with key stakeholders

Selection of priority species and habitats for action

Development of
action plans

Implementation of the actions

Monitor and review of the LBA

8.1 Biodiversity Audit

An essential part of the BAP process was to establish, via a biodiversity audit, which of the internationally important and UK and Northern Ireland priority habitats and species occur in the Council area, and where available, include information on population size or habitat extent, trends, threats, and information sources. This audit forms a record of 'best current knowledge'. It is not a definitive statement of biodiversity in the Council area. However, over time it will be amended and added to as our knowledge is increased. Nonetheless, the audit highlights the remarkable biodiversity that occurs in the Council area from the common and widespread, to nationally rare species and habitats.

The audit provided the information about the species and habitats that are under threat. The information was then used to decide what habitats and species should be prioritised for conservation action in the Ards and North Down area. These are our priority habitats and priority species. In addition to priority habitats and species, locally important species and habitats are also highlighted.

The audit also highlights where there are gaps in information, which through the LBAP process can stimulate new data collection and research.

The Ards and North Down LBAP will be based largely on the targets set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy. The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy is the blueprint for conserving and improving biodiversity in Northern Ireland. This strategy identifies a distinct role for local councils in conserving biodiversity through the production of LBAPs.

8.1.1 Internationally, Nationally and Locally Designated Sites

Designated sites are wildlife-rich sites that have been selected for their nature conservation value. They vary in shape and size and can have important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species. Designating sites helps to ensure that the species present are properly protected. Sites that are designated tend to be the best examples of natural and semi-natural ecosystems and are managed to conserve their unique features. In Ards and North Down sites have been designated to preserve a wide range of Northern Ireland priority habitats and species. Many of these designated areas are in private ownership which is why partnership work is so important to the success of this LBAP.

Habitats are designated as important when a specific area of land has an important ecosystem which helps to support a particular species, or a group of species.

There are over 60 designated sites of regional, national and international importance in the Ards and North Down area. These sites are listed in **Appendix 1**.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

In 1979 UN member states including the United Kingdom, adopted The Birds Directive which aimed to protect all European bird species. These sites deemed important for breeding, over wintering and migrating birds are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). There are currently four SPAs designated in the Borough, see Appendix 1.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

In 1992 the European Union also adopted a directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna, often called The Habitats Directive. This required all member states, including the UK, to designate a series of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to protect some of the rarest or seriously threatened habitats and species in a European context. There are currently only two SACs within the Borough, see Appendix 1.

Sites designated under both directives for their conservation interest are often known as 'Natura 2000' sites. In 1995 the EU Habitats Directive was transposed into Northern Ireland legislation as the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). This legislation provides protection for our most vulnerable habitats and species.

Despite the UK exiting the EU, the level of protection to our habitats and species in the wider countryside and in our protected areas will remain unchanged. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (NI) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 limits changes, only to those needed, to ensure our legislation continues to operate effectively from 1 January 2021. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) will become part of the UK national site network. There is no practical difference to these designated sites, and the requirements of those that manage them or make decisions related to them, remains the same. They will continue to be referred to as European sites.

Ramsar Sites

Wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention to protect those of international importance. Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, listed under the Ramsar convention, where signatories are required to conserve such areas through the highest form of protection. A wetland is defined as an area of marsh, fen, peatland, or water, whether natural, or artificial, permanent, or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt and including areas of intertidal marine water. There are currently two Ramsar sites in the Borough, see Appendix 1.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)

ASSIs are sites of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological and/or physiographical features and are designated under the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended). ASSIs are areas of land that have been identified through a scientific survey as being of the highest degree of conservation value,

based on their flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features. They have a well-defined boundary and by and large remain in private ownership. There are currently nine ASSIs within the Borough, either in whole or part. See Appendix 1 for full list.

National Nature Reserves/Nature Reserves

These are designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 and are managed by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs or by agreement with another Department, a District Council, or a voluntary conservation body. Nature reserves are chosen from among the very best examples of our wildlife, habitats, and geology. They contain a wide range of species, communities and geology and their designation is a public recognition by Government of their importance. These sites are reserved and managed for conservation as well as providing special opportunities for study and/or research.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) were designated in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 2 Planning and Nature Conservation. Sites were identified based on their flora, fauna, or earth science interest. Policies for the protection and/or enhancement of SLNCIs were included in the Local Development Plan. As the Council's new Ards and North Down LDP process progresses, the Local Policies Plan will identify SLNCIs. Where such sites are confirmed in adopted plans, specific planning policies will be applied to development proposals on those sites.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

LNRs can be designated by local Councils under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Local Nature Reserves protect sites of local importance for nature conservation, education, and amenity. See Appendix 1 for full list. Ulster Wildlife manages a network of nature reserves throughout Northern Ireland. Ulster Wildlife also carries out conservation management of notable habitats including lowland meadow as well as conservation actions for notable species such as red squirrel and barn owl.

8.1.2 Habitats within Ards and North Down Borough Council Area

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group has developed lists of Priority Habitats and Priority Species which detail the habitats and species most at risk in Northern Ireland.

The Borough contains a variety of habitats including saltmarsh, semi natural grasslands, woodlands, wetlands, peatlands including bogs and fens, agricultural grassland and areas of geological interest.

Coastal, Island and Marine Habitats

The Borough contains a 350 km stretch of coast from Belfast Lough to the tip of the Ards Peninsula. With such a significant length of coastline it is not surprising that coastal habitats have been identified as integral elements of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Marine Habitat

The marine environment supports a significant percentage of Northern Ireland's biodiversity. Many birds are associated with the coast, including the instantly recognisable oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, that walks the shores, feeding on cockles and mussels. Other common seabirds include both the Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and shag *Gulosus aristotelis* which are often spotted standing on offshore rocks.

Strangford Lough, with its at least 70 islands, is the only marine nature reserve in Northern Ireland and one of only three in the UK. The Lough supports over 2000 marine species which is more than 70% of the known marine species off the coast of Northern Ireland. Strangford Lough and the Outer Ards Area is a designated Marine Conservation Zone and supports internationally important breeding populations of sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis* and Arctic tern *Sternus paradisaea*. A wide range of habitats are also found including seagrass meadows, horse mussel beds and

unique to Strangford intertidal native oyster reefs all of these support highly diverse assemblages of flora and fauna.

Copeland Islands SPA/ASSI viewable from Donaghadee, is located off the North Down coastline and comprises Big Copeland, Light House Island and Mew Island. The site is most importantly known for its breeding seabirds and waders, these include significant populations of razorbill *Alca torda*, kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and common guillemot *Uria aalge*. Other species of significance include the fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, and black guillemot *Cepphus grylle*. It is important to note the islands also contain some particularly unique coastal plant communities and geological features.

The shoreline of Belfast Lough comprises a series of mudflats and lagoons while the outer Lough is restricted to mainly rocky shores with some small sandy bays. The Lough has been designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar Site as it regularly supports internationally important numbers of migrating waterfowl and wildfowl. Belfast Lough has also been declared an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).

Sightings of harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* and bottle nosed dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* are quite common at all times of the year. Strangford Lough and the Outer Ards Peninsula are home to colonies of grey seal *Halichoerus grypus* and common seal *Phoca vitulina*. The waters of Strangford Lough include reef and sandbank habitats that support and are vital for a variety of rare marine life.

The plant perhaps most commonly associated with our coastline is thrift *Armeria maritima*, exhibiting an abundance of pink or sometimes red, purple or white flowerheads on stalks. Other species with colourful flowers to look out for include red valerian, sea mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum*, sea campion *Silene uniflora*, common scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis* and rock-sea spurrey. The fern sea spleenwort *Asplenium marinum* occurs on coastal rocks.

Sea-kale *Crambe maritima*, a plant of shingle beaches, is generally said to be extremely rare in Northern Ireland.

Other rarities of the upper beach include oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* found at Kearney NT, Ards Peninsula. This is a scarce attractive plant found on shingle and sand sea-shores in the east and south of the county.

Sand Dune Habitat

Sand dunes are diverse habitats that support a range of common and rare plants, mosses, insects, birds and mammals. They support a substantial proportion of our butterfly, moth, ant, bee and wasp species. Sand dunes also provide nesting habitat for breeding birds such as stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* and meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*. Most of the habitat in the area can be found in the Outer Ards and around Cloughey Bay. Vegetation includes dune scrub/slacks, together with saltmarsh, strandline vegetation, and dry grassland. Cloughey Dunes comprises a complex habitat mosaic of sand dunes, scrub and dense bracken. Sand dune plants include lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius*, sand couch *Elymus junceiformis*, sea sandwort *Honckenya peploides*, mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum*, sea rocket *Cakile maritima*, sea radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp *maritimus*, perennial sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis* and several species of orache *Atriplex* spp.

Mudflat Habitat

Extensive areas of mudflat occur around Strangford Lough. Mudflats contain a great abundance of species, including invertebrates such as the Lugworm, which in turn support large numbers of predatory birds and fish. Mudflats provide valuable feeding and resting areas for significant numbers of passage/wintering waders and wildfowl such as light-bellied brent geese *Branta bernicla hrota*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, shoveler *Anas clypeata*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, knot *Calidris canutus* and bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*.

There was an over 60 per cent decline in breeding numbers of curlew, lapwing and redshank in Northern Ireland between 1987 and 1999. The decline of these waders

has been largely caused by the loss of mixed farming and spring cropping, and the intensification of grassland management through drainage.

The road from Newtownards to Portaferry provides a good vantage point to view the extensive intertidal mudflats notably at Mount Stewart. The upper parts of the mudflats are fringed with saltmarsh vegetation. Saltmarsh is one of the rarest coastal habitats in Northern Ireland as most of the original habitat has been reclaimed and improved for agriculture. Strangford Lough supports one of the most extensive saltmarsh areas in Northern Ireland with the Comber estuary harbouring one of the most valuable saltmarsh areas. The saltmarsh located at Ballymacormick Point ASSI contains several plant species with a restricted distribution in Northern Ireland, including salt-marsh flat Sedge *Blysmus rufus* and sea purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*.

The best time to view this habitat is in August when, from the road, an abundance of the colourful yellow and purple flowers of sea aster can be seen, mingling with innumerable tiny purple-pink flowers of lax-flowered sea-lavender *Limonium humile*. Saltmarsh is rare in the British Isles and in Northern Ireland the total area amounts to only c. 250 ha.

Saline Lagoon Habitat

Saline lagoons are bodies of water that have a restricted connection to the sea which creates an environment where the salinity of the water body is neither marine nor fresh. Saline lagoons provide important habitats for large numbers of wildfowl and waders. They often provide important locations for high tide roosts as well as offering habitats for migrating birds. In the North Down and Ards area saline lagoons are present at The Dorn in Strangford Lough and at Castle Espie.

Brackish Water Habitat

Brackish water habitats are uncommon and can be associated with rare species. These include rare molluscs and plants e.g. spiral tasselweed *Ruppia cirrhosa* noted at Strangford Lough, Comber and Newtownards. This species has declined, in some

cases due to development, and there are only two recent known locations. The county population of this species may be endangered due to continued development.

Shingle Beach Habitat

Shingle beach associated with raised beaches occur at Ballyquintin Point ASSI/ NNR, a site that is notable for its extensive vegetated shingle banks. Coastal vegetated shingle also occurs at the National Trust property at Kearney, Templecowey and at Horse Island in Strangford Lough. These habitats also support breeding birds such as ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and support specialised plant and invertebrate communities.

Maritime Cliff and Slope

Maritime cliffs are often significant for their populations of breeding seabirds. They provide nesting sites for breeding birds such as the black guillemot *Cephus grylle*, six species of gulls and the fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*.

Maritime Grassland

The flora of maritime grassland varies depending on exposure to salt spray and soil type but includes red fescue *Festuca rubra*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima*, buck's-horn plantain *Plantago coronopus*, thrift *Armeria maritima*, wild thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, biting stonecrop *Sedum acre*, English stonecrop *Sedum anglicum*, and spring squill *Scilla verna*. Maritime grassland occurs locally over exposed rocky headlands and outcrops at Ballyquintin Point and at Templecowey.

Horse mussel *Modiolus modiolus*

The horse mussel *Modiolus modiolus* in Strangford Lough is hugely important to the Lough's biodiversity as clumps of their shells form a living reef over large tracts of seabed. Over 270 other species have been recorded living on or in the horse mussel beds. Horse mussels are a long-lived species and individuals within beds are frequently 25 years old or more. However, they and their associated community of animal species are in serious decline.

The Native Oyster *Ostrea edulis*

Strangford Lough has been recognized by the Zoological Society of London and the Native Oyster Restoration Alliance of Europe as a stronghold for the species. The Lough once supported a prolific native oyster fishery between the 1700s and mid-1800s, however, overfishing rendered the oyster functionally extinct within the Lough by 1903.

The native oyster returned to Strangford in the mid-1990s as a result of the aquaculture industry. The unique hydrodynamics and intertidal substrates of the Lough allowed the oyster to re-establish a population along the north eastern shore and the islands.

These intertidal native oyster habitats are of great scientific significance as they are one of the few examples throughout its natural range. They are highly diverse assemblages as an individual oyster can have more than 100 species attached to its upper and lower shells.

The native oyster however, is under considerable threat from unregulated harvesting and the parasite *Bonamia ostreae* and as such is recognized by OSPAR as a "threatened species which should be maintained and preserved". *Ostrea edulis* is also listed as a priority species and has been designated its own UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), to conserve and increase the species whenever possible.

Seagrass *Zostera* spp.

Seagrass *Zostera* spp. (often referred to as eelgrass) are marine flowering plants which often grow in dense, extensive beds in shallow coastal areas. The northern mudflats of Strangford Lough support luxuriant beds of the intertidal dwarf seagrass *Zostera noltii*. Such extensive beds are rare in the British Isles. Seagrass beds provide nursery and foraging areas for commercially important fish, improve water quality by removing dissolved nutrients, stabilise sediment and are a valuable food resource for wildfowl. Over 30,000 pale-bellied brent geese *Branta bernicla hrota* make the 3,000-kilometre journey from northeast Canada each autumn to feed on the Lough's succulent seagrass.

The larger subtidal seagrass *Zostera marina* can be found at numerous sites within Strangford Lough. The *Z. marina* meadow at Ballyhenry Bay is considered one of the most impressive examples within the UK. This larger subtidal seagrass provides an important nursery habitat for juvenile demersal fish species. The subtidal seagrass beds offer a number of ecosystem services including improvement in water quality, removal of wave energy providing a preventative barrier against erosion, foraging habitat for commercially important crustaceans and fish.

Zostera marina is also an important blue carbon resource with the ability to remove carbon 15 times faster than an equivalent rainforest habitat, in fact one m² of seagrass can trap one Kg of carbon a year.

Smelt *Osmerus eperlanus*, a small, shoaling fish that lives in estuarine and coastal waters and spawns in the lower reaches of rivers, has been noted in sea loughs including Belfast Lough. Grey mullet *Chelon labrosus* and flounder *Platichthys flesus*, which are also commonly found in estuaries, have also been recorded from Belfast Lough and some of the lagoons.

Belfast Lough regularly supports nationally important numbers of overwintering birds including goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, redshank *Tringa totanus* and common gull *Larus canus*. Internationally significant numbers of light-bellied brent geese *Branta bernicla hrota* have been recorded at the southern end of the lough, overwintering after migrating from northern Canada.

Little egret *Egretta garzetta*, a distinctive medium-sized white heron, has in recent years extended its range northwards in Europe and is now breeding in Ireland and is regularly spotted at Belfast Lough, feeding on the mudflats.

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*, the rarest of our breeding finches, has been spotted wintering by the coast in this area, feeding on seeds around the saltmarshes in

Strangford Lough. Strangford Lough supports an internationally important population of light-bellied brent geese in winter.

The otter *Lutra lutra* can be spotted along the coast and if you take a stroll along the attractive coastal footpath from Bangor to Helen's Bay you might also be lucky enough to see a common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, our only native reptile, sunning itself on rocks or on one of the picnic tables. Lizards are frequently reported from this area and, in addition to coastal habitats, are particularly associated with sites that have coniferous woodland, heath or bog. However, it is thought that in lowland areas populations may be small and isolated due to habitat loss.

Invertebrate species to look out for near the Ards and North Down coast include the moth rosy rustic *Hydraecia micacea* at Ballyquintin Point NNR/ASSI and the grayling butterfly *Hipparchia semele* at Helen's Bay.

A walk at low tide along a rocky shore reveals a richness of marine life. This includes seaweeds, sponges and shelled creatures such as the common mussel, barnacle, limpet, whelk and periwinkle. However, there is concern about a growing number of non-native invasive species that have been accidentally introduced and are spreading in the local marine environment. These can take over habitat and displace native species and cause other problems including fouling the hulls of ships and impacting aquaculture industries. Once established, marine invasive aliens are almost impossible to eradicate. The slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata*, a North American species, first appeared in Belfast Lough around 2005. In 2012, the carpet sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum*, which is thought to be a native of the waters around Japan, was found at Strangford Lough, and it may spread to other sites. Wireweed *Sargassum muticum*, an alga native to the shores around Japan and Korea, has been present in Europe for several decades, growing up to 16m in length and quickly forming dense mats. It now occurs at several sites along the coast in County Down.

Coastal, Island and Marine Habitats to Visit

- Ballymacormick Point
- Ballyquintin Point

- Copeland Islands
- Crawfordsburn Country Park
- Orlock Point
- Island Hill
- Ardmillan Bay
- Barr Hall Bay
- North Down Coastal Area
- Strangford Lough

Threats to Coastal, Island and Marine Habitats

- Water pollution
- Habitat loss to development
- Marine litter
- Recreational pressure

Farmland Habitats (Grassland, Arableland and Hedgerow)

Intensification of agricultural practices has had a dramatic impact upon grassland habitats. The application of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides as well as frequent re-seeding of agricultural grassland on lowland farmland has favoured only a small number of nutrient-loving plant species with field boundaries of maintained hedgerows or barbed wire fencing. Most grasslands in the Borough are of the species-poor, improved and generally of low conservation value. In some locations however they do provide grazing for NI priority wildfowl species, e.g., whooper swan *Cygnus* and Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*.

The result is that very few semi-natural grasslands now exist and many of our once-abundant wildflowers, as well as their pollinators, are now much more localised. It is estimated that Northern Ireland has lost around 97% of its species-rich hay meadows within the last 50 years.

The priority habitat lowland meadow, includes many unimproved and semi-improved grasslands which are used for hay or grazing rather than for silage. Lowland

meadows have all but disappeared in Northern Ireland, but some examples of this habitat type can be found in Crawfordsburn Country Park. They are important habitats for many wildflowers and diversity of grasses which in turn support a wide range of pollinating insects including butterflies, moths and bumblebees. Damp and dry lowland meadow is a rare habitat in the Council area sites being small and rather isolated. The Council has recently begun to manage Council-owned sites (e.g. Ballyphilip Playing Fields) to improve species diversity under its Rewilding Initiative.

Many roadside verges inadvertently act as valuable corridors for the dispersal of plant and animal species across the landscape. In many areas of countryside they provide the only resources for wildlife such as sources of nectar for pollinating insects, seeds for farmland finches and buntings, cover for small mammals and a wide range of invertebrates and also foraging habitat for bats and raptors.

Rough grassland is common in the uplands. Areas of both wet and dry rough grasslands are associated with coarse grass species. Rough grasslands are also important for the NI priority species Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*, whose range has been limited by the extension of improved, intensively managed grassland.

Lowland dry acid grassland is scattered across rocky knolls and can form minor components within other habitats. It can also be found as lawns associated with old gardens, church yards and other amenity areas. Heaths occur as a mosaic within this habitat and are characterised by nutrient poor, mineral soils and thin peat. These have a high value for biodiversity and provide shelter for nesting birds.

Patches of wet grassland occur in inter-drumlin hollows and alongside small streams. Some of these wet grassland parcels can be species-rich and are important breeding sites for NI priority wetland birds, e.g., redshank *Tringa totanus*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. These wet grasslands may be associated with wetland habitats for example marsh, fen, fen carr and reedbeds.

Arable land is scattered throughout the Council area often on the drier better drained broad upper slopes and ridge tops of drumlins. Arable crops with their associated

elevated levels of fertiliser herbicides and pesticides can have low conservation interest, though it can provide a food resource for Northern Ireland priority farmland bird species including yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*, tree sparrow *Passer montanus* and linnet *Linaria cannabina* if winter stubble is left in place after harvesting and spring-sown cereals grown instead.

Arable field margins are strips of land between cereal crops and the boundary of the field and are key areas for seed-eating birds. They are deliberately managed under agri-environment agreements to benefit wildlife. Arable field margins provide nesting and feeding sites for many birds as well as a vast variety of insects. Many species of wildflower can be found in these margins.

Calcareous grassland is associated with thin basic soil. Plants on calcareous grassland are typically short and hardy and include a variety of grasses and herbs. It is an important habitat for insects, particularly butterflies and is localised in its distribution across North Down and Ards area but occurs notably as fragmented patches in Whitespots Country Park.

Hedgerows are linear strips of shrubs often interspersed with trees that form land or property boundaries. These have largely been deliberately planted in the past with the most frequent hedgerow species present being hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, gorse *Ulex europaeus* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* with ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, oak *Quercus* sp. and hazel *Corylus avellana*. They also support climbers and may provide conditions for a diverse ground flora.

To qualify as a priority habitat, a 30m section of hedgerow needs to have six species of native trees or woody shrubs present, excluding climbers. A hedgerow that possesses less tree and shrub species than this but has a rich ground flora, may also be included in this category. Hedgerows are important for wood mice and therefore barn owls.

Hedgerows in Northern Ireland are in decline often due to lack of management. Adequate management and replanting of hedgerows would help to avoid this besides retaining the wooded character and ecological value of the landscape.

There is an estimated 250,000km of field boundaries in Northern Ireland, which comprises 13% of the resource of linear broad habitats in the UK. Some parts of the Council area have a low density of woodland, but this is partly made up by a high density of hedges.

Hedgerows are important within the landscape as they represent the dominant form of tree cover in an otherwise open and agricultural landscape. Their linear and often inter-connected nature as well as their structure (which is like that of woodland) allows them to act as a network of corridors across the landscape, which can be vital for plant and animal species dispersing across the countryside.

Associated farmland priority species that rely on hedgerows include common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, tree sparrow *Passer montanus*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*. As many as 170 plant species of plants have been recorded in hedgerows throughout Northern Ireland.

Hedgerows act as buffers and offer wildlife protection in the landscape and fundamentally assist biodiversity through protecting and nurturing soil systems.

Grassland Sites to Visit

- Ballyquintin Farm (National Trust)
- Creighton's Green Reservoir
- Redburn Country Park
- Ballyphilip Playing Fields

Threats to Farmland Habitats

- Over-grazing

- Cessation of annual management e.g., no longer mown or grazed resulting in invasion of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation
- Use of inorganic fertiliser, supplementary addition of organic fertiliser and herbicides thereby reducing species diversity
- Drainage of wet grasslands
- Ploughing and re-seeding of old species-rich permanent grasslands
- Loss of hedgerows to development
- Lack of management of hedgerows resulting in the creation of gaps reducing their value as bird nesting habitats
-

Woodland, and Parkland Habitats

Most of Northern Ireland would have been cloaked in woodland in prehistoric times. Clearance of this vast woodland began around 6,000 years ago to provide land for agriculture and settlements, and to provide timber for building and for use as fuel.

Northern Ireland is one of the least wooded areas of Europe with only 8% of the land covered by woodland, compared with the European average which is 44%. Even by these standards woodland cover is generally low in the Ards and North Down Borough Council with little planted or mature woodland.

Well established semi-natural woodland is vital for wildlife. In Northern Ireland woodland can be divided into two types: coniferous woodland or broadleaved and mixed woodland. Broadleaved semi-natural woodland accounts for only 1.2% of land cover in Northern Ireland while the rest is conifer plantation.

Most of the broadleaved or mixed woodlands in the Borough is associated with present or former estates. Many of these estate woodlands are 'long-established', Notable wooded estates in the Council area include Clandeboye, Mount Stewart and Carrowdore as well as several smaller demesnes.

The Borough's estate woodlands are known to support a diverse range of native and non-native trees including oak *Quercus* sp., ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, elm *Ulmus* sp.,

lime *Tilia* sp., beech *Fagus sylvatica*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* and conifers including Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Monterey cypress *Cupressus macrocarpa*, Wellingtonia *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and fir *Abies* sp. However, many of the demesne woodlands are infested with non-native invasive shrub species such as rhododendron sp. and cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* in the understorey which shade out the native woodland herbs and prevent native tree regeneration.

Often carpets of spring-flowering ground flora such as bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *nemorosa*, ramsons *Allium ursinum* and lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* are present. Such woodland can also be an important habitat for woodland fungi, lichens, and mosses, and for bird species .

The non-priority habitat coniferous woodland consists of areas planted with non-native species such as sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis*, Norway spruce *Picea abies* and larch *Larix* spp. While such woodlands harbour relatively few plant and animal species when compared to native woodlands, they can be important for priority Species such as pine marten *Martes martes* and red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*.

Wet woodland priority habitat occurs on poorly-drained land or an area that is waterlogged seasonally. It is found on the margins of water bodies and streams throughout the Borough, on nutrient-enriched hill-side flushes and appear on fens and cutover acid bogs (e.g., on Council owned land, known as the Carrogs, east of Killinchy Road Comber and in small patches along the banks of the Comber (Enler) and Ballystockart rivers.)–The species present and its structure will vary but will largely contain components of willows *Salix* spp., alder *Alnus glutinosa* and downy birch *Betula pubescens* with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and oak *Quercus* sp. occurring where soils are drier. There is normally a varied herb layer consistent with this habitat. The high humidity present beneath the tree canopy also favors the growth of a variety of mosses and liverworts. Priority species associated with wet woodland include song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, and common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*.

Mixed ash woodland priority habitat occurs in small isolated stands throughout the Borough while ash *Fraxinus excelsior* is the dominant tree species, oak *Quercus* sp., downy birch *Betula pubescens*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* can all be present. Such woodland often has a rich diversity of plants in the ground layer including scattered ferns as well as carpets of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *nemorosa*, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.

The oakwood priority habitat is characterised by the predominance of either sessile oak *Quercus petraea* or pendunculate oak *Quercus robur* and downy birch *Betula pubescens* in the canopy layer. The understory species consist of holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. Priority species associated with oakwood include red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, spotted fly-catcher *Muscicapa striata*, and starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Lowland wood-pasture and parkland priority habitat is not commonly found in Northern Ireland. It is an historic land management creation, associated with country houses and estates of the 19th century. Some demesne woodlands in the Borough e.g., Castle Park, Bangor are classified as priority lowland wood-pasture and parkland habitat.

Parkland includes old or veteran trees where the land has often been converted to other uses such as arable farming and amenity land and where the surviving trees are of nature conservation interest. It generally contains some of the oldest and largest trees in Northern Ireland. This is strongly linked to parkland continuity over time and the presence of old and dead wood.

Old or veteran trees are a key feature in some local parklands. They are an indicator and an essential element of a healthy ecosystem. Diversity in tree age structure in Parklands has greatly reduced over the last century this is linked not only to loss of trees but also to lack of regeneration.

Characteristically veteran trees will have a wide trunk which is hollowing in many instances as well as having rot holes, they can support a wide range of specialised invertebrates, lichens and fungi. Those with hollows may support cavity-nesting birds such as great tit *Parus major*, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, spotted fly-catcher *Muscicapa striata*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Coal Tit *Periparus ater* and barn owl *Tyto alba* as well as roosting common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipisrellus* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auratus*.

Overall Parkland in Northern Ireland is threatened or in declining condition.

Woodland and Parkland Sites to Visit

Woodlands to Visit

- Balloo Wood
- Cairn Wood
- Crawfordsburn Country Park
- Killynether Forest Park
- Mount Stewart

Parklands to Visit

- Castle Park
- Mount Stewart House
- The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
- Cultra Manor

Threats to our Woodlands, and Parkland

- Tree diseases such as ash dieback
- Woodland felling and fragmentation
- Hedgerow removal (wire fences are easier to maintain)

- Invasive non-native species such as rhododendron *ponticum*, cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis* and grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*.
- Inappropriate management such as cutting hedgerows too frequently
- Planting of non-native tree species such as beech and field maple
- Application of herbicides and fertilisers to field edges which causes a decline in hedgerow and woodland species diversity

Peatland Habitats (Bog and Heath)

There are no sizable areas of peatlands left in the Council area. Most peatlands are small, and fragmented. They have been cut-over and converted into fen or have been drained for farmland. Cut-over peatland can retain a diversity of habitats, not only those that are relatively dry but also water-logged sites or small pools that provide a habitat for invertebrates (e.g., dragonflies). One of the largest areas of degraded old cutover bog is Inishargy Bog, an Ulster Wildlife Reserve.

Nestled in an otherwise intensively managed landscape, the undisturbed position of Inishargy attracts a range of birds of conservation concern including linnet *Linaria cannabina*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*. The buzzard *Buteo buteo* can also be seen or heard circling overhead, and sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and kestrel *Falco Falco tinnunculus* regularly hunt here. Butterflies spotted on the wing in spring and summer include orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*, speckled wood *Pararge aegeria*, small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* and small copper *Lycaena phlaeas*. Day-flying moths include common heath *Ematurga atomaria* and silver hook *Lithacodia uncula*. One of the most impressive and interesting plants found at Inishargy is the royal fern, in decline elsewhere because of wetland drainage. The colony here is the largest in the east of Northern Ireland.

Most of our larger mammals seek refuge at Inishargy including fox *Vulpes vulpes*, Irish stoat *Mustela erminea hibernica*, badger *Meles meles* and Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernica*. The otter *Lutra lutra* have been reported nearby and likely use the reserve to move between habitats.

At Inishargy, invasive scrub and bracken is controlled to provide the right conditions for wildlife to thrive.

Lowland Raised Bog Habitat

Raised bogs have a fascinating history. They are generally located in shallow basins and in the flood plains of rivers, places that would have been poorly drained. With the growth of vegetation these sites develop into marsh and fen, and, over a long period of time, the continued accumulation of organic material creates conditions that encourage the growth of peat-forming mosses. Lowland bogs typically have a raised, domed, profile. They are rainwater-fed and associated with a distinctive range of plants that can survive the waterlogged, nutrient-poor and acidic environment. Most of the lowland raised bogs have been affected by cutting.

Lowland raised bog is a rare habitat in the UK, and Northern Ireland has a large proportion of the UK's lowland raised bogs and they are therefore of national and European importance.

Areas of lowland raised bog have largely been destroyed due to commercial peat extraction and much has been colonised by downy birch *Betula pubescens* woodland as a result of drainage. Several have been converted to fen, wet woodland or damp grassland. There can also be patches of lowland heathland; this may be found where the peat left after cutting or reclaimed from pasture is shallow. In the best examples there is a diversity of structural features including hummocks and hollows and pools that give rise to micro-habitats related especially to the height of the water table.

Lowland raised bogs, together with blanket bog, are significant stores of carbon helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Cutover bogs can retain an impressive complex mosaic of habitats. This diversity of habitats can support a range of plant and animal communities associated with acid bog, rich fen and swamp. Lowland peatland sites are also known to support lizard populations.

The drains, pools and old peat cuttings are important for wetland invertebrates especially aquatic beetles, aquatic bugs and dragonflies. The Irish damselfly *Coenagrion lunulatum* is found on some sites (e.g. Aughnadarragh Lough ASSI). It is in decline with the UK population restricted to Northern Ireland, and stronghold of the Irish population being Northern Ireland. Cutover bog also supports a rich terrestrial insect fauna, especially moths and butterflies.

Blaeberry Island Bog, located approximately 6km NE of Newtownards, is of special scientific interest because of its physiographical features, peatland flora and associated fauna. The area occurs in low-lying hollows between a series of drumlins. Blaeberry Island Bog represents one of the last remaining and largest examples of active, regenerating, lowland raised bog in the south-east of Northern Ireland.

Blaeberry Island Bog is a remnant of the much larger Cottown Bog, which was extensively cut for turf in the past and much of it converted to agricultural land. The remaining bog, although extensively cutover, still contains some areas of deep peat and consists of a mosaic of bog, acid grassland, fen, bog woodland, pools and drains that have developed on the old peat cuttings. Recovery of the bog is evident in places, with hummocks, hollows and shallow pools supporting a diverse cover of vegetation, including bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp. and ericoid dwarf-shrubs. The loss of this bog has been extensive and at one time covered land between Newtownards and Donaghadee.

Most of the bog vegetation is characterised by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*. In early summer, the surface of the bog is transformed by the appearance of innumerable fluffy, white heads of common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*. By mid-July these have almost all vanished and vast numbers of spikes of bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* with ochre-yellow flowers appear. By the beginning of autumn, the pink flowers of cross-leaved heath and purple flowers of heather dominate, and the bog asphodel spikes change in colour to brown. As winter approaches, and the vegetation dies back, russet, silver and grey colours predominate on the bog surface. Shrubby species include bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* has berries that by end July have changed in colour from red to blue-grey

and bog myrtle *Myrica gale*, which grows in wetter areas and has an attractive eucalyptus-like fragrance.

The insectivorous round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* also occurs on the bog-moss hummocks. A wide variety of bog-mosses are frequent over the surface of the bog, in wetter cuttings and at the edges of pools the nationally rare golden bog-moss *Sphagnum pulchrum* can be found growing.

Royal fern *Osmunda regalis* and narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* are frequent throughout but these two species have declined considerably in the east of Northern Ireland as a result of habitat loss.

Other habitats associated with the bog include wet woodland, scrub, acid grassland, heath, fen and wet ditches.

Threats to Peatland Habitats

- Overgrazing
- Drainage
- Dumping
- Invasive Species
- Fire risk
- Ammonia enrichment
- Agricultural intensification

Wetland Habitats (Fen, Reedbed, Lakes and Rivers)

Wetlands are extremely important habitats as they support a variety of plants and animals such as invertebrates, fish, amphibians, mammals and birds. The North Down and Ards area has many good quality examples of wetland habitat including lowland fens, reedbeds, rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. The largest wetlands are found around the shores of Strangford Lough.

In general wetlands are threatened by draining (for pastures), landfill, dumping, nutrient enrichment (which can change species composition) from surrounding land and conversion to wet woodland by natural succession.

Lakes located in the Borough with important wetland communities include Ballyalolly Lake, Heron and Carrigullion Lough and Glastry Clay Pits.

Reedbeds often occur as discrete stands but can also occur in a complex mosaic with other habitat types such as lakes, fen, wet woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and in modified examples of lowland raised bog. Reedbeds are dominated by stands of the common reed *Phragmites australis* our tallest native species of grass and are of particular value for a range of specialist bird species including reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Reedbeds also provide nesting cover for a number of species of waterfowl such as great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*.

The main watercourses/rivers in the Borough are the Comber (Enlar) and Ballystockart rivers. The non-priority canal habitat Newtownards Canal also traverses the Council area. The bankside and channel of this canal supports a diverse range of habitats (e.g., reedbeds, scrub), flora and fauna including several NI priority species such as the otter *Lutra lutra*.

The meandering Comber (Enlar) River flows across the Council area, through rolling drumlins, farmland, woodland, parkland and Newtownards Town itself. The Enlar supports the NI Priority Species the brown trout *Salmo trutta* as well as the eel *Anguilla anguilla*, the latter declining in Northern Ireland. Otter *Lutra lutra* have made a significant return along with Irish dipper *Cinclus hibernicus*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, several species of bats, and brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*.

Although the Comber (Enlar) River supports a wide range of biodiversity, its various tributaries and even the smallest stream are equally of great importance to wildlife within the Council area. They are especially important as wildlife corridors linking other semi natural habitats.

Many of the rivers in the Borough drain into Belfast and Strangford Loughs. Sections of these rivers have experienced some previous modification but still attract grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Irish dipper *Cinclus cinclus hibernicus* and heron *Ardea cinerea*.

Ponds are scattered throughout the landscape and represent areas where the water table rises above the surrounding land, or areas which become waterlogged due to impermeable poorly drained soils. Many ponds have been lost as a result of agricultural-intensification, pollution, lack of management and invasive species and with them we have lost many local populations of amphibians, fish, wetland invertebrates and wetland plants. Ponds are often home to a rich diversity of wetland plants which in turn support a wide range of aquatic invertebrates, dragonflies and damselflies, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, birds such as kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, and occasionally a visiting otter *Lutra lutra*.

There are a variety of ponds scattered across and include the Mill Pond at Comber, as well as at Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Mount Stewart, Balloo Woodland, Balloo Wetlands and Stricklands Glen.

Strangford Lough, covering a huge 150 km² (58 sq mi) is almost fully enclosed by the Ards Peninsula and linked to the Irish Sea by a long narrow channel at its southeastern edge. The main body of the lough has at least seventy islands along with many islets (pladdies), bays, coves, headlands and mudflats. It is part of the 'Strangford and Lecale' Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and was designated as Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone in 2013, it is also designated a Special Area of Conservation for its important wildlife.—Strangford Lough ASSI, is also a SPA and part of a Ramsar listed site due to the internationally important numbers of wildfowl which spend the winter in these areas. It has a wide variety of habitats including submerged and floating aquatic vegetation swamp, fen and fragmented wet woodland.

Fens are wetlands with permanently high-water levels at or just below the surface. They receive most of their water and nutrients from soil, rock and ground water and are of national and international significance, not only for their plant life, but as part

of a complex of open water, reedbeds, wet meadows and carr woodland that provides a diversity of habitats for mammals, insects (e.g., dragonflies, damselflies, and aquatic beetles), aquatic plants and birds. This type of habitat receives water and nutrients from rainfall and groundwater and are rich in minerals..

Lowland fens such as those located at Heron and Carrigullion Lough and Whitespots, have a range of vegetation types making them a diverse habitat with particular importance for invertebrates. A local site under Council ownership, known as the Corrogs located on lands east of Killinchy Road Comber was recently surveyed and found to comprise a central area of rank fen surrounded by wet alder-willow woodland with broadleaved plantation woodland in drier areas.

The fen habitat classification for Northern Ireland includes swamp which is considered species poor with the dominant species being bulrush *Scirpus* spp., reed-mace *Typha latifolia*, reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, flowering-rush *Butomus umbellatus* and sedges. Associated priority fauna species include curlew *Numenius arquata*, redshank *Tringa tetanus*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*. There can also be a rich invertebrate fauna in fens including butterflies such as marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* and green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, and dragonflies and damselflies, including Irish damselfly *Coenagrion lunulatum*.

Wetland Habitats to Visit

- Strangford Lough (Ramsar, SPA, ASSI)
- Aughnadarragh Lough
- Balloo Wetland
- Castle Espie
- Heron and Carrigullion Lough
- Lough Cowey
- Mount Stewart
- Whitespots

Threats to Wetland Habitats

- Nutrient enrichment of water from pollution incidents such as agricultural run-off
- Alteration of water levels
- Ammonia
- Abandonment and lack of management
- Invasive non-native species e.g., Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.
- Loss to development

Urban Habitats (Industrial Land, Cemeteries, Parks and Gardens)

These include man-made habitats such as quarries, road verges, cemeteries, old mill sites, golf courses, and waste ground on industrial sites and are widely distributed around the Council area especially near to the larger urban centres providing feeding stations and breeding sites for birds, butterflies etc.

A brownfield site is an area that has previously been developed and has since ceased to have been used and natural processes have been left to take their course. The most important brownfield sites for wildlife are characterised by a nutrient-poor soil such as gravel or sand that create microclimates a situation that suits many opportunistic species such as ephemera/short perennials and invertebrate species (bees, beetles, butterflies and moths)..

Brownfield sites have been recognised in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process and have been identified as a priority open mosaic habitat. Its combination of bare ground, flower-rich grassland, patches of scrub, and sometimes shallow ponds, is vitally important for a diverse range of invertebrates.

Open mosaic habitat is threatened prone to misuse such as fly-tipping or antisocial behaviour. Many sites are in private ownership and therefore at risk of development. These areas tend not to fall under any management and therefore are prone to being lost by scrub encroachment.

Quarries can support remnant areas of species-rich grassland, heath, scrub, woodland and ponds as well as rare flora (e.g., orchids) and fauna (e.g., nesting peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*). The biodiversity value of these sites can be

enhanced further through best habitat restoration practices after extraction of the rock, sand or gravel.

Occupied and derelict buildings can support bat roosts as well as nesting birds such as swallow *Hirundo rustica*, house martin *Delichon urbicum* and the threatened swift *Apus apus*.

Green spaces within built-up areas provide an oasis where people can relax and unwind. Parks, golf courses, gardens and school grounds provide sanctuaries for at least some of the more common species of flora and fauna and are important nature conservation education resources.

Cemeteries in both rural and urban areas are also havens for wildlife. Gravestones in some of the older cemeteries can harbour a diverse range of lichens including rare species. They are often enclosed by hedgerows and incorporate scattered tree and shrub planting, all of which provide suitable nesting sites for birds as well as foraging habitat for bats and a range of bird species. Flowering and fruiting trees (e.g., Irish yew *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'), shrubs and bedding plants will also attract pollinators such as bumblebees and butterflies. The quiet nature of cemeteries means that for the most part, they are undisturbed areas where wildlife can flourish;

Gardens can harbour a wide range of plant and animal species depending on how manicured or 'wild' they are. Urban gardens can provide important nesting, roosting and foraging habitats for birds and bats in the form of trees, hedges and shrubs. Flower beds provide bare soil where mammals and ground-dwelling birds can forage. Flowering plants provide a source of nectar for pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

Less manicured gardens or gardens which have a 'wild' corner are of greater benefit to biodiversity as often log piles and branch piles can shelter hedgehogs, nesting birds and a range of invertebrates. A garden pond can attract animals to drink and bathe as well as aquatic plant and animal species who may take up residence. The biodiversity value of our gardens can also be enhanced by installing bird tables and hanging feeders to attract seed-eating birds.

Green spaces within schools which are not used for sports activities can often be developed into wildlife 'gardens' which would function as an outdoor classroom.

Allotments are also a refuge for both people and wildlife supporting grasslands, hedgerows, as well as annual plants that favour cultivated ground. Many of the plants and animals that struggle to survive on intensively managed farmland find a refuge on allotment sites.

Urban Sites to Visit

- Public parks, allotments and gardens
- Cemeteries

Threats to Biodiversity in Urban Habitats

- Development of species-rich brownfield sites
- Invasive non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*; some are planted in gardens including Himalayan honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa* and Russian vine *Fallopia baldschuanica*
- Excessive grass cutting
- Excessive use of herbicides and pesticides
- Lack of cavities suitable for roosting bats and nesting birds such as swift *Apus*
- Tree diseases such as Ash Dieback
- Air pollution from industrial activity and motor vehicles
- Inappropriate street lighting affecting bat foraging activity and roosts
- Fragmented nature of green spaces

8.1.3 Local Species Selected for Action

In Northern Ireland several species have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action; these are referred to as priority species. The Northern Ireland priority species list now stands at 481 species, an increase of 271 on the 'old' list when the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy

was being prepared. These include species of bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, crustaceans, fish, fungi, lichens, liverworts, mammals, molluscs, mosses, moths, reptiles, and vascular plants.

Priority species are those which require conservation action due to the degree of their decline, rarity and importance in an all-Ireland and UK context.

These Priority Species lists formed the basis for selecting species requiring Northern Ireland Species Action Plans (SAPs).

NI priority species that occur in the Council area are presented in **Appendix 2**.

ANDBC is conscious that they can make a significant impact to the quality and quantity of habitats and species through its management and project practices and recognise that further improvements can be gained through formally including biodiversity within its project and maintenance programs. This is particularly important where Council holdings infringe upon designated conservation areas.

The LBAP for the North Down and Ards area has drawn on this list of priority species and used it to identify which species we want to take action to conserve. Many of the species listed below and over the following pages are of specific importance in a Northern Ireland context. Others, while not necessarily of regional importance, have a local interest value and in our LBAP have been classed as being Local Priority Species.

The benefits of undertaking a local biodiversity project are that locally important non-priority species can be identified that are specific to the Council area. While these species may not be of concern in an international context, paying attention to their requirements will contribute to the overall health of biodiversity.

Appendix 3 presents a list of locally important species relevant to the Council area. Some species represent old records and may no longer be extant in the Council area.

The following species have been selected for Action within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan as they are a Northern Ireland Priority Species, are of local significance, easily visible, iconic, and or would encourage people to act by engaging in environmental activities which benefit biodiversity.

Many of the species and species groups selected for action will also benefit from Actions listed previously under each habitat category.

Mammals

Bats (Chiroptera)

An all-Ireland species action plan for bats has been produced. There are currently eight species of bats known to live and breed in Northern Ireland. The most recent bat (and our newest mammal), Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, was only discovered as recently as 1996.

The Leisler's bat *Nyctalis leisleri*, is our biggest species weighing in at around 15 grams, less than a packet of crisps. Our smallest bat, the pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* sp., can eat around 3,500 small insects, such as midges, in one night.

Habitat change in the wider countryside and roost loss, or disturbance are the two major threats to bats on the island of Ireland.

Habitat change has two major effects: it can result in a loss of roosts and a loss of adequate foraging. Habitat fragmentation is also a major concern as bats rely on commuting routes such as treelines and mature well-managed hedgerows to link their varied seasonal habitat requirements. Gaps in hedgerows can cut bats off from a foraging site.

On the island of Ireland all bats predate insects.—Habitats especially used by bats include woodland edges and wetlands. However, bats also forage over pastoral grassland and in some cases around white street lighting.

Loss of foraging habitat and prey can arise from a change in land use or land management measures resulting in the loss of adequate invertebrate habitat and therefore the number of invertebrates present.

The place that a bat lives is called a roost. Bats can have a number of different roosts which they occupy at different parts of the year namely summer maternity roosts, spring gathering roosts, mating roosts, night roosts and pre-hibernation roosts. Bats do not construct roosts but use structures that are already available such as tree hollows, caves, bridges and a variety of buildings and built structures. Bats and their roosts face a number of threats and pressures including development, trimming and felling of trees and closure of caves and mines for health & safety reasons, bridge improvements, climate change and potentially wind turbines.

Other Threats to Bats

- Exclusion from or entombment of bats in their roosts both unintentionally and intentionally due to loft conversions and other building work (e.g., bridge repairs).
- Bats can become entangled by the use of breathable roof membranes at bat roosts.
- Lighting (e.g., the illumination of the underside of bridges) can adversely affect bat roost emergence, commuting routes and foraging areas.

Irish Hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*

Found only in Ireland, the declining Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus* is a subspecies of the mountain hare. Hares are much larger than rabbits and have long back legs with big feet. In summer, the upper fur is reddish-brown while the belly fur is a much lighter cream colour but greyer in winter. The ears are long with black tips and the tail is usually white and easily seen when the hare is running away. They prefer undisturbed areas where there is plenty of ground cover and a variety of cover height, grasses and other food plants. They have been seen at Ballymorran and Ballyquintin Point, Strangford Lough and Crawfordsburn County Park.

Threats to Irish Hare

- Changes in farming practice – the increased use of farm machinery, high livestock (cows and sheep) densities and the decrease in the variety of grasses grown on farmland have all contributed to the decline in the Irish hare population.
- Loss of daytime resting sites particularly rushes and good quality hedgerows
- Introduction and spread of non-native brown hare species to mid-Ulster
- Illegal hare coursing in urban fringe areas.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

The Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* is one of the smallest marine mammals found in the coastal waters of Northern Ireland and are protected by various pieces of legislation.

These mammals are under threat and have declined by 50% in the last 50 years. Due to their small size, they often end up accidentally caught by fishing boats. Conservation efforts that focus on reducing the impact of fisheries by-catch and underwater noise, coupled with wider surveillance, are most likely to achieve effective conservation of the Harbour Porpoise.

They are present all year round in many areas. Porpoises are usually seen in small groups of two or three, but where feeding is good, 20 to 30 animals may be seen together. They feed mainly on small shoaling fish such as herring, mackerel and sand eels but will also take squid and octopus. Harbour porpoises are capable of diving to depths of 200m and can stay underwater for up to six minutes.

Threats to Harbour Porpoise

- By-catch – the accidental killing associated with commercial fishing equipment – trawls, seines, cod traps and bottom-set gill nets are the biggest threat to harbour porpoise populations.
- Disturbance and injury by speedboats and jet skis
- Climate change

- Ocean pollution (chemical and noise). Whales and dolphins communicate mainly by sound; they also use sound to navigate and find food. Many man-made sounds are introduced into the oceans, some of these, such as noise due to seismic exploration for oil and gas and disturbance from marine traffic, may pose a threat to whales and dolphin populations.
- Many species of fish eaten by porpoises are also fished commercially (herring, mackerel, sprat, pilchard, whiting, cod). Reduction in fish numbers due to commercial fishing may threaten porpoise populations.

Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

The common seal *Phoca vitulina* and the grey seal *Halichoerus grypus* are both found around the Northern Ireland coast. The common seal is the smaller of the two species and has a more rounded head with a short muzzle and large eyes.

Strangford Lough is the most important breeding site in Ireland for the common seal *Phoca vitulina* (also known as the Harbour Seal). Over half of the breeding population of Strangford Lough is found in 'The Narrows'. Other areas where these species are often present are the Copeland Islands and along the North Down Coast. They are seen regularly hauled out on rocky shores and sandbanks. In 1988 the European common seal population was decimated by a viral disease, phocine distemper virus (PDV) – it is estimated that around 18,000 seals died, about 50% of the total population. Eventually the population recovered, and numbers increased but an outbreak of the disease in 2002-2003 killed a further 22,500 seals. In Northern Ireland around 350 seals died during the two disease outbreaks.

Common seals eat a wide variety of different fish such as plaice *Pleuronectes platessa*, flounder *Platichthys flesus*, herring *Clupea harengus*, mackerel *Scomber scomber*, whiting *Merlangius merlangus*, etc and may swim long distances (up to 50km) from their haul out sites to find food. Much of their time is spent alone in the sea, feeding, and they are only found in groups at haul out sites (places where they rest, mate, give birth and moult). Seals can live for up to 30 years; females usually live longer than males.

Threats to Common Seal

- Chemical pollution
- Organochlorines that may interfere with seal reproduction
- Oil pollution
- Disease – phocine distemper virus

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Squirrels are easily recognised by their distinctive body shape and bushy tail. The red squirrel is smaller than the invasive grey squirrel and is generally more brown in colour. In the winter the red squirrel's long dark ear tufts are very noticeable, ear tufts are absent on grey squirrels. Both species are active during the day; red squirrels are more likely to be seen high up in the tree canopy, while grey squirrels are often seen feeding on the ground.

Red squirrels usually give birth twice a year, once in spring and again in summer. Litter size varies but the average number of young (kittens) produced per litter is three. They eat a variety of seeds, nuts, fungi, bark, buds and berries. In late summer and autumn when food is plentiful, they hide stashes of seeds and nuts on the ground – much of which is probably eaten by grey squirrels who spend more time foraging on the ground, especially in winter. Squirrels do not hibernate; in very cold weather they will stay in their nests for a day or two, but they cannot survive for longer periods without food.

Red squirrels are protected in Northern Ireland by Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife (N. Ireland) Order 1985. It is also listed in Annex III of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention).

Introduced into County Longford in 1911, the grey squirrel has since successfully colonised most central and eastern counties of southern Ireland and much of Northern Ireland. As the grey squirrel expanded its range across the province it largely replaced red squirrel populations especially in deciduous woodland. Grey squirrels seem to be better adapted to live in deciduous woodland. Red squirrels

appear to be able to compete more successfully with grey squirrels in coniferous woodland and are less likely to be displaced.

Red squirrels are susceptible to a potentially fatal viral disease – Parapox virus. Grey squirrels can carry and spread the disease but appear to be unaffected by it.

The UK Strategy for Red Squirrel Conservation – Action Plan for Northern Ireland was produced in 2000, and there is a UK Species Action Plan which was published in 1995.

A Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) has been established to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations as well as representatives of country parks and local volunteer organisations dedicated to protecting the red squirrel in Northern Ireland

Implementation of the Northern Ireland habitat action plans for Oakwoods, Mixed Ashwoods and Parkland will also help red squirrel populations to recover. Habitat connectivity is equally important for the recovery of the red squirrel. Connecting red squirrel populations is vital for maintaining viable genetic populations for the future while ensuring that red squirrel and grey squirrel populations are not connected.

The Ards peninsula has a strong population of Red Squirrels notably in the estate woodlands of Mount Stewart and Ballywalter but also in Carrowdore, Greyabbey, Portaferry and Clandeboye. Red squirrels can also be seen in Cairn Wood North Down. However, these locations are under constant threat of grey squirrels. Further information is available from the 'Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022 – 2032' via the www.ulsterwildlife.org

Threats to Red Squirrel

- Competition with grey squirrels
- Loss of woodland habitat
- Disease (Squirrel poxvirus)

Pine Marten *Martes martes*

The mustelid the pine marten *Martes martes* with chocolate brown fur and a creamy yellow bib is about the size of a domestic cat and just as adept at climbing trees. The beautiful pine marten is one of our most elusive mammals due to its habit of being most active at night and frequenting woodland habitats, particularly older areas of woodland.

A true omnivore and skilled hunter the pine marten is native to Ireland and is one of our rarest mammals. Once common throughout the country, by the 20th century this species had become extinct from most of the island. This decline was the result of hunting of martens for their fur, loss of habitat, and both direct and or indirect poisoning and general persecution.

The numbers and range of the pine marten has expanded at a brisk pace over the last decade, until recently they were largely restricted to remote forests of counties Fermanagh and Tyrone. They have now spread out across all six counties traversing a variety of habitats. There are recent records of this species throughout the Borough.

Being an omnivore, the pine marten *Martes martes* has a wide and varied diet that includes meat, carrion, nuts and berries. The breadth of its diet clearly benefits its survival, being able to switch between food resources should one dry up. Pine marten *Martes martes* will raid the bird feeders, pet food trays, bins and vegetable patches. They also will hunt domestic fowl and game birds particularly when the latter are accessible in the release pen.

Threats to Pine Marten

- Habitat Fragmentation

European Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Hedgehogs are found on farmland as well as in parks, cemeteries and gardens. Hedgehogs are 20–25cm long and typically weigh up to 1.2kg. They have a distinctive waddling gait and are covered in characteristic brown spines. They have long snouts and no spines on their underbellies, faces or limbs. Invertebrates are a

hedgehog's favoured food, with beetles, slugs, earthworms and caterpillars high on the menu. Occasionally, they also eat carrion and the eggs of ground-nesting birds. They're very partial to food left out by humans too, with cat food and leftovers being an urban hedgehog staple.

Hedgehogs have been known to live for seven years, but a lifespan of two to three is more typical. Hedgehogs spend much of their life asleep, hibernating through the winter months in a nest made from fallen leaves in a sheltered spot. They emerge in spring but will spend the day sleeping, becoming active after the sun has gone down. Your best chance of seeing a hedgehog is by putting out some suitable food in your garden, such as wet cat food or our hedgehog food, and hope you are visited in the night. Hedgehogs are also surprisingly noisy, so listen out for their distinctive huffing and puffing sounds.

Hedgehogs are found across the UK and can live in a variety of habitats including woodland, farmland, parks and gardens. Effective hedgerow management in rural areas provides connectivity across the landscape, but they are however in serious decline. While it is difficult to accurately monitor hedgehog numbers, it is believed they could be down by over half in rural areas and a third in urban areas since 2000.

Threats to Hedgehogs

- Loss and damage of suitable habitat, such as hedgerows and woodland, may be a major factor in hedgehog decline, depriving the species of both food and shelter. That's why we stand up for woods and trees, and the biodiversity they bring.
- The use of pesticides on farmland and in gardens may also have reduced the hedgehog's food supply.
- In urban areas, the use of impermeable fencing, loss of greenery in gardens and increasing development is thought to be negatively impacting hedgehog populations too.
- Many thousands of hedgehogs killed by cars each year.
- Use of slug pellets in gardens, will lead to poisoning.

- Domestic pets can cause serious injury and death, particularly during breeding season.

Birds

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

The black-headed gull is the smallest gull likely to be encountered commonly in Northern Ireland. It nests colonially, sometimes in large colonies of over 1,000 pairs. The nests are an untidy pile of readily available material such as seaweed or straw, a slight depression in the top of the structure hosts the four or five eggs. Pairs raise only one brood annually but will often re-lay if the first clutch is lost. In winter large numbers of immigrants arrive from northern Europe to augment our resident population. Wintering birds are also extremely gregarious and will move considerable distances in search of easily available food.

As a breeding bird the largest colonies are found in various Loughs across Northern Ireland including Strangford Lough. Seabird Census 2000 estimated a Northern Ireland population of a little over 10,000 pairs, of which just over 4,000 were coastal. This represents a significant decline from the previous survey in 1985-88 when over 38,000 pairs were counted. Most of the losses relate to Lough Neagh, but there was also decline at sites in County Down.

The species is listed as amber in both Irish and UK Birds of Conservation Concern as its breeding population has undergone a moderate decline in the past 25 years and more than 50 per cent is concentrated in ten or fewer sites. The reason for the decline at some Northern Ireland breeding sites is unclear.

Threats to Black-headed Gull

- Predation of eggs by mammals, crows and other gulls is a known problem.
- Habitat changes, egg collection and destruction could be an issue on some sites.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

The herring gull is a large, classically coloured gull, found commonly around the coast but also inland on freshwater lakes and at refuse tips..

Although traditionally a breeding bird of offshore islands and rocky coastline in vegetation or shingle, it increasingly chooses to nest on flat rooftops and chimneys in urban environments. The nest is a large accumulation of available vegetation with a cup lined with finer material.

Easily seen throughout the year but numbers greatly increase in winter. Following a period of population growth between the 1950s and 1970s there has been a subsequent period of rapid decline. During the period 1985-88 Seabird Colony Register and the Seabird Census 2000 the colony on Copeland Island declined from 7000 to 355.

Threats to Herring Gull

- Disease associated with feeding on rubbish dumps
- Competition with lesser black-backed gull at some breeding sites
- Culling for public health and safety as well as conservation measures for terns
- outbreaks of disease including botulism and salmonella, possibly increased as a result of the introduction of plastic refuse sacs
- Reduction of food availability through better refuse management

Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

The best place to see Light-bellied Brent Geese in Ireland is Strangford Lough where from October onwards upwards of 30,000 congregate before moving on to other estuarine sites. Smaller numbers can also be seen along the Irish Sea coastline, most often on the beach at Crawfordsburn. During the winter they feed on seagrass, which grows in muddy estuaries, and on grasslands, when the eelgrass has been depleted at estuarine sites.

Threats

- Increase in water levels due to climate change affecting feeding areas.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

The little tern is the smallest of the five species of terns which regularly breed in the British Isles. It is on the edge of its most suitable range here and may never have been particularly common. Small numbers of pairs have bred in Northern Ireland in the past, but at best it should be considered an erratic breeder. Indeed, only a handful of sightings are recorded here in most years.

Summer visiting tern species breed erratically in Northern Ireland. Poor tern breeding success is directly related to disturbance by man of breeding beaches, predation by rat populations, feral cats, avian predators, and crows and foxes. Some nesting sites are vulnerable to very high tides. The unseasonably cold and wet summer in 2012 resulted in a lot of young dying in their nest as they were not able to be kept warm. Little tern sightings are now a matter of chance in Northern Ireland. Rare terns often turn up at breeding colonies of other terns, so any coastal tern colony would be worth a look in spring and summer. Little terns have been seen at Crawfordsburn Bay and Brigg's Rocks, Belfast Lough, and Strangford narrows.

Threats

- Disturbance of nesting sites by dogs

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

The black guillemot is a small auk that breeds among rocks at the base of cliffs, on lower slopes, or on rocky islands; they tend to be seen in small numbers. Black guillemots eat fish and crustaceans. They dive down from the surface of the water, and swim to catch their prey. Many thousands of black guillemots breed in the UK, scattered along the coast in pairs or small groups. Not moving far between seasons, in winter, you are likely to spot them in their breeding places.

It is a very distinctive bird that spends most of its life at sea, only coming near to land to breed. They nest in nooks in cliffs and on harbour walls which can make them vulnerable to predators.

The Black Guillemot often is seen in harbours such as at Bangor, Groomsport and Donaghadee.

Threats

- Disturbance by recreational users

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

These brilliant fliers are also excellent swimmers, but dreadful walkers, only coming on land to breed. They have a distinctive cackle which can make breeding sites exceptionally noisy. The Copeland Islands provide an important habitat due to their rocky cliffs and other suitable habitats.

Threats

- Invasive non-native predators at breeding sites
- Artificial light pollution
- Risk of accidental bycatch by fishermen

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

The curlew (*Numenius arquata*) is a large ground nesting wader. It is a characteristic breeding bird of upland areas, where it nests on moorlands and lowland wet grasslands. It occurs in winter in coastal areas with Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough holding numbers of national importance.

There has been an overall UK decline of curlew of 42 per cent between 1995 and 2008. In Northern Ireland, there has been a 60 per cent decline in breeding numbers in Northern Ireland between 1987 and 1999.

The curlew is included on the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland. DAERA's agri-environment programme under the Higher Environmental Farming Scheme contains habitat prescriptions of benefit to curlew.

Threats to Curlew

- Low productivity levels because of predation of eggs and chicks are currently the major factor limiting breeding success. This is believed to result from increased populations of predators (foxes, crows and gulls), possibly brought about by reduced levels of control and increased feeding opportunities arising from higher stocking densities and other agricultural improvements.
- Past and current loss, fragmentation and reduced quality of breeding habitat as a result of agricultural improvement, afforestation and peat extraction have reduced the area in which breeding can occur and, by concentrating breeding birds into smaller areas, also may have increased vulnerability to predators.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

This familiar farmland bird has suffered significant declines recently and is now a Red List species. A Northern Ireland wide survey of breeding waders in 1986/7 estimated that the lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* population was between 4,000-6,000 pairs. By 1999 a survey of breeding waders in the wider countryside recorded a decline of 66% in lapwing, and the population was estimated at just over 1,770 pairs. Further declines at most of the key sites were also recorded in 2000. Strangford Lough is an important site for lapwing in Northern Ireland.

The lapwing is a red-listed species in Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland. In Northern Ireland a Species Action Plan for lapwing has been produced that details conservation actions to reverse a decline in breeding lapwing populations.

Threats to Lapwing

- Lapwing are threatened by agricultural improvement - the wet grasslands which are so important for breeding lapwing in Northern Ireland, have incurred severe losses over the last 50 years. Drainage, land improvement, and changes in grazing patterns have all greatly reduced and fragmented the area of suitable breeding habitat. Other habitats suitable for breeding lapwing, such as cut-over bogs and marginal upland grasslands, have also been affected by agricultural improvement.

The loss of mixed farming systems has also been a factor in the decline of lapwing populations. The area of arable land in Northern Ireland has been reduced to under 3% and this is mostly concentrated in the cereal growing areas of eastern Co. Down. As a result, nesting sites in arable crops are now rarely found next to extensively managed damp grasslands, which are important for chick rearing.

The replacement of spring sown cereals with winter wheat or barley has also affected lapwing populations. This is due to winter-sown crops becoming too dense early in spring, more frequent agricultural operations and heavy applications of chemicals, all of which lead to reduced nesting success and productivity.

- Breeding lapwing suffers high rates of nest failure because of predation by crows and foxes. It is thought that this may be due in part to habitat loss and fragmentation, which concentrates breeding birds into smaller areas.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

The Irish breeding population of redshank (*Tringa totanus*) was estimated at between 4-5,000 pairs in the late 1980s, a decline of 15% from the early 1970s. In Northern Ireland, the population was estimated at 550 pairs in 1987. Non-breeding wintering populations of Redshank occurs in nationally important numbers on Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough.

The Northern Ireland Countryside Survey 2000 indicated a decline in habitat potentially used by redshank between 1987 and 1998 including a 20% decline in fen marsh and swamp. The redshank is a red-listed Bird of Conservation Concern in Ireland.

DAERA has developed a series of agri-environment schemes. Their objective is to protect and enhance semi-natural habitats and species by encouraging more sensitive management practices. These schemes include a range of prescriptions

which have potential to be of benefit to redshank such as creating wader scrapes and raising water levels.

Threats to Redshank

- Given that redshank is almost exclusively a wet grassland species in Northern Ireland, the loss and fragmentation of this habitat is a key factor in its decline.
- More frequent agricultural operations such as increased livestock numbers, rolling and fertilizer application inevitably lead to increased nest losses. A shift from cattle to sheep grazing in some areas has also had an impact, as intensive sheep grazing creates a more uniform sward with few tussocks which are important for redshank.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Kingfishers are small unmistakable bright blue and orange birds of slow moving or still water. They are found by still or slow flowing water such as lakes, canals and rivers in lowland areas which are clean enough to support abundant small fish. Fast-moving streams and polluted waters do not contain enough available fish, and hence do not contain kingfishers. In winter, some individuals move to estuaries and the coast. Occasionally they may visit garden ponds if of a suitable size.

They fly rapidly, low over water, and hunt fish from riverside perches, occasionally hovering above the water's surface. Kingfishers are amber listed birds of conservation concern because of their unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

Kingfishers eat mainly fish, chiefly minnows and sticklebacks, but they also take aquatic insects, freshwater shrimps and tadpoles etc to top up their diet. Each bird must eat at least its own bodyweight of fish each day. An ideal fishing spot is a firm perch overlooking a clear, shallow pool of water.~

Territory is extremely important for kingfishers all year round. Any bird that is unable to secure a territory with an adequate food supply is likely to perish. This is particularly important before the onset of winter. The birds start to contest territories by mid-September. Freezing weather can sometimes force the birds out of their

territories, which often takes them to less suitable habitats or into conflict with other resident kingfishers.

Threats to Kingfisher

- They are vulnerable to hard winters and habitat degradation through pollution or unsympathetic management of watercourses.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Widely distributed across the UK, and indeed the world, this bird has suffered declines through the 20th century and is thought to have been adversely affected by organochlorine pesticides such as DDT in the 1950s and '60s. Although well-known, the Barn Owl is one of our most endangered species which has been in decline for many decades; today it has an estimated population of fewer than 30 breeding pairs remaining in Northern Ireland. This species is extremely hard to see on account of its rarity but there have been sightings at selected locations throughout the Borough.

This species requires tree cavities, outbuildings and other suitable sheltered places for roosting and nesting; it forages over rough grassland (including field margins and roadside verges) hunting for small mammals such as wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*, house mouse *Mus musculus*, brown rat *Rattus norvegicus* and pygmy shrew *Sorex minutus*.

Farmland Seed-eating Birds

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, tree sparrow *Passer montanus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, and linnet *Linaria cannabina* have been grouped together here as they form a group of four Northern Ireland Priority Species which are seed-eating farmland birds.

All four species can be found in flocks within farmland during the winter months, when they rely heavily on grain split in stubble fields and weed seeds as a source of food. Such seed-rich fields are sometimes referred to as 'giant bird tables'.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

The tree sparrow in the British Isles is often considered the 'country cousin' of the far more familiar house sparrow. In 1959-61 it was extinct as an Irish breeding bird. Immigration of birds in 1962 is considered to have re-established breeding stock.

The tree sparrow has undergone the largest population crash of all our commoner bird species. The UK tree sparrow population has suffered a severe decline, estimated at 93 per cent between 1970 and 2008. Records in Northern Ireland 1995-97 show a 65 per cent increase in number, although this is based on a very low population level of several hundred birds.

There are some unusual facets to this species, in Ireland it breeds almost exclusively in holes in old farm buildings, old trees and cliffs or even old sand martin burrows. They will readily use nest boxes and are small enough to fit into holes used by great tit *Parus major* and blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*. Tree sparrows largely shun higher ground in the British Isles.

Arable and mixed farmland areas hold a large proportion of the tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) population. It is perhaps most easily encountered when it flocks in winter and frequents stubble fields. They are also common close to waterbodies and along waterways.

The tree sparrow is listed as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It is amber listed in the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland. It is also a Northern Ireland Priority Species under the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.

It is listed as a Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 3) – a species of unfavourable conservation status in Europe although its global population is not concentrated in Europe. This is due to its declines across much of north-western Europe.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

The yellowhammer is one of the larger buntings, which is a family of plump sparrow-sized birds with triangular bills, which are perfectly designed for eating both seeds and insect food.

The yellowhammer builds its nest on or close to the ground in dense vegetation, often at the base of a thick hedge, bank or gorse bush. The nest is made of grasses, leaves, moss and straw and lined with fine grasses. The young are fed on insect food such as caterpillars, but throughout the rest of the year, yellowhammers feed extensively on grass and weed seeds or spilt grains from stubble fields. In winter, birds tend to gather in flocks, often with other seed-eating birds, scouring the countryside for suitable sources of food.

It was once a widespread and familiar farmland bird, but is now scarce and localised in Northern Ireland, where its remaining stronghold is mixed arable and livestock farming areas of eastern County Down. In Northern Ireland, Yellowhammers declined by 65% in the 1990s.

Some work with landowners has already been taking place, mainly in agri-environment schemes, to raise awareness of the species. These initiatives are having a positive impact on population numbers.

Reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* nest on the edge of wetland habitats such as wet grassland, reedbeds, ditches and fens, as well as farmland; they rely on farmland during the autumn and winter to forage for seeds.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

The linnet is a small member of the finch family. Found on open farmland with gorse and scrub, linnets are widespread in Northern Ireland, though they have undergone a decline in recent years. The UK population is estimated to have declined by 57% between 1970 and 2008. As seed eaters, it is likely that the loss of mixed farming and the increased use of herbicides have been instrumental in causing declines.

Linnets frequent open habitats with dense hedgerows and areas of scrub, particularly where gorse is present. Nests are built within hedges and scrub..

Linnets feed on a wide variety of seeds, and unlike other finches, feed their chicks on seeds as opposed to insects. They are therefore highly dependent on the availability of seeds as a food source.

The Linnet is an amber listed bird of conservation concern in Ireland.

The main cause of the decline in linnet, and other seed-eating farmland birds, is thought to be agricultural intensification and specialisation, which has led to the loss of suitable nesting and feeding sites. This decline can also be attributed to increasing use of herbicides, fertilisers, aggressive scrub removal and excessive hedge trimming.

There is a UK Species Action Plan which was published in 1998. The population in Northern Ireland is monitored under the Breeding Bird Survey, a joint BTO/NIEA/RSPB initiative, which has monitored common breeding bird populations since 1994.

Threats to Farmland Birds and Barn Owl

- Barn Owls are threatened by lack of suitable nesting and roosting sites, and sufficient hunting habitat, accidental rodenticide poisoning, collisions with cars and crashes in small mammal populations. In addition, wet spring and summer weather (due to climate change) can prevent birds breeding successfully.
- The threats to farmland birds including the Barn Owl are changes from arable or mixed farming to livestock farming, the change from traditional spring sowing of crops to autumn sowing of crops which clears winter stubble feeding sites, loss of scrub and excessive trimming of hedgerow nesting habitats, loss of rough grassland and meadows which are a source of weed seeds, increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and inappropriate hedge management e.g. trimming during the nesting season.
- In all areas, management of hedgerows is important for yellowhammers, since hedges which are cut too frequently, or which are full of gaps are not suitable

for nesting. Equally Hedgerows are important foraging corridors for the Barn Owl.

- The intensification of grassland has also meant the loss of species-rich grasslands, with intensive pasture and silage again providing little in the way of seeds and invertebrates.
- More efficient harvesting methods and intensification of existing arable land means that there is less spilt grain, and fewer weeds to provide seeds and associated invertebrates.
- A lack of traditional nesting sites such as holes in mature trees and buildings, and the loss of ruins and inappropriate management of old buildings could be limiting nesting opportunities for farmland birds and Barn Owls.

Swift *Apus apus*

A summer visitor from Africa, the swift arrives in Northern Ireland during May to begin its breeding cycle and leaves again in August, so is with us for a relatively brief period of time. This species spends most of its year flying, only perching when it returns to the nesting site during its short breeding season! During its stay it requires suitable cavities for nesting; these are often found in old buildings. It feeds on flying insects in open air and so can forage anywhere these are plentiful.

During the period between 1994 – 2016 we have lost between 69,000 and 138,000 pairs of swifts and the downward trend has continued since 2016 with a decline both in their breeding grounds and over-wintering grounds. There was a loss of 28,000 pairs of swifts between 2009 and 2016. That's a drop of 32% in just 7 years with an average annual decline of 5.4%. As a result, they are a red listed bird of conservation concern in Ireland.

Most new modern buildings give little or no opportunities for swifts to nest. They are habitual nesters, returning to the same site each summer after migrating from Africa. If their site is removed, they do not nest that year. This lowers the overall reproduction rate of swifts. They are slow to move to a new nest site, usually needing to be attracted there by a caller system.

Translink and Ulster Wildlife working together have provided advice and guidance to staff and contractors and members of the public on reducing the decline of the common swift *Apus apus* by erecting swift boxes on buildings.

Threats to Swift

- One of the factors causing the decline in swift numbers is the loss of nest sites in the local area. Buildings are a favoured nest site. Building renovation and demolition remove potential nesting sites for swifts.
- Swifts are also threatened by wet summers that reduce the availability of flying insects, resulting in fewer young being produced or failed breeding attempts.
- A gradual loss of natural habitats such as woodland, wetland, meadow and bog results in fewer aerial insects upon which swifts feed.

Invertebrates

Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*

The wings of this beautiful butterfly are more brightly patterned than those of other fritillaries. Its habitat is open damp or heathy grassland dominated by tussock-forming grasses.

The marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* was once widespread in Britain and Ireland but has declined severely over the last century, a decline mirrored throughout Europe. Its populations are highly volatile, and the species probably requires extensive habitats or habitat networks for its long-term survival.

The food plant of the marsh fritillary caterpillar is devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

The butterfly forms close-knit colonies on discrete patches of habitat (typically 5 - 20 ha). Adults rarely fly more than 50-100m, but a small proportion seem to disperse further. The butterfly is renowned for its large fluctuations in population size that make it highly prone to local extinction.

The butterfly requires extensive habitat networks to survive (probably comprising many tens of hectares) and all potentially suitable habitat in a region needs to be targeted for management.

This species is vulnerable to adverse weather conditions. Unfortunately, this charming butterfly is one of our most threatened species and has suffered severe declines in recent decades. Marsh fritillary can still be seen at Inishargy Bog.

Pollinators

Pollinating insects include the familiar butterflies, moths, bees and bumblebees – but did you know that many flies, particularly hoverflies, are also important pollinators? Ireland has 21 native bumblebee species.

Of these, 6 species are cuckoo bumblebees. These cuckoo species don't make their own nests, but instead lay their eggs in the nest of a true bumblebee who will inadvertently bring up their young.

As with all bees, only the females can sting! Bumblebees are not at all aggressive and are interested only in collecting pollen and nectar. Bumblebees can travel up to 5km to feed but commonly forage within 1km of their nest

Four of Ireland's bumblebees are endangered and 2 are vulnerable. The great yellow bumblebee is on the verge of extinction from Ireland.

Bumblebees are more primitive and don't make honey like honeybees. Like the honeybee, bumblebees are social bees. They live in colonies with a queen, many female workers, and some males. Instead, they store a little bit of nectar in wax nectar pots in their nests for emergencies. This means that a bumblebee colony is never more than a few days away from starvation, making Ireland and its climate a challenging place to live!

Solitary bees, a little-known group of insects, are another important group of pollinators. While we have only 18 species of bumblebee in Ireland, there are 77 species of solitary bee.

When pollinators visit a flower, they are dusted with pollen grains, and are in return rewarded with food in the form of sugar-rich nectar. On visiting other flowers to gather more nectar, pollen is deposited onto the flowers and results in fruit and/or seeds being produced which are essential for the continued existence of the plant as well as the animals it supports. When numbers of our pollinators decline, this therefore has a drastic knock-on effect for many plant species.

A loss of pollinators is not just disastrous for biodiversity and our local landscape, it can also be detrimental to our economy. For example, the annual value of pollinators for human food crops has been estimated at €153 billion world-wide. The value of the apple-growing industry in Northern Ireland is estimated at £7 million per year and is dependent on pollinators for apple production. Other pollinator-dependent crops in Ireland include apples, strawberries, raspberries, currents, tomatoes, peas and courgettes. A decline in pollinators translates into a decline in fruit production, which leads to higher prices in the supermarket. It is a problem which affects us all!

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 aimed to address pollinator decline and protect pollination services across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Pollinator Plan recognised that Councils, working locally in partnership, can play a leading role in providing habitat where pollinators can survive and thrive. A new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan has been developed to cover the 2021-2025 period.

Threats to Pollinators

- Pollinators are losing their homes: habitats such as woodland, hedgerows and species-rich grassland are lost every year because of increasing agricultural intensification and urban sprawl.
- There are relatively few places where wildflowers can thrive due to the frequent cutting of roadside verges, a change from hay production to silage production, and the tendency to keep recreational areas such as gardens and parks 'well-maintained'. Pollinators therefore find it difficult to find adequate sources of food.
- Insects are sensitive to climate change: our changing climate results in plants flowering at slightly different times of the year and insects are slow to adapt to

these changes, emerging from hibernation too early or too late to find flowers to pollinate.

- The use of certain pesticides to improve crop yield may pose a risk to pollinating insects if used inappropriately
- Introduced diseases and pests such as the Varroa mite can devastate populations of honeybees.

Reptiles

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

The Northern Ireland priority species common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* is Ireland's only native reptile. Lizard distribution was likely to have declined during the 19th and 20th centuries due to conversion of suitable lowland habitats to agriculture.

The common lizard occurs throughout Northern Ireland, in a variety of habitats, including heathland, bogland, coniferous forest, disused railway tracks, gardens, sand dunes and coastal cliffs but population numbers are not known. Common lizards are only active during the day and hibernate from October to March. They can be hard to spot since they run and hide as soon as they are disturbed.

There is a lack of understanding as regards good lizard habitat, as they require a mix of bare ground plus tall vegetation for shelter and insect food.

Threats to Common or Viviparous Lizard

The conversion of lowland habitat to farmland has probably had the most impact on this species. The loss of upland heath and coastal dunes also pose a continuing threat.

Amphibians

Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

One of our native amphibians, the Smooth Newt is protected at all times by law. Like frogs, this species makes its way to ponds in early spring where it lays its eggs.

These will similarly develop into tadpoles and slowly emerge as miniature versions of the adults. Although newts are widespread across Northern Ireland, suitable habitat for the species is in decline. Newts have aquatic young and require ponds and areas of standing water with aquatic vegetation for breeding, including garden ponds and field ditches. After breeding has completed, they disperse into nearby rough grassland and woodlands. Newts hibernate over winter under rocks, logs and other sheltered areas that can sometime be a distance from their breeding waterbody.

Threats to Smooth Newt

- Newt breeding ponds and damp habitat are exceptionally vulnerable to drainage, infill and pollution.

Fish

Sea Trout *Salmo trutta trutta*

The Ardmillan River, Crawfordsburn stream and the Comber/Enler River are productive rivers for sea trout *Salmo trutta trutta*, and have been shown to have self-sustaining populations of brown trout *Salmo trutta*. These rivers also have the potential to support Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*.

Threats to Sea Trout

- Pollution
- General habitat degradation
- Reduction in the availability of prey
- Introduction of non-native aquatic animals
- Diseases and parasites
- Creation of artificial barriers to upstream migration
- Predation by birds and mammals.
- Interbreeding with non-native farm-reared brown trout results in the loss of the genetic integrity of unique trout populations.

Native Oyster *Ostrea edulis*

The native oyster *Ostrea edulis* is a bivalve mollusc that is typically associated with shallow, subtidal coastal and estuarine habitats. The native oyster has a rounded, rough shell with a pale green, yellow or brown colouring, and when mature are around 5-20 cm in length.

Oysters are filter feeders, they use their valves to pump water across hair like gill structures to filter out microscopic algae and small organic particles from the surrounding water, which serve as the oyster's food. One adult oyster can filter more than 8ltr of water an hour, its shell provides habitat for numerous flora and fauna with up to more than 100 species being recorded on a single oyster. Once a complex oyster habitat has been formed it can provide refuge and feeding for many species and acting as a base platform within a specific food web.

The native oyster is characterised by slow growth rate and sporadic recruitment success, the number of oysters surviving to maturity can vary hugely from year to year, making it a particularly vulnerable species to any disturbance.

Threats to the native oyster:

- Commercial hand gathering
- Disease (*Bonamia ostreae*)
- Environmental pulse events; extreme cold winters, heavy freshwater run-off
- Pollution
- Sedimentation

Flora

Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*

A member of the rose family, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* can survive for decades due to its extensive root system. This flower is extremely rare in Northern Ireland but is recorded on the old railway embankment at Donaghadee. A rare native perennial of open pasture. It was first recorded before 1863 and only from Donaghadee, where it grew in pastures until after 1878. It seems that after the

species was lost from the pastureland, it persisted along the railway line, where it was recorded from 1893. A small number of plants now grow on a short stretch of bank beside a footpath, previously the railway line, close to a housing development.

Threats to Great Burnet

- Trampling by recreational users
- Overshading by trees and shrubs

Lower Plants (Bryophyte and Lichens)

Using a hand lens, mosses, liverworts and lichens are seen to consist of a diverse range of growth forms and colours a world of beauty in miniature.

Bryophytes play a huge role in the establishment of plant communities because they can colonise almost bare rock faces, existing in the minutest of crevices and turning what was barren rock into productive material. They along with a few other plants considered 'primitive' like algae and lichens prove themselves to be incredibly valuable building blocks in plant communities ever reaching their full potential.

They are also important in recycling nutrients and changing the chemistry of an area to be able to support higher plants because they can withstand and tolerate conditions which would normally be unsuitable for larger plants.

So, the greening of many places is started not by your magnificent ferns and trees but by the ever-so humble, yet massively important bryophytes.

Lichens are a group of terrestrial organisms, which are abundantly found growing in various places, including on rocks, gravestones, walls, tree barks, on roofs, soil, etc. They require a clean atmosphere with sufficient air for their growth. Some species of lichens are also found in many environmental conditions as they can grow on almost any surface from sea level to high alpine elevations. According to fossil records, these organisms were found about 400 million years ago.

These organisms are found in different colours, shapes, sizes and forms. Based on their physical features, they are further classified into diverse types.

Lichens hold a great economic importance and are essential for the environment in several ways.

- Some species of lichens help with the conversion of rocks into soil.
- Lichens also play a key role in the nitrogen cycle by fixing nitrogen from the atmosphere.
- Lichens serve as an important source of food for humans across the world..
- Based on the size of these lichens, we can study and find out the age of rocks.
- Since ancient times, these species are well known for their various colouring agents and dyes. They are a good source of natural dyes.
- Lichens can degrade polyester, lead, copper, radionuclides and other pollutants, polluting the planet earth.
- Apart from the pharmaceutical industries, lichens are widely used by various cosmetic industries and are also a natural medicine for various types of skin diseases and rashes.
- Lichens are also a great source of food for many aquatic organisms and are widely used as anti-infective agents in pharmaceutical industries to produce antibiotics, anti-mycobacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory products.

These beautiful plants have been sorely neglected in previous LBAPS in Northern Ireland hence they have been included for conservation actions in this LBAP.

Threats to Lower Plants

- Habitat loss
- Modification of habitats through drainage
- Water and air pollution

Sea Grass *Zostera* spp.

Sea Grass is a grass like flowering plant with dark green, long, narrow leaves with rounded tips. Leaves shoot from a creeping rhizome that binds the sediment. Sea grass forms dense swards in the subtidal zone, supporting a diverse fauna and flora. It acts as a nursery for fish and shellfish, as well as being a source of food for wildfowl (e.g., brent geese).

The distribution of *Zostera* in Strangford Lough and its exploitation by wildfowl have been well investigated and documented. Records show in October 1991 there was an estimated 1100 tonnes (fresh weight) of *Zostera* in the Lough covering some 6.3 km² of the northern mudflats and representing some 12% of the total intertidal area of the Lough.

Threats to Sea Grass

- Industrial and agricultural run-off
- Coastal infrastructure development, and dredging increasing water turbidity and physically damaging seagrass

8.2 Partnership and Community Involvement

The habitat and species actions plans that are being developed as part of the LBAP process would not be possible without the expert knowledge and experience of government agencies, local authority staff, non-governmental conservation organisations, landowners and local community groups and individuals. Community involvement in the management of the biodiversity in our area will be key to the success. It is local communities who benefit most from protection of local habitats and their species.

The LBAP has been drawn up after consultation with a wide group of people. The LBAP requires the Council to work alongside several governmental and non-governmental partner organisations to develop and complete actions and fulfil targets which promote and enhance biodiversity within the Council area.

The LBAP has committed a partnership of statutory and non-statutory organisations, and local communities that is keen to realise the biodiversity goals enshrined in the plan. The implantation of actions outlined in this LBAP will also include other local community groups, the farming community, schools and businesses and individuals who will become or are already actively involved in biodiversity actions.

'The most recent State of Nature Report for NI (2019) showed an overall decline in the average abundance of wildlife in Northern Ireland with some species facing

extinction. This is despite legislation and policy to protect biodiversity and wildlife. It is critical to understand that not only is our protected sites important for biodiversity but all areas in between including farmland, hedgerows, rivers, gardens, recreational and amenity sites, canals even our built environment. As a community we can all make space for nature. With the continued effort of our wonderful local groups, organisations, inspiring volunteers, and the overall support of the ANDBC community I have no doubt together we can help local biodiversity recover.'

ANDBC Biodiversity Officer

'We are convinced that we are to preserve this rich biodiversity it is vital to involve the local community in the stewardship of areas. This can be done by informing people and giving them a role in preserving it, for example identifying important habitats and encourage everyone to be proud of them and help with monitoring and custodianship'.

Donaghadee Community Association

Research by the Natural History Museum and RSPB also shows that Northern Ireland ranks 12th worst out of 240 regions for biodiversity loss. There must, therefore, be a step change in action by all public authorities to halt and reverse declines in biodiversity to make Northern Ireland Nature Positive by 2030.

RSPB Northern Ireland

The National Trust's local team are committed to working in partnership to restore and renew nature in the Borough. The area is home to some wonderful landscapes and coast, providing important habitats, but it is only by working together with local communities and other landowners that we can ensure species and habitats recover, develop 30 x 30 network, and ultimately secure a nature positive future.

National Trust

Only by this partnership working together and by inspiring and encouraging others to become involved will the action plan be successful. All of us have a part to play in conserving our wildlife.

With time these partnerships will grow, and the LBAP will naturally evolve.

The partner organisations are:

- Bat Conservation Ireland (BCI)
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
- Buglife
- Butterfly Conservation (Northern Ireland Branch)
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- Grass Roots Conservation Group
- Groundwork Northern Ireland
- Local Businesses
- Local Community Groups
- Local Schools
- National Trust (Northern Ireland)
- NI Raptor Study Group (NIRSG)
- Northern Ireland Bat Group (NIBG)
- Northern Ireland Swift Group
- Northern Ireland Badger Group
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- The Farming Community
- The Woodland Trust (Northern Ireland)
- Translink
- Ulster Wildlife
- Mineral Products Association Northern Ireland
- Department for Infrastructure
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)

It is anticipated that as the LBAP continues to evolve, more partners will be invited to participate.

8.3 Selection of Priority Species and Habitats for Action

Ards and North Down Borough Council are responsible for and manage extensive landholdings which make a considerable contribution to the local landscape and provide habitats for wildlife. The Council acknowledges the wider environmental and conservation value of much of its infrastructure and property portfolio, incorporating an objective “to protect and enhance the biodiversity value of our land, properties and associated infrastructure” within its corporate and development plans.

The Council land resource comprises three types of land all of which support their own complement of flora and fauna: green space, grey space and brown space.

Green Space

Green space or ‘green infrastructure’ is land that is currently vegetated. It can clearly have a value for biodiversity. However, it can also play a key role in flood protection, air quality regulation and pollution control as well as having an amenity value. Green space includes modified and artificial habitats e.g., formal gardens around residential properties to those in institutional lands such as hospitals to much larger areas under different management regimes such as designated sites.

Grey Space

Grey Space is the built environment including buildings, roads and pavements. Grey space can be enhanced for biodiversity particularly at the design stage of development to include green roofs and walls and bird and bat boxes. Built heritage and man-made structures have been adopted by many of our native plants and animals as a refuge, nesting or feeding sites. For example, bridges, tunnels and buildings provide opportunities for wildlife which will vary according to building materials, location or aspect. Grey space provides habitat for over-wintering butterflies and moths, bat roosts or nesting opportunities for swallows and swifts.

Brown Space

Brown Spaces are vacant or unused sites that have the potential for redevelopment. They have been used in the past but are not currently managed. The biodiversity of such sites can vary. They can be diverse in pioneer and tall herb species that thrive in disturbed ground or in nutrient poor conditions and support associated diverse invertebrate communities. These communities may develop into scrub and grassland due to natural ecological succession if left alone and not tidied up.

Council makes a significant impact to the quality and quantity of habitats and species through its management and project practices. Further improvements can be gained through formally including biodiversity within its project and maintenance programs. This is particularly important where Council's land holdings infringe upon designated conservation areas.

The plan will naturally allow for the identification of actions that the Council can undertake to conserve biodiversity under its influence. The Ards and North Down Borough Council (LBAP) will contribute to the targets set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.

8.4 Objectives and Actions

Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) has been created to initiate a series of actions designed to conserve and enhance habitats and species that are of international, national, and regional importance, but also crucially habitats and species that are of local significance within the Council area. Many of these habitats and species are important to local communities.

The objectives of the LBAP are:

Objective 1: Help and conserve habitats and species

Objective 2: Raise awareness of the ecosystem services provided by key species in Ards and North Down Borough Council area.

Objective 3: Involve people in biodiversity projects and develop partnerships

Actions fall into one of four themes

Theme 1: Education and Awareness

These actions build support for biodiversity through education and awareness events for local communities for example participation in recording schemes to monitor the flora and fauna in the Borough or participation in practical conservation activities (e.g. tree planting, native seed harvesting or removal of invasive species).

Theme 2: Research and Monitoring

Research and monitoring actions are fundamentally important to determine the distribution, extent and condition of all key habitats, flora and fauna in the Council area so that actions can be instigated as early as possible to reverse declines in the most threatened.

Theme 3: Land Management

Lack of or inappropriate land management is a key threat to the key habitats, flora and fauna in the Council area. Hedgerows can develop gaps if not cut, wetlands can be polluted by the runoff of fertilisers from farmland or species-rich grassland can be overshadowed by scrub encroachment. Land management actions for example implementation of appropriate mowing or grazing regimes on sand dune or grassland sites or creation of buffer zones around wetlands will be implemented to address this threat.

Theme 4: Building Partnerships

Actions under this theme seek to form partnerships between the Council, conservation NGOs and local communities. It is only through joint actions between all stakeholders that reverses in the decline of our most threatened habitat, flora and fauna can be achieved.

Actions will be focused on Council owned land (parks, sports fields, cemeteries, , leisure centres, allotments, and other open spaces).

Actions will be tied into priorities and policies of the different Council sections or where appropriate on private land where a partnership between the landowner and Council is feasible.

Several local habitats and species have been selected for inclusion in the LBAP using several selection criteria:

- National and regional priority – whether they are contained on the EU, UK or NI's priority habitats and species list by virtue of extent.
- National and regional priority – whether they are contained on the EU, UK or NI's priority species list by virtue of population size.
 - Rapidly declining in Northern Ireland (2% per year over the last 25 years).
 - Declining (1% year) with Northern Ireland being a stronghold consisting either: -
 - >50% Irish population or
 - >20% UK population/range.
 - Rare (e.g., a small population and/or confined to one or two sites in Northern Ireland) with Northern Ireland being a stronghold consisting of either: -
 - >50% Irish population or
 - >20% UK population/range.
- Significant proportion (>20%) of the international population of a species (or well-recognised subspecies) occurring in Northern Ireland.
- Published or proposed Irish Red Data Book species classed as either critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable.
- Red-listed species in either the Ireland or UK Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) lists.
- Habitats and species which are of local significance.
- Species which are easily visible or iconic that encourage people to act by engaging in environmental activities which benefit biodiversity.
- Importance to local people – the cultural significance of the habitat or species.

8.4.1 Habitat Actions

Five broad habitat types have been identified for conservation actions in the Council area.

- Coastal, island and marine habitats
- Farmland habitats (grassland, arableland and hedgerow)
- Woodland, and parkland habitats
- Peatland habitats (bog and heath)
- Wetland habitats (fens, reedbeds, lakes and rivers)
- Urban habitats industrial land, cemeteries, parks & gardens

8.4.2 Species Actions

The following species have been selected for action within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Many of the species and species groups selected for action will also benefit from actions listed previously under each broad habitat type category.

Lower plants (bryophytes and lichens)

Trees

Invasive flora and fauna

Pollinators (bees, butterflies, wasps, flies, beetles)

Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

Farmland birds

Swift *Apus apus*

Sand martin *Riparia riparia*

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus hibernicus*

Barn owl *Tyto alba*

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Pine Marten *Martes martes*

Bats (Chiroptera)

Irish Hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*

European Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

Breeding Seabirds

Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* and other wintering and breeding waders and wildfowl

9.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Actions

The habitats and species listed in this document represent a selection of what is present in the North Down and Ards area. These are the ones that will be prioritised by the LBAP. It is likely that other habitats and species may be added to this list as priorities may change over the life span of this plan.

The Council at a practical level will continue to engage with the LBAP process and allocate specific responsibilities regarding the implementation stage. In fully acknowledging the Council's natural heritage, the Council will continue to seek innovative ways to manage and/or mitigate for biodiversity and encourage and reward a conservation ethos in its staff. The Council will continue to develop

partnerships to deliver Northern Ireland's targets for biodiversity and will look to the future allocation of resources to support implementation of action for biodiversity.

It is intended that the Biodiversity Action Plan is a dynamic document which is subject to constant review. Progress towards the targets will be assessed annually and it is anticipated the LBAP will be reviewed after 5 years by the Partnership. Reporting on progress will be undertaken by the Council on behalf of the LBAP partnership. In particular, the actions undertaken will increase as more stakeholders join the process and agree work which can be implemented on the ground.

10.0 What You Can Do to Help Biodiversity

At a time when our biodiversity is under immense pressure, there is something everyone can do to help our local wildlife. The success of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan depends not just on the work of Ards and North Down Borough Council and the partner organisations, but also the work that individuals and communities can carry out to enhance our environment for biodiversity.

Regardless of our age, job, or experience, we can all take positive action for local biodiversity. This may take the form of volunteering with an environmental organisation, taking part in a beach clean or simply putting on your walking shoes, getting into the fresh air and taking notice of the wildlife that surrounds you.

What can One Person Do?

- Your own garden can be a haven for wildlife, no matter how large or small; bird feeders and tables help to feed many birds during times of unfavourable weather.
- Install bird boxes and inspect and maintain annually
- Creating a garden pond provides drinking and bathing water for birds and mammals such as hedgehogs, as well as possibly also attracting other wetland inhabitants like frogs and dragonflies/damselflies
- Create log and branch piles providing valuable habitats for many insects as well as frogs, newts, and hedgehogs
- Create your own garden compost heap for use in the garden

- Leave areas of your garden to 'go wild' will encourage native plants to flower and attract a wide range of insects and birds
- Plant your own wildlife garden by selecting flowering plants which attract pollinators.
- Recording the species, you find in your garden and anywhere else you visit will allow us to keep an eye on how well or poorly each species is faring over time. Records can be submitted to the Council Biodiversity Officer or to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording
- Encourage friends and family to engage with nature, especially children - they will have to solve many environmental problems that we have helped to create.
- Keep an eye on local wildlife and report anything which might be a wildlife crime. Water pollution, disturbance of protected species and habitats, littering and dumping of rubbish are things which will have a negative impact the whole community as well as local wildlife.
- Within the North Down and Ards area, there are many organisations actively looking for extra hands to help in local conservation projects why not join them?
- Attend biodiversity events to meet like-minded people and show your support for our local biodiversity.
- Do you enjoy being out and about spotting wildlife? If so, please take a notebook and pencil with you the next time and become a wildlife recorder. We need wildlife records in the North Down and Ards area, whether rare or common. This will help us to monitor how well our local wildlife is doing. You can submit your records to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR).
- Explore Your Natural Environment as this LBAP has highlighted, the North Down and Ards area is rich in biodiversity. The best way to see wildlife is to put on your walking shoes and go exploring. You don't need professional equipment to spot wildlife – just keep your eyes and ears open. For further information on walking routes in the district visit www.walkni.com.

What Can Farmers Do?

Most of the land in the Council area is privately owned and the majority of this is farmland.

Fortunately, farmers and other landowners are often keen to incorporate management for wildlife on their land and grants through agri-environment schemes has provided a useful impetus to improve nature conservation on farmland.

We must continue to build on this by providing an incentive for farmers to make it worthwhile to manage their land in sympathy with nature and for them to do so profitably. Equally important is practical guidance on best practice and habitat management and how to integrate this into their farming system while maintaining income levels.

- Manage your land in a way that benefits local wildlife, particularly farmland birds.
- Install bird boxes and inspect and maintain annually.
- Cut hedges outside of the growing season to ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed, and that fruit and seeds are available as a winter food source for wildlife.
- Retain hedgerows as important wildlife corridors rather than replacing with wire fencing.
- Apply herbicides and pesticides in a way that does not affect field margin and hedgerow habitats or even better go organic!
- Leave a strip of uncut grass around the field margin as a refuge for native plants and animals. Cut field margins outside the growing season to allow native plants to set seed and insects to complete the summer part of their lifecycle.
- Find out if you are eligible to take part in an agri-environment scheme such as the Environmental Farming Scheme.
- Plant an area of woodland – forestry grant schemes are available (see <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daera-forestry-grants>)
- Install a constructed wetland to treat farmyard dirty water.

What Can a School or Community Group Do?

The Eco-Schools programme was developed in 1994 on the basis of the need for involving young people in finding solutions to environmental and sustainable development challenges at the local level.

Most young people care deeply about environmental issues and wish to make a positive change in the environment around them. The Eco-Schools programme provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school in a way that links to many curriculum subjects. The primary aim of the Eco-Schools programme is to educate and empower young people to make positive decisions and become change makers for an environmentally sustainable world.

It aims to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of a school. This should include the students, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents, as well as the local authority, the media and local businesses. Eco-Schools endeavours to extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible attitudes and commitment, both at home and in the wider community.

- Install bird boxes and inspect and maintain annually.
- Create an area for wildlife within the school grounds or within a community garden. These areas are not just important for wildlife, they are often also great places to relax.
- Visit local woodlands, meadows, wetlands, and urban green spaces – they are the perfect outdoor classroom.
- Establish a tree and wildflower nursery.
- Engage with local environmental organisations – many can help you to plant native trees, sow a wildflower meadow, create a garden pond, and survey what plants and animals live in your area.
- Start a school or community project that will help us to complete actions listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan. Contact the Council's Biodiversity Officer or one of the local environmental organisations to find out how you can make a difference.

What Can a Business Do?

Although there has been much achieved for biodiversity conservation and awareness in the transportation (Translink), and quarrying (Minerals Products Association) sectors, there has been very limited engagement by and with industry to date to the levels required. There are many ways in which businesses can contribute, including ensuring that they understand and manage their impact on biodiversity through developing biodiversity policies, getting involved in wider initiatives such as conservation projects with the Council's biodiversity officer or conservation NGOs, communicating the biodiversity message to employees and customers and mitigating their overall impact on biodiversity through site action.

There are many opportunities to improve partnership with local business either through their sponsorship of projects or incorporating sustainability and biodiversity enhancement measures into their future development and way of operating. Many firms are keen to improve their image and show off their "green" credentials and we must take the opportunity that this provides to fully engage with them and have them aboard the partnership.

- Install bird boxes and inspect and maintain annually.
- Create a wildlife area. Wildlife areas can also be great places to spend your lunchtime.
- Visit local green spaces during work breaks; this helps to lower blood pressure and reduce stress levels.
- Liaise with the Council's Biodiversity Officer or one of our local environmental organisations and use staff training days to help with tasks such as tree planting or helping to control invasive species.
- You could sponsor a local wildlife project such as creation of a wildflower meadow or pond, or the planting of a woodland or native species-rich hedgerow.
- Small and large businesses can sign up to a Prosperity Agreement. These are voluntary agreements through which NIEA, and an organisation can explore opportunities for reducing environmental impacts in ways that create prosperity and wellbeing.

Community Action

A major challenge is to raise awareness and help people to become involved. It is encouraging to see the number of local groups who want to engage at some level and particularly the number of young people who are active and involved in nature. We are fortunate in the Council area in having a diverse range of committed conservation NGOs. Links must be built on and schools encouraged and assisted to undertake projects in biodiversity. This practical introduction to biodiversity is the best way to educate the next generation in the problems that we face. It is very reassuring to know that biodiversity is included in the new school curriculum.

Some of the side benefits of this biodiversity work should be mentioned. It has already provided an opportunity to bring cross community groups together in joint projects which reflect both communities' natural and cultural heritage. There is still considerable social need and exclusion in Northern Ireland and interacting with nature provides a stimulus to remove some of these barriers.

There is also an opportunity to bring together groups with a common interest. Most people want to see an enhancement of their local environment and where this involves nature conservation efforts will be made to form partnerships to achieve the biodiversity objectives.

11.0 Useful Contacts

- Northern Ireland Bat Group <https://www.bats-ni.org.uk/>. For advice on injured bats, bats on the ground or in a building, or bats discovered during building or tree works, contact Northern Ireland Bat Group. Interfering with protected species and/or damaging the habitats on which they depend, damaging protected habitats, poaching, badger baiting and infringements on the Animal Welfare Act are all types of Wildlife Crime. If you suspect a wildlife crime, contact your nearest Police station or call 101 from a landline; state they you believe a wildlife crime has occurred and be sure to ask for a Crime Reference Number.
- Action for Biodiversity www.actionforbiodiversity.eu
- Biodiversityni www.biodiversityni.com
- Northern Ireland Badger Group www.badgersni.org.uk
- British Trust for Ornithology www.bto.org

- Butterfly Conservation www.butterfly-conservation.org
- Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) www.nmni.com/cedar
- Copeland Island Bird Observatory www.copelandbirdobservatory.org.uk
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) www.dardni.gov.uk
- Exploris www.exploris.org.uk
- Forest Service www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service
- National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) www.habitas.org.uk
- National Trust www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Bat Group www.bats-ni.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) www.doeni.gov.uk/niea
- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/partnership-for-action-against-wildlife-crime>.
 The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime UK (PAW UK) helps statutory and non-government organisations to work together to reduce wildlife crime (e.g. badger raptor and bat persecution, illegal trade in CITES species, illegal harvesting of freshwater pearl mussels, and poaching (deer, fish & hare coursing) through raising awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife crime, helping and advising on wildlife crime and regulatory issues and making sure wildlife crime is tackled effectively.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) www.rspb.org.uk
- Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership www.strangfordlough.org
- The Conservation Volunteers www.tcv.org.uk/northernireland
- Ulster Wildlife www.ulsterwildlife.org
- Walkni www.walkni.com
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust www.wwt.org.uk/visit/castle-espier/
- Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Glossary

AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

ASSI - Area of Special Scientific Interest; a nature conservation designation which protects areas that are the best samples of our natural heritage and / or geological history

Biodiversity - The diversity of all living things on Earth including plants, animals, fungi and bacteria

Biodiversity Duty - The duty placed on public bodies such as councils under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 to further the conservation of biodiversity in ways that are consistent with carrying out their main functions

DAERA - The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Ecosystem – An area made up of plants, animals, micro-organisms, soil, rock, minerals, water sources and the local atmosphere interacting with one another

Ecosystem Services – Ecosystems supply us (humans) with a number of benefits e.g., pollination, drinking water and decomposition of waste, collectively these resources are referred to as Ecosystem Services

FNR – Forest Nature Reserve Habitat – This is an ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species of animal, plant or other type of organism

HAP - Habitat Action Plan; a plan to enhance a habitat for the benefit of biodiversity

INNS - Invasive Non-native Species; species which have been accidentally or deliberately introduced into our environment and result in damage to native habitats and/or species.

LBAP - Local Biodiversity Action Plan; a plan developed between partner organisations to develop and complete actions, and fulfil targets, which will promote and enhance biodiversity within the local area

LNR – Local Nature Reserve

MCZ – Marine Coastal Zone

MNR – Marine Nature Reserve

NNR – National Nature Reserve

NR – Nature Reserve

Priority Habitat - A habitat which requires conservation action because of its rarity, importance and/or decline in quality and/or spatial area

Priority Species - A species which requires conservation action because of its rarity, rapid population decline and/or international importance

RAMSAR - Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SAC - Special Area of Conservation; an area designated under the EU Habitats Directive for the protection and conservation of seriously threatened habitats and species

SAP - Species Action Plan; a plan to benefit a particular species

SLNCI - A Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance; sites are designated according to their flora, fauna and/or earth science interest

SPA - Special Protection Area; an area designated under the EU Habitats Directive for the protection and conservation of sites which are important for our most vulnerable species of birds

Ramsar site - A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated for its international importance to nature conservation. Named after the 1971 Convention on Wetlands which was held in Ramsar, Iran

Acknowledgements

The North Down and Ards LBAP is a product of contributions from many individuals. We thank the many individuals and partner organisations in governmental

departments, Ards and North Down Borough Council and the community and voluntary sector for their help, support and advice during the compilation of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). We look forward to working alongside each of you to develop the actions laid out in this plan.

The Council would also like to thank all the local schools and community groups that we have had the pleasure of working with to help increase awareness of, and improve habitats for, biodiversity in their local areas.

Many thanks for staff within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) who also offered much valuable assistance with the content of this Plan.

The North Down and Ards LBAP Steering Group supplied valuable advice and support throughout the LBAP process. This group is formed of individuals from North Down Borough Council and Ards Borough Council, Action for Biodiversity Project, British Trust for Ornithology, Exploris, National Trust, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Ulster Wildlife, Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership, the Conservation Volunteers (NI) and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

Special thanks are due to Noeleen Farry Ards and North Down Borough Council Biodiversity Officer, and Nina Schonberg Nature Recovery Networks Coordinator Ulster Wildlife and Thomas Finn GIS Officer Ards and North Down Borough Council as well as to everyone who went out of their way to supply information and photographs for this publication.

References

- Alexander, K., Hope, J., Lucas, A., Smith, J., Wright, M. (2007) Woodland pasture and parkland scoping study. Environment and Heritage Service research and development series No. 08/01. Copy held by NIEA.
- Cooper, E. A., Crawford, I., Malloch, A. J. C. and Rodwell, J. S. (1992) Coastal vegetation survey of Northern Ireland. Lancaster University. Copy held by NIEA

Daye, S.

Gibson, C. E. (ed) (2011) Northern Ireland State of the Seas Report. Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute and Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Hackney, P. (1992) Stewart and Corry's Flora of the North-East of Ireland. Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast.

Leach, S. J. and Corbett, P. M. (1987) A preliminary survey of raised bogs in Northern Ireland. Glasra 10 57-73.

Records of flora and fauna mentioned in this publication are largely from Habitat Action Plans, Species Action Plans and ASSI citation documents that are available on the NIEA web site and from CEDaR.

Insert Credited Photos

Supplied by John Wann copyright free and Ards and North Down Borough Council

Appendix 1: Designated Sites in Ards and North Down Borough Council Area

Site Name	Designated Site Category	Designated Site Area (ha)
Aughnadarragh Lough	SAC	12.8
Strangford Lough	SAC	15398.54
Outer Ards	Ramsar Site/SPA	1154.16
Strangford Lough	Ramsar Site/SPA	15580.79

Copeland Islands	SPA	201.52
Belfast Lough	SPA	432.14
Ballymacormick Point	ASSI	39
Strangford Lough Part 1	ASSI	1549
Strangford Lough Part 2	ASSI	699
Strangford Lough Part 3	ASSI	1859.5
Whitespots	ASSI	5.05
Scrabo	ASSI	25.5
Blaeberry Island Bog	ASSI	24.58
Lough Cowey	ASSI	30.11
Aughnadarragh Lough	ASSI	12.8
Heron and Carrigullian Loughs	ASSI	80.42
Tievehilly	ASSI	3.42
Ballyquintin Point	ASSI	74.10

Copeland Islands	ASSI	201.52
Strangford Lough	MNR	16500.00
Granagh Bay	NR	24.00
Dorn	NR	790.00
Ballyquintin Point	NNR	16.00
North Strangford Lough	NNR	1015.00
Ballyrainey	SLNCI	1.97
Kiltonga	SLNCI	7.84
Cairngaver	SLNCI	5.08
Cunningburn	SLNCI	2.15
Ballylolly Lough	SLNCI	38.98
Whitespots, Newtownards	SLNCI	40.59
Inishargy Bog	SLNCI	39.13
Tullynagee	SLNCI	17.15
Rosemount	SLNCI	5.97

Ballymacashen Bog	SLNCI	15.18
Castle Espie	SLNCI	2.42
Golden Glen	SLNCI	7.44
Ballyharry	SLNCI	1.38
Killynether Wood	SLNCI	13.72
Willy's Wood Island	SLNCI	78.34
Lough Cowey	SLNCI	30.21
Glen Lyon, Hollywood	SLNCI	8.04
Blackhill, Seahill	SLNCI	2.44
Hollywood Reservoirs, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	14.94
Redburn, Hollywood	SLNCI	67.56
Strickland's Glen, Bangor	SLNCI	5.72
Edith of Lorne's Glen, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	17.10
Croft Burn, Hollywood	SLNCI	0.26

Creighton's Green Reservoir, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	28.46
Ballysallagh, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	18.25
Crawfordsburn	SLNCI	85.00
Ballymacormick Point, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	0.46
Ballygrainey Dismantled Railway, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	16.71
Rockport Coast and St Columbanus, Seahill	SLNCI	13.91
Clandeboyne Avenue, North Down Countryside	SLNCI	14.49
Rathgael, Bangor	SLNCI	6.30
Ballymenoch Park, Holywood	SLNCI	10.97

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and Cultra Glen, Holywood	SLNCI	48.15
Balloo Wetland/ Woodland	Ulster Wildlife/Ards and North Down Borough Council.	6.00
Light House Island	National Trust	9.71
Orlock Point	National Trust	10.00
Ballymacormick Point	National Trust	14
Mount Stewart	National Trust	167.14
Strangford Lough	National Trust	
Kearney	National Trust	143.4
Glastry Ponds	National Trust	16.46
Killynether Wood	National Trust	22.44
Kilcooley Wood	Woodland Trust	
Corrog Wood, Portaferry	Woodland Trust	5.49
Ballysallagh Wood	Forest Service Northern	18.25

	Ireland	
Clandeboyne Forest	Forest Service Northern Ireland	102
Inishargy Bog	Ulster Wildlife	8
Kiltonga nature Reserve	ANDBC	9.5

Appendix 2: List of NI Priority Species in Council Area

This list will be revised during the first year of the LBAP in accordance with the revised 2023 NI Priority Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Grey dagger	<i>Acronicta psi</i>
Knotgrass	<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>
Beaded chestnut	<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Green-brindled crescent	<i>Allophyes oxyacanthae</i>
Allis shad	<i>Alosa alosa</i>
Mouse moth	<i>Amphipyra tragopoginis</i>
Chaffweed	<i>Anagallis minima</i>
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
a solitary bee	<i>Andrena coitana</i>
a solitary bee	<i>Andrena denticulata</i>
a solitary bee	<i>Andrena praecox</i>
Bog-rosemary	<i>Andromeda polifolia</i>

Whirlpool ramshorn	<i>Anisus vortex</i>
Greenland white-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Dusky brocade	<i>Apamea remissa</i>
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Garden tiger	<i>Arctia caja</i>
Short-eared owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Centre-barred sallow	<i>Atethmia centrago</i>
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
a door snail	<i>Balea perversa</i>
a moss	<i>Brachydontium trichodes</i>
Pale-bellied brent goose	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>

Mottled rustic	<i>Caradrina Morpheus</i>
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>
Haworth's minor	<i>Celaena haworthii</i>
Crescent	<i>Celaena leucostigma</i>
Broom moth	<i>Ceramica pisi</i>
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
a chantarelle	<i>Clavaria zollingeri</i>
a common scurvygrass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis ssp. scotica</i>
Frog orchid	<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>
Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>
Sea-kale	<i>Crambe maritima</i>
Corncrake	<i>Crex</i>
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Bewick's swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Whooper swan	<i>Cygnus</i>
Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>

Small square-spot	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>
Small phoenix	<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
August thorn	<i>Ennomos quercinaria</i>
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>
Small eggar	<i>Eriogaster lanestris</i>
Marsh fritillary	<i>Eurodryas aurinia</i>
Garden dart	<i>Euxoa nigricans</i>
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
Field gentian	<i>Gentianella campestris</i>
Meadow crane's-bill	<i>Geranium pratense</i>
Wood crane's-bill	<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>
Heath cudweed	<i>Gnaphalium sylvaticum</i>

Double dart	<i>Graphiphora augur</i>
Smooth ramshorn	<i>Gyraulus (Torquis) laevis</i>
Narrow-bordered bee Hawk	<i>Hemaris tityus</i>
Ghost moth	<i>Hepialus humuli</i>
Grayling	<i>Hipparchia Semele</i>
Rustic	<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>
Rosy rustic	<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Neat mining Bee	<i>Lasioglossum nitidiusculum</i>
Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>
a moss snail	<i>Leiostryla anglica</i>
Wood white	<i>Leptidea reali</i>
Irish hare	<i>Lepus timidus hibernicus</i>
Scottish lovage	<i>Ligusticum scoticum</i>
Ash-grey slug	<i>Limax cameronite</i>

Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Grasshopper warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>
Common scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Oysterplant	<i>Mertensia maritima</i>
Rosy minor	<i>Mesoligia literosa</i>
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Shoulder-striped wainscot	<i>Mythimna comma</i>
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Oblique carpet	<i>Orthonama vittata</i>
Powdered quaker	<i>Orthosia gracilis</i>
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Dark spinach	<i>Pelurga comitata</i>

Common seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>
Common (Harbour) porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>
Wood warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
55 kHz pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>
Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus species</i>
a pea mussel	<i>Pisidium pulchellum</i>
Lesser butterfly-orchid	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>
Brown long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auratus</i>
Golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Small-white Orchid	<i>Pseudorchis albida</i>
Balearic shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>
Intermediate wintergreen	<i>Pyrola media</i>

Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula</i>
Spiral tasselweed	<i>Ruppia cirrhosa</i>
Sea trout	<i>Salmo trutta</i>
Prickly saltwort	<i>Salsola kali ssp. kali</i>
Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>
Annual knawel	<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>
Mullein wave	<i>Scopula marginepunctata</i>
Shaded broad-bar	<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>
Latticed heath	<i>Semiothisa clathrate</i>
a whitebeam	<i>Sorbus Hibernica</i>
a whitebeam	<i>Sorbus rupicola</i>
White ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>
Buff ermine	<i>Spilosoma luteum</i>
Arctic skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Little tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>

Turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
a moss	<i>Tortella inclinata</i>
Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
a whorl snail	<i>Vertigo antivertigo</i>
Spring vetch	<i>Vicia lathyroides</i>
Sallow	<i>Xanthia icteritia</i>
Native Oyster	<i>Ostrea edulis</i>

Appendix 3: List of Locally Important Species Relevant to the Council Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	Significance
Great burnet	<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>	NI Rare & Scarce Plants, Wildlife (NI) Order Sch 8
Bats	Chiroptera	Wildlife (NI) Order
Irish hare	<i>Lepus timidus hibernicus</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order

Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Smooth newt	<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	Wildlife (NI) Order
Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Breeding populations on amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland
European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Breeding populations on amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Breeding populations on amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland

Black guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	Amber listed bird of conservation concern
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Amber listed bird of conservation concern
Pale bellied brent goose	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	Wintering population on amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland.
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Red listed bird of conservation concern in Ireland
Greenland white-fronted geese	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	Wintering population on amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland.
Farmland seed-eating birds	Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> , tree sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i> , reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> , linnet <i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Northern Ireland priority species. Yellowhammer is a red listed bird of conservation concern. Tree sparrow, and linnet are amber listed birds of conservation concern.

Twite	<i>Acanthis flavirostris</i>	Breeding population listed on red list of conservation concern in Ireland.
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Badgers are protected, under Schedule 5, 6 and 7 of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended).

<p>Hedgehog</p>	<p><i>Erinaceus europaeus</i></p>	<p>In Ireland the hedgehog is classed as Least Concern on the IUCN red list, but this is due to the fact that the species is data deficient, they are now classed as Vulnerable to Extinction in Britain. There have been huge declines in Britain and Europe, and it is estimated that there is a similar situation in Ireland.</p>
<p>Common or viviparous lizard</p>	<p><i>Zootoca vivipara</i></p>	<p>Listed in Schedule 5, 6 and 7 of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985</p> <p>Listed in Annex III of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)</p>

	Action	Partners
Theme 1. Education & Awareness		
1	Encourage participation in citizen science wildlife projects and engage the public in biodiversity recording and awareness.	ANDBC, CEDaR, Museums NI, DAERA, conservation and wildlife NGO's, WWT, Flora and Fauna groups, SLLP
2	Encourage the public to get involved in practical activities and habitat restoration projects to increase the numbers of our priority species	ANDBC, conservation and wildlife NGO's, Flora and Fauna groups, SLLP
3	Support participation in national and international biodiversity awareness campaigns	ANDBC, CEDaR, conservation and wildlife NGOs such as WWT, Flora and Fauna groups, SLLP
4	Raise the profile of bats by running a programme of related activities and developing an information page on the council website.	ANDBC, NI Bat Group, Bat Conservation Ireland
5	Encourage participation in SeaSearch via diving clubs https://www.seasearch.org.uk/	DAERA, Divers, SLLP
6	Work in partnership to organise training in whale and dolphin identification and monitoring	ANDBC, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
7	Carry out an audit and mapping exercise of coastal interpretative panels on council owned land. Identify panels in need replacing, opportunities to combine panel information and potential new panel locations to promote marine biodiversity.	DAERA, ANDBC, SLLP, Exploris, Ulster Wildlife, RSPB, BTO, Copeland Bird Observatory, WWT.
8	Inform the public where land is being managed for biodiversity.	ANDBC
9	Raise awareness on the biodiversity of our rivers and produce interpretation material on the biodiversity value of wetlands habitats and associated species at key sites.	ANDBC, SLLP, DAERA (WMU), WWT, Rivers Agency, conservation and wildlife NGO's

10	Promote local biodiversity by creating new biodiversity trails (including interpretative signage) in selected woodland locations.	ANDBC
11	Raise awareness regarding land management changes for barn owl conservation and promote recording sightings of barn owls.	ANDBC, Ulster Wildlife, RSPB
12	Promote 'Gardening for Wildlife' and support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025	ANDBC, DAERA, Ulster Wildlife, Buglife, National Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Bumblebee conservation society, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations, local schools and businesses community groups
13	Raise awareness of red squirrel conservation and encourage local recording of the red squirrel and pine marten.	DAERA, ANDBC, North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Group, National Trust, Ulster Wildlife
14	Raise awareness on danger of rodenticides to non-target wildlife and the importance of using rodenticides correctly.	ANDBC, NIRSG, RSPB, BTO, Ulster Wildlife
15	Engage with the PSNI Wildlife Officer to promote the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAWS) and raise public awareness of the threats and persecutions that face some of our most vulnerable and iconic species.	ANDBC, PSNI, DAERA, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations
16	Monitor the progress of this action plan through the setting up of a BAP implementation / partnership group within the first year of the plan. To be made up partner organisations meeting on an annual basis.	ANDBC, LBAP Partnership
17	Publicize the BAP within the council and beyond through existing information centres and museums (e.g. Bangor Library)	ANDBC

18	Ensure council land managers are familiar with the latest biodiversity guidance, policy and legislation through appropriate training.	ANDBC, DAERA
19	Provide invasive species identification, control and management training to council staff and the wider public and produce an Invasive Species Swatch for council staff to assist with identification in the field.	DAERA, ANDBC, conservation NGOs
20	Target and promote agri-environment scheme uptake around lanes, ponds and rivers - including buffer zones and ungrazed grass margins to reduce the impact of eutrophication and sedimentation. Highlight the importance of these features as wildlife corridors.	DAERA, ANDBC, RSPB, SLLP, Farming Community
21	Promote the importance of cereal field margins for biodiversity	DAERA, ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, Ulster Wildlife
22	Raise awareness of the importance of our hedgerows for local biodiversity and its role as a vital ecological network and promote best practice management.	DAERA, ANDBC, RSPB, private landowners, community groups, Ulster Wildlife, National Trust, Woodland Trust, TCV
23	Establish a 'Birds of the Borough' project group, to develop project ideas to promote the understanding and conservation of the Borough's iconic birds through education and outreach.	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, NI Swift Group, Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group (NIRSG)
24	Raise awareness of Swift nesting habitat in our urban environment with the wider public and in all relevant sections of the council. Provide training in Swift identification and adequate habitat requirements	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, NI Swift Group
25	Distribute guidance on habitat management that will benefit each of our priority bird species	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, Ulster Wildlife
26	Promote semi-natural grassland biodiversity through local events, and council publicity, hold lowland meadow identification and management training courses.	DAERA, ANDBC, Ulster Wildlife

27	Implement the STAND4TREES initiative by engaging stakeholders including local groups and communities through activity workshops to increase tree and hedgerow cover throughout the Borough.	ANDBC, Woodland Trust, National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Landowners, TCV
28	Raise awareness of the Borough's oldest and most important trees through the promotion of the Ancient Tree Inventory.	ANDBC, Woodland Trust
Theme 2. Research & Monitoring		
29	Facilitate and support survey work to understand current distribution and condition of priority habitats and priority species populations within the Borough.	ANDBC and other Stakeholders including DAERA, UWT, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations
30	Log 'Actions for Pollinators (www.pollinators.ie) to aid the tracking of resources in the landscape.	ANDBC, UWT, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation
31	Commission an invasive species audit of Council owned land and produce a Council Invasive Species Management Strategy; to include a 'traffic light' system to prioritise control of certain species	ANDBC, Woodland Trust
32	Commission a survey of the distribution, extent and condition of Council hedgerow networks. Review council hedgerow management practices for the benefits of biodiversity. Identify areas for hedgerow enhancement and establishment, particularly where habitats can be connected.	DAERA, ANDBC, Woodland Trust, National Trust, RSPB, Ulster Wildlife Trust
33	Commission a desktop and field-based survey of woodland and parkland on key Council-owned sites including invertebrates and lower plants (lichens, bryophytes).	ANDBC, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation
34	Commission a biodiversity audit, to include a Bryophyte and lichen survey, of all Council owned graveyards and cemeteries to guide conservation management	ANDBC, DAERA, BBS, BLS
35	Support Ulster Wildlife (UW), NI Barn Owl Project, to include the surveying of Barn Owl hotspots on council owned land.	ANDBC, Ulster Wildlife, RSPB

Theme 3. Land Management		
36	Identify and declare Local Nature Reserves at appropriate sites in the Borough and manage accordingly.	ANDBC
37	Commission conservation management plans for key Council owned sites detailing prescriptions to ensure relevant features remain in good condition, any features not in favourable condition are to be improved and maintained in good condition.	ANDBC
38	Encourage the concept of green walls/roofs where appropriate on new Council buildings.	ANDBC
39	Secure funding to commission a feasibility study exploring the potential of a local nature recovery network demonstration project on the Comber River (and its tributaries to connect fragmented habitat)	ANDBC, DAERA, Conservation and wildlife NGO's, Community Groups
40	Secure funding to commission a feasibility study to explore the options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen.	ANDBC, DAERA, Conservation and wildlife NGO's, Local Community & Community Groups
41	Control excessive gorse growth <i>Ulex</i> sp. on the rocky higher ground of Whitespots Country Park. Thin planted trees at the site to create a more open and biodiverse environment.	ANDBC, DAERA, TCV, Local Community Groups
42	Commission management plan for Cloughey sand dunes outlining conservation actions to effect favourable condition	ANDBC, DAERA, Local Community Groups
43	Create and install features in existing and newly created meadows, to benefit invertebrates including bug hotels and beetle and bee banks.	ANDBC, UWT, Buglife, DFI Roads
44	Avoid removing deadwood from woodlands unless there is over-riding health and safety reasons. Ensure this is incorporated into the management plans for all council managed woodlands.	ANDBC, Buglife
45	Look at opportunities to create new ponds across the Borough at suitable locations	ANDBC, Local Community Groups, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations
46	Restore woodland and pond habitats at Strickland Glen for the benefit of biodiversity	ANDBC, UWT, local community groups, TCV, schools

47	Erect and maintain existing and newly installed bat boxes within key council-owned woodland and parkland sites where suitable trees and stone structures exist, and along river banks within close proximity to ponds, lakes and canals.	ANDBC, NI Bat Group
48	Restore or plant new native species-rich hedgerows for biodiversity with emphasis on connecting woodlands and other habitats. These hedgerows should act as demonstration sites for good practice hedgerow management.	ANDBC, UWT, RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust, TCV
49	Identify suitable sites to install swift boxes on council buildings.	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, NI Swift Group
50	Improve land management in council owned land and identify and erect barn owl nesting boxes key locations within the Borough in collaboration with wildlife organisations.	ANDBC, Ulster Wildlife, RSPB, BTO, NIRSG
51	Continue to manage and monitor lowland meadows under the council rewilding initiative and increase the extent of species-rich wildflower meadow habitat by creating new meadows and expanding the area of existing meadows, in both urban and rural locations. Opportunities to connect to other habitats should be identified and prioritised.	ANDBC, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations, Buglife, Local Community
52	Reduce the frequency of amenity grassland cutting per year at selected Council amenity areas including around sports facilities.	ANDBC
53	Establish a network of native seed donor sites for habitat creation and restoration. Ensure that ENSCONET Seed Collecting Manual for Wild Species is utilised.	ANDBC, True Harvest Seeds, Ecoseds
54	Actively pursue the use of local provenance seed (tree and wildflower) and hold workshops on seed harvesting, collection, storage and growing. Including the establishment of local / community tree nurseries.	ANDBC, Woodland Trust, TCV, True Harvest Seeds, Ecoseds
55	Actively excluding all peat-based compost from council use and aiming for a ban on peat-based compost sales. Encourage other organisations and the community to adopt a peat free approach to growing.	ANDBC
56	Ensure all built structures and mature trees on council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of bats prior to any works (even minor works such as limb / ivy removal) occur.	ANDBC
57	Creation of a council grassland management strategy.	ANDBC and community partners including UFU, NFFN, Local Farming Community

58	Investigate with our partners the feasibility of providing wild bird cover for farmland birds	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, Local Farming Community
59	Reduce, replace and where possible eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers on council land	ANDBC
60	Increase accessible woodland (% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m) towards UK average of 21.1% by 2032. Increase woodland creation (% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km) towards UK average of 12.1% by 2030	ANDBC, Landowners, Woodland Trust, National Trust
61	Ensure a collection of diverse tree colonies through the planting of native trees across the Borough with the creation of an equitable canopy map.	ANDBC, Woodland Trust
62	Engage with all landowners in relation to the eutrophication issue at the ponds located in Whitespots Country Park	ANDBC, DAERA, Private Landowners
63	Provide funding to create community wildlife gardens with pollinator-friendly wildflower areas	ANDBC
64	Develop an ambitious planting plan starting with the planting of 160,000 native trees across the Borough with further increased planting to contribute to regional and national targets	ANDBC Woodland Trust, National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Landowners
65	Investigate the potential for incorporating buffer zones around ponds and rivers on council owned land.	ANDBC, DAERA, Community Groups
66	Commission a resurvey of SLNCIs in the council area	ANDBC
67	Ensure all council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of badgers and/or setts prior to the commencement of any works, including maintenance works such as the removal of vegetation or scrub	ANDBC, NI badger Group

68	Review current rodenticide use across council services and promote the use of the CRRU code.	ANDBC, NIRSG, RSPB, BTO
Theme 4. Building Partnerships		
69	Promote biodiversity objectives in the management of golf courses and encourage all golf courses in the Borough to secure the GEO certified label.	ANDBC, Local Golf Clubs, Conservation and wildlife NGO's
70	Engage with local businesses to encourage involvement in local biodiversity projects.	ANDBC, private businesses
71	Engage with local operators of business parks and supermarkets to encourage biodiversity enhancements.	ANDBC, business owners
72	Engage with local quarries in conservation actions for key habitats and species in conjunction with conservation NGOs.	ANDBC, MPA NI, Conservation and wildlife NGO's
73	Engage with local residents, businesses and schools to establish Swift nest boxes on their buildings / premises.	ANDBC, BTO, RSPB, NI Swift Group, Local residents, schools and businesses
74	Work in partnership promoting good practice in local provenance native woodland management.	ANDBC, Woodland Trust, TCV
75	Work in partnership to produce a rivers and streams biodiversity education pack	ANDBC, DAERA (WMU), Rivers Agency
76	Support a local biodiversity partnership collaboration between Camphill Community, Royal Belfast Golfclub and local schools	ANDBC, Camphill Community, Royal Belfast Golfclub, local schools.
77	Work in partnership to highlight Irish hare identification and habitat requirements.	ANDBC, Ulster Wildlife
78	Engage with and support local biodiversity partnerships between council and other landowners to increase the extent of land managed for biodiversity.	ANDBC, Private Landowners, Conservation and Wildlife NGO's

79	Work in partnership with relevant statutory bodies, NGO's and local groups to support the conservation of the red squirrel and pine marten and identify road mortality black spots where warning signs can be erected.	ANDBC, DAERA, North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Group, Ulster Wildlife
80	Work in partnership with DfI to manage key roadside verges for pollinators	ANDBC, DfI Roads Service
81	Improve the value of urban green spaces for biodiversity by setting up 'Friends of Groups' at selected sites	ANDBC, Local Community Groups
82	Engage with local groups to help deliver community led biodiversity related projects and support them to develop and lead their own	ANDBC, Local Community Groups
83	Engage with stakeholders to facilitate the reduction in ammonia and nutrient run-off across landscapes.	ANDBC, Stakeholders
84	Identify potential peatland restoration sites and engage with stakeholders to identify opportunities for restoring of sites into a semi natural state.	ANDBC, Stakeholders including Private Landowners

It is intended that the Biodiversity Action Plan is a dynamic document which is subject to constant review. Progress towards the targets will be assessed annually and it is anticipated the LBAP will be reviewed after 5 years by the Partnership. Reporting on progress will be undertaken by the Council on behalf of the LBAP partnership. In particular, the actions undertaken will increase as more stakeholders join the process and agree work which can be implemented on the ground.

Unclassified

218

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	05 April 2023
File Reference	ART 05/23 R1
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Arts Project Grants 2023-2024
Attachments	

The Arts Projects Grants for 2023-2024 opened for application on Monday 27 February 2023, with a closing date of 23 March 2023. The grants were advertised in the press, on the Councils web site and groups were notified by email.

The total budget ringfenced for the Arts Grants was £11,000 and applicants could apply for up to £1,000 for each project.

An assessment panel met on Wednesday 5 April 2023 to consider nine applications received by the closing date. The total value of the applications received was £8,960 and the panel agreed a pass mark of 60%.

Unclassified

219

Table 1 below provides a summary of the applications and the recommended awards.

Table 1. Assessment Panel Recommendations

Name of Organisation	Requested Amount	Project	Score	Amount Recommended
Portico	£1,000	Halloween Scream	89	£1,000
Bangor & North Down Camera Club	£1,000	Discovering & Creating the Refined Photo Book by Keron Psillas Oliveira	80	£1,000
Rotary Club of North Down	£1,000	Primary School Musician of the Year Competition	90	£1,000
AMH New Horizons	£1,000	Glass Fusing & Beyond	83	£1,000
AMH Promote	£1,000	Christmas Pantomime	88	£1,000
Hollywood Shared Town	£1,000	Poetry Workshop and Readings	58	£0
Portaferry Community Services	£1,000	Storyteller – Seanachai – wee yarns	84	£1,000
Kilmood Art Club	£960	Art Workshops	82	£960
Lisbarnett & Lisbane Community Association Ltd	£1,000	Lisbane Art Group Autumn Project 2023	55	£0

Two applications were unsuccessful:

- Hollywood Shared Town's application did it provide sufficient information about its core aim of school engagement and did not represent good value for money.
- Lisbarnett and Lisbane Community Association's application due to the quality of the facilitation and was in sufficient information regarding participation.

The unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback from the panel and a second round of Arts Grants funding will be released in August 2023 for the remaining budget of £4,040. The unsuccessful applicants can then reapply under round two of the grant scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the seven successful applications and awards detailed in table 1, totalling £6,960.

Unclassified

220

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	07 April 2023
File Reference	HER 01/23
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Heritage Project Grants 2023-2024
Attachments	None

Applications to the Heritage Grant 2023-24 opened in February 2023 and closed on 23 March 2023. Thirteen applications were received. Three members of the Arts and Heritage Panel assessed the applications on 31 March, along with the Heritage Development Officer.

There is a total of £5,000 available with a maximum of £500 per application awarded. Each application is scored out of 100. Recommendation for award of grant is based on a minimum score of 50.

Table 1. Assessment Panel Recommendations

Name of Organisation	Requested Amount	Project	Score	Amount Recommended
Portaferry and Strangford Trust	£500	Maritime Heritage past and future	80	£500
Ards Historical Society	£500	Domain renewal and printer consumables	60	£500

Unclassified

Discover Groomsport	£500	Groomsport history tour and self-guided tour	80	£500
Auld Bangor Historical and Cultural Society	£500	Shared History from the Somme and beyond	54	£250
Portavogie Cultural and Heritage Society	£500	Booklet publication	55	£250
Friends of Columbanus	£500	Pilgrim Badges	56	£250
Kilcooley Women's Centre	£500	Market House Memories	40	£0
Inspiring Yarns	£500	Learn to spin sessions	55	£250
Boom Studios	£500	Bangor seafront heritage sketch walks	60	£500
Donaghadee Historical Society	£500	Reminiscences of growing up or visiting Donaghadee	70	£500
Upper Ards Historical Society	£500	Journal 47 of UAHS	70	£500
Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company	£500	History and use of Donaghadee Harbour	75	£500
Portaferry Sailing Club	£500	Maritime and Gilpin Memoirs	60	£500
	£6,500			£5,000

Kilcooley Women's Centre were not awarded a grant as the project did not demonstrate good value for money nor quality of expertise involved.

The remaining twelve projects, scored above the minimum required.
Those scoring between 60 or above have been awarded the requested £500
Those scoring 40-59 have been awarded £250

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the twelve successful applications and awards detailed in table 1, totalling £5,000.

Unclassified

222

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture and Head of Tourism
Date of Report	16 April 2023
File Reference	CD27
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Order (NI) 1986
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 - Tranche Two and Tranche One update
Attachments	None

Background

Council approved the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2012-2026 (BESD) in November 2020. Within the BESD, it acknowledges that local festivals and events play a key part in delivering social, cultural and economic outcomes. Various Council services provide grants to support festivals and events, including Community Development and Tourism.

A recommendation of the BESD is that Council should continue to support the development of the local events sector through strategic funding, training and development and advice. The Strategy recommended that this support should be better structured for event organisers and progression routes are made available for event organisers to help run their events safely or for those who want their events to grow. In addition, the Strategy recommended combining the two Council grant budgets that supported events and festivals i.e. The Tourism Events Fund and the Community Festivals Fund.

In October 2022 Council agreed this new fund as the "Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund". Through the estimates process £175,000 has been secured for 2023/24 and this amount includes match funding from DfC which had been estimated at £31,400.

Unclassified

223

In line with the Strategy recommendations, Council agreed that the fund would follow a 4-tier model, detailed in Table 1 below to include the festival type, criteria, budget and the minimum and maximum grants for each tier.

Table 1: Four Tier Model

Tranche	Festival/Event	Criteria	Budget	Min-Max Grant
1	Large	Min 2,000 attending	98,437.50	£10,001 - £20,000
1	Medium	Min 1001 attending	38,281.25	£4001 - £10,000
2	Neighbourhood	Up to 1000 attending	£16,406.25	£1001-£4000
2	Local	Up to 500 attending	£21,875	Up to £1,000

The Application Process

Following information workshops for potential applicants, Tranche 2 of the Events and Festivals Fund opened for applications on 27th February 2023 and closed on 20th March 2023. All applications were received and assessed by a panel comprised of the Community Development Manager, Community Development Officer, and Events Officer against an agreed scoring matrix.

The scoring matrix included:

- Eligibility checks
- How does the event/festival achieve its aim (Economic or Social benefit)
- How it can be developed (including audience development)
- The project description
- Safety and Welfare measures
- Opportunities and supporting volunteers
- Environmental management
- Financial Breakdown including income and financial sustainability
- Participant numbers and roles and supporting local spend
- Marketing and promotion to attract attendees

The panel agreed to apply a pass mark of 50%.

Applicants were required to indicate the primary purpose of their festival or events i.e., was it primarily for economic benefit or social benefit. Whilst this question in the application was not scored, it assisted the Tourism and Community Development Teams to provide the appropriate support for event organisers, when organising and delivering their events/festivals.

Unclassified

224

Recommendations of the Assessment Panel

Twenty-six applications were received by the closing date. The total value of the applications received was £39,234 and the total budget available for both the Neighbourhood and Local festivals was £38,281.25.

Five applications did not meet the pass mark of 50% and are therefore not recommended for award.

In line with the criteria of the fund, four applications were deemed ineligible and as a result were not scored, for the reasons given below.

Tranche 2 Events and Festivals Grants

Local Festivals Recommended for Award					
	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	% Score	Eligible Amount at 100%
1	Breezemount Community Association	Breezemount Summer Festival	£1,000.00	50.91%	£700.00
2	Cloughey & District Community Association	Cloughey's Old fashioned day at the beach	£770.00	52.73%	£670.00
3	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	Family Day	£1,000.00	50.91%	£1,000.00
4	Kilcooley Women's Centre	International Women's day	£1,000.00	58.18%	£700.00
5	Love Ballyholme	Christmas at Holme	£1,000.00	65.45%	£850.00
6	St Marys Support PS Kircubbin Parent support group	Summer Fun for Families	£1,000.00	60.00%	£1,000.00
7	St Marys Support Group	Bank Holiday Tractor run & family fun day	£1,000.00	61.82%	£875.00
8	ND & Ards U3A	U3A Songfest	£1,000.00	52.73%	£1,000.00
9	Whitehill Community Association	Whitehill Community Festival	£1,000.00	50.91%	£750.00
					£7,545

Unclassified

225

Tranche 2 Neighbourhood Festivals – Recommended for award					
	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	% Score	Eligible Amount at 100%
10	Ards Cycling Club	Ards Town Centre Criterium Races	£3,910	54.55%	£3,910.00
11	Ballygowan Community Voices	An evening of Summer / Winter Song	£4,000	56.36%	£2,310.00
12	Ballygowan Presbyterian Church	Community Fun day	£4,000	60.00%	£4,000.00
13	Friends of Coloumbanus Bangor (FoCB)	Columbanus Festival	£4,000	63.64%	£3,200.00
14	Friends of St Patricks Ballygalget	Summer Fete Day	£2,554	58.18%	£2,054.00
15	Hollywood Shared Town	The Creative Hollywood festival	£4,000	50.91%	£4,000.00
16	Polish Association	International Children's Day, Polish Independence Day, Cultural Christmas Celebration	£4,000	58.18%	£2,000.00
17	St Patricks Community Centre	Spooktacular Monster mash Halloween Fest	£4,000	60.00%	£3,700.00
					£ 25,174.00

Total	£32,719.00
--------------	-------------------

Unsuccessful - failed to reach pass mark and not recommended for Award				
	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	%
18	Cloughey Heritage Group	Cloughey Heritage Fun day	£1,000	43.63%
19	Glencraig IPS PTA	Community Summer Fair	£1,000	49.09%
20	Mae Murray Foundation	Inclusive Beach Events	£1,000	47.27%
21	Millisle & District Community Association	Burns night, Holocaust memorial day, St Patricks day	£1,000	49.09%
22	Hollywood District Community Council	Hollywood May Day Fair	£4,000	45.45%
			£8,000	

Unclassified

226

Ineligible Applications – not recommended for Award			
	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested
23	Bangor & ND Samaritans	Samaritans All-Ireland conference - not eligible as is a conference not event/festival	£1,000
24	Friends of Abbey PTA	Spring Festival - was a fundraising event	£1,000
25	Killinchy & District DCA	Killinchy Community Christmas Carols & Santa visit - refer to Christmas grants	£1,000
26	Lisbarnett & Lisbane	Lisbane Summer Fair - application received after the 12 noon deadline	£1,000
			£4,000

Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with the reason for rejection and offered feedback on their application and the Council's Appeals Procedure will apply, where appropriate. Also, where possible, officers will assist unsuccessful applicants to source other sources of funding for their events/festivals.

Award process and Possible Budget Reductions

In the report entitled the NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024, Members have been informed that the Permanent Secretary has written to the Council advising of possible budget reductions in grant income in the current financial year.

At the time of writing this report the Council's Letter of Offer from the Department of Communities (DfC), which provides £31,400 of matched funding for the Events and Festivals Fund, remains outstanding and therefore it is recommended that in line with the principles applied to other matched funded grants, only Council's contribution to grant schemes is released to successful applicants. The reduction applies to all successful applicants to the Events and Festivals Fund i.e., Tranche 1 Large and Medium (agreed by Council in March 2023) and Tranche 2 Neighbourhood and Local.

In the absence of DfC's matched funding Council's Letters of Offer to Tranche 1 successful groups have not been issued; instead the applicants have been notified that they can choose to run their events/festivals "at risk" in the absence of a formal offer of funding from the Council. It is now recommended that letters of offer for 82.06% of all approved awards under both Tranche 1 and 2 of the grants scheme is issued until such time as the Department confirms the Council's matched grant contribution.

Unclassified

227

Tranche 1 Events and Festivals

In March 2023, Council requested that Officers review two applications submitted under Tranche 1, which had been deemed by the panel ineligible for scoring, namely:

- Comber District LOL 15 - Celebration of Orange Culture
- Bangor District LOL 18 - Boyne Anniversary

The Events and Festivals fund is co-funded by DfC. DfC's Letter of Offer to Council states that Council must:

"Ensure that all events funded promote the principles of inclusion and comply with equality requirements".

Therefore, the Events and Festivals criteria includes similar specific criteria which states:

"Applications will not be accepted for the following activity:

Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension".

The panel met again to specifically review the two ineligible applications for a "Celebration of Orange Culture" and the "Boyne Anniversary". The decision that both applications from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges were ineligible was upheld. The panel agreed that the applications were ineligible due to the highlighted section taken from page 4 of the Guidance Notes:

Ineligible Applications

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders;
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions;
- Organisations not legally established in the UK;
- Events and festivals run on the same date as a Council run event and require the use of Council equipment/assets, are not eligible.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs
- Retrospective activity (events/festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed);
- *Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension*
- Events/festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the event organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

Unclassified

228

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees:

1. The recommendations set out in this report in relation to all Tranche 2 applications;
2. That the Tranche 1 applications received from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges are ineligible for assessment; and
3. That Council's Letters of Offer for all successful applications under Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 are released for 82.06% of approved awards (i.e., the Council's agreed contribution), until such time as the Department for Communities confirms the Council's grant contribution which match funds the Events and Festivals scheme.

Unclassified

229

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	20 April 2023
File Reference	SD148
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Service Order NI 1984
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Soccer Development Delivery April 2023 Onwards
Attachments	None

Members will recall that a report on the future of soccer development was presented to Community and Wellbeing Committee in March 2023 with a number of recommendations. However, at Marchs Council meeting, an amendment to the recommendations was approved by Members as follows:

“That this Council allocates appropriate funding to deliver our soccer development programmes and throughout the incoming year it consults with all local clubs, the Irish Football Association, and the Education Authority to ease the transaction from the Council’s responsibility over to them for the following fiscal year and explores all revenue streams including funding to alleviate running costs going forward for all.”

Considering above approved recommendation, Council Officers sought clarification from Elected Members on approved recommendation and requirements of Officers to implement recommendation. Following consultation with the proposer and seconder, it was advised that the expectation is full delivery of the programme for 2023/24 to

Unclassified

230

allow Officers more time to consult with local clubs and the IFA to ease the transition period.

Funding of Programme

Full direct delivery of the Sports Development Programme (2023/24 only) would be a net cost of approximately £68,000 to Council (Based on 2022/23 financial year expenditure of £90,000 and income generation of £22,000 approximately). Officers have considered Programme financing and identified the following potential opportunities to raise the shortfall:

- Officers will further consider programme costs to ensure any programme savings are made where possible. Costs of each activity stream will be carefully monitored to minimise overspends that occurred in past years.
- Officers will continue to actively seek any available external funding opportunities to fund the Programme during 2023/24.
- It is not possible to run a Leisure Centre Summer Scheme in 2023/24 due to recruitment issues therefore this will generate an identified saving of £25,000 to £30,000 (Community Development run summer schemes will continue as normal).
- Available budget in Sports Development staffing £5,000.
- Ards Half Marathon normal contribution not required (only £3,000 required) - £2,000
- Some Black Light Zone lease income £4,000
- Price Increases/charges are implemented across some of the Soccer Development Programmes £6,000. The following table details prices previously approved by Council and proposed changes for approval

Ards and North Down Borough Council Soccer Development – Price Increases 1 April 2023			
Activity	2022-23	2023-24 (Previously Approved)	2023-24 (Proposed to assist meet costs of delivery)
Easter Football Camp (3-days)	£30.00	£32.00	£34.00 March 2024
Easter Football Camp (3 days) Sibling Rate		£21.00	£27.50 10% discount
Summer Soccer course (weekly)	£45.00	£48.00	£50
Summer Soccer Course (weekly) Sibling Rate		£30.00	£45 10% discount
Football Development Centres 12 Weeks	£45.00	£48.00	£60
Football Development Centres 12 Weeks Sibling Rate		£34.50	£54 10% discount

Unclassified

231

Adult Walking Football Programme	£3.00	£3.50	£5
Disability Football Programme	£3.00	£3.50	No change
Borough Cup Entry Fee	Free	£50.00	£75
Schools Football Per Hour	£17.50	£20.00	£40.00
Community Cup			£20.00 Already promoted at this rate
Primary School Boys League (Ards) 18-week Programme		50% of facility hire Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school School provides all officials/referees
Primary School Boys League (Peninsula) 4-week Programme		50% of facility hire Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school School provides all officials/referees
Primary School Boys Tournament - Ards (2 weeks)		50% of facility hire Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school School provides all officials/referees
Primary School 1 Day Tournament - Ards	Free	Free	No change
Girls Coaching Programme (Ards) 2 weeks	Free	Free	£40.00 per hour
Girls Coaching Programme (Peninsula) 2 weeks	Free	Free	£40.00 per hour
Primary School Girls Tournament	Free	Free	No change

If all of the above is approved it will leave a shortfall of c. £21-26k, which represents a quarter of the overall costs.

As detailed to Members in March 2023; Officers will continue to plan the transition period and will actively engage with the IFA, clubs and schools. Officers will seek to bring this transition date forward from 1 April 2024 in order to address the budget gap. If this is not determined to be possible, then further efficiencies will be looked for either within the soccer programme itself, or from within the wider Leisure Services budget. Officers will bring back an update report to Members in the Autumn of 2023/24 and prior to the rate setting process to ensure Members are fully informed of the future delivery proposal.

Unclassified

232

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Approves the delivery of the Soccer Development Programme for 2023/24 based on savings identified within the report.
2. Agrees that direct delivery of the Soccer Development Programme will be for one year only (2023/24) during which the Sports Development team will further develop and promote the transition period with an update being provided to Members in Autumn 2023/24.

Unclassified

233

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing and Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Date of Report	07 April 2023
File Reference	CW 161
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	Response to Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Recommended response to the Consultation

Members will be aware of the above consultation, launched in February 2023, and which closes on 3rd May, and the various consultation and engagement events that Members and the public have been involved in since the launch. In addition, there have been Committee and Council meetings that have considered the issue, including a deputation received from the Trust in March. The attached response highlights the decision made by Council as a result of a specific motion agreed through Corporate Services Committee and ratified by Council in March. This is presented as the Councils recommended corporate response to the Consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

It is Recommended that Council submits the attached (Appendix 1) response to the Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area.

2nd May 2023

Strategic & Capital Development Department
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Kelly House, Ulster Hospital
Dundonald
BT16 1RH

Email: consultation@setrust.hscni.net

Dear Sir / Madam

Consultation response on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council

The Council considered the invitation to the above consultation and debated the proposals on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area on a number of occasions since the consultation launch, as follows

1. Council meeting, 22nd February 2023
2. Corporate Services Committee, 14th March 2023
3. Council meeting, 29th March 2023 (including a deputation from the SE Trust)
4. Cross Party Working Group on Health and Social Care on 3rd April 2023
5. Site visits to the Bangor and Newtownards MIUs and the Ulster Hospital ED.
6. Attendance at public meetings

The formal view of the Council as an organisation has been established through the recommendation of the Corporate Services Committee and ratified at Council on 29th March as follows.

This Council rejects the proposals to close the Bangor and Newtownards Minor Injuries Units. We believe that this will lead to a detrimental impact on patient care particularly at an already overstretched Ulster Hospital. The Council calls on the Trust to not only retain the minor injury unit in Ards but also to re-open the Bangor minor injury unit. We see this as a better way to treat more people locally and ease the pressure on the Ulster. We urge the Trust to listen to the real concerns from the public and we hope that this consultation exercise is a genuine one and not a cover for something that is already a done deal.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation and all of the engagement that you took time to organise for the Council over recent weeks. We look forward to receiving feedback on the Councils response to the consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Signed by Stephen Reid, Chief Executive, on behalf of the Council

Unclassified

236

ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	14 March 2023
File Reference	SD135
Legislation	Recreation and Youth services Order (1986)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG March 2023)
Attachments	Appendix 1 Successful Coaching Noting Report Appendix 2 Successful Goldcard Noting Report Appendix 3 Successful Travel & Accommodation Noting Report Appendix 4 Unsuccessful Report

Members will be aware that on the 26th August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £40,000 had been allocated within the 2022/2023 revenue budget for this purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still require Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates are reported to members.

Unclassified

237

During February 2023, the Forum received a total of 26 grant applications: 7 Coaching, 3 Goldcard, 15 Individual Travel/Accommodation and 1 Club Travel/Accommodation. A summary of the **15** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Coaching, Successful Goldcard and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories is as follows:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded February 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£250
Coaching	£3,000	*£665	-£642.50
Equipment	£11,000	£0	£3,535.14
Events	£6,000	£0	£1,200
Seeding	£500	£0	£250
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£1,350	*-£2,013.97
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
New category under development	£3,000	£0	£3,000
*Goldcards proposed during the period February 2023 is 1 (22 Goldcards in total during 2022/23).			

* The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of - **£642.50** is based on a proposed award of **£665.00** – for Noting. * The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of - **£2,013.97** is based on a proposed award of **£1,350.00** – for Noting.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached applications (no applications were received for over £250 this month), and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

Successful Coaching Applications - for Noting

March

2022/23

238

AppName	Application	Course	Benefits	Facilitator	Start Date / End Date	Requested	Proposed	Notes
Kestrel Trampoline Club	Coaching	4 x UKCC Level 1/2 trampoline coach (15 Jan), 3 x Level 1 judge course (1 Apr)	Will cater for the massive demand & support in aurora where there is currently only 1 registered coach above level. Recruiting new judges will allow Club to enter full numbers at events without a fine.	British Gymnastics	01/04/2023 19/04/2023	£2,130.00	£75.00	Current guidelines state funding limits for Official Qualification Courses, maximum of £75. Recommend funding of £75, 'subject to' confirmation of 3 judges courses booked.
Portaferry Sailing Club	Coaching	Safeguarding C&YP Awareness Course & Designated Safeguarding CO	Additional training for new volunteers allow junior sailing continue and summer camp within club. Children community/members PSC. Raise awareness.	RYA	27/02/2023 22/03/2023	£90.00	£90.00	Current guidelines state funding limits for organising club development training/workshops, up to 50% of costs up to a maximum of £200. Recommend funding of £90, 'subject to' confirmation of workshop booked.
Suphub - Caitlyn Taylor	Coaching	Level 1 SUP Instructor	More qualified Instructors will ensure that the club can meet demand for courses and events and increase participation of the sport throughout the borough	BSUPA	04/03/2023 05/03/2023	£225.00	£168.75	Current guidelines state funding limits for Governing Body sports coach qualification – up to 75% of costs up to a maximum of £300. Recommend funding of £168.75.

AppName	Application	Course	Benefits	Facilitator	Start Date / End Date	Requested	Proposed	Notes
Suphub - Lucy Howard	Coaching	Level 1 SUP Instructor	More qualified Instructors will ensure that the club can meet demand for courses and events and increase participation of the sport throughout the borough	BSUPA	04/03/2023 05/03/2023	£225.00	£168.75	Current guidelines state funding limits for Governing Body sports coach qualification – up to 75% of costs up to a maximum of £300. Recommend funding of £168.75.
Suphub - Taryn Phillips	Coaching	Level 1 SUP Instructor	More qualified Instructors will ensure that the club can meet demand for courses and events and increase participation of the sport throughout the borough	BSUPA	04/03/2023 05/03/2023	£225.00	£162.50	Current guidelines state funding limits for Governing Body sports coach qualification – up to 75% of costs. Recommend funding of £162.50 (Club reached max. £500 per Club per financial year).
Total Proposed							£665.00	

Successful Goldcards - for Noting

March

2022/23

240

Applicant	Representing	Sport	Event	Start	End	Gvm	Proposed	Notes
Hannah Crymble	Ireland	Weightlifting	2023 World Championships	02/09/2023	17/09/2023	ABM, LDP, BA	Awarded	Goldcard valid from 20 March 2023 to 17 September 2023.

Successful Travel/Accommodation - for Noting

March

2022/23

241

Applicant	Representing	Sport	Event	Location	Start/ End	Requested	Proposed	Notes
Alison Morris	Ireland	Bowls	2023 British Isles Indoor Bowling Championships (Triples)	Dunfermline, Scotland	13/03/2023 15/03/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Selection email from Recognised NGB, Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, advises Alison has qualified for the British Isles Indoor Bowling Championships (Triples Discipline), 13-15 March 23, Dunfermline, Scotland. Recommend funding of £150.
Chloe Watson	Ireland	Bowls	2023 British Isles Indoor Bowling Championship (Pairs & Triples)	Dumfermline, Scotland	13/03/2023 15/03/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Selection email from Recognised NGB, Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, advises Chloe has qualified for the British Isles Indoor Bowling Championships (Pairs & Triples disciplines), 13-15 March 23, Scotland. Recommend funding of £150.
Chloe Watson	Ireland	Bowls	2023 British Isles Indoor Bowling International Series	Dumfermline, Scotland	10/03/2023 12/03/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Selection email from Recognised NGB, Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, advises Chloe has qualified for the British Isles Indoor Bowling International Series, 10-12 March 23, in Dunfermline, Scotland. Recommend funding of £150.

Applicant	Representing	Sport	Event	Location	Start/ End	Requested	Proposed	Notes
Isabel Nixon	N Ireland	Sailing	2023 Eric Twiname Championship	Rutland, England	29/04/2023 01/05/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Isabel is representing Northern Ireland at the Eric Twiname Championship, 29 April-31 May 23, Rutland, England. Recommend funding of £150, 'subject to' selection letter from RYA NI.
Kestrel Gymnastics Club		Gymnastics - Trampoline & DMT	2023 British Schools Gymnastics Association National Finals	Benham LC Northampton	18/03/2023	£2,096.00	£200.00	Club members are attending the British Schools Gymnastics Association National Finals (an event which involves travel beyond normal limits). Maximum per financial year is £500, £300 already awarded. Recommend funding of £200, "subject to" event entry.
Kyle Thompson	Ulster	Cross Country	2023 All Ireland Schools Cross Country Championships	SETU Arena, Carriganore	11/03/2023	£249.30	£100.00	Application advises Kyle representing Ulster at All Ireland Schools Cross Country Championships on 11 March. Ulster Entries 2023, shows Kyle listed. Propose £100, "Subject to" an Athletics NI letter confirming that Kyle will be representing Ulster.

Applicant	Representing	Sport	Event	Location	Start/End	Requested	Proposed	Notes
Sally Nixon	N Ireland	Sailing	2023 RS Feva Nationals	Plas Heli, Wales	27/05/2023 30/05/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Sally is representing Northern Ireland at the RS Feva Nationals, 27-30 May 23, Plas Heli, Wales. Recommend funding of £150, 'subject to' selection letter from RYA NI.
Sandra Bailie	Ireland	Lawn Bowls	2023 British Isles Indoor Bowling Championship (Pairs & Triples)	Dunfermline, Scotland	13/03/2023 15/03/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Selection email from Recognised NGB, Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, advises Sandra has qualified for the British Isles Indoor Bowling Championships (Pairs & Triples Disciplines), 13-15 Mar 23, Dunfermline, Scotland. Recommend funding of £150.
Sandra Bailie	Ireland	Lawn Bowls	2023 British Isles Indoor Bowling International Series	Dunfermline, Scotland	10/03/2023 12/03/2023	£150.00	£150.00	Selection email from Recognised NGB, Irish Women's Indoor Bowling Association, advises Sandra has qualified for the British Isles Indoor Bowling International Series, 10-12 March 23, Dunfermline, Scotland. Recommend funding of £150.

Total Proposed £1,350.00

Unsuccessful Applications Report

March

2022/23

14 March 2023

244

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Peninsula Triathlon Club	Coaching	Retrospective funding as Application received on 24 February for a Coaching course running 21 January - 11 February.	Our Guidelines state, under "What we will not fund": Retrospective Funding.	Peninsula Triathlon Club do not meet the criteria as their application was received 24 February for course running 21 January - 11 February (retrospective). Funding not proposed.
Donaghadee Sailing Club	Coaching	Retrospective funding as Application received on 22 February for a Coaching course running 13-18 February.	Our Guidelines state, under "What we will not fund": Retrospective Funding.	Donaghadee Sailing Club do not meet the criteria as their application was received 22 February for course running 13-18 February (retrospective). Funding not proposed.

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Demi-Leigh Hennessey	Goldcard	A Goldcard in preparation for the World Junior Savate Championships, in Slovenia, 21-25 June 2023.	Take part in a sport listed by Sport Northern Ireland / Sport Ireland through the UK Sports Council's recognition policy / Sport Ireland's recognition policy and be affiliated to a recognised Governing Body.	Savate is not a Recognised Sport. However, application withdrawn on 6 March, as Demi-Leigh is no longer competing at the event.
Frankie Hennessey	Goldcard	A Goldcard in preparation for the World Junior Savate Championships, in Slovenia, 21-25 June 2023.	Take part in a sport listed by Sport Northern Ireland / Sport Ireland through the UK Sports Council's recognition policy / Sport Ireland's recognition policy and be affiliated to a recognised Governing Body.	Savate is not a Recognised Sport.

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Sophie Kingsley	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.
Lucy Kingsley	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Hannah Ruttie	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.
Emmie Louise Richardson	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Ellie Smyth	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.
Caleb Moore	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.

Applicant	Application	Request	Evidence Required	Explanation
Aimee Robinson	Travel / Acc	For a Travel and Accommodation Grant for the Trampoline League Qualifier in Cardiff, Wales 1-2 April 2023.	Assistance will be available for individuals who are representing their sport at a specific event at Provincial/ National/ International level.	No selection letter provided from Recognised NGB, British Gymnastics, for Trampoline League Qualifier, advising of representative level and event selected for. Funding not proposed.

Unclassified

250

ITEM 16**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	28 March 2023
File Reference	'-
Legislation	Section 78 Coronavirus Act 2020
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings – Extension of legislation to 24 September 2023 - Sec 78 Coronavirus Act 2020
Attachments	Letter from the Department of Communities

The Council has received a letter from the Department of Communities in relation to Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This piece of legislation allows for Councils to run remote or hybrid meetings. The legislation expired on 24 March 2023 but has been extended to 24 September 2023.

A copy of the letter advising of the update from the Department of Communities is attached.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the letter.

An Roinn
PobalDeapairment fur
Commonities

251

To: Council Chief Executives**Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**Telephone: (028) 90582 3346
e-mail: anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref:
Date: 24 March 2023

Dear Chief Executive

Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings

Further to my letters of 25 March and 26 September 2022.

Section 78 (local authority meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained provision to provide councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency. This included an enabling power for the Department to make subordinate legislation regarding remote/hybrid meetings and the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 were subsequently made and came into operation on 1 May 2020.

The expiry date of section 78 (Local Authority Meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 was previously extended to 24 March 2023, thus allowing councils to continue to hold remote/hybrid meetings under the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2020.

This was intended as an interim measure until such time as proposals for more permanent legislation, to be made under section 2 of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021, could be considered by a Communities Minister. In the absence of the Assembly, it is not possible to make regulations under the 2021 Act.

A further extension order has therefore been made to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act for a further 6 months, until **24 September 2023**. [The Coronavirus](#)



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Deapairment fur
Commonities

252

[Act 2020 \(Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings\) \(No2\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2023](#) was made on 23 March. As previously highlighted in my earlier letter of September 2022, an Order to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act is subject to the confirmatory procedure in the Assembly and, whilst it comes into operation once made, it will cease to have effect 40 days from the date of making unless it has been approved by resolution of the Assembly (the 40 day period does not include any time in which the Assembly is dissolved, in recess for more than 4 days or adjourned for more than 6 days). The Department will monitor the situation and keep councils informed.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Carleton
Director
Local Government & Housing Regulation

Unclassified

253

ITEM 17

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	13 April 2023
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	50th Anniversary of UDR CGC Greenfinches
Attachments	

Members will recall, at the Corporate Services Committee on 14 February 2023, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:-

That this Council honours the 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches following the introduction of the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill in July 1973, which permitted the recruitment of women into the regiment, recognising those who joined within the Borough, and brings back a report to outline how the Corporate Services Committee can work with Regimental Association of The Ulster Defence Regiment CGC along with other relevant bodies to support anniversary events in the Borough and explores a lasting tribute to the Greenfinches of The Ulster Defence Regiment CGC.

A meeting has since taken place with representatives from the relevant local groups. Discussions took place around a civic event and a proposed lasting tribute. The plans have been developed in conjunction with the local groups and take into consideration the resources available.

Unclassified

254

Civic Reception

It is recommended that a Civic Reception be held in the City Hall, Bangor during the commemoration period July to September 2023. It is recommended that those who lived or served in the UDR CGC Greenfinches in the Borough between 1973 and 30 June 1992 be invited to attend.

Certificates will be designed for the occasion and presented to all those Greenfinches in attendance. The event will be held in the evening and a finger buffet will be served.

Lasting Tribute

The issue of a lasting tribute was considered. It is recommended that a commemorative tree be planted with an explanatory plaque to mark the occasion. This would be in accordance with the Council's Memorial Tree Policy.

In addition, the UDR Rose bush, the Freedom Rose, could be planted. Discussions will take place between the group and parks team to ascertain the most appropriate location for the planting.

Commemorative Flower Bed

The group has also requested that a Commemorative Flower Bed display be installed outside the Post Office in Bangor to mark the occasion. This request is in line with the Council's policy.

Parade

A discussion had taken place around a parade. It is considered that, due to the poor mobility of a number of the members, they would not wish to see a parade included within the commemoration plans. As members are aware the Council holds a Veteran's Day parade annually in Newtownards. It is recommended that some members of the UDR CGC Greenfinches be asked to lead the parade (if able) this year, some space made available for seated guests and that special mention is made to the anniversary in the speeches.

RECOMMENDATION

It is Recommended that Council agrees the plans as set out above to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches.

Unclassified

255

ITEM 18**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	13 April 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Loan of Belfast (Good Friday Agreement)
Attachments	

Background

The National Archives (TNA) holds the UK Government copy of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and has agreed to loan the Agreement to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) to facilitate venues and organisations within Northern Ireland to display the document on a day display basis.

To mark the 25th Anniversary of the Agreement being signed, the Northern Ireland Office would like to offer the chance for Councils to display the document in a venue of their choice, on a day display basis between 25 April and 17 May 2023, should there be a specific event that would benefit from having the Agreement present and thus enabling a unique opportunity for people to view a key piece of Northern Ireland's history.

Unclassified

256

Venue

There are a number of standard safety and security requirements that any venue must meet in order to display a document of this nature. These are (but not limited to):

- It must be displayed in a room without food or drink.
- Preferably a room with one entrance/exit, but no more than two that is not directly accessible to any outside entrance.
- No open windows.
- An appropriately sized table that can safely and securely display the documents.
- A member of security staff on hand at all times who is able to check bags and manage access.
- A cloakroom for bags and coats.
- A system in place to manage the number of visitors who will have access to the document at any one time. For example this could be organising viewings for specific community groups, school trips or ticketed viewings.
- Constant invigilation by a member of conservation staff from PRONI who shall have responsibility to ensure these display conditions are met. This member of staff shall have discretion to make additional requests to ensure the safety and security of the document.

Staff from TNA Collection Care Department are available to work with the Council about these display conditions or to answer questions around the care of the document in order to help facilitate the display.

A member of PRONI staff will accompany the document to the nominated location, and will remain with the document at all times, however it is advised that an interpreter should be on hand to answer any questions from viewers.

The Council are asked to consider the offer to display the Agreement and if in favour, consider where and what date in May they would wish to hold it.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council consider the offer.

Unclassified

257

ITEM 19**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	06 April 2023
File Reference	CW162
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024
Attachments	Appendix 1 Letter from the DfC Permanent Secretary Appendix 2 Letter from the Executive Office

Council received the attached correspondence from both the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities (Appendix 1) and The Executive Office (Appendix 2), advising the Council of the budget uncertainties facing all Government Departments for the 2023/2024 financial year.

Given the absence of a budget settlement for 2023/24, the position for all Northern Ireland Departments remains unclear, however, the financial outlook for 2023/24 is extremely challenging with pressures at a NI Block level, leading to the potential for reductions in the Departments final 2023/24 budget allocation.

Potential budget cuts implied by Permanent Secretary's letter (Appendix 1) have implications for Council, primarily for both the Community Development Service (through the Community Support Programme) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme and the Externally Funded Programmes Service (through Good Relations and potentially the Policing and Community Safety Partnership).

Unclassified

258

The Community Support Programme (CSP)

The Community Support Programme provides matched funding from both the Department of Communities and Council and is allocated across almost all of the services provided by the Councils Community Development team including the following;

1. Essential funding awarded to Community Advice Ards and North Down for Advice Services and Welfare Reform.
2. The Social Supermarket operated by North Down Community Works.
3. Contributions to the three Community Networks.
4. The recently approved Community Development Grants Scheme for community Group running costs.
5. A proportion of Community Development Officers salary and overhead costs.

as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Community Support Grant Income 2022/23

Funded Programme	Dept.	DfC Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
Community Support Programme	DfC	£384, 091.62 (to include all uplifts awarded in 2022/23)	£796,337.73	Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND), Welfare Reform Tribunal Reps (CAAND), Welfare Reform Mitigations Face to Face (CAAND), AND Social Supermarket, Community Development Grants, Service Level Agreements with the 3 Networks, Community Development Officer salaries, Training and support services

Therefore, as acknowledged by the Permanent Secretary, the situation will have a knock-on impact upon support and services delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector at a time when the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact communities, groups and individuals.

Unclassified

259

Salary Costs

In an attempt to alleviate some of the immediate pressures that organisations are facing, the Permanent Secretary has provided a level of financial support to help sustain some services and posts. This support only covers the 3-month period from 1 April to 30 June 2023, with a total of £70,240.57 being advanced to Council in relation to salary costs for Council staff and Community Advice Ards and North Down salary costs only as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Community Support Fund, April – 30 June Advance Funding breakdown for Councils

	Salary Support	Running Cost Support	Total Interim Financial Support
Welfare Reform Tribunal Reps	£4,800.00	N/A	£4,800.00
Welfare Reform Mitigations Mitigations Face to Face	£14,439.97	N/A	£14,439.97
Community Support Programme	£51,000.60	N/A	£51,000.60

All Council posts, including Community Development, Neighbourhood Renewal and Good Relations posts which are match funded by DfC and TEO are contracted permanent posts, therefore Council has an obligation to continue to fully fund these posts.

Council has a contract with Community Advice Ards and North Down which commenced on 1 April 2021, initially for a three-year period, expiring on 31 March 2024, with an option to extend for a further 2 x 12-month period subject to adherence to the Agreement, the Terms and Conditions of the Contract and satisfactory performance. The total amount of annual grant income from the Department, through Community Support Programme in 2022/23, for Community Advice Ards and North Down was initially £200,479.09 (excluding a number of additional uplifts). As per table 2 above at this point the Department has only committed £19,239.97 for quarter 1 and that amount is solely for salary costs.

Community Development Grants

Following Council approval in March 2023 all applicants to the Community Development Grant scheme have been advised of the outcome of their applications, subject to receipt of a formal Letter of Offer for matched funding from the Department of Development (DfC).

Of the £87,320.50 awarded to forty-five successful groups, £41,100 of this budget is grant income from DfC through the Community Support Programme. Given the current grant income uncertainty, it is recommended that Council releases Letters of Offer to the successful groups for 52.96% of each total approved grant, which is Councils secured contribution to the grant budget. The balance of the approved awards, which is the Departments contribution to the total grant budget, can be

Unclassified

260

released (or the proportion thereof) once the Department confirms the level of grant income available to Council.

For Member's information, if the Department's contribution is not forthcoming, in order for Council to make up the grant award to 100% of what communities would be entitled to receive as a result of their application for running costs being approved by Council in March, an additional £41,100 would be required from another source. There is no additional Council budget available for this.

Other Funded Community Support Programme Services

Other support services supported through the Community Support Programme include financial support for the Social Supermarket (SSM) operated by North Down Community Works.

In 2022-23 £82,155.18 was ringfenced in the CSP for the SSM although approximately £48,847 of this budget was unspent, largely due to delays in employing staff to deliver the project. There is no matched funding from Council for the SSM, therefore at this point Council is unable to issue a Service Level Agreement or release funding to North Down Community Works, until the Department confirms the level of grant funding, they are able to commit.

Officers have also written to the Department asking if the proportion of this budget which is ringfenced by the SSM for salary costs for the project co-ordinator and the driver, is secure and can be confirmed. At the time of writing this reports officers await a reply.

Good Relations Programme

The correspondence received from The Executive Office (TEO) at Appendix 2, sets out the Departments intention to consult on budget reductions and highlights the fact that there will be *"some very difficult choices and challenges ahead; and this may have an impact on the District Council Good Relations Programme in the coming year"*.

The grant income from TEO for the Council Good Relations Programme received for 2022/23 is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Good Relations Programme Grant Income 2022/23

Funded Programme	Dept.	Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
Good Relations (GR) Programme	TEO	£170,053.50	£56,684.50	Delivery of GR Action Plan to include the Cultural Expressions Programme GR Salaries and overhead costs

Officers have reviewed the agreed Good Relations (GR) Action Plan to consider which of the agreed GR Programmes need to proceed in the first six months "at risk"

Unclassified

261

and it is recommended that the Cultural Expressions programme proceeds, along with the Community Cup with ANDBC's Football Development Team which is being delivered in May 2023 at a cost of £1,000. All other planned programmes and activity can be postponed until the second half of the financial year, or until further clarity on funding from TEO becomes available.

In line with the principles applied to the Community Development Grants, it is recommended that the grants ring fenced for community festivals through the Cultural Expressions Programme, are limited to the Councils financial contribution, which is 25% of the total grant funding. (£15,000). This equates to individual grants of £595 rather than the normal grant amount of £2,300. Once the Department confirms the level of grant income available to Council the balance of match funding available can be awarded accordingly, subject to normal audit requirements. For Member's information, if TEOs contribution is not forthcoming, in order for Council to make up the funding award to 100% of what communities normally receive, an additional £45,000 is required. There is no additional Council budget available for this, however it could be funded from other good relations programmes in this year's activity plan, but this would be to the detriment of those programmes pending receipt of a letter of offer from TEO. There may be some budget available from NIHE which had contributed towards the costs in the past, but this is uncertain at this stage.

All other costs in relation to the Cultural Expression Programme are funded by Council, including the cost of beacons, set up, clearance costs and reinstatement. Council is also seeking a contribution from NI Housing Executive towards clearance costs.

As reported to Members in March 2023, Council has received £142,087.46 Dispersal Funding from TEO for support and the integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which support the delivery of services up to 31 March 2024. The Good Relations team can prioritise the administration of this financial support whilst other GR programmes are in abeyance.

Grant Income for other Community and Culture Services

Although there has been no written confirmation from other Departments regarding further reductions to grant income, Council receives grant funding for a number of other services, detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Grant Income for other Community and Culture Services

Funded Programme	Dept.	Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
Community Festivals Fund (Events and Festivals Fund)	DfC	£31,400.00	Minimum of 50% £31,400.00	This budget is now included in the Events and Festivals Fund -Tranche 1 and 2
Neighbourhood Renewal Funding	DfC	£16,000.00	£5,000.00	Proportion of Salary costs and overheads for Neighbourhood Renewal Officer

Unclassified

262

Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)	DoJ	£317,834	£56,584.50	Delivery of PCSP Action Plan – grants and 3-year contracts
PCSP Members Allowances	DoJ	£18,000.00	£0.00	Members costs e.g., Mileage

Officers' recommendations in relation to the Events and Festivals fund are included in the Events and Festivals Report.

A formal Letter of Offer from the Department of Justice (DoJ) for the administration and activities of the PCSP remains outstanding. Members should note that the DoJ funds the activities of the PCSP on the basis of 100% and there is no matched funding for these activities from Council. It is therefore recommended that Council does not issue any further PCSP contracts or grants until the Departments financial position is confirmed.

Hardship Fund

Members will be aware that in February 2023 Council approved the establishment of a Hardship Fund. With the approval of the Department, this budget was comprised of unspent funding allocated to the SSM operated by North Down Community Works, totalling £48,847. This funding was an element of the Community Support Programme (2022-23) provided by DfC, in Table 1 above. If the underspend could not be used in 2022-23, it would have had to be returned to the Department.

Nine Community Partners, providing food and hardship support were to benefit from the underspend. Members also agreed that £20,000 should be awarded to the SSM operated by Kilcooley Womens Centre (KWC) rather than the recommended award of £6,672. The balance of funding required was £13,328 and it was agreed that this amount would be contributed by Council only if additional further Hardship Funding for 2023-24, was not secured from the NI Executive.

Council agreed that should additional Hardship Funding from Executive become available for 2023-24 it would be distributed it to the same nine Community Partners based on the same percentage applied to the total grant funding of £48,648 awarded, (excluding the additional funding awarded to Kilcooley Womens Centre).

In April 2023 received confirmation from DfC that £344,027.00 would be awarded to Ards and North Down Council, to be distributed in 2023-24. This amount is approximately six times what was expected and on which the recommendation to distribute based on the proportions already awarded was made. Therefore, it is recommended that what was expected, i.e., 1/6 or £48,648 is distributed in the agreed manner. Therefore, each Community Partner would receive additional awards as set out in Table 5 below.

Unclassified

263

Table 5. DfC Hardship Awards

Organisation	Purpose of Funding	Funding Recommended
Community Advice Ards and North Down	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
St Vincent De Paul	To collaborate with partners to provide food, advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Ards Foodbank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Bangor Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Storehouse Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Kilcooley Womens Centre SSM	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support by supporting their running costs	£6,672
Ards Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting	£2,872
County Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
North Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
Total		£48,648.00

In addition, the extra funding of £13,328 allocated to KWC SSM in 2022-23 which completed the top up of £20k in accordance with the Councils previous decision, should be taken from the Executives Hardship Fund, leaving a balance of £282,051 to be utilised.

Given the uncertainty of the Department's contribution under the Community Support Programme, that normally funds Community Advice Ards and North Down and the Social Supermarket operated by North Down Community Works it is recommended that Council seeks approval from DfC to allocate the remaining £282,051 to *initially* cover the annual costs for both Community Advice Ards and North Down and the Social Supermarket, operated by North Down Community Works.

The DfC percentage recommended for award to each organisation is based on the percentages awarded in the Letter of Variance, dated 22 June 2022, excluding consolidated uplifts i.e.,

- £148,048.57 for Community Advice Ards and North Down (plus £19,239.97 confirmed for salaries) and

Unclassified

264

- £63,799,93 for the SSM operated by North Down Community Works pending confirmation of a letter of offer for these schemes from the Department.

If with DfCs permission the hardship fund balance is used for these, a residual balance of approximately £70,000 remains, which could be used to top up the approved community development 'running costs' pending receipt of the letter of offer.

Thereafter, the balance of the approved awards, can be released (or a proportion thereof) once the Department confirms the level of grant income available to Council through the CSP for 2023/24, adjusting for any advance payments from the DfC. Furthermore, once the Department confirms the Councils CSP grant income for 2023/24, Council can then consider how any unused and remaining balance in the Departments Hardship Fund for 2023/24 is allocated, with Departmental approval i.e., up to the balance of £282,051.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves:

1. The release of Community Development Grants (for running costs) Letters of Offer to the successful groups for 52.96% of each total approved grant, which is Councils secured contribution to the grant budget.
2. That a Service Level Agreement or funding for 2023/24 is not released to North Down Community Works, until the Department confirms the level of grant funding, they are able to commit.
3. That the Council Goods Relations Cultural Expressions Programme continues "at risk", however the associated grants are limited to Councils contribution of £595, until TEO confirms their financial contribution to the Programme.
4. That the Good Relations Community Cup proceeds "at risk"
5. That the PCSP does not issue any further contracts or grants until the Departments financial position is confirmed.
6. That £48,648 from the Executives Hardship Fund for 2023/24 is distributed as detailed in Table 5 above.
7. That Council seeks approval from DfC to allocate the remaining £282,051 (based on the percentages detailed in this report) to initially cover the annual costs for both Community Advice Ards and North Down (plus £19,239.97 confirmed for salaries) and the Social Supermarket, operated by North Down Community Works, until the Department confirms Councils CSP allocation, and redistributes any remaining balance towards approved Community Group Running Cost awards.
8. Once the Departments confirm the Councils grant incomes for 2023/24 Council considers how any remaining balance in the Executives Hardship Fund for 2023/24 is allocated, with Departmental approval i.e., the balance of £282,051.



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Depairtment fur
Commonities

From: Colum Boyle
Permanent Secretary

Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 823301
E-mail: colum.boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: PSC 0180.23
Date: 24 March 2023

2023/24 Funding Position

I wanted to update you on the current budget position and the outlook for 2023/24, as I recognise the impact of the ongoing uncertainty on our partner organisations. Given the absence of a budget settlement for 2023/24, the position for all Northern Ireland Departments remains unclear, however, the financial outlook for 2023/24 is extremely challenging with pressures at a NI Block level, leading to the potential for reductions in the Department's final 2023/24 budget allocation.

I appreciate that this situation provides significant challenges and frustration for organisations and their staff who receive funding from our programmes. I also recognise the vital nature of the support and the services delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector at a time when the cost of living crisis continues to impact communities, groups and individuals.

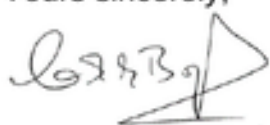
In response to concerns raised by the sector and to alleviate some of the immediate pressures that organisations are facing, I have taken the decision to provide a level of financial support to help sustain services and posts. This support will be provided by the Department to cover the 3-month period up to 30 June 2023 with the allocations based on the 2022/23 budget settlement. I hope you will understand why this allocation cannot be interpreted as an assurance as to the level of funding available for the remainder of 2023/24, given the absence of clarity on the overall budget settlement for the Department.

I can assure you that I remain committed to doing everything within my gift to ensure that organisations can continue to deliver critical services to the most vulnerable and to those who are most in need of support and advice.

I appreciate that this will not meet the immediate needs of all organisations, but I hope this goes some way to providing a level of support to help sustain critical services and retain experienced staff. Officials from across the Department continue to be available to help support organisations and to provide advice and guidance on the various programmes.

I would hope that we will be in a position to confirm our annual funding budget within the coming weeks, and in the meantime I am very grateful to you and your organisations for all that you deliver on behalf of the department for our communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colum Boyle', with a stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

COLUM BOYLE
PERMANENT SECRETARY

Gareth Johnston
Deputy Secretary
Good Relations and Inclusion
Directorate (GRID)

Room E5.22
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR

Gareth.johnston@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk



05 April 2023

Dear Chief Executive

UPDATE: APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE'S DISTRICT COUNCIL GOOD RELATIONS PROGRAMME 2023-2024 ACTION PLAN

I am writing to update you on your recent application for funding under the Executive Office's (TEO) District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) for the period 2023/24 and specifically on our plan to consult on budget reductions through an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

As you are aware, in previous years TEO has funded 75% of eligible expenditure under the DCGRP, with councils required to provide match funding of 25%. Generally, as we approach the beginning of the Programme's delivery period it is a matter for Councils to decide whether to operate 'at risk' in the absence of a confirmed TEO budget for your Action Plan.

Final budgets have yet to be set, but it is already clear that the Northern Ireland public sector is facing a highly constrained financial situation in 2023/2024. I wanted to explain the steps TEO is taking to live within its allocation.

The Department has put immediate measures in place to reduce staff numbers and cut expenditure across the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies. This would not, however, achieve enough savings to address the level of reductions which we are likely to face given the significant pressures on NI public finances. We therefore need to look at difficult options to ensure that we can live within our means.

For this reason, we are urgently preparing an Equality Impact Assessment on these and other options as well as their implications. We will consult on this shortly and would be keen to have your views. In line with our statutory duties, the EQIA will inform decisions on budget allocations, including for Good Relations programmes.

I will send you a link to the EQIA once it is available so that you can have your say. In doing so, it is only fair to highlight that: we are facing into a very difficult year; there will be some very difficult choices and challenges ahead; and this may have an impact on the District Council Good Relations Programme in the coming year.

If you have any further questions or queries on this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

[Signed] GWJ

GARETH JOHNSTON

Cc Chris Gardner
Gavin King

From: Sinead Healy <Sinead.Healy@eani.org.uk> **On Behalf Of** EAPlanSpEP
Sent: 31 March 2023 15:31
Subject: EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Consultation

Welcome to our consultation,

A core priority for the Education Authority (EA) is to ensure that all of our children can lead happy, fulfilled lives, and enjoy an inclusive education within a supportive, nurturing environment. A key part of this is ensuring that parents/carers, schools, children and young people and our range of partners can access the information they need at the right time in the right place.

In line with the SEND Act (NI) 2016, we will be preparing and publishing an annual plan of the EA's arrangements for special educational provision for the first time on 31st July 2023 and on the same date every year going forward.

The Plan sets out a range of EA resources and advisory and support services available to help schools, parents/carers, and other key partners access the most appropriate support to meet the child's Special Educational need.

The Plan must be accessible to people of all ages and abilities and will be available in a range of formats to meet the needs of all audiences, and in line with accessibility regulations, for example a website, easy read formats, accessible language, animations, and videos.

The Plan will be published for the first time on 31st July 2023 and on the same date every year going forward.

In advance of this date, EA have launched an independent targeted consultation on the content of the Plan which will run from 31st March until 26th May 2023.

As part of this consultation, we would very much value your feedback on two key components of the Plan:

- the EA Plan of Arrangements website and
- a PDF version of the document that will be available to any person who has difficulty accessing online resources.

Follow the link below to access the consultation page that includes links to the above and to a questionnaire designed to gather your feedback. The password is: **easend2023**

If you would like a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment for the consultation, please request it by replying to this email.

Thank you for your valued input to the development of this very important resource for children and young people, parents/carers, and schools.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-plan-of-arrangements-for-special-educational-provision-consultation>

Kind regards,
EA Plan

From: NIE Networks <ConnectionDesign@NIENetworks.co.uk>

Sent: 31 March 2023 11:50

To: Enquiries <enquiries@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk>

Subject: SSG Consultation Release

[Home](#) [Customer Information](#) [Contact Us](#) [Privacy Notice](#) [Unsubscribe](#)



Dear Stakeholder,

The Northern Ireland Energy Strategy – The Path to Net Zero Energy outlines a range of recommendations and policies to achieve a 56% reduction in energy related emissions, including delivering at least 80% of electricity consumption from a diverse range of renewable resources. NIE Networks and the System Operator for NI (SONI) recognise the important role Small Scale Generation (SSG) plays in achieving the wider objectives of the Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland, and as a result of this NIE Networks is considering an update to SSG Connection Offers and Agreements. It is important to note that without the proposed update to SSG Distribution Connection Offers and Agreements NIE Networks will remain in the position that it cannot issue SSG export Distribution Connection Offers as per SONI's recommendation on the grounds of system security concerns.

Therefore, NIE Networks is launching a consultation to gain feedback from stakeholders on a proposal to amend existing distribution connection offer policy for exporting generators with a registered capacity less than 5MW. The consultation paper can be viewed at the link below. NIE Networks is proposing to include wording within Distribution Connection Offers and Connection Agreements for generators with a registered capacity less than 5MW that entitles NIE Networks to instruct the generator to cease or reduce parallel operation for system security reasons as instructed by SONI to NIE Networks.

NIE Networks invites interested parties to respond to this consultation by responding to the three questions outlined in the consultation paper. Responses should be sent electronically to connectiondesign@nienetworks.co.uk by 5 pm on Friday 12th May 2023. The responses will be

analysed by NIE Networks and SONI and will be used in the development of a decision paper that will publish the result of this consultation and new connection process go live date.

In addition to this, NIE Networks invites interested parties to attend a Zoom event where a short presentation will take place, followed by the opportunity to ask questions. This Zoom event will take place on the 26th of April 2023. If you wish to attend, please mail connectiondesign@nienetworks.co.uk for joining details. Participants are encouraged to submit questions ahead of the event by sending them to connectiondesign@nienetworks.co.uk.

[VIEW GENERATION CONSULTATION PAGE](#)

[VIEW CONSULTATION DOCUMENT](#)

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited - Registered in Northern Ireland - Registered No: NI26041
Registered Office: 120 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5HT

Unclassified

272

ITEM 21**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	18 April 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Consultation on NAC NI Constitution
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Draft NAC Constitution (Revised 15 March 2023)

Background

The National Association of Councillors (NAC) Northern Ireland Region has undertaken a review of its Constitution.

It was requested that the proposed amendments to the NAC Constitution following the review would be issued to Councils for feedback. Accordingly, please find attached the draft NAC Constitution (Revised 15 March 2023). Feedback from the Council is requested no later than Friday 28th April 2023. Officers have sought an extension to this deadline to ensure ratification of Council meeting.

Officers request that any feedback is discussed at this meeting and all comments will be collated into a draft response, which will be circulated to all Elected Members for information before the deadline.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council consider the NAC Constitution (Revised 15 March 2023) and provide feedback at Council to inform consultation response.

1. Name

The name of the Association shall be The National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region herein referred to as the Association.

Mission Statement: -

The Association strives for the better governance of local communities within Northern Ireland by seeking to ensure that those who are elected to serve to the office of councillor are equipped, to the greatest possible extent, to discharge the many and varied responsibilities falling upon them.

2. Aims and Objectives

- To promote & represent civic leadership.
- To extend and strengthen the links between all Local Authorities, and to enhance friendship and co-operation.
- To address and understand matters of common and mutual interest.
- To facilitate the coming together of members on a regular basis.
- To promote equality of opportunity, combat discrimination and embrace diversity in both the work of the Association and its membership.
- To provide a forum for members to research, discuss and progress issues and a means whereby joint views may be formulated and expressed.
- To identify training needs of members, and solutions.
- To provide information on the Association to members, to ensure that they are afforded the opportunity to contribute to the Association's activities and to the development of policies.
- To promote the policies of the Association by providing information to local authorities, bodies representing local government, the public, the media, and outside organisations.
- To promote the status of members and to ensure adequate remuneration, pension rights and working conditions.
- To advocate measures which will remove barriers to serve as a councillor and encourage a diversity of candidates standing for election.
- To actively take part in consultations with the NI Assembly, when required.
- To maintain and develop the Association on a structured basis.
- To appoint elected representatives and officers, as appropriate.
- To develop relations with other organisations and bodies, as appropriate.

3. Membership

Membership shall be open to all councils in Northern Ireland as corporate members. Each council shall appoint 8 delegates to attend NAC Member's Meetings. All delegates shall have voting rights.

4. Executive Committee

An Executive Committee shall be elected, in accordance with item 16, at the AGM and drawn from members who have been appointed by their council.

The Executive Committee shall conduct the ordinary business of the Association and meet on the first Monday of each month, unless agreed to postpone to a later date for a specific reason.

All meetings of the Executive Committee shall be summoned by not less than 4 days' notice in writing, or by email, specifying the business to be conducted there-at, save that, in the case of business which the chair of the meeting deems to be of urgent nature, any such business may be included on the agenda at any time prior to the commencement of the meeting.

A quorum of 2 Executive Committee members may summon an emergency meeting with 24 hours prior notice, this would be coordinated by the secretary who will contact each member of the Executive Committee with the meeting details, either orally or electronically. The quorum for an emergency meeting will be 5 Executive Committee members, preferably cross-party.

Chair

A Chair shall be elected at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 2 years. Should the position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should the chair no longer be a member of the party holding the position, allocated in accordance with the rotation formula at item 5, the position shall automatically be declared vacant, and a replacement shall be made by the party.

Senior Vice Chair and Junior Vice Chair

A Senior and a Junior Vice Chair shall be elected at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 2 years. Should either position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should either no longer be a member of the party holding the position the position shall automatically be declared vacant and a replacement shall be made by the party.

Secretary

A Secretary shall be elected every 2 years at the AGM of the Association. If the position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be made by the Executive Committee. The secretary of the Association will be the designated accounting officer, and the line manager for staff.

Treasurer

A Treasurer shall be elected every 2 years at the AGM of the Association. If the position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be made by the Executive Committee.

Women's Representative

A Women's Representative shall be elected every year at the AGM of the Association, in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5 and serve for 1 year. Should the position fall vacant, a replacement shall be made by the party which held the position. Should the Women's Representative no longer be a member of the party holding the position the position shall automatically be declared vacant and a replacement shall be made by the party. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.

Other Executive Committee Members

- All parties represented in a NI council may appoint one other member to the Executive Committee at each AGM, provided the party has a member nominated by a council as a delegate. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If a position falls vacant during the year, a replacement shall be from the party holding that position. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If an Executive Committee member leaves the party they represent, the position shall be declared vacant, and a replacement shall be made from the party's members. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- Any individual elected as an Independent, and nominated by a council, may be appointed to the Executive Committee. If no nominations are made the position will remain vacant.
- If more than one Independent is nominated by council(s) they shall agree the one appointment to the Executive Committee.
- A member no longer in a party, after an election, shall not be regarded as an Independent for the Independent Executive Committee position.

5. Party Rotation for election of Officers and Women's Representative

The positions of Chair, Senior Vice Chair, Junior Vice Chair, Women's Representative, UK Executive Member nominee and appointments to other bodies shall follow the rotation.

DUP ~ SDLP ~ APNI ~ SF ~ UUP

The rotation cycle shall continue from one council term to the next and altered with any additional political party representation to the Executive Committee.

6. Co-option Policy

The Executive Committee may co-opt an elected member(s) with specific skills/knowledge to assist the NAC - there will be no voting, proposing or seconding rights.

7. Honoraria

The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer shall be paid an honorarium monthly in arrears, amounts to be determined by the Executive Committee at the first meeting following an AGM.

8. NAC UK Executive Committee

Executive Committee members are eligible for election to the NAC UK Executive following nomination by the Executive Committee. Nominations shall be made in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5.

9. Appointment to Other Bodies

Nominations shall be made in accordance with the party rotation formula at item 5.

10. Finances

The financial affairs of the Association shall be conducted under the financial regulations agreed by the Executive Committee and approved by full membership.

11. Subscriptions

The Association shall decide the rate of subscriptions at the AGM each year. Subscriptions shall be due before the 1 September each year.

12. Financial Year

The financial year of the Association shall end on 31 July each year.

13. Audit

The accounts of the Association shall be subject to an independent examination at the end of the financial year.

14. Notice of Meetings

A notice of an Annual General, an Extra-ordinary General Meeting or a Special Meeting shall be issued giving 7 days' notice. Meetings may be held by way of a virtual meeting due to a time of national emergency, such as a pandemic, or other event, which involves the application of social distancing.

15. Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be open to all members of the Association and shall be held each year in the month of October, at such place and at such time as may be determined by the Executive Committee. If, due to a time of national emergency, such as a pandemic or other event, the Executive Committee may vary the month to hold the AGM.

16. Procedure at the AGM

- To receive the Minutes of the previous AGM.
- To receive a Report from the Secretary on activities of the Association during the preceding year.

- To receive a Balance Sheet and Audited Statement of Accounts for the preceding financial year.
- Bi-Annually elect a Chairman, a Senior Vice Chair, and a Junior Vice Chair.
- Bi-annually elect a Secretary.
- Bi-annually elect a Treasurer.
- Every year to elect other members of the Executive Committee in accordance with item 5.
- To deal with resolutions, showing the name of the Mover and Seconder and having been notified in writing to the Secretary 28 days prior to the AGM.
- No other resolution, other than Motions of Procedure shall be permitted.
- Voting at an Annual General, an Extra-ordinary General Meeting or a Special Meeting shall be restricted to the delegates nominated by their council.

17. Extra-ordinary General Meeting

An Extra-Ordinary General Meeting shall be called by the Executive Committee upon a written request from 5 Members and shall be held with 21 days from receipt of the request.

18. Special General Meetings

The Executive Committee may call a Special General Meeting if required to do so.

19. Quorum

The Quorum of an Annual General Meetings, an Extra-ordinary Meeting and a Special Meeting shall be 15 Members. Where a quorum has not been reached before 15 minutes of the scheduled start time the meeting shall not be held, and a further meeting shall be called within 21 days.

20. Termination of Membership

Membership of the Association shall cease where a council's subscription is 6 months overdue.

21. Dissolution

If at a meeting of the full membership, called for this purpose, a motion for the dissolution of the Association shall be passed by at least two thirds of Members, where at least 7 councils are represented at the meeting, the NAC Executive, and up to 2 appointed Senior Officers from 2 councils shall realise the assets and pay the liabilities of the Association as a Dissolution Group. The Group shall make arrangements whereby they shall distribute or discharge the Association's net assets or liabilities. Any remaining property or money shall be distributed in equal share to the 11 councils. Any outstanding balance shall be met by the 11 councils and administered by the Group.

22. Amendments to the Constitution

This Constitution may be amended at any time by the Association on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, if the recommendation is passed by at least two-thirds of the representatives present and voting at the quorate meeting of the Association.

ITEM 24

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	26 April 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	19 April 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Notices of Motion
Attachments	Notices of Motion - Status Report

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of motions. Please note that as each motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS UPDATE – APRIL 2023

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
31/05/15	Permanent recognition of Rory McIlroy in Holywood	Councillor Muir	24/06/15	Corporate Services Committee – October 2015	Agreed	June 2022	Update sought at Jan 22 Council – To be reported to CSC in June 2022. Further report to follow in 2023.
21/1/19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Council – January 2019	Environment Committee	Agreed	TBC	
25/9/19	Report on feasibility of holding annual remembrance service for those lost to suicide	Councillor Martin	Council – October	Corporate Services – November 2019	Agreed	Reported to CSC January 2020. Further report to	Report to follow during 2023.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
						come back. (September 2022).	
16/01/20	Closing of a public right of way at Andrew Shorefield, Groomsport	Alderman Keery	Council – January 2020	Corporate Committee – February 2020	Agreed	Reported to CSC in March and October 2020. Further report to come back (September 2022).	Report to follow during 2023.
20.10.20	"I would like to task officers to produce a report to consider what could be a more environmentally friendly and benefit the wellbeing of the community for the use of the disused putting green on the Commons and play park at Hunts park in Donaghadee . Following the success of the Dog park in Bangor and the	Councillor Brooks	Council October 2020	Community & Wellbeing Committee – December 2020	Agreed	TBC	Officers to liaise with Regeneration and consideration of Masterplan and also take into account play strategy local consultation when it takes place in Donaghadee and

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	demand for a Dementia garden, both should be considered as options in the report. The process should involve consultation with the local community."						bring back a report thereafter.
19 April 2021	Flying of Union Flag on all Council buildings and war memorials all year round. Flags at half mast on death of any monarch or any other member of the Royal Family or Prime Minister of the UK for the period of mourning.	Councillor Cooper	Council April 2021	Corporate Committee – September 2021	NOM as amended agreed at March 2022 Council	CSC - October/Nov 2022	Awaiting ratification.
10 May 2021	That officers are tasked to bring back a Report on how the Council might approach a Climate Change Action Plan and perhaps including - but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, a Conference of Ideas, and	Councillors Walker & Egan	23 June 2021	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	values-based recommendations for next steps.						
20.10.2021	That officers bring back a report to consider the option of transferring responsibility for bins which are currently the responsibility of the Parks Section into the Environment Directorate.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Council November 2021	Community & Wellbeing December 2021	Agreed	Report to C&WC April 2022. Report to October 2022 C&WC	Further consideration by officers, update report to June 2023 C&W Committee
3.11.2021	That this Council, in liaison with the Department for Infrastructure, will seek permission for and explore a source of funding in order to make an artistic feature of the steps which lead from Princetown Road to Queen's Parade at Bangor seafront as part of Bangor Town regeneration, and brings back a report to Council addressing how this	Councillor Douglas & Alderman Wilson	Council November 2021	Regeneration & Development December 2021	Agreed	June P&P Committee	Urban Team working up a scheme which will be forwarded to DfI for approval.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	can be achieved as a pilot for the Borough.						
31.12.21	Coastal and Storm Damage to Ballywalter Harbour, repair costs and reinstatement costs	Councillors Adair and Edmund	Council January 22	Environment February 2022	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought back.
13.04.22	Environmental damage caused by modern day packaging	Councillors McRandal and Douglas	Council – April 2022	Environment Committee – June 2022	Agreed - ratified by June Council		Report to be brought back - TBC.
17.05.22	2028 Centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT races. Asking Council how best to commemorate this important sporting anniversary.	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	Council – May 2022	Community and Wellbeing June 2022	Agreed (to be ratified at June Council)	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
19.05.2022	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Councillors Cummings and Johnson	Council – June 2022	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022		TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
20.06.2022	Review of health and safety process re community groups	Councillors MacArthur, Brooks, T Smith and Kennedy	Council – June 2022	Corporate Services Committee – Sept 2022 - deferred to October 2022	Agreed	Ratified at October Council	Further report to follow – June 2023
20.06.2022	Report exploring the possibility of introducing a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone undergoing IVF.	Councillor Greer and Councillor McKee	Council – June 2022	Corporate Services Committee – Sept 2022 – deferred to October 2022	Agreed	Ratified at October Council	Further report to follow in June 2023.
21.06.2022	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen's Leisure Complex	Councillors Kendall, McRandal and McClean	Council - June 2022	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022		TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
5.07.2022	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne.	Alderman Irvine & Keery	Council – July 2022	Environment Committee - September 2022 Corporate Services Committee	Amdt agreed.		Sept 2022 - Recommendation to Council that item is referred to Corporate Services Committee and

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	<p>*** Amendment Received from Councillor Cathcart</p> <p>That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.</p>						report to be brought to a future meeting - TBC
19.07.2022	This Council notes with concern that a number of planted trees in urban settings along roads which have died or have been removed but not replaced; Notes the importance of environmental and social	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Council – July 2022	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 Deferred to October 2022		TBC	Meeting with DfI Roads and DAERA to be organised. Officers will bring back a report thereafter.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	<p>benefits of such trees in the built environment;</p> <p>Notes that Dfl Roads formerly had a partnership arrangement with Belfast parks for the replacement of trees but that this partnership ended some time ago;</p> <p>That Council officers are tasked with opening discussions with Dfl Roads and DAERA with a view to exploring the possibility of a partnership which will involve the supply and replacement of lost trees in the Borough and then providing a report to Council for further consideration.</p>						
29.07.2022	That this council withdraws all funding to any sporting organisations with any	Cllrs Cooper, T Smith and	Council –	Corporate Committee – September 2022 –	Agreed with amendment	TBC	C&W Officers considering report to be

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums or competitions, and tasks officers to bring back a report outlining the specific relevant council policy.	Councillor Irvine	August 2022	deferred to October 2022			brought to future Committee
22.08.22	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Councillor Dunlop and Councillor Douglas	September 2022	Environment Committee – October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back
19.09.22	Establishment of an Animal Abuse Register for the Borough and write to the DAERA Minister to ask for the introduction of Lucy's Law and Reggie's Law for Northern Ireland.	Councillor T Smith and Councillor Cooper Amendment received from Councillor Woods	September 2022	Environment Committee October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back – June 2023
21.09.22	Humane control of Pigeons in Conway Square, Newtownards	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman	September 2022	Environment Committee 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Update report to be brought to future meeting

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
		Armstrong-Cotter					
9.11.22	That Council task officers to work with The National Trust to source external funding to develop and regenerate the Car Park at both Glastry Clay Pits & Knockinelder Bay for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Councils Tourism Strategy for the Ards Peninsula	Councillors Adair & Thompson	November 2022	Environment Committee - December 2022 Heard at R&D Dec 2022	Agreed	Sept P&P Committee	
16.11.22	That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	November 2022	Community & Wellbeing - December 2022	Agreed	TBC	Reported to March Committee Officers to discuss future location of stones with HED and further report to future Committee

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	schools when the stones have been returned.						
24.11.22	That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Abbey Road Millisle to ensure they can be used and enjoyed by the local sporting clubs and community of Millisle.	Councillors Thompson & Adair	December 2022	Community & Wellbeing Committee – January 2023	Agreed	TBC	Officers investigating funding opportunities and considering report to be brought back to future Committee
09.12.22	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to ' <i>Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls</i> ', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake	Councillors Douglas & Walker	December 2022	Corporate Services Committee – January 2023 Community and Wellbeing Committee - TBC	Agreed	Community and Wellbeing - TBC	14/3 it has been agreed that this NOM will transfer to PSSP/C&W.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.						
13.12.22	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns,	Councillors Cathcart and MacArthur	December 2022	Environment Committee – January 2023	Agreed	June Committee	Report to be brought to June Committee

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	<p>forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try</p>						

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	address the issue of bins left on public footways.						
08.12.22	This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas (Postponed from Dec Council to Jan Council)	January 2023	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023			Officers considering report to be brought back to future meeting.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	Building on the practice of other council areas, that this council tasks officers to liaise with DfI Roads as a matter of urgency to offer its assistance in providing self-service grit piles for residents and to post locations of such grit piles on the council website	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	January 2023	Environment Committee – February 2023	Agreed – ratified by February Council	TBC	
16.12.22	That Ards and North Down Borough confers the Freedom of the Borough on Lady Sylvia Hermon	Aldermen Irvine & Keery	Withdrawn				
24.11.22	That this Council notes its declaration of a climate emergency in 2018 and the passage of the Climate Change Act 2022; agrees the need to reduce emissions to ensure happy and healthy communities and engages with community and government	Councillors Woods & Dunlop (Resubmitted from December	January 2023	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023		June 2023	Report planned to come back to CS Committee in June 2023.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	partners with the aim of piloting 'car free' days in our City, towns and villages.	Council meeting)					
08.01,2023	That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern that the provision of a footpath at Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not considered a priority by the Department following the completion of a feasibility study which demonstrated need. That the Council highlights the road safety concerns raised by residents for pedestrians using the Shore Road from the village to the residential developments including Park Homes and St Andrew's. That Council requests that the Department for	Councillors Adair & Edmund	January 2023	Place & Prosperity – February 2023	Agreed that Council writes to Perm Sec of Dfl.	Letter sent to DFI – response to be reported back to Council when received	

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	Infrastructure makes the installation of a footpath a priority and commits to deliver the scheme as a matter of urgency.						
17.01.2023	This Council supports local residents who have started a petition which calls for a pedestrian crossing on Moat Street, Donaghadee, near to the Spar store. This road can be extremely busy and residents have real safety concerns when trying to cross it. Not only do many people use this area to cross to shop at the Spar store, others need to cross the road to get children to and from the local schools. This Council will write to the Department of Infrastructure and call on them to listen to local residents, take on board their concerns and	Councillors T Smith and Brooks	January 2023	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023			Report planned to CSC June 2023

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	take the necessary steps to install a pedestrian crossing in this vicinity.						
17.01.2023	<p>This Council notes its previous sponsorship of the Community Asset Transfer request from Branch Out Community Group and welcomes the agreement from DfI to lease the woodland area to the group for 1 year. Officers will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to DfI to express council's support for the work of Branch Out on the DfI-owned site and how it complements The Big Plan for Ards and North Down. • Write to the EA to express council's support for their work on the EA-owned site, adjacent to the woodland. • Bring back a report, identifying what can be offered to support the work 	Councillor Moore and Alderman McDowell	January 2023	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023			Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	of Branch Out including, but not limited to, providing advice, support, equipment and finance. • Engage directly with Branch Out to identify what support is needed.						
12.01.2023	This Council honours the 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches following the introduction of the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill in July 1973, which permitted the recruitment of women into the regiment, recognising those who joined within the Borough, and brings back a report to outline how the Corporate Services Committee can work with local UDR Associations along with other relevant bodies to support	Councillor Cummings and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	January 2023	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023			Report to be heard at April Council.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	anniversary events in the Borough.						
18.01.2023	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back a report with costs to outline what steps can be taken to ensure that Council car parks and footpaths in the City and town centres are gritted	Councillors Morgan and McRandal	January 2023	Environment Committee – February 2023	Agreed – ratified by February Council	TBC	

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	when the weather is forecast to have heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing weather conditions.						
18.01.2023	That Council, subject to consultation with addressees on the road, considers changing the name of that stretch of the A21 in Newtownards which runs from Portaferry Road to the junction with upper Greenwell Street, Newtownards currently named New Road to Viscount Castlereagh Avenue as a mark of the life and legacy of Robert Stewart, 2 nd Marquess of Londonderry, who was known by the courtesy title of Viscount Castlereagh during most of his life, in the 200 th year of his passing.	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	February 2023	Environment Committee March 2023	Ratified by March 2023 Council	TBC	Report to be brought to future meeting

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
08.02.2023	That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions. football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	February 2023	Community and Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Ratified by March Council		Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
09.02.2023	That this Council is concerned that recent data shows that the Ards and North Down Borough Council area has the highest level of potholes in Northern Ireland and calls on DfI Roads Service to produce an action plan to improve	Councillor P Smith and Councillor Smart	February 2023	Corporate Services Committee March 2023			Letter sent to DfI Further action TBC

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	the quality of roads in the Borough.						
10.02.2023	That Council writes to the South Eastern Trust rejecting their proposals to close the Bangor and Newtownards Minor Injury Units. We believe that this will lead to a detrimental impact on patient care particularly at an already overstretched Ulster Hospital. This Council calls on the Trust to not only retain the minor injury unit in Ards but also to reopen the Bangor Minor Injury Unit. We see this as a better way to treat more people locally and ease the pressure on the Ulster. We urge the South Eastern Trust to listen to the real concerns from the public and we hope that this consultation exercise is	Councillor T Smith and Councillor Kennedy, also Councillor S Irvine, Councillor McKimm, Councillor Boyle and Councillor Cathcart	February 2023	Corporate Services Committee March 2023			Response to consultation to be taken at April Council.

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	a genuine one and not a cover for something that is already a done deal.						
14.02.2023	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund	February 2023	Corporate Services March 2023			Officers considering next steps for further report to be brought back.
	That this Council rescind the decision taken at the meeting of the Council on 26 th October 2022 that Council notes the report and expressing concern with the report of anti-social behaviour that is ongoing in and around Playparks. Furthermore, that Council agrees to carry out local consultation before taking a decision on the locking up of the 7 playparks identified in the Northern Down area, and instead purposes that	Councillor McKee, Councillor Gilmour, Councillor Irwin, Alderman Wilson, Alderman Smith and Councillor Woods	Council February 2023	Heard at Council February 2023	Agreed		Quotes obtained from security contractors – above tender threshold limit. Tender being prepared with assistance from Procurement Department for locking of 2 sites for 6 months trial and consultation ongoing for other 7 sites

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	Council notes the concerns raised with the decision taken to not lock the MUGA and playpark at Clandeboye and the playpark at Bloomfield; agrees to re-lock premises at Clandeboye and Bloomfield, as soon as possible, for a trial period of 6 months, subject to review, to monitor concerns and carries out local consultation at parks effected by changes in the locking up schedule in the Borough.						
6.3.2023	Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change. As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of	Councillors Smart & Irvine	March 2023	Place & Prosperity June 2023			

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for						

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	regeneration and the public good.						
20.3.2023	That this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost and potential delivery partners.	Councillors Gilmour & Cathcart	March 2023	Community & Wellbeing Committee June 2023			
20.3.2023	That this Council recognises the issues and concerns detailed in the letter sent to the Chief Executive by The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group and agrees to write to the Permanent Secretaries	Councillors Thompson & Adair	March 2023	Corporate Services Committee June 2023			

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	of the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities, asking them to provide details of the responsibility they have in ensuring the public safety of the harbour and listing any details of dealings their departments have had with the owner.						



Disability Action Plan

2023-2025



Waterways For All



Alternative Format

Copies of this document are available on the Waterways Ireland website and in paper format. Documentation will be made available on request in formats such as Easy Read, Braille, audio formats, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

To request an alternative format, please contact us at:

Equality Unit, Corporate Services,
Waterways Ireland
2 Sligo Road
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh
BT74 7JY

Tel: +44 (0)28 6632 3004

Email: informationrequest@waterwaysireland.org

You can also read and / or download this document from our website. Go to www.waterwaysireland.org

CONTENTS


Foreword from the Chief Executive Officer	3
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Purpose of the Disability Action Plan.....	4
3.0 About Waterways Ireland	5
4.0 Implementation of the Plan.....	6
5.0 Annual Report	6
6.0 Effective Engagement	7
7.0 Consultation	7
8.0 Public Life Positions over which Waterways Ireland has Responsibility	8
9.0 Previous Measures.....	8
10.0 Action Measures	10
11.0 Publication of the Plan.....	19

Foreword from the Chief Executive

Waterways For All - The Waterways Ireland Disability Action Plan 2023-2025 is a statement of our commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006) in Northern Ireland and the Disability Act 2005 in Ireland.

The successful implementation of this Plan will enhance the services, facilities and waterways we manage so they can be enjoyed by all in our communities with a particular focus on people with disabilities. As an employer we continually examine how we can do more to attract people with disabilities to consider Waterways Ireland as an employer of choice.

The Plan provides a strategic framework to address the attitudinal and environmental barriers to the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in public life. Ensuring participation by all will be at the heart of policy and decision-making within our organisation. Positive action measures will be mainstreamed and prioritised across all of our work programmes.



JOHN MC DONAGH
Chief Executive Officer

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Waterways Ireland is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- 1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, Waterways Ireland is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.
- 1.3 As a North-South Body, it is also intended that delivery of the measures in this Action Plan will address our statutory obligations under the Disability Act 2005 in Ireland.
- 1.4 Note on terminology
In this Action Plan, the terms “persons with disabilities” and “disabled people” are used interchangeably. The term ‘disabled people’ is recognised by many within the disability rights movement to align with the social and human rights model of disability, as it is considered to acknowledge the fact that people with an impairment are disabled by barriers in the environment and society. However, we also recognise that others prefer the term “persons with disabilities” because of the inherent understanding in the term that they are first and foremost human beings entitled to human rights. This reflects the language used in the UNCRPD. Finally, we recognise that some people do not identify as being disabled.

2.0 Purpose of the Disability Action Plan

- 2.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to the fulfillment of its disability duties in relation to its business functions, and in making these duties central to our aim of creating the right conditions to support inclusion, equality of opportunity and increasing public participation and appreciation of the waterways’ environment.

This Plan outlines the positive action measures Waterways Ireland will deliver during 2023-2025. It builds upon the achievements of previous Action Plans, whilst also identifying new opportunities to make disability issues an integral part of Waterways Ireland’s work programmes.

3.0 About Waterways Ireland

3.1 Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, established under the British-Irish Agreement Act of 1999.

We are the cross-border navigational authority responsible for the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of almost 1,100 km of inland navigational waterways and over 600 km of Greenways and Blueways, principally for recreational purposes, comprising:

- Lower Bann Navigation
- Erne System
- Shannon-Erne Waterway
- Shannon Navigation
- Royal Canal
- Grand Canal
- Barrow Navigation
- Ulster Canal

In July 2007, it was agreed by the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) to include responsibility for the reconstruction of the Ulster Canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones, and following restoration, its management, maintenance, and development, principally for recreational purposes to Waterways Ireland's remit.

Our Headquarters are in Enniskillen Co Fermanagh, with regional offices in Dublin, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim, and Scarriff, Co Clare.

At an operational level, Waterways Ireland is responsible for a vast range of infrastructure assets including navigation channels, embankments, towpaths, adjoining lands, harbours, jetties, fishing stands, bridges, culverts, aqueducts, overflows, locks, sluices and lock houses along with buildings and archives.

Waterways Ireland's work programmes are critical to providing a safe and high-quality recreational environment for customers, whilst preserving the industrial and environmental heritage of the waterways for future generations.

Our Mission is to be the custodian of the inland navigations and collaborate to reimagine, maintain, develop, and promote them to sustain communities, environment, and heritage.

Our mission statement is: "Creating inspirational inland navigations and waterways experiences through conservation and sustainable development for the benefit of all."

4.0 Implementation of the Plan

- 4.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to the effective implementation of this Action Plan throughout the organisation.
- 4.2 The Action Plan will be monitored on a bi-annual basis by the Senior Management Team who will review progress in implementing previously agreed actions together with consideration of any new developments in the intervening period. Where appropriate, the Action Plan will be revised to reflect any new developments, consultations, the outcome of any new Equality Impact Assessments or any additional information not previously available.
- 4.3 Responsibility for the delivery of this Disability Action Plan lies with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team. Day to day responsibility lies with the Corporate Services Section who will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that Waterways Ireland complies with its disability duties when carrying out its functions.
- 4.4 Necessary resources, in terms of people, time and budget, will be allocated in order to effectively implement this Plan and also deliver associated objectives and targets relating to disability duties in our corporate and business plans. Waterways Ireland is committed to ensuring that this Plan is communicated to all staff and will provide the necessary training and guidance on disability duties on the implementation of this plan.
- 4.5 Waterways Ireland will also ensure appropriate internal arrangements are in place to monitor and report on compliance with the disability duties, and implementation of this Action Plan. A three-year review of the Plan will be carried out in consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

5.0 Annual Report

- 5.1 Waterways Ireland confirms its commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission based on the implementation of this Plan. A copy of the annual report will be made available on our website and can be provided in alternative formats on request.
- 5.2 Details of progress on meeting objectives in relation to our public sector disability duties will also be included in Waterways Ireland's Annual Report.

6.0 Effective Engagement

- 6.1 We are committed to engaging effectively with people who have disabilities and their representative groups on the development, implementation and review of this plan.

7.0 Consultation

- 7.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to carrying out meaningful consultation in the development of its disability duties. Consultation is integral to the effective development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. It is intended that this reflective and forward looking engagement of consultees will ensure that the actions Waterways Ireland put in place bring about sustainable change for people with disabilities.
- 7.2 The involvement of consultees is designed to assist Waterways Ireland by:
- Identifying barriers faced by people with disabilities in participating in public life in general and specifically any barriers they have encountered when dealing with us.
 - Identifying circumstances in the past in which we have not promoted positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and by identifying future opportunities to promote such attitudes.
 - Setting priorities and identifying solutions to take remedial action; and
 - Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken.
- 7.3 Consultation on the Disability Action Plan run from 18 October 2022 to 10 January 2023 and consisted of:
- Requests for responses to stakeholders and target groups on the draft Plan.
 - Online consultation with placement of the draft 2023-2025 Disability Action Plan on Waterways Ireland's website with social media advertising.
 - Face to face meetings with advisory groups and use of other methodologies identified as best practice; and
 - Removal of barriers to participation by offering to make consultation documents available in alternative formats
- 7.4 Consultation responses were accepted in a variety of formats including:
- Consultation response questionnaire
 - By e-mail to informationrequest@waterwaysireland.org
 - By requesting a one-to-one meeting; and
 - Any other method which could be reasonably accommodated.
- 7.5 On completion of the consultation process, Waterways Ireland reviewed the feedback received and has updated the Disability Action Plan as necessary. All consultees received a copy of our response to the consultation comments received.

8.0 Public Life Positions over which Waterways Ireland has Responsibility

- 8.1 Waterways Ireland does not have direct control over public life positions; however, we will continue to clearly communicate our commitment to encouraging the participation of people with disabilities in public life through recruitment.
- 8.2 Opportunities are also provided for involvement of our staff in policy and decision-making groups through the following channels;
- Waterways Ireland Equality and Diversity Working Group
 - Joint Industrial Relations Forum
 - Trade Union National Negotiating Committees
 - Health & Safety both regional and organisation wide representation

9.0 Previous Measures

- 9.1 The following measures are indicative of the many positive actions we have taken in delivering previous Disability Action Plans, with a number of these actions established as part of our continuing commitment to promoting good equality practices.
- All capital and maintenance projects are designed in accordance with best practice.
 - Events on and along our waterways are encouraged and facilitated to widen the appeal of the waterways for everyone, including people with disabilities. We collaborate and support a number of governing bodies to deliver recreation programmes to ensure they are accessible for people with disabilities.
 - We support and encourage access for all events and programmes on and along our waterways. These are supported and promoted as part of our ongoing promotional reach.
 - All job vacancies recruited externally are posted on the website and social media channels, opening career opportunities to a much wider audience and promoting equality of opportunity. It is Waterways Ireland's policy to provide employment equality to all existing and potential employees, irrespective of disability.
 - All selection processes address the special needs of applicants on an individual basis.
 - Employees, who have requested assistance to carry out their duties, have been provided with additional support, additionally, we invite employees to notify us if they wish to have a personal evacuation plan developed to accommodate their needs, in the event of an evacuation from our office buildings.
 - Where public meetings are planned, consideration is given to ensuring that the venue and required services are accessible to all attendees

9.2 Whilst we are cognisant of the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on delivery of some elements of our previous Equality and Disability Action Plans, priority focused on the mental health and wellbeing of our staff, with employees completing online courses on:

- Managing Stress in the Workplace;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace;
- Protecting Yourself when Home Working; and
- Diversity and Inclusion.

Section 10 of this Plan details the action measures and associated performance indicators and outputs Waterways Ireland commits to delivering between 2023-2025.

10. Action Measures

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006), Waterways Ireland is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Staff Training and Awareness

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
1.	<p>Provide disability equality legislation training which will include information on employers and employees duties under the DDA and the WI equal opportunities policies and procedures.</p> <p>Deliver disability awareness and etiquette training to all staff to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people. • Developing understanding of the barriers faced by disabled people, including attitudinal and environmental factors. 	<p>Number of staff that have received disability equality training.</p> <p>100% of Operational staff 2023 and annual thereafter</p> <p>100% of PTA complete e-learning module (annual)</p> <p>100% of all new staff at induction</p> <p>Reduction in levels of reported bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation.</p>	<p>Keeps staff informed on disability issues and influences them to affect positive change opportunities.</p> <p>Staff have the training they need to identify what support they can offer customers/users with different needs and be aware of the support available to facilitate their interaction with users.</p> <p>Increased awareness of Waterways Ireland's shared disability obligations and provide staff with a</p>	<p>Q1 2023 (Ops)</p> <p>Q1 2023 (PTA)</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate Services</p> <p>Human Resources</p>

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understanding of the social model of disability. Information on the use of appropriate language and etiquette. Challenging stereotypes/ misconceptions about disabled people. 		<p>confidential opportunity to advise if they have any related requirements.</p> <p>Disabled employees requiring reasonable adjustments receive timely support and provide positive feedback about their experience</p>		
2.	<p>Provide enhanced training to key staff members to ensure integration of disability, equality and inclusion into leadership management and other key roles within the organisation.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management & Extended Leadership Teams Corporate Services Equality staff Front facing Reception and Operational staff 	3 training interventions provided to key staff groups per annum.	Improves staff knowledge of disability issues and provides them with an up-to-date understanding of legislation and potential access opportunities.	2023 2024 2025	<p>Equality Unit, Corporate Services</p> <p>Human Resources</p>
3.	Encourage participation of disabled employees in training and development programmes.	5% increase in participation of disabled staff in training and development programmes.	Increased opportunities for staff with disabilities.	Annual	HR

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
	Outreach to disabled employees re development of training programmes.		Effective succession planning for future workforce needs.	Q3 2024	
4.	Integrate and deliver disability equality into recruitment training to ensure that where reasonable; applications in alternative formats are accepted, reasonable adjustments proactively offered and made.	All HR recruitment and selection panel members – targeted disability training Other potential panel members (Years 2 & 3) Number of requests for alternative formats, reasonable adjustments.	Staff have the training they need to identify what support they can offer job applicants with different needs.	Q3 2023 Q4 2025 Annual	Human Resources

Communications

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
5.	Run internal communication campaigns to build inclusion, raise awareness of our challenges, and celebrate the diversity of our workforce.	2 campaigns per annum, in collaboration with the Waterways Ireland Working Well Group.	Increased staff knowledge and awareness of specific disability issues and their shared obligations to implement the disability agenda.	Annual	Equality Unit Marketing & Communications
6.	Use positive imagery and content to promote the accessibility of the waterway environment for people with disabilities.	Positive content in corporate publications, on social media and on our website.	Encourages people with disabilities to experience the waterways. Such imagery and content removes pre-conceived perceptions of the	Ongoing	Equality Unit Marketing & Communications

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
		2 collaborations per annum to create and capture positive imagery / content	capabilities of people with disabilities.		
7.	<p>Continue to create opportunities for the organisation to listen to staff and understand the personal impact of inequalities on disabled persons and to reduce barriers.</p> <p>Explore options to expand opportunities to make the waterways accessible through the use of the WI StreetView Google Maps Tracker initiative, podcasts, video, articles, etc.</p> <p>Increase awareness for these channels and promote the accessibility to a broader audience.</p>	1 promotional content (such as podcast, video, article) created per annum	Increased awareness of Waterways Ireland's disability obligations and provide staff with a confidential opportunity to advise if they have any related requirements.	Q3 2023 2024 2025	Corporate Services Marketing & Communications
8.	Review our user communications to make sure they are clear and easy to understand, meet the needs of all users, and are available in other languages and alternative formats.	<p>Number of requests for information in alternative format.</p> <p>Number of complaints about our information or service delivery.</p>	<p>Accessibility of Information and Services for staff and visitors to our facilities and waterways who experience information barriers.</p> <p>Creation of accessible communications, where</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Corporate Services

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
	<p>Review and evaluate current communication channels available for disabled users and consider other potential channels to improve engagement.</p> <p>Continue to analyse equality related complaints to identify emerging trends which will allow for targeted intervention to improve the service and support we provide our disabled users.</p>	<p>Waterways Ireland website (under development) will be fully compliant with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>2 promotional content (such as video, podcast, or articles) which include an alternative format of communication to raise awareness of the accessibility of Waterways Ireland facilities</p> <p>2 training content pieces which include an alternative form of communication.</p>	<p>applicable – written, spoken, digital and signed.</p>	<p>Mar 2024</p> <p>June 2024 June 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>	<p>Marketing & Communications</p> <p>Marketing & Communications/ Corporate Services / HR</p>

Encourage participation by disabled people in public life

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
9.	<p>Address identified gaps in equality data to ensure that data is sufficient to allow meaningful equality analysis.</p> <p>Audit the level of public participation by disabled people.</p> <p>Identify any existing barriers to participation of disabled people.</p>	<p>Accurate and up to date reflection of the equality groups within our workforce to inform statutory reporting, and to guide policy making.</p>	<p>Informed feedback which will help WI identify barriers to equality of opportunity for disabled people.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p>	<p>Corporate Services</p>
10.	<p>Affirmative action measures to attract more applications from people with disabilities for vacancies across all areas of our organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use welcoming statement in recruitment exercise to encourage applications. • Engage with disability organisations and asking them to promote recruitment exercises. • Provide placement, work experience or job shadowing opportunities. 	<p>Increase of 3% per annum in applications received.</p> <p>1 work placement, work experience, work shadowing opportunity per annum.</p> <p>Host 1 capacity building workshop per annum.</p>	<p>Disabled people acquire skills and experience that will equip them to apply for public life positions.</p> <p>Workforce diversity data shows increased representation of disabled people.</p> <p>Compliance with Government targets for employment of persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>Dec 2023 Dec 2024 Dec 2025</p> <p>Q4 2023 Q4 2024 Q4 2025</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support capacity building measures in the voluntary/community sector, for example giving support to disability groups or others in relation to the provision of training for disabled people in, for example, interviewing or other relevant skills. Consider the implementation of a guaranteed interview scheme and shortlist disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the position. 				
11.	Collate information about applicants for jobs and our staff to enable us to take appropriate action and make improvements with attracting, recruiting, retaining and progressing people with disabilities	3% of workforce having a disability 4.5% of workforce having a disability 6% of workforce having a disability	Progression and retention of staff with disabilities within the organisation Workforce diversity data shows increased representation of disabled people.	Dec 2023 Dec 2024 Dec 2025 Ongoing	Human Resources

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
12.	Liaise with local disability groups or representative bodies to ascertain the most effective way of raising awareness and getting input from their disabled members on communication, participation and engagement with Waterways Ireland.	1 service user consultative forum representative of equality groups established – proactive participation by people with disabilities.	<p>Increased methods of raising awareness and engagement amongst disabled people and explore new initiatives to increase participation and engagement.</p> <p>Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy makers.</p>	Sept 2025	Corporate Services
13.	<p>Encourage the participation of disabled users by involving service users and external stakeholders where possible to work collaboratively, share information and build supportive, trusting and professional relationships.</p> <p>Ensure provision made for access for participants with a disability is managed and supported in all Waterways Ireland work with third parties to increase use of the inland waterways for recreational activity.</p>	Support 2 events per annum targeting people with disabilities.	<p>People with disabilities are encouraged to visit and enjoy our waterways and take part in a water sport.</p> <p>Increase the participation of people with disabilities in waterway activities, and in doing so, build their confidence, skills enhance their social well, and positively change their lives</p> <p>Increase in number of applications to Waterways Ireland seeking approval for events targeting people with disabilities.</p>	2023-2025	Corporate Services / Operations / Marketing & Communications

	Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
14.	<p>Consider the needs of disabled people across all our services.</p> <p>Ensure the principles of Access for All and Universal Design are central in the design, upgrade and development of facilities on and along our waterways to ensure these are accessible and usable for everyone.</p> <p>Internal and External communications/information material will, where possible and appropriate use positive imagery and content to promote the accessibility of the waterway environment for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Online and digital information is accessible to everyone by maintaining WI managed social media and websites to a high standard.</p>	<p>Number of complaints of equality/disability nature reported on Complaints Register.</p> <p>5 accessibility audits completed by end of Action Plan</p> <p>Increased provision of disabled facilities at 2 locations per annum</p> <p>Waterways Ireland website (under development) will be fully compliant with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p>	<p>Removal of any structural barriers which limit physical access.</p> <p>Facilities on and along our waterways are designed and built, where applicable to the highest standards of accessibility for all to use and enjoy.</p> <p>Access for All to our services and facilities.</p> <p>Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dec 2025</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Dec 2023</p>	<p>Operations / Technical Services</p> <p>Operations</p> <p>Marketing & Communications / IT</p>

11.0 Publication of the Plan

11.1 this Disability Action Plan is available at :

www.waterwaysireland.org

Waterways Ireland will, through its ongoing work with people with disabilities, seek out further opportunities to communicate the Plan and develop collaborative disability programmes. Additionally, the Plan will be highlighted through advertisements, mail shots and meetings directly with disability organizations and representative groups, where requested. A copy of the Plan will also be made available to all employees.

11.2 The Plan will be made available in alternative formats on request. It may also be provided in other minority languages, subject to demand.

For further information on the content of this Plan or to discuss your specific format / translation requirements, please contact:

Equality Unit, Corporate Services
Waterways Ireland
2 Sligo Road
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh
BT74 7JY

Tel. +44 (0)28 6632 3004

Email: informationrequest@waterwaysireland.org



Equality Action Plan

2023 – 2025



Waterways For All



1. Introduction

This Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 has been developed from the outcome of an Audit of Inequalities conducted by Waterways Ireland

Note on terminology

In this Action Plan, the terms "persons with disabilities" and "disabled people" are used interchangeably. The term 'disabled people' is recognised by many within the disability rights movement to align with the social and human rights model of disability, as it is considered to acknowledge the fact that people with an impairment are disabled by barriers in the environment and society. However, we also recognise that others prefer the term "persons with disabilities" because of the inherent understanding in the term that they are first and foremost human beings entitled to human rights. This reflects the language used in the UNCRPD. Finally, we recognise that some people do not identify as being disabled.

Alternative Format

Copies of this document are available on the Waterways Ireland website and in paper format. Documentation will be made available on request in formats such as Easy Read, Braille, audio formats, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

To request an alternative format, please contact us at:

Equality Unit, Corporate Services,
Waterways Ireland
2 Sligo Road
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh
BT74 7JY

Tel: +44 (0)28 6632 3004

Email: informationrequest@waterwaysireland.org

You can also read and / or download this document from our website. Go to www.waterwaysireland.org

2. Background

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Waterways Ireland to comply with two statutory duties: the Equality of Opportunity Duty and the Good Relations Duty.

- (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
 - a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - b) between men and women generally;
 - c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - d) between persons with dependants and persons without
- (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Waterways Ireland undertook an Audit of Inequalities to establish whether any of the above-mentioned Section 75 categories are or could be adversely affected or negatively impacted by the activities of Waterways Ireland and, where such inequalities were detected or suspected has developed this Action Plan to address them. While a lot of work has been done to promote equality and good relations, persistent inequalities will remain within our society.

As a North-South Body, it is also intended that delivery of the measures in this Action Plan will address the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. This Public Sector Duty places a responsibility on all public sector bodies in Ireland to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of our employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by our policies and plans.

This Action Plan aims to reduce these inequalities through the identification and implementation of key strategic actions, with the aim of outcomes improving over time.

This Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 has been linked to the Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan 2023-2025 planning cycle.

Four themes have been identified:

1. Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among Waterways Ireland staff.
2. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.
3. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates equality, diversity and inclusion.
4. Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our property and waterways.

Actions are categorised according to the theme they contribute to. Each action includes a timescale for delivery, a performance indicator and the name of the department responsible for delivery.

We will also seek to promote good practice across the range of our policies and in respect of all equality categories. The Plan will build on existing equality work undertaken by Waterways Ireland and assist in meeting future equality requirements.

It is designed to be flexible and will be reviewed regularly, with the support of the Equality Commission. It is recognised that the timescale of the plan may have to be amended in response to other work priorities and available resources.

3. About Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, established under the British-Irish Agreement Act of 1999.

We are the cross-border navigational authority responsible for the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of almost 1,100 km of inland navigational waterways and over 600 km of Greenways and Blueways, principally for recreational purposes, comprising:

- Lower Bann Navigation
- Erne System
- Shannon-Erne Waterway
- Shannon Navigation
- Royal Canal
- Grand Canal
- Barrow Navigation
- Ulster Canal

In July 2007, it was agreed by the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) to include responsibility for the reconstruction of the Ulster Canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones, and following restoration, its management, maintenance, and development, principally for recreational purposes to Waterways Ireland's remit.

Our Headquarters are in Enniskillen Co Fermanagh, with regional offices in Dublin, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim, and Scarriff, Co Clare.

At an operational level, Waterways Ireland is responsible for a vast range of infrastructure assets including navigation channels, embankments, towpaths, adjoining lands, harbours, jetties, fishing stands, bridges, culverts, aqueducts, overflows, locks, sluices and lock houses along with buildings and archives.

Waterways Ireland's work programmes are critical to providing a safe and high-quality recreational environment for customers, whilst preserving the industrial and environmental heritage of the waterways for future generations.

Our Mission is to be the custodian of the inland navigations and collaborate to reimagine, maintain, develop, and promote them to sustain communities, environment, and heritage.

Our mission statement is: "Creating inspirational inland navigations and waterways experiences through conservation and sustainable development for the benefit of all."

4. Key Equality Considerations

Waterways Ireland strives to fulfil its equality obligations as an employer and as a public body delivering a service to the public. Its service to the public is to manage, maintain and promote the inland navigable waterways principally for recreational use. Waterways Ireland, as a navigation authority, is therefore a provider of public space for outdoor recreation including boating, a wide range of water-based sports, walking and cycling. Whilst Waterways Ireland's remit covers 1,100 km of inland navigable waterways and 600 km of Greenways and Blueways, just 15% of its geographical remit on the inland navigable waterways is in Northern Ireland covering the Erne System in County Fermanagh and the Lower Bann from Lough Neagh to Coleraine.

Waterways Ireland has a total staff of 356¹, 89 of these are employed in Northern Ireland, 267 in Ireland.

Responsibility for the delivery of this Equality Action Plan lies with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team. Day to day responsibility lies with the Corporate Services Section who will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that Waterways Ireland complies with its equality and good relations duties when carrying out its functions.

5. Monitoring and Review Process

The Action Plan will be monitored on a bi-annual basis by the Senior Management Team who will review progress in implementing previously agreed actions together with consideration of any new developments in the intervening period. Where appropriate, the Action Plan will be revised to reflect any new developments, consultations, the outcome of any new Equality Impact Assessments or any additional information not previously available.

Waterways Ireland will submit an Annual Review of Progress on Section 75 implementation to the Equality Commission and will report on developments and achievements in its annual report as required under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014

The collation of information on progress will allow for regular and ongoing review of the Action Plan to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to Waterways Ireland's functions. Any changes or amendments to the Action Plan will be reported to the Equality Commission.

¹ Headcount at 31/12/2022

6. EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2025

Themes

1. Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among Waterways Ireland staff.
2. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.
3. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates equality, diversity and inclusion.
4. Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our property and waterways.

1. Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among Waterways Ireland staff

Ref	Actions	Performance Measure	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
1.	<p>Continue to deliver a suite of equality, good relations and diversity-awareness training to all staff including equality, diversity, disability.</p> <p>Provide enhanced training to key staff members to ensure integration of policies on disability, equality and inclusion into leadership management and other key roles within the organisation.</p>	<p>Number of staff that have received training.</p> <p>100% of Operational staff to include legislation, barriers, language/etiquette, challenging stereotypes</p> <p>100% of PTA staff complete refresher training annually</p> <p>100% of all new staff at induction</p>	<p>Staff have a robust understanding of equality and good relations and feel confident to apply relevant principles in practice.</p> <p>Integration of equality, good relations and public sector duties into all planning and decision-making processes</p>	<p>Q1 2023, 2024, 2025</p> <p>Q1 2023, 2024, 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	HR / CS

Ref	Actions	Performance Measure	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
		Enhanced equality and public sector duty training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management & Extended Leadership Teams (2023) • Corporate Services Equality team (2023) • Recruitment & selection panels (Priority HR 2023; Others 2024 & 2025) • Customer service – Reception and operations teams (2024) • Dignity at Work: Nominated Persons (2023) • Access auditors (2025) 		Q2, 2023 Q2 2023 Q3 2023, 2024 & 2025 2024 2023 2025	
2.	Appoint Equality 'Champion' to drive programme delivery	Delivery of Equality & Diversity Working Group Terms of Reference.	Successful delivery of Action Plan measures. Integration of equality duties into all planning and decision-making processes.	March 2023 Annual	CS WG

Ref	Actions	Performance Measure	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
3.	<p>Develop and incorporate equality and good relations actions for all aspects of the Body's work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek regular updates to capture work done and/or identify ongoing/persistent inequalities. Monitor the number of complaints received in relation to equality / disability / good relations. Ensure that Equality and Good Relations is embedded to all WI corporate documents 	<p>Review delivery of Action Plan measures at quarterly Equality & Diversity Working Group Meetings</p> <p>Register of Complaints.</p> <p>Positive images and content used in corporate publications, on social media and on our website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 collaborations per annum to create and capture positive imagery / content 	<p>Accessibility of Information and Services for staff and visitors to our facilities and waterways who experience information barriers.</p> <p>Integration of equality duties into all planning and decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>2023-2025</p>	All
4.	<p>Create a calendar of events and awareness campaigns to celebrate diversity and inclusion across our workforce.</p>	<p>3 campaigns per annum.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for staff collaboration and participation</p>	<p>Increased awareness and celebration of diversity and inclusion.</p>	Ongoing	CS / WG / M&C

2. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
5.	<p>Continue to provide a suite of workplace, work-life balance policies and entitlements and flexible working for staff in the organisation.</p> <p>Implementation and monitoring of Hybrid Working</p>	<p>Review of existing HR policies completed by end 2023,</p> <p>Monitoring of hybrid working across the organisation.</p> <p>All new policies developed as identified by HR "People Strategy" Review and in accordance with the Waterways Ireland Guidance on Policy Development Process and Equality Screening</p>	Workplace where staff feel valued and safe.	<p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	HR
6.	Review and develop the extent of the inclusion of equality responsibilities in performance reviews across all relevant staff.	<p>Introduction of new performance management system</p> <p>Review and inclusion of equality responsibilities, where relevant for relevant staff.</p>	Integration of equality duties into all planning and decision-making processes	<p>June 2023</p> <p>Q1 2024</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>HR / CS</p>

3. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates equality, diversity and inclusion

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
7.	Undertake voluntary staff census to gather relevant information on equality categories covered by legislation.	Annual staff census 80% return of questionnaires from Northern Ireland workforce.	Accurate and up to date reflection of the equality groups within our workforce to inform statutory reporting, and to guide policy making	Q3 2023 2024 2025	HR
8.	<p>Develop entry to employment workforce actions within new HR "People Strategy for WI" to underpin detailed workforce planning across the organisation and include succession planning for key roles, eg engineers.</p> <p>Consider issues such as hard to recruit / retain posts and ways of effectively succession planning for future workforce needs.</p> <p>Positive targeting of under-represented groups through recruitment/promotion campaigns and engagement with representative groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled 	<p>Increased applications received for vacant posts identified by the HR Strategy for WI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women/Men in traditional work roles. Young people. People from Protestant community – 5% over the lifetime of Action Plan People from other racial groups – 3% over the lifetime of the Action Plan <p>Increased representation of people with a disability in the workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3% by December 2023 	<p>Robust understanding of our workforce and have identified and responded to areas for improvement.</p> <p>Effective succession planning for future workforce needs</p>	Ongoing	HR / CS

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial group Protestant <p>Use of welcoming statements, where applicable.</p> <p>Engage with disability umbrella groups to promote recruitment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.5% by December 2024 6% by December 2025 			
9.	<p>Seek to offer a range of work experience opportunities for young people, from a range of educational achievements and background.</p> <p>Raise awareness of WI jobs/skills through schools/colleges eg engineering, marketing/digital marketing, legal, HR, etc to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview skill training Student mentor programme Develop/run competition for students ie build a bridge / explore biodiversity/climate action within Waterways Ireland 	Engage 2 schools/colleges per annum, to include for example Transition Year students	Young people acquire skills and experience that will equip them to apply for positions.	2023 2024 2025	CS / WG

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to Support national programmes ie Engineers Week Support and engage female participation in STEM subjects 				

4. Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our property and waterways.

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
10.	<p>Continue to provide Education and Heritage/Environment programmes online with minimal or zero cost to the school or student, thereby removing cost or disability as a barrier to access or participation.</p> <p>Expand Education and Heritage Programmes to increase uptake by children with Special Educational Needs.</p>	<p>Increase in online educational, heritage and environment content.</p> <p>Engage with one SEN educational setting to deliver an education or Heritage/Environment programme per annum.</p>	Children living in poverty or with disability have access to educational programmes.	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2023-2025</p>	<p>M&C / E&H</p> <p>M&C / E&H</p>

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
11.	<p>Continue to develop and work with strategic partners across Ireland to promote our facilities for engagement in recreational activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canoe Ireland • Rowing Ireland • Get Ireland Walking • CANI • Sport NI • Sport Ireland • Cara • NCBI c/o Vision Sports Ireland. <p>Identified target groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people • Women and girls • People with disabilities • Those living in areas of deprivation adjoining our waterways. 	<p>Number of programmes supported, providing opportunities for each of the identified target groups to participate in recreation /leisure.</p> <p>Target: 2 events per annum.</p>	<p>Increased visitor experience for those accessing WI facilities.</p> <p>Improved profile and understanding of our activities.</p> <p>Increased participation of under-represented groups on and along our waterways.</p> <p>Increase in number of applications to WI seeking approval for events targeting under-represented groups approval.</p>	2023-2025	WG
12.	<p>Increase Event / Awareness Programme in partnership with other government agencies, community groups, equality groups etc.</p>	<p>Establishment of at least one collaborative working group.</p>	<p>Partnerships to develop and increase opportunities for participation in leisure / recreation.</p>	Sept 2025	WG

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	Consult with Department of Communities and Equality Commission to explore the potential to create a NI wide collaborative Working Group amongst public bodies such as Councils and ourselves		Accessibility of Information and Services	Q2 2025	WG
13.	<p>Ensure the principles of Access for All and Universal Design are central to the design, upgrade and development of facilities on and along our waterways, where practical, that people with disabilities have equality of opportunity to access the recreational facilities provided by the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor accessibility of our buildings and facilities through Access Audits Explore opportunities to create quiet /sensory space along our waterways 	<p>Compliance with best practice and legislation.</p> <p>3 Staff trained to undertake Access Auditing</p> <p>5 accessibility audits completed by end of Action Plan</p> <p>Completion of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shannon Greenway Barrow Blueway Grand Canal Greenway <p>Progress development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shannon-Erne Blueway Royal Canal Greenway Phase 2 	<p>Facilities on and along our waterways which are designed and built, where applicable to the highest standards of accessibility for all to use and enjoy.</p> <p>Reduction in obstacles to participation in leisure / recreation</p> <p>Accessibility of the built environment for all.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dec 2025</p> <p>Dec 2025</p> <p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Dec 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	AM / TS / Ops

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage umbrella groups such as Irish Wheelchair Association <p>Consult with the public and invite stakeholder interest groups to help shape services on major capital works as appropriate to ensure views of equality groups form part of the decision-making process.</p>				
14.	<p>Ensure all third-party activity provider leases/agreements – include equality/disability clauses to ensure inclusivity.</p> <p>Collaborate with WI licensed providers to promote /encourage increased opportunities for equality groups experiencing obstacles to participation to take part.</p>	<p>Inclusion of appropriate clause in third party activity provider legal agreements</p> <p>Number of events run by third party licenced providers supported and/or promoted by WI per annum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support 2 events per annum. 	Obstacles to participation in leisure / recreation	<p>Q3 2023</p> <p>2023 2024 2025</p>	<p>P&L</p> <p>CS / WG</p>
15.	<p>Review our user communications to make sure they are clear and easy to understand, meet the needs of all users, and are available in other languages and alternative formats.</p>	<p>Number of requests for information in alternative formats.</p>	<p>Creation of accessible communications, where applicable - written, spoken, digital and signed.</p>	Annual	CS / M&C

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	Continue to analyse equality related complaints to identify emerging trends which will allow for targeted intervention to improve the service and support we provide our disabled users.	Number of complaints of equality/disability nature reported on Complaints Register.		Annual	CS / M&C
16.	<p>Develop an accessible information policy to highlight the organisation's commitment to communicating effectively with everyone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop opportunities to use alternative formats to communicate information for staff and public eg use of caption, audio description, sign language, training videos, Braille, large print; etc Explore the use of accessible public communication boards/signage incorporating pictogram images, Braille, tactile contrasting, illustrations systems, QR code, etc on 	<p>Website (under development) will be fully compliant with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>2 promotional content (such as video, podcast or article) which include an alternative format of communication to raise awareness of the accessibility of Waterways Ireland facilities</p> <p>2 training content which include an alternative form of communication by end of Plan.</p>	Accessibility of Information and Services for staff and visitors to our facilities and waterways who experience information barriers.	<p>Dec 2023</p> <p>June 2024 June 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>	CS / M&C / CEO

Ref	Actions	Performance Indicator	Outcome	Timescale	Function Lead
	our facilities and at locations along our waterways.				
17.	Explore opportunities to promote the accessibility of Waterways Ireland's facilities in national advertising campaigns.	One dedicated national advertising campaign, with supporting stakeholders, showcasing the Accessibility of WI facilities/waterways	Wider audience showing accessibility of Information and Services for visitors to our facilities and waterways.	2025	M&C
18.	Develop links with advocacy and representative organisations to improve under representation in decision making processes across the equality groups.	1 service user consultative forum representative of equality groups North and South established	Improved opportunities for engagement with and influence policy makers Robust understanding of the needs of our users and stakeholder groups and have identified and responded to areas for improvement.	2025	CS
19.	Explore opportunities to source funding from other sources to support events, improved infrastructure.	Sources identified, where applicable Support / Funding Principles and Guidelines developed and approved by SMT Providers invited to apply for support funding.	Improved accessibility to information and services for visitors to our facilities and waterways.	2023 2024 2025	CS/I&D

Key to Function Lead abbreviations:

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| WG | Equality & Diversity Working Group | CS | Corporate Services |
| HR | Human Resources | TS | Technical Services |
| E&H | Environment & Heritage | M&C | Marketing & Communications |
| I&D | Innovation & Development | P&L | Property & Legal |
| CEO | Chief Executive's Office | AM | Asset Management |
| Ops | Operations | FP | Finance/Procurement |

From: informationrequest <informationrequest@waterwaysireland.org>
Sent: 30 March 2023 17:29
Subject: Waterways Ireland Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Consultee

I am delighted to attach our new Waterways Ireland Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025 following recent public consultation.

Thank you to those who responded to the consultation, a copy of the Consultation Feedback Report is attached.

Copies of both Action Plans are available on our website at [Waterways Ireland | About Us | Plans and Policies | How we Treat You | Equality](#).

If you require the Action Plans in an alternative format please contact us at:

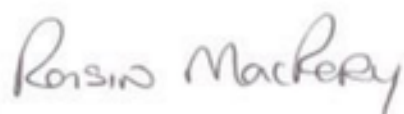
Equality Unit, Corporate Services
Waterways Ireland
2 Sligo Road
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh
BT74 7JY

Tel: +44 (0) 28 6632 3004

Email: information.request@waterwaysireland.org

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely





EQUALITY & DISABILITY ACTION PLANS 2023-2025 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT

Summary

Waterways Ireland recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties.

The Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 outlines the work we intend to carry out to comply with our Section 75 duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in all parts of our work.

The Disability Action Plan 2023-2025 outlines the positive measures we will deliver to make disability issues an integral part of our work programmes and to comply with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

As a North-South Body, it is also intended that delivery of the measures in our Action Plans will also fulfil our public sector duties in Ireland in relation to Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 and the Disability Act 2005.

Timeline:

- Consultation Opened: 18 October 2022
- Consultation Closed: 10 January 2023
- Feedback Review by Equality & Diversity Working Group: 9 February 2023
- Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025 ratified by the Waterways Ireland Senior Management Team: 27 March 2023

Consultation Methods:

- All Staff through email and WhatsApp
- Trade Unions within Waterways Ireland
- Sponsor Departments
- Audit Committee
- 155 Northern Ireland consultees by email
- 20 Ireland consultees by email
- 1 Operations feedback group
- 7 Social media posts – Facebook, LinkedIn
- Consultation Open Days:
 - 10/11/2022 – Enniskillen
 - 16/11/2022 – Coleraine
 - 23/11/2022 – Ashtowngate
 - 29/11/2022 – Carrick-on-Shannon
 - 06/12/2022 – Scarriff

Equality Action Plan Consultation Responses

Responses received

- 5 Staff
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)
- *Equality Commission NI (not included in stats below)*

Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among WI staff	Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity & respect	Attract, recruit & retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates diversity & inclusion	Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive & responsive to visitors to our property & waterways
5 Strongly Agree 2 Agree	6 Strongly Agree 1 Agree	5 Strongly Agree 2 Agree	5 Strongly Agree 2 Agree

Disability Action Plan Consultation Responses

Responses Received

- 6 Staff
- Newry User Forum Cedar Foundation
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)
- *Equality Commission NI (not included in stats below)*

Staff Training & Awareness	Communications	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
5 Strongly Agree 3 Agree	6 Strongly Agree 2 Agree	5 Strongly Agree 3 Agree

Equality Unit, Corporate Services
29 March 2023

DRAFT EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2025 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Theme 1: Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among WI staff

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should go beyond promoting of it to the agenda being embedded in the culture and working practices of the organisation. A more diverse workforce will mean a wider range of skills and ideas. It needs to be reinforced, applied and measured to have a real sense if Theme 1 produce the expected outcome. Overall there are lots of room for improvements and the Equality plan gives hope to improve culture and inclusion. 	Action Plan updated to include key training within 2023 as a priority.
Irish Wheelchair Association	Requiring a collaborative effort from everyone to encourage a culture of belonging, therefore everyone in WI is responsible for creating a work environment that fosters inclusivity and togetherness.	Action Plan updated to include key training for all staff to embed inclusive culture within organisation.
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WI to ensure enhanced training for key disciplines includes disability awareness, etiquette and appropriate language. NCBI notes dates of 2024 and 2025 indicated for delivery of enhanced training to some key disciplines with remit for equality e.g. Access auditors, Bullying and harassment advisors. 	Training will be ongoing over the lifetime of the Action Plan. Annual review will indicate priority key staff.

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	NCBI asks WI to prioritise delivery in 2023 of enhanced training to all disciplines so as to ensure staff are suitably equipped to address inequalities as early as possible within the lifetime of this plan.	

Theme 2: Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	It would need to be highlighted from the top that teams meeting and teams strategy meetings are important specially for new members of the staff as they will feel more integrated and valued.	Comments noted
Irish Wheelchair Association	Nurturing a diverse and inclusive environment is essential to achieving a workplace in which everyone feels that they belong, can be themselves and as a part of our initiative, we aim to raise awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion.	Waterways Ireland will reach out to the IWA for support and guidance as Action Plan measures are delivered and inclusion on future collaborative working group/forum
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	It is important to provide a range of policies and benefits to staff to support employment of underrepresented groups, including those who are blind or vision impaired. One that has been particularly beneficial for people with sight loss is hybrid working as often transport and other factors can impact on a person's ability to access employment.	Implementation and monitoring of hybrid working, introduced in 2022, is within the Action Plan

Theme 3: Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates diversity and inclusion

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will support the organisation to best deliver for the public. The organisation should reflect the diversity of its jurisdictions, which it doesn't at present. There are long-term cultural issues internally which contribute to poor retention in some areas. Staff who hold the same values as the organisation are more likely be attracted to it and will stay if the organisation offers a safe working environment where they feel valued and respected. 	Measures within the Action Plan will be delivered to both jurisdictions.
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	NCBI would reiterate the comments made in our response to the Disability Action Plan in terms of accessible recruitment processes and digital platforms.	Comments noted

Theme 4: Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our property and waterways

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone should be able engage with the waterways in a way that makes them feel valued and included. This means delivering diversely too – not just a small suite of offerings with limited means of engagement. WI should be creative in its approaches, invite stakeholders to help shape services. 	<p>Comments noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures re communication reviewed and strengthened in Action Plan

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	<p>This requires not just central engagement but local outreach particularly in large population centres. Visitors should be able to engage with and contact the organisation through a myriad of channels and trust that their feedback or comments will be acknowledged and responded to. At the moment, there is no (or very little) engagement with social media users who message the organisation regarding issues relating to accessibility, for example.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lot of local solutions being taken which are not reported/recognised. • Provision of open and accessible toilet facilities is difficult to achieve in some areas due to high levels of vandalisms. • WI should raise public awareness of how accessible a lot of their facilities are. 	<p>Noted: WI will actively seek this information.</p> <p>Comments noted</p>
Irish Wheelchair Association	Detailed checklist provided	Helpful detail.
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend expanding the organisations listed to support WI to engage with Sport Ireland, Cara and also NCBI c/o Vision Sports Ireland as strategic partners. • Engage with NCBI to ensure accessibility of buildings and facilities for people with sight loss. • Definition to be given to the Performance Indicator for best practice, making reference 	<p>Measures reviewed and updated on Action Plan</p> <p>WI welcomes this offer and will reach out to NCBI for support and guidance as Action Plan measures are delivered and inclusion on future collaborative working group/forum</p>

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	<p>to relevant standards or guidance in the development of policy or strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative formats to communicate information - should list braille, large print; Signage should list braille, tactile, contrasting.	<p>Measure has been updated on Action Plan</p>

DRAFT DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2025 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Theme 1: Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Staff Training & Awareness

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to see prioritised delivery in 2023. • Welcome dedicated point to recruitment and suggest an additional point on digital accessibility in recruitment processes. If recruitment websites are fully accessible, many people may not require other additional accommodations which can be a more equitable process. 	Training will be ongoing over the lifetime of the Action Plan. Annual review will indicate priority key staff.
Equality Commission NI	<p>Consider tightening the performance indicators to make them more specific and measurable e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aim to have trained at least X% of staff in year 1 of the plan, Y% by year 2 etc. (this could include mop up sessions for staff unable to attend earlier sessions and training for new any new employees.) You could also include a measure which relates to disability awareness training / training on the legislation forming part of the induction training for new staff. • Could also include target dates for provision of training rather than 'annually' e.g. general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action measures have been reviewed and targets included. <p>Noted</p>

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	<p>training provide to all employees by ... specific/targeted training for customer facing staff by... training for interview panel members by This will help to ensure that measures in the plan are kept on track and actually get implemented / aren't deprioritised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance indicator in relation to measure 3 – think this should relate to the involvement of disabled employees in the development of the training e.g inputting their ideas and suggestions in relation to the content of the training rather than just attending the training as a participant (i.e. an opportunity to involve / encourage participation of disabled employees by giving them the opportunity to have a say) • Measure 4 re integration of disability training into Recruitment and Selection training – could performance indicator be that all staff sitting on interview panels have received targeted disability training? You could stage this e.g at least one member of interview panels to have attended targeted disability training in relation to R&S from (date) with all potential panel members trained by the end of 2025. 	<p>Action Plan measure updated.</p> <p>Action Plan updated to include key training within 2023 as a priority.</p>

Communication

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope to link with Work Well newsletter. Maybe showcase employees in the organisation with disabilities. • All communications should be inclusive and acknowledge different needs and abilities. For example use of appropriate language, visuals that follow best practice accessibility guidance (e.g. will work easily with screen reader technology), warnings where applicable re communications content, clarity about all materials relating to WI assets (waterways, bridges etc.) as to accessibility and any mitigating factors relevant. • Wide range of communication channels may be required. • Access to the waterways is everyone's right. Actively encourage all people of all abilities. 	Comments noted
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific reference is made to using ALT text on images on social media, following Clear Print guidelines for all documents, posts and webpages and ensure website and apps are fully compliant with the WCAG 2.1AA standards for web accessibility. 	Action Plans have been updated, where applicable.
Equality Commission for NI	Measure 5 is a bit vague – can you elaborate a bit on this to provide greater clarity? Are these internal campaigns to raise awareness and	Measure has been reviewed and updated for clarity.

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	understanding of different disabilities amongst staff? Also performance indicator could be more specific e.g rather than 'number of campaigns' can you be more specific e.g. one / X number of campaigns in each year of the plan?	

Theme 2: Encourage Participation by disabled people in public life

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Employee(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope to expand our recruitment as well as work experience programmes. Develop outreach initiatives where staff could go to the centres where individuals attend. • WI should be striving to create the conditions through and in our work to support and encourage the participation of disabled people. • Currently there is a lack of joined up working between divisions internally in terms of accommodating reasonable adjustments. • There is a lot of canoe/kayak steps out there which are not user friendly for people with additional needs. 	Comments noted.
National Council for the Blind of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew commitment to ensuring accessibility of venues for public meetings. Additionally, NCBI have Workplace Integration Partner Officers that would be happy to engage with 	Comments noted.

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
	<p>WI to discuss shadowing, placement and recruitment opportunities etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WI to set targets (performance indicators) for increasing provision of accessible parking spaces, accessible WCs and changing places toilets within the lifetime of this plan. • WI to engage with Local Authorities, Public Transport Operators, other State agencies and third parties to promote the development of improved physical access and links to waterways infrastructure. • WI to conduct trail accessibility audits to ensure accessibility of all waterways infrastructure – including towpaths, locks, footbridges, information and amenity areas. • Clarity is provided on what WI means by disability duties. "Waterways Ireland is committed to ensuring that this Plan is communicated to all staff and will provide the necessary training and guidance on disability duties on the implementation of this plan." • Suggest including a paragraph at the beginning of this Action Plan to discuss terminology. There are many who wish to be described as a 'disabled person' but there are others who prefer 'person with a disability'. The way in which a person chooses to 	<p>Action Plan updated to include this clarification. Also included in Equality Action Plan.</p>

Responder	Feedback	Waterways Ireland Response
Equality Commission NI	<p>describe themselves is the appropriate term for them and neither is right or wrong.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure 10 – include more specific performance indicators so that you can measure the impact of the affirmative action • Could also include the recently established internal equality working group here (and any other internal working groups) and consider any measures that could be taken to encourage the participation / involvement of disabled staff members in these groups. Note that action 18 in the Equality Action Plan refers to '<i>develop links with advocacy and representative organisations to improve under representation in decision making processes across the S75 groups</i>'. Perhaps WI could consider it would be appropriate to establish a local service user or consultative forum type group which is representative of S75 groups and if so proactively try to encourage disabled people's participation in this. 	<p>Action measures have been reviewed and targets included</p> <p>Measure updated.</p>

From: Ballentine, Phillip <Phillip.Ballentine@economy-ni.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 April 2023 10:42

Subject: Department for the Economy consultation on Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27.

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Consultee,

The Department has published three draft documents for public consultation, including Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27..

The consultation seeks the views of key stakeholders and the general public on the content of these important documents, which outline how the Department for the Economy will fulfil its statutory equality and disability duties. Consultation on the draft documents will end on 04 June 2023. Copies of the draft documents, along with details on how to respond to the consultation, can be found on the Department's website at this link - [Consultation launched on the Department for the Economy Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27.](#)

The documents are also available in a range of formats on request.

Email -

equalityunit@economy-ni.gov.uk

Write to -

Equality Unit

Corporate Governance and Equality Branch

Department for the Economy

Adelaide House

39/49 Adelaide Street

Belfast

BT2 8FD

Telephone: 028 9052 9827.

TextRelay: 18001 028 9052 9827

This email has been sent to you because you are on the Department for the Economy Section 75 consultee list. If you would like to be removed

from this list, or have any queries regarding any aspect of this email please contact equalityunit@economy-ni.gov.uk

Your views are important to the Department, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Phillip Ballentine

DfE Equality Unit

From: McShane, Cara <c.mcshane@ulster.ac.uk>

Sent: 31 March 2023 14:56

Subject: Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies - Public consultation

Dear Consultee,

Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies - Public consultation

In accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and commitments made within our Equality Scheme, the University is consulting on the equality screening of the following new and revised policies, as defined by the Equality Commission (NI):

- Renaming of Cinematic Arts Studio
- Removal of desk phones
- AHRC Impact Accelerator Account
- Safeguarding Policy

I have attached a summary document that lists and describes the policies and the outcome of screening, for your information.

Policy documents and screening pro formas are available to download on the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) webpage](#).

Please note some of these policies have been implemented and therefore are subjected to ongoing monitoring from a screening perspective.

A consultation response MS Form is also linked on the web page to assist you in your response. Alternative formats can also be made available on request. Comments should be emailed to our [EDI section](#).

Please contact me if you are interested in further details about the equality screening of any of the policies listed.

The closing date for comments is **Friday 7 July 2023**. Please note that we are unable to respond to comments received after the consultation period closes and will not be able to include these in the summary of feedback received.

Best wishes,

Cara



Cara McShane

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor

People and Culture Directorate

Ulster University | Cromore Road | Coleraine | BT52 1SA

T: +44 (0)28 70124871

E: c.mcshane@ulster.ac.uk W: ulster.ac.uk/peopleandculture/employee-benefits/equality-diversity

Better. Connected

Public Transport in Northern Ireland

Over the next decade, public transport will play a vital role for people, planet, and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

As a cross-cutting public service, public transport is a key enabler to the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of Northern Ireland and plays a vital role in delivering the goals within the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in order to reduce emissions to meet the legislative requirement to achieve Net Zero by 2050 and the Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland.

However, Government spending per head on public transport in Northern Ireland over the last decade has only been around 35% of the UK average; this situation is likely to get worse as other devolved regions in the UK continue to increase investment in public transport in line with their own Climate Change legislation.

Social, Economic and Environmental Outcomes of Public Transport in Northern Ireland

Transport emits 20% of Northern Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions, an increase of 22% since 1990; the biggest contributor is private cars. Poor air quality is also the biggest environmental risk to public health in the UK and contributes to 800 deaths a year in Northern Ireland.

The Climate Change targets for the transport sector can only be achieved with a modal shift to public transport and active travel. Modal shift will also support a Just Transition by giving people low-cost greener travel solutions.

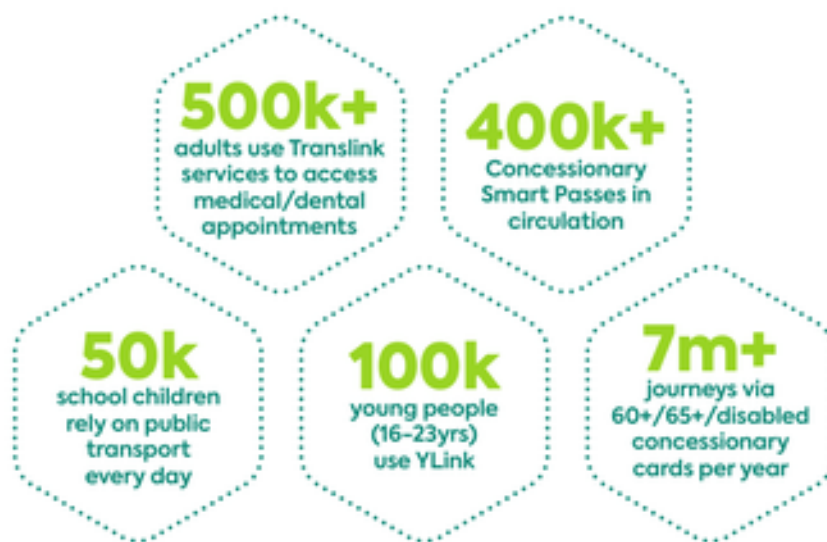
Decarbonisation of public transport will support Green Growth through investment in innovation, skills, and R&D in electric and hydrogen technologies.

Translink has ambitious plans to deliver these Outcomes through:

- Investing in frequency, reliability, and reducing journey times across the network
- Decarbonising our bus and rail fleet using innovative electric and hydrogen technologies
- Upgrading rail infrastructure to maintain and renew the rail network
- Enhancing inter-city rail connections between Derry~Londonderry – Belfast – Dublin
- Improving accessibility for all
- Rolling out integrated contactless ticketing
- Improving bus infrastructure through priority measures and park and rides
- Modernising passenger facilities, including Belfast Grand Central Station

Public transport funding is
50% lower
in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland

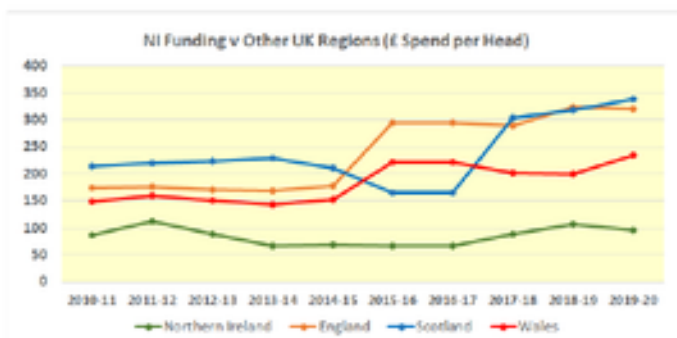
Government spending per head on public transport in Northern Ireland is only
35%
of the UK average



Public transport is central to the daily lives of many individuals and families, as well as to economic activity and to the social well-being of the general population.

Investment in Public Transport is essential

Per-head spending on public transport in Northern Ireland over the last decade has been only 35% of the UK average (Table 1 below). The Independent Fiscal Commission report also shows expenditure on transport below the UK average while overall public spending here is 20% above the UK average.



Expenditure per capita on public transport across the UK

- Public transport funding is also 50% lower in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland (based on 2019 subsidy per passenger figures)

- The budgetary picture during the 2022/23 financial year has been stark for Translink with Public Service Obligation funding representing less than 10% of the total DfI revenue budget which has driven Translink’s cash reserves to an all-time low, which is simply not sustainable.
- Translink has been pro-active in improving its financial position through revenue growth and cost efficiencies of over £20m in 2022/23. The recent fare increases averaging around 7% will also help to grow revenues, however no public transport network can deliver financial sustainability on its own and agreeing an appropriate budget allocation for 2023/24 is crucial to maintain and develop the public transport network in Northern Ireland.
- There is an urgent need to address the imbalance in funding between public transport and roads in Northern Ireland. This has been highlighted many times since the Northern Ireland Audit Office report in 2015, and yet little progress has been made. If the status quo continues, there will be major cuts required to bus and train services across the network. Notably, this would have a significant impact on the NI Railways network, with route closures, and on socially necessary services on the rural Ulsterbus network. In addition, Glider and Metro services in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry would also be impacted.

Conclusion

Passenger growth has been strong, at around 90% of pre-pandemic levels and there is now an urgent need to address 2023/24 Public Service Obligation funding allocation, as well as putting the public transport network on to a sustainable long-term footing so that it can play its vital role for people, planet, and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

The Translink ‘Better. Connected’ strategy for the next decade details the vital actions required to transform public transport in Northern Ireland, with a clear focus on continuous improvement, climate action, customer focus and connecting communities.