

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

1st June 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a meeting of the Regeneration and Development Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held on **Thursday, 9 June 2022**, commencing at **7.00pm virtually via Zoom**.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Tourism Performance Report for Quarter 4 (Jan to Mar 2022) (report attached)
4. Visitor Information Annual Report 2021/22 (report attached)
5. Economic Development Performance Report for Quarter 4 (Jan to Mar 2022) (report attached)
6. Economic Development Annual Activity Report 2021-22 (report attached)
7. East Border Westminster Exchange Visit (report attached)
8. Regeneration Performance Report for Quarter 4 (Jan to Mar 2022) (report attached)
9. Donaghadee Commons Masterplan Update (report attached)
10. Covid Recovery Projects (report attached)
11. Five Chambers of Commerce/Trade Plans 2022-24 (report attached)
12. Rural Development Programme Funding Update (report attached)
13. Any Other Notified Business

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

14. Pickie Quarter 4 Report 2021/22 (report attached)
15. Exploris Quarter 4 Report 2021/22 (report attached)
16. Single Tender Action, Pickie Fun Park (report attached)
17. Extension of Enterprise NI (ENI) contract for delivery of the Go-For-It Programme (report attached)
18. Update on AND Labour Market Partnership (report attached)
19. Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme (report attached)
20. Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding (report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Alderman Girvan	Councillor Cummings (Vice Chairman)
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Dunlop
Alderman Wilson	Councillor Gilmour
Alderman Smith	Councillor Irvine
Councillor Adair	Councillor Kennedy
Councillor Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor McClean
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Brooks	Councillor Walker (Chairman)

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	9 June 2022
Responsible Director	Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	20 May 2022
File Reference	TO/TD15
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other X If other, please add comment below: Evaluation Report
Subject	Tourism Performance Report for Quarter 4, 2021/2022
Attachments	None

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

Unclassified

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The Council's 17 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2021-22 is attached.

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports, some financial information has not been updated.

Key points to note:

- The Events service was not able to meet end of year targets due the ongoing impact of Covid-19 throughout the year. A restricted and reduced programme was delivered.
- Staffing has remained problematic throughout the year for the entire service. A post continues to remain vacant in the VIC which has limited outreach activity when the opportunities have arisen. The Marketing service has had a reduced complement of staff with one post remaining vacant due to an unsuccessful recruitment exercise.
- Events has a full complement of staff, filling a maternity cover post on a second recruitment exercise.
- Target not met for Event organiser training. The second cohort was delayed until March and is due to complete in June.

Key achievements:

- The Tourism service has completed two funded programmes, enabling local experience development. These were: Tourism NI Market Led Experience Development Programme and DAERA Rural Tourism Collaborative Experience Programme. Combined, the programmes have supported the development of 20 experiences, with two progressing to the 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' portfolio level with Tourism NI.
- Delivery of a new visitor website, enhancing the presentation of the Borough as an appealing destination to potential visitors, and growth across tourism social media channels extending the reach to digital audiences.
- 3 campaigns delivered: 'Ready to Welcome you', 'Ours in the place' and 'Make it Yours'.
- Completion of Events Toolkit.

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Emerging issues:

- VIC staffing is a continuing issue and will likely impinge on plans for outreach in Q1 and Q2 for 2022. It has the potential to impact opening schedules at both Ards and Bangor VIC throughout the 2022 season.
- Securement of businesses in both experience and event programmes continues to remain challenging and will likely continue into 2022.
- The Events service to include contingency plans regarding changeable weather patterns in events management plans.

Action to be taken:

- Progress final recruitment for outstanding vacant posts and keep options under review for VIC staffing.
- Continue to work closely with businesses and experience providers within the development/delivery of the Summer and Autumn Food Festivals.
- Monitor web performance cumulative to date.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

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Quarterly Performance Report - Tourism

Generated on: 20 May 2022

Last Update Q3 2021/22




















Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	87.21%	100%

Last Update Q4 2021/22

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Develop Sustainability Audit at 1 event	1	0
	No. of tourist information touch points	38	38
	No of Ice cream and hot drinks licences managed	11	11
	Event Grant Programme cost per attendee	£0.80	£1.22
	Cost per attendee at Tourism events	£6.47	£5.11
	Market research provision procured and established	1	1
	Develop Transformational Action Plan for delivery of Borough Events Strategy	1	1
	Develop Events Bid for Strategy	0	1
	% customer satisfaction at events	77.25%	90%
	% staff attendance	95.85%	95%
	% staff receiving regular pride in performance conversations	100%	100%














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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% staff receiving team briefings	100%	100%
	No of event organisers and volunteers trained	8	40
	Borough Marketing Strategy – No of campaigns (cumulative)	3	2
	Increase VAND web views audience by 10% annually	5.3%	10%
	Increase VAND social media audience by 10% annually	99%	10%
	Borough Marketing Strategy – No of editorial pieces	15	10
	Borough Marketing Strategy – Visitor Guide	1	1
	% Out of Borough Visitors on Experience Tours	51%	15%
	No. of Experience Tours (cumulative)	15	15
	% of Taste of AND Food Tours/showcases (cumulative)	8%	20%
	No of Taste of AND Food Tours/Showcases (cumulative)	4	8
	FDDP Year 2 – Activity 1 – No of Network Members	110	100
	FDDP Year 2 – Activity 2 – No of markets (cumulative)	4	3
	FDDP Year 2 – Activity 3 – Attendance at food event	1	1
	Tour Operators – Delivery of in person familiarisation tours (cumulative)	2	2
	Tour Operators – Creating of virtual familiarisation tours	1	1
	Number of attendees to grant assisted events	91,506	70,000
	Number of Clusters (cumulative)	3	3
	Exploris developed as a new LVIO	Yes	Yes

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Development of bookable experiences (cumulative)	10	8
	Delivery of ezines to tourism trade database (cumulative)	50	40
	Average engagement rates from e-zine	37.5%	25%
	Refresh online content weekly/monthly (cumulative)	52	52
	Visitardsandnorthdown.com user figures (cumulative)	203,115	120,000
	Launch new VAND web platform	1	1
	Visit Belfast Partnership – SLA	1	1
	Visitor Accommodation Audit	1	1
	No of Tourism/food webinars/seminars (cumulative)	3	3
	% of Out of Borough Visitors attending events	28%	16%
	% of Ex NI Visitors attending events	0%	1%
	Event Visitor spend per attendee	£11.26	£15.00
	Number of attendees at Tourism events (cumulative)	19,500	40,000

Unclassified

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ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	19 May 2022
File Reference	TO/VIC4
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Visitor Information Annual Report 2021/2022
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Newtownards and Bangor VIC individual stats

Background

The Tourism unit manages two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in the towns of Bangor and Newtownards. Both Centres open daily, Monday to Saturday servicing visitor and local enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time, and more spend in the Borough. The VICs service both those who make contact prior to visiting, and those who do so during their time here. They also offer information on "what's on" locally and a retail/box office ticket service for events – services used by both visitors and residents.

Throughout the year, members of the VIC team, work alongside marketing, assisting with the content build of the new Visit Ards and North Down website, maintaining, and updating content, as well creating digital content for social media. The VIC team is also active in supporting the wider tourism team with 'call outs' to trade for campaigns, experiences and food and events programming, and the ticketing of the walks, tours, and experiences.

Numbers of visitors and types of enquiries changed radically during the global pandemic. In March 2020, travel was restricted, and many businesses closed for several months. Initially, the VIC teams worked from home for a short period continuing their administrative duties, however this was followed with furlough or redeployment for the VIC team.

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This report provides an overview of the Newtownards and Bangor Visitor Information Centres as their services emerged from this period.

Newtownards VIC reopened to the public on Thursday 6 May 2021 (having closed on 20 March 2020 with two short periods of reopening that year when restrictions allowed, from 9 to 26 November and 11 to 24 December). Bangor VIC reopened to the public on Tuesday 1 June 2021 for the first time since 20 March 2020. When the centre reopened, it operated on a traffic light system restricting the number in the centre to only one 'bubble' at a time.

May 2021 – March 2022

Visitors and enquiries

The profile of visitors was dominated by the 'Staycation' and 'Day trip' market. There were very few out of state visitors initially, due to travel restrictions, and general unease regarding travel. The 'We're Good to Go' scheme supported by Tourism NI, in conjunction with Visit Britain, Visit Scotland and Visit Wales, aimed to give a sense of reassurance regarding Covid-19 safety measures in businesses to visitors – both VICs were part of this scheme.

Overall, almost 84% of VIC customers visited the centres in person, this highlights that face-to-face interaction remains important in the visitor journey with 14,159 customers serviced face to face. Excluding self-service visitors or "browsers", a total of 17,156 customers were serviced via various platforms - direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post, fax, and email.

Newtownards and Bangor VICS	May 21 - March 22
Total footfall to the Centres	15,469
ENQUIRY TYPE	
Face to face enquiries	14,159
Self service visitors/browsers	1,310
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	879
ENQUIRIES Phone	2,117
TOTAL SERVICED	18,465

*Newtownards VIC reopened 6 May 2021 missing Easter period.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	May 21 – March 22 % of total
NI	85.5%
GB & ROI	12%
Rest of the World	2.5%
TOTAL	100%

In comparison to the 'pre pandemic' profile of visitors to the centres, the VICs serviced 14.5% visitors from GB, ROI and Rest of the World (a decrease of 3.8%).

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Income

Whilst visitor information provision is the core function of the VIC's, both have a retail offer comprising mainly souvenirs, books and gifts as per customer needs. Both VICs encourage sales via special promotions, e.g., Christmas / Mother's Day / Valentine's Day, and regularly re-merchandise stock to attract new customers and increase footfall.

The VICs also actively advertise a ticket agent service for local events and operate as a sales agent for external events. Commission on tickets adds to total income generated. Events, tours and performances are returning for this season.

Income type	May 21 - March 22
Retail sales	£25,870
Booking fees	0
Ticket sales commission	£601
Total income	£26,471
Total income ex vat	£22,744

VIC Performance Summary

It should be noted that while, not unexpectedly, footfall and enquiries are down in 21/22 by 58% compared to pre pandemic figures, this was during a challenging travel environment. It is also reflective of an overall number of reduced trading months - Newtownards operating for 11 months and Bangor operating for 10 months. It is encouraging to note that customers visiting the Centres continued to support the retail element with retail reducing by a lesser amount of 26%.

As Appendix 1 illustrates, there are some notable performance differences between Newtownards VIC and Bangor VIC. Newtownards VIC serviced approximately twice the number of enquiries as Bangor, however Bangor serviced more 'Out of Borough' (OoB) visitors. Explanations for that may include Newtownards VIC's more town centre location (on a shopping street beside the bus station), and its larger retail and information space in comparison to 'bubble' restricted entry to Bangor. Bangor may attract more OoB visitors due to its additional public transport links from Belfast, its proximity to the Marina and Pickie Fun Park.

See Appendix 1 for full report.

Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office

The Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO) is in the reception area of Exploris. A Service Level Agreement is in place with the operators and regular monitoring of this is undertaken. It offers visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Exploris closure at Christmas). With a footfall in excess of 100,000 per year in a normal operating environment, the exposure to visitors is significant.

Exploris reopened after lockdown on Monday 24 May, with the new LVIO opening in tandem. The Council provided literature racking for brochures on the local area and key attractions across NI. There is also an interactive touch screen, supplied by

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Tourism NI, for visitors to explore the Borough and extended tourism offering in a digital format. Prior to Exploris reopening, its staff were trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to enable them to address visitor enquiries directly.

The new LVIO has been well used so far by self-service visitors. Over 7,500 pieces of visitor literature have been taken away, alongside use of the touch screen. The Council's VIC staff have provided visitor servicing support at peak periods during July and August, Halloween and on Bank Holidays (total of 13 days). On these dates a Council Visitor Advisor serviced enquiries from 421 additional visitors. This is planned for the coming season, subject to availability of staff.

Exploris LVIO	May 21 –March 22
ENQUIRY TYPE:	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	1137
Exploris Phone Enquiries	227
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (13 Peak Visitor Days)	421
TOTAL SERVICED	1785

Cockle Row Cottages

As previously reported to Council in April 2022 the Cockle Row Cottages remained closed to visitors in 21/22 due to the inability to reopen under Covid-19 restrictions and the associated Risk Assessment. It did however deliver one small scale event in October attracting just under 300 attendees (outdoor). Similar activity with one event per month is scheduled for the 2022 summer season. Two publicly advertised Expressions of Interest exercises, to seek private or community proposals for use of the Cottages were unsuccessful. However, Officers are continuing to engage with third parties on potential joint activity and will update Council with a further report at the appropriate juncture.

Outreach Activity

Literature was removed from public display during the pandemic in many locations for safety reasons. Further literature stock was not produced by the service, as the climate was ever changing with businesses opening and closing irregularly and at short notice, and some ceasing to trade altogether.

During 2021, the opportunity for outreach was limited with sites and events significantly reduced. However, some opportunities started to re-emerge with a mobile VIC presence at Portaferry Market on limited dates, the Europro NI Masters Golf tournament in August and at 'Back in Bangor' and 'Tide and Turf' in August and September, respectively. A total of 620 visitor enquiries were serviced.

Summary

Although there continued to be a very challenging environment for the tourism industry in 21/22, the Council's visitor information service engaged with over 20,000 customers via its VICs, outreach and Local Visitor Information Office.

The VICs have adapted as necessary and serviced face to face enquiries and sales, demonstrating that visitors still seek 'trusted' and 'personalised' visitor services.

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A promotional campaign is set to take place during summer 2022 to generate awareness of the VICs and drive additional footfall. Plans to work with the local trade are underway with both VICs rebuilding relationships.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

Appendix 1 – ITEM 4.1

Newtownards and Bangor VIC Report – May 21 – March 22

Newtownards and Bangor VICs	MAY 21 - MARCH 22	APRIL 19 - MARCH 20	VARIANCE*
TOTAL FOOTFALL TO THE CENTRES	15,469	38,272	
ENQUIRY TYPE			
FACE TO FACE ENQUIRIES	14,159	36,595	
SELF-SERVICE VISITORS/BROWSERS	1,310	1,317	
ENQUIRIES Post/Email	879	1,357	
ENQUIRIES Phone	2,117	4,654	
TOTAL ENQUIRIES	18,465	43,923	-58%

*Newtownards VIC open 11 months and Bangor VIC open 10 months

Newtownards VIC

	May 22 – MARCH 22
VISITORS TO THE CENTRES	10,962
ENQUIRIES TYPE	
VISITORS	
FACE TO FACE ENQUIRIES	9,666
SELF-SERVICE VISITORS/"BROWSERS"	1,296
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	519
ENQUIRIES Phone	1,141
TOTAL	12,622

Newtownards VIC Income

Income type	May 21 - March 22
RETAIL SALES	£16,991
TICKET SALES	
COMMISSION	£98
TOTAL INCOME	£17,089
TOTAL INCOME EX VAT	£14,773

The retail income generated by Newtownards VIC was down by only 15% on pre pandemic 2019/20 figures.

Bangor VIC

	June 21 - MARCH 22
VISITORS TO THE CENTRE	4,507
ENQUIRY TYPE	
VISITORS FACE TO FACE ENQUIRIES	4,493
SELF-SERVICE VISITORS/"BROWSERS"	14
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	360
ENQUIRIES Phone	976
TOTAL	5,843

Income

SALES & COMMISSIONS £	June 21 - March 22
RETAIL SALES	£8,879
TICKET SALES COMMISSION	£502
TOTAL INCOME	£9,381
TOTAL INCOME EX VAT	£7,970

The retail income generated by Bangor VIC was significantly impacted due to the entry 'bubble' and 'traffic light' restrictions to the Centre. Ticket commission was also significantly reduced due to event restrictions decreasing overall income by 45% on pre pandemic 19/20 figures.

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ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development Committee
Date of Meeting	9 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	23 May 2022
File Reference	160167
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	ED Performance Report, Quarter 4, 2021-2022 (Jan-Mar 2022)
Attachments	N/A

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (2015-2019 plan in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (2018/19 plan published 30 June 2018)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April 2018).

The Corporate Plan 2015-19 sets out 17 objectives for the plan period based on themes of People, Place, Prosperity and Performance. The Council's Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the

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Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for the fourth Quarter of 2021-22 is below.

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports, some financial information has not been updated.

Key points to note:

- 2021-22 has been a difficult year in many respects with difficulties in recruiting staff to fill posts that are either new or vacant due to staff taking up posts elsewhere, as well as instances of staff illness which has affected performance in some areas of service delivery. Work steams had to be prioritised in line with the resources available.
- Many businesses have been concentrating on getting their business back up and running post Covid and therefore take up on some of the mentor-based programmes has been slow.
- Some programmes have been delayed due to the impact of C-19 but Officers continue to work across Councils to secure funding and roll out procurement and delivery in the coming year.
- Despite having 28 businesses participate in the Virtual Jobs Fair, to date no new jobs have been taken up. This reflects the difficulties across the board that employers are facing in attracting talent.

Key achievements:

- Despite lack of staff the creation and set up of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP), with support from the Department of Communities, became a priority and the agreed Action Plan will help to address the issues employers and those seeking work are facing. The former Employability and Skills Sub-Group has been subsumed by LMP to take forward the work to support employment across the Borough.
- Delivery of support has worked well through digital channels which businesses reporting it offers them and their staff more flexibility.
- Despite closures and restrictions due to C-19, Exploris and Pickie Fun Park have recovered well and are seeing numbers return to and even exceed pre C-19 figures.

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Emerging issues:

- As the current phase of EU Funding will soon draw to a close, officers continue to work with other Councils and bodies to ensure that appropriate successor funding is identified and secured. However, given the lack of clarity on UK Shared Prosperity Funding alternative plans may need to be put in place to ensure we are able to meet our statutory targets.
- The establishment of a Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and the creation of an Action Plan has been approved and submitted to the Department of Communities however, until DfC can confirm the budget for implementation delivery is restricted.
- In addition to the difficulties with recruiting for the LMP posts, there remain several vacancies within the ED team. While the replacement of required posts takes place, there will be challenges for current team members to continue to respond to all the work requirements across the broad spectrum of tasks. Workloads will need to be carefully monitored and managed.

Action to be taken:

- Officers will work to ensure sufficient plans and partnerships will be in place to provide continuity of support for new businesses. An 11-Council working group has been established work on progressing this important support.
- Recruitment of staff will remain a priority and officers will work with HR to fill posts as efficiently as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

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Quarterly Performance Report - Economic Development

Generated on: 23 May 2022

Last Update Q3 2021/22




















Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	93.99%	100%

Last Update Q4 2021/22

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Conduct annual business survey	1	1
	Monitor contracts through operational agreements via monthly and quarterly meetings	100%	100%
	% staff attendance	91.1%	95%
	Pride and Performance interview completed and including review will all staff	100%	100%
	Team Briefings to be communicated to all available staff monthly (unless Sick or on leave)	100%	100%
	Creation of new web portal pilot to manage client programme applications	1	1
	Number of business owners/employees signing up for Health and Wellbeing initiatives	45	30
	Improve the qualification levels of GCSE for students ** (Exam results awaited for 52 participants)	0	30

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Creation of Action Plan to progress Innovation Hub concept	Yes	Yes
	Number of participants on ERDF Digital Transformation programme	0	6
	Deliver appropriate AND content for Renewed Ambition Programme	1	1
	PR & thought pieces placed in relevant publications	11	6
	No of workshops/group interventions	46	30
	No of 1:1 Business Advice sessions	113	100
	Number of business research assignments	63	75
	Number of commercial premises and land inquiries	17	10
	Plan based on recommendations of Business Accommodation Needs Report	No	Yes
	Creative Industries Development – number of group interventions/workshops	15	15
	No of new jobs created through NIBSUP2	128	133
	Number of jobs created through the Social Enterprise programme	15	15
	Number of businesses supported through the Digital Growth Programme	33	35
	Delivery and implementation of Digital Strategy Action Plan	Yes	Yes
	Delivery of LFFN Wave 3 as part of FFNI Consortium	95%	100%
	Effective draw down and utilisation of grant claims	100%	100%
	Creative Industries Development – number of 1-1 mentoring sessions	19	18
	Number of jobs taken up by applicants as a result of the virtual jobs initiatives	0	25
	Number of jobs created as a result of the Shine programme	46	70

Unclassified

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Number of meetings Economic Development Forum	1	1
	Number of Employability and Skills sub group meetings	0	2
	Number of ESF participants into employment	43	25
	Number of participants in the WIB Women Challenge Fund	56	42
	Targeted interventions supporting Agri-Food businesses	5	4

Unclassified

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ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration, Development and Planning
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	20 May 2022
File Reference	ED55
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Economic Development Annual Activity Report 2021-22
Attachments	Appendix 1: ED Annual Summary 2021-22

Ards and North Down Business Support Services

The role of the Economic Development Section (ED) is to promote and encourage local economic growth and to work to develop a pipeline of support from enterprise awareness, business start and business growth, employability and skills and sector development.

To encourage skills development, enterprise, growth and innovation, ED provides a suite of support, projects, interventions, and collaborations. Local businesses and entrepreneurs benefit from 1:1 confidential business advice, business intelligence service, signposting to other support agencies, workshops, advice sessions, networking opportunities and mentoring programmes.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the ED Section has continued to deliver its support, as well as adapting quickly to what the business community required.

The team has worked in conjunction with colleagues across other service units to provide timely and crucial advice and support to assist businesses navigate the issues associated with both the pandemic and current recovery period.

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This annual report, as in previous years, provides a summary overview of the elements of the support services provided to local businesses between April 2021 - March 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

Item 6.1 - Appendix 1: ED Support Annual Summary 2021-22**CONTENT****PRE ENTERPRISE & NEW START****1 European Social Fund Projects (ESF)****GROWTH****2 Signal Business Support****2.1 Business Support Services – Advice & Research****2.2 Business Support Services – Information & Communication****2.3 Business Support Services – Food and Drink Programme 2021****2.4 Business Support Services – Hospitality and Leisure Programme 2021****2.5 Social Enterprise – Support for the Social Enterprise Sector****2.6 Summary of Business Growth Support Services – During COVID-19****SUPPORT PROGRAMMES & EVENTS****3 Go For It Programme****4 SHINE Programme****5 AND Social Enterprise Programme 2020-21 (ANDSEP)****6 Mind Body Business Activity Programme 2020-21****7 NI Apprenticeship Week Programme 2022****8 Job Fair 2021****9 Women in Business Yes You Can Programme****10 Prince's Trust****FACILITY****11 Signal Facility**

Item 6.1 - Appendix 1: ED Support Annual Summary 2021-22

1. ESF Projects

The ED section supports three European Social Fund projects in the Ards and North Down area.

(i) Exploring Enterprise – Enterprise Northern Ireland:

Exploring Enterprise Programme is a pre-enterprise programme which seeks to support people who are considering self-employment as their route to enter and/or return to the labour market. The programme is a mixture of group training and one-to-one mentoring support. Participants do not need to have a specific business idea to join. The programme provides an insight into starting a business whilst allowing participants to work towards achieving the recognised CCEA Level I qualification in Understanding Business Enterprise. In addition, there will also be an emphasis with regards guiding and assisting individuals into and through the mainstream business support/further education options.

From 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022, 3 courses have been delivered in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area:

- 2 delivered by North Down Development Organisation (Large Courses)
- 1 delivered by Ards Business Hub (Small Course)

Targets and progress to date - Year 4

2021/22	Target	Progress
Number of Courses delivered	3	3
Number of individuals enrolled	25	22
Number of individuals securing an accredited qualification in Understanding Business Enterprise	19	15 (externally moderated by CCEA in May 2022)
Number of individuals obtaining employment / self-employment	8	15
Number of individuals into Further Education Training	3	3

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(ii) The Verve Programme – the NOW Group

The NOW Group is a social enterprise that supports 540 people in Northern Ireland with learning disabilities/ difficulties/ASC gain jobs with a future.

- Employment Programme provides one-to-one specialist support to individuals to help them get the job they want and keep it.
- A range of interventions to build clients capacity to engage in training, work placements, voluntary work and community / social activities.
- Vocational and employability training delivered at appropriate levels.

The NOW Group continually scan workforce trends and the economic and political environments for opportunities for employment, up skilling and social engagement which will increase inclusion and wellbeing, leading to citizenship development and civic involvement for participants. Its work is also about social and community inclusion which leads to the people they work with having better health, a better education and a brighter future. Its services are continually evolving as a result of co-design, participant feedback and learning from projects.

Verve Programme targets and progress - Year 4

2021/22	Target	Progress
Participants Enrolled	42	40
Academy / Vocational Training	40	46
Participants moving into employment / voluntary jobs upon leaving the programme	20	20
Stakeholders Engaged with	85	85
Positive Progression Route for Participants (%)	100	100

(iii) Stepping Stones to employment – Stepping Stones NI

Stepping Stones to Employment Programme delivered by Stepping Stones NI engages people with learning disabilities/difficulties and barriers to employment.

The programme targets:

- The unemployed or economically inactive
- People with learning disabilities, difficulties and barriers to employment who are unlikely to move into education, employment or training
- People who have low or no qualifications.

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The programme offers the following in the Ards and North Down area:

- **Skills Development and Hospitality Training:** helping people tackle the barriers they face when looking for paid employment through the provision of innovative training courses. People with disabilities benefit from accredited and non-accredited courses delivered in a manner that suit the learning needs and abilities of participants through class-based workshops. Practical skills are delivered through the Gatelodge Café in Ards.
- **Employability and Employment:** providing assistance and support including careers guidance to participants seeking to find or keep employment or voluntary work through Employment Officers and Job Coaches.

Targets and Progress to date - Year 4

2021/22	Target	Progress
No. of participants recruited	20	22
No. of participants in paid employment	2	8
No. progressing into education and or training	5	2
No. completing accredited units	10	13
No. of participants volunteering in the workplace, obtaining work placements or completing work tasters	10	39

2 Business Support Services

2.1 Business Support Services – Advice and Research 2021-2022

From April 2021 - March 2022 businesses have sought the assistance of the business support team across a wide variety of topics. The assistance varies from signposting through to working on a longer-term basis to help clients with marketing, business plans and signposting to available business support programmes, i.e. ERDF SHINE and Digital Growth Programme. The services have been taken up as shown in the table below. The number of market research requests were slightly below the target, attributed to reduced resources related to the sickness absence of two key officers.

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Service	No Clients / Projects Apr 21 - Mar 22	Target
Business Advice	113	100
Market Research	66* (63 external research requests, 3 internal research requests)	75

*There was no Business Researcher in post from July 2021 – May 2022

2.2 Business Support Services – Information & Communication 2021-2022

In addition to the Business Advice and Research Service, the team supports businesses by keeping them updated on a variety of areas including business support programmes, marketing and development opportunities, changes to legislation, and opportunities for grant funding and assistance.

Information Service	2021-2022 No.
<i>Weekly Business Newsletters</i>	49
<i>Thematic Business Ezines</i>	57

As of 31 March 2022, the Economic Development unit has 1,559 subscribers to the online newsletter and email service (down from 1,675 in the previous financial year). The reason for the drop in the subscribers number will be investigated as part of the business survey which will be circulated at the end of May 2022 and officers will look at news ways to engage businesses further.

2.3 Business Support Services – Back to Business Programme

Event Type	Apr 21 – Mar 22		Apr 20 – Mar 21	
	No Businesses attended	No Participants Registered to attend	No Businesses attended	No Participants Registered to attend.
Online Webinars	286	479	286	298

- 1) Some companies attended more than one event and figures reflect each time they attended.
- 2) The above table excludes the additional support delivered via programmes such as SHINE, Digital Growth, ANDSEP, and the Creative Vision

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Programme. Full details of all support delivered in 2021-2022 is included within this report (The Creative Vision Programme and Digital Growth is included within the Development Projects Report).

The 2021-22 programme consisted predominantly of on-line initiatives which were developed and delivered to aid businesses through the continuing pandemic and reopening phase. It is therefore difficult to compare the figures directly against the results of previous years. During 2021-22 there was a significant difference in the number of people registered to attend, compared to actual attendance at the events (479 compared to 286). However, it should be noted that the level of participation in the on-line webinars was the same as for the previous financial year (286 businesses attended). In order to mitigate the issue of non-attendance following registration, the ED team is considering the introduction of a small non-refundable fee upon registration for each event (approx. £10).

Programme Income Generation

The Programme of support generated the following income:

Income Generation	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020-21	Target 2021-22	Actual 2021-2022
Modules & Programmes	£4,200	£0.00	£4,200	£0.00

All "in person" events were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions and replaced by online/virtual events for which no payment was charged resulting in no income generation for 2021-2022.

Online/Virtual Events and Initiatives

A total of 46 online support initiatives were delivered as follows.

No	Date	Title of Event	No registered	No Attended	Businesses Attended	% Overall Excellent Satisfaction/Vgood
1.	13-May-21	Build Resilience and Wellbeing	16	10	8	100%
2	17-May-21	Job Start and Apprenticeship	28	20	18	100%
3	25-Jun-21	Fundamentals of Digital Marketing	22	13	13	100%
4	02-Jul-21	Creating Video on Mobile Device	20	13	13	100%
5	06-Jul-21	Creating Video on Mobile Device	13	6	6	100%
6	05-Aug-21	Fundamentals of Digital Marketing	20	12	12	100%

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7	13-Aug-21	Facebook for Business	19	15	15	100%
8	20-Aug-21	A Beginner's Guide to Instagram	18	11	10	80%
9	26-Aug-21	A Beginner's Guide to Instagram	18	11	11	75%
10	08-Sep-21	Export and Logistics (Invest NI)	7	3	3	100%
11	15th sept	RP - Customer Journey	6	5	4	None completed
12	22-Sep-21	RP - Merchandising	6	3	3	None completed
13	24th sept	Employment Law for SMEs	10	5	3	100%
14	30th Sept	Positive Influencing Skills	14	7	7	100%
15	01-Oct-21	Creating and Managing an Engaging workplace post pandemic	8	4	4	100%
16	04-Oct-21	Developing your brand (RP)	6	4	4	None completed
17	04-Oct-21	Hootsuite	9	5	5	100%
18	07-Oct-21	Ready to Export Products	7	6	6	100%
19	12-Oct-21	Canva - Design made easy	21	12	12	88%
20	14-Oct-21	Ready to Export Services	7	4	4	100%
21	18-Oct-21	Social Media and Growing your Business (RP)	7	2	2	None completed
22	19-Oct-21	export sales prospecting Invest NI	6	3	3	100%
23	09-Nov-21	Invest NI Maximising social media	17	11	11	100%
24	11-Nov-21	Managing your Carbon Footprint	6	5	5	80%
25	17-Nov-21	Identifying Opportunities and Trends	13	9	9	100%
26	18-Nov-21	Trading Standards Information Session	8	8	8	100%
27	25-Nov-21	Presentation Skills in a Virtual World	7	3	3	100%
28	01-Dec-21	Excel beginners	9	7	6	None completed
29	08-Dec-21	Excel advanced	7	5	5	None completed
30	10-Jan-22	Business Growth - 5 Ways to Grow Your Business	17	11	10	100%
31	18-Jan-22	Invest NI - The Sales Practice	11	6	6	100%
32	20th Jan 2022	NLP	12	9	9	100%
33	26th Jan 2022	Deaf Awareness	9	6	6	100%
34	04-Feb-22	Hospitality and Leisure Programme - Recruiting talent	15	7	7	100%

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35	18-Feb-22	Hospitality and Leisure Programme - Retaining talent	5	3	3	100%
36	08-Feb-22	Perfecting Your Pitch	22	16	14	100%
37	23-Feb-22	Food and Drink Programme session 1 How to find the right outlets for your product	8	5	5	100%
38	04-Mar-22	Food and Drink Programme session 2 How to make your approach	8	5	5	100%
39	11-Mar-22	Food and Drink Programme session 3 How to use Social Media	9	3	3	100%
40	24-Mar-22	Budget Update	8	5	5	100%
41	28-Mar-22	SharePoint for Business	7	5	2	100%
42	9-Mar-22	Fundamentals for Digital Marketing and Social Media	15	6	6	100%
43	15-Mar-22	LinkedIn for your Business	17	13	12	100%
44	21-Mar-22	Twitter for Business	7	3	3	100%
45	23-Mar-22	Mailchimp for your Business	16	8	5	100%
46	30-Mar-22	Facebook for your Business	10	6	6	100%
Total / Average			479	298	286	98%

2.5 Sectoral – Food & Drink Programme (F&D)

The Food & Drink Programme was a collaborative initiative between the ED Team and the Food & Drink Officer and was specifically created for Food and Drink producers within Ards and North Down Borough Council to help them navigate challenging times. The Programme was designed for small and medium sized producers wanting to raise awareness of their brand, find new routes to consumers and review the potential to develop new products.

The objective of the programme was to empower participants to take control of their own Lead Generation Strategy and, in doing so, expand their points of distribution and deliver sales growth.

By the end of the Programme, participants had developed a Sales Outreach Strategy to identify and make contact with relevant outlets for their products and had a Digital Content Plan they could implement on Social Media to grow their online presence via brand awareness and sales.

The support was built around three sessions in February and March 2022, that included identifying the right outlets for products, how to make an approach, and the use of social media.

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10 F&D businesses availed of the programme, with 100% of respondents stating that they were 100% Highly Satisfied/Satisfied with the support provided. The direct impacts to their businesses are highlighted below:

Potential Impact Upon Business	% of Respondents
Impact on Turnover	62.5%
Affect Productivity / Processes	75%
Help to Expand the Business	100%
Help to Enter New Markets	100%
Improve Customer/Employee Relations	75%
Increase Knowledge and Skills	100%



2.6 Sectoral – Hospitality & Leisure Programme

The ED section delivered two support sessions in February 2022 for the Hospitality and Leisure Programme. These were focussed on Recruiting Talent and Retaining Talent.

One of the most pressing issues currently faced within the Hospitality and Leisure industry is getting the right people working for them and getting them to stay.

Owners and managers of a Hospitality and Leisure business within the Borough were invited to attend two informative interlinked sessions with owners/managers recommended to attend both.

This first session on recruiting and attracting talent looked at issues including:

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- Understanding the talent pool
- Getting the recruitment message out to that talent pool
- Communicating industry career opportunities positively
- Creating a memorable recruitment experience
- Managing the offer

The second session focus on retaining staff for the session included:

- Early-stage employment - maintaining the job celebration
- Understanding
- Talking career development
- Developing a retention plan
- Continuous communication
- Celebrating success

Summary of outcomes:

- 20 businesses registered for the sessions and 10 businesses attended across the two sessions.
- 40% of those businesses registered provided feedback.
- 100% were highly satisfied or satisfied with the speaker content and delivery of topic.
- 100% of respondents were highly satisfied with the quality of the presentation.
- 100% of respondents responded that they were either highly satisfied or satisfied with the overall content of the programme.

Participants fed-back on the potential positive impacts the programme would have on their business as follows:

Potential Impact Upon Business	% of Respondents
Impact on Turnover	75%
Improve Profitability	100%
Affect Staffing Levels	100%
Affect Productivity / Processes	75%
Help to Expand the Business	75%
Help to Enter New Markets	25%
Improve Customer/Employee Relations	75%
Increase Knowledge and Skills	100%

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2.8 Summary of Business Growth Support Services

The team prioritised the need to continue supporting businesses that were affected by the impact of lockdown and restrictions on many businesses and the changes to operating processes required due to Brexit.

The Economic Development team offered business support and advice to 462 businesses on the latest and up to date information through a variety of methods including direct Business Advice, Business Research and a series of virtual webinars.

Area of Support	No. of Businesses
Business Advice	113
Business Research	63
Online Initiatives*	286
Total	462

**The average overall satisfaction level for webinars, as rated by participants, was over 98% Highly Satisfied/Satisfied.*

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In addition, the Economic Development section responded to the economic challenges during the pandemic as follows:

- Responding directly to approx. 63 enquiries from local businesses and advising them accordingly about issues such as COVID 19 grant support, Job retention scheme, self-employment grants, rates deferment, and issues relating to Brexit.
- Weekly e-zines – or ezines following each relevant government announcement
- Engaging directly with local businesses through phone calls and asking how Council can assist as part of the recovery or lobby on behalf of businesses
- Engaging directly with local businesses through the ED forum and the Employability and Skills sub-group to identify support

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3 Go For It Programme

The current Business Start-Up Programme is regionally known as the 'Go for It' Programme and is an 11 partner Councils collaboration across Northern Ireland.

Participants receive the following support:

- Up to 6 hours of bespoke mentoring support delivered by a business adviser through a series of 1-1 meetings, group workshops and phone calls to assess and develop their business idea and to develop their bespoke business plan;
- Finance and business planning workshops;
- Tailored mentoring, guidance and support covering everything from sales and marketing to accessing funds and securing premises;
- Best practice tools, videos and more to help the participant get started.

The Table below NIBSUP Stats Council Financial Year April 2021 - March 2022

<i>April 2021-March 2022 End of Programme Performance</i>	<i>Achieved No.</i>
Enquiries	424
Initial Assessment Meetings (IAM)	255
Business Plans Approved	214
Jobs Created*	128

*151% jobs created versus statutory target (statutory target is 85)

The programme is managed centrally by LCCC on behalf of the 11 councils. The main elements of the programme consist of delivery (Enterprise NI), marketing (Derry Strabane District Council contract), Enquiry Handling (Teleperformance) and MIS (Belfast City Council Contract).

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4 SHINE Programme

The SHINE Programme is Ards and North Down Borough Council's principal business support and growth programme providing 1:1 specialist business advice and tailored workshops to take businesses to the next level of growth. It is part funded by Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) programme. The delivery/mentoring element of the programme is delivered by Brilliant Red and marketing delivered by Directus.

Progress to date on delivery and marketing - In below table listed are SHINE Programme Delivery main objectives and outputs to date;

Objectives/targets	Outputs to date
360 individual businesses engaging in the Programme	138 engaged with programme, 129 assigned to mentoring, 20 either withdrew from programme, are not eligible and assigned to other support, on hold due to not trading at current time. Review application at later date agreed with client.
330 businesses recruited for mentoring support	129 businesses currently recruited to SHINE and have started and/or completed their mentoring support.
100 businesses to receive 1.5 days of mentoring	37 currently receiving mentoring or have completed their mentoring hours.
200 businesses to receive 3 days of mentoring	57 currently receiving mentoring or have completed their mentoring hours.
30 businesses to receive 5 days of mentoring	35 currently receiving mentoring or have completed their mentoring hours
280 jobs to be created within 3 years by 31 December 2023	Total number of FTE jobs created since start of programme is 156.08 jobs.
30 businesses referred to Invest NI (the pipeline)	6 quality business referrals added to portal and emailed to INI Executive, 4 referred.
70 businesses referred to other sources of support and assistance.	To date 24 participants have been referred to other business support providers, excluding Invest NI financial Support. A total of 41 referrals to business support services.
6 per annum Economic Development Business topic half day workshops/events with minimum of 12 participants	18 workshops/webinars delivered since start of programme, example of topics; Finance including; Cash Flow, Managing Tax and Selling on Linked In. Digital Marketing including: Social Media Strategy, Social Media Trends for 2021 and Creative Brand Awareness Online As well as featuring a webinar focusing on; Creating a short-term containment plan

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	<p>All workshops/webinars met the minimum standard of 12 participants.</p> <p>The remaining workshops are scheduled to take place in April, May, June and September, October and November 2022.</p>
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The recruitment under the SHINE programme has been slow. This is partly due to the pandemic when some companies decided to suspend their mentoring. In addition, many companies are now focusing on their re-opening and recovery, leaving little time for mentoring support.

When applying for ERDF funding for the SHINE Programme, the Council had to meet the tight requirements of creating jobs for less than £1,000 per Full Time Equivalent position. In addition, all ERDF applications had to be higher than £250,000 in value.

In order to be considered for funding by the Department for the Economy, the council had to submit a proposed job creation figure of 280 which would always be very challenging to meet.

The fact that the programme has already created 159 jobs, in the midst of a pandemic, is very positive despite not being in line with the programme's target.

The table below outlines promotional activity delivered by Directus Consulting and the Economic Development Section:

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY	DETAILS OF EVENTS	DATES OF EVENT
Monthly Ezine	Ezines issued by the ED Unit	46 SHINE ezine items featured, plus 6 stand-alone ezines for SHINE Programme
Social media	Social Media marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - posts on Facebook - posts on Instagram - posts on Twitter - posts on LinkedIn 	A social media plan for remainder of the programme up to March 2022 is being progressed with Marketing delivery agents Directus starting in July 2021. Marketing content created from August – March 2022 with new images/content. Posted on council Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, and tagged to other support organisations, ie Ards Business Hub, NDDO
Inclusion in Business Support Programmes	The SHINE advert was included in our Business Support Programmes as part of the overall	Businesses that are attending other events run by ED are being contacted post event. All enquiries received by ED. Promoted to chambers of

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	programme of activities run by the Council The advert adheres strictly to the publicity guidelines.	Commerce, and the LEA's to communicate with their networks.
Videos	Promotional Videos from existing participants	Four promotional videos were made using SHINE participants.
ANDBusiness Website SHINE Page	Detailing SHINE programme with access to download application, dates of webinars and testimonial videos	The website page has received 1,363 unique views.

5 AND Social Entrepreneurship Programme

The third ANDSEP Programme launched in June 2021 for a one-year period with the possibility to extend it for an additional 12 months. Due to COVID 19, most of the programme was delivered online.

ANDSEP 2021-2023 Programme Targets and outputs:

Targets	Outputs/Outcomes
25 separate individuals / groups participating in the programme per annum and receiving one to one mentoring	19 groups/individuals recruited at Preparatory stage (17.5 hours mentoring) 10 groups/individuals recruited at Core stage (28hrs mentoring) 7 groups/individuals recruited at Strategic Stage (7 hours mentoring)
1 x Launch of programme per annum	Launch took place on 23 rd June 2021 with 31 attendees
5 Workshops based on business needs	5 Workshops Delivered as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to Social Enterprise / Business (14 attendees) - Planning Innovative Fundraising (15 attendees) - 'Measuring Social Impact' (7 attendees) - 'Knocking Doors' (9 attendees) - 'Selfies to Sales' (19 Attendees) <p>Additional Support Workshops</p>

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	<p>1 x Foursight Workshop was delivered on Tuesday 29th March 2022 with 5 attendees who all had the opportunity to have their individual Foursight Creative Profile done.</p> <p>A final event was held on Thursday 31 March and was attended by 12 people.</p>
15 Jobs Created in Year 1	15 jobs created
20 New Products / Services developed in Year 1	14 (a number of others at Strategic stage are also considering new products / services)
£300,000 Group /Enterprise Annual Turnover in Year 1	£269,005 (excluding one group which will be included in a later report and exceed the target specified)
£450,000 funding levered through existing sources of funding (grants, gift aid and loans) for Year 1	£181,195 (9-month achievement – this will increase as outcome of current applications are realised)

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6 Mind Body Business

The MBB programme aims to encourage employers to put "health" at the centre of their business agenda to the benefit of employers and their employees.

In advance of planning the 2021-22 a survey was undertaken to obtain views on business wants and needs and this was used to develop the programme, retaining the focus on mental health and physical activity.

MBB delivered a range of activities that included Health and Wellbeing Boxes, Step Challenge & Pedometer, information on nutrition, crisis/support contact numbers and advice from key partners on Health and Wellbeing. Virtual Health Checks measuring nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, stress, and sleep. A series of topical webinars covering the themes of Mental Health, Physical Health including nutrition and Financial Wellbeing. Webinars were delivered by Action Mental Health on Stress Awareness and Burn Out and Rest; Advice NI delivered a webinar on Money Management and Vital Nutrition delivered a webinar with cooking demonstration designed to Get you Bounce Back and Stress Less. This year's programme also included a QA Level 3 Award in Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace.

It had been a target of MBB to increase the number of businesses which sign up each year. At the Health Fair in Autumn 2019 businesses were encouraged to formally sign up to MBB and 25 did so. A further 23 were added in 2020/21, exceeding the target of ten new businesses per year.

Last year's programme 2021-22 registered 10 new participants to MBB through initial communications and outreach. As the programme developed and was advertised, more businesses attended specific MBB webinars/events although had not initially registered for the MBB programme. As a result, a further 18 businesses are now registered with MBB programme, giving a total of 28 new members for 2021-22. The total membership of MBB since the Health Fair in 2019 now stands at 76 (up to end March 2022).

Table indicates MBB 2021-2022 Programme of Activities

<i>Mind Body Business Event Type</i>	<i>Nº Businesses attending Apr 20-Mar 21</i>	<i>Nº Participants</i>	<i>Nº Businesses attending Apr 21-Mar 22</i>	<i>Nº Participants</i>
Wellbeing Boxes	27	186 packs (Individuals)	76	40 Boxes (Businesses)
Step Challenge	14	176 (including Staff)	6	57
Exercise video	3	3 (available May 21)	-	3 (promoted not created)

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Health Checks	100	50	55	55
Webinars/Workshops (including Action Mental Health)	15	15	9	57
TOTAL	159	589	146	212

As has been reported generally, health and wellbeing is coming more to the fore and has gained increasing importance since the pandemic. Businesses are increasingly aware that active measures need to be put in place to ensure their staff can work at their best and continue to remain in work. The programme of activity has increased, and officers are keen to ensure such support is maintained for workforces alongside general support for the business's development.

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7 NI Apprenticeship Week Programme 2022

The third Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week 2022 #NIA22 was held from 7th to 11th February 2022. The programme was led by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and aimed to raise the profile of apprenticeships across NI by working collaboratively with South Eastern Region College (SERC) and the Council.

The week long event and lead up to it consisted of virtual events, promotional activity on social media that demonstrated the benefits of becoming an apprentice, and how apprenticeships can work to strengthen businesses, communities and the wider economy. A dedicated website giving details of virtual events happening across Northern Ireland available was created on the nidirect website.

The council partnered with SERC and DfE in hosting an Apprenticeship promotional campaign in the week leading up to and during the week of NI Apprenticeship Week in February 2022. The campaign will be used beyond the duration of Apprenticeship Week to promote apprenticeship as a route to qualification and employment.

The ED section produced two promotional videos showcasing two Ards and North Down businesses that had participated in SERC apprenticeship training programmes. The two businesses, Oakmont Lodge Care Home in Bangor and Alchemy Restaurant in Greyabbey, were selected and two five-minute videos were produced. The videos focused on the employer and the apprentice talking about their journey, the benefits for the apprentices and their achievements and SERC highlighted their apprenticeship programmes.

The videos can be viewed here:

<https://www.andbusiness.co.uk/grow-your-business/business-opportunities/apprenticeships-ni/northern-ireland-apprenticeship-week>

A social media and promotion campaign delivered with the Corporate Communications team resulted in scheduling a series of facebook, instagram, twitter and linkedin posts. Promotion included DfE and SERC events, marketing the new apprenticeship schemes and the two AND businesses Oakmont Lodge Care Home and Alchemy Restaurant.

Social Media Activity Summary:

Website

AND Business website - NI Apprenticeship week webpage	
Page views	227
Unique page views	173
Average time on page	07:36

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Feedback on Social Media Activity Summary

Over two weeks there were 15 posts in total over 4 Council run channels;

Facebook – 7 posts

Twitter – 4 tweets

LinkedIn – 3 posts

Instagram – 1 post

Posts were a mix of Image/text post and the use of the two videos created for NIAW 2022.

The 2 video posts were posted organically and subsequently had money spent on them to boost reach on Facebook (ANDBC's corporate channel with the biggest following) towards the end of NIAW 2022.

Breakdown of posts and available insights/analytics by date is below;

Facebook	31 Jan	3 Feb	4 Feb	7 Feb	7 Feb Video Alchemy	8 Feb Video Oakmont
Post Impressions	5977	9794	3659	3947	3605*	10,595*
Post Reach	5994	9335	3566	3815	Not known	4674
Post Engagement	93	143	11	199	214	576
Reactions	9	14	4	32	53	21
Comments	4	7	0	3	8	14
Link clicks	13	13	1	2	96	68
Shares	4	11	0	8	25	9

*Video was subsequently boosted with £20 for 4 Days on our Facebook channel to increase reach of video.

Twitter	3 Feb	7 Feb	8 Feb	9 Feb
Retweets	4	2	2	1
Likes	2	2	2	1
Impressions	Not known	457	1065	604
Engagement	Not known	18	10	9

Instagram	7 Feb
Reactions	22
Actions from post	4
Profile visits	4
Reach	1046
Impressions	1124

LinkedIn	7 Feb	8 Feb	10 Feb
Impressions	751	290	207
Reactions	12	6	2
Clicks	35	4	1

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Comments	0	1	0
Share	1	0	0

Press coverage:

The council organised a photocall with the 2 video participating business owners and their apprentices, representatives from SERC, Department for Economy and the council. A press release was issued in the local paper during the week of NIAW2022 and an article on the finalist in the NI Apprenticeship Awards 2022 was published in the Ards advertiser.

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8 Virtual Job Fair 2021/2022

REGIONAL JOB FAIR PROGRAMME 2021/2022 – Ards and North Down

The Department for Communities contacted the council informing of their plans for Regional Job Fair Programme in 2021/22 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Their Employer Services Branch (ESB) facilitated five virtual job fairs during this period including Ards and North Down Job Fair held on 25th March 2021, the Council agreed in 2021 with the Recovery Task Finish Group, to host a Virtual Job Fair. The ESB confirmed they will have access to run on-line Job Fairs, but this will be for a limited number of events.

It was decided that the 2021/2022 Job Fair would continue in an online format and the council would host the event with support from DfC in terms of publicity and assisting with recruiting for employers.

Digi Leaders DigiLounge platform was procured as the provider for the online platform for the Ards and North Down Virtual Job Fair. The Virtual Recruitment Platform held the capability of emulating a physical job fair for up to 40 employers and support agencies. The platform allowed for the facilitation of a two-way communication between employers and job seekers and also allowed each employer to display details of their vacancies and their company during the event.

The Job Fair took place on 29th March 2022. A mandatory training session was held on 22nd March. Recruiting businesses completed an interest pro forma registering their interest in the fair. In the lead up to the fair 30 businesses and 8 Support Agencies signed up to attend the fair. Before the fair 2 businesses sent apologies that they would no longer be attending.

On the day of the fair 26 businesses and 7 Support Organisations logged on to take part in the event. The event ran from 10am – 2pm. The sectors represented included: Food and Drink; Health and Social Care; Industrial Sector; Construction; Manufacturing; Retail and Tele communication Sales. There were over 153 jobs available on the day.

The event was marketed through a large promotional campaign using Adshel, bus stop posters, digital adshels in the weeks preceding the Job Fair. All advertisements were strategically placed throughout the borough to publicise and inform people in the borough seeking employment and employers looking to recruit new staff. Other means of publicity included advertisements and PR in both local papers, Job Fair promotional flyer on council website events page and issue of business support ezines.

Despite the excellent marketing and communication with the Jobs and Benefits offices in the Borough job seeker attendance was lower than anticipated with 62 Job seekers logging on to the platform.

The ED section conducted a survey with participating employers to establish the number jobs created both immediately after the fair and 6 weeks post event. Despite the feedback being very positive on the organisation of the Job Fair and the virtual platform, many employers did not recruit as the calibre of applications did not match their requirements, to date 4 positions have been filled either as a direct or an

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indirect result of the fair. The ED section will continue to communicate with employers on the jobs creation figures.

The Department for Communities has made contact requesting expressions of interest from Councils that would like to run an in-person Job Fair for 2022/2023. We have since returned an expression of interest to deliver an in-person Job Fair partnering with the department for 2022/2023.

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9 Yes You Can Women in Business

Yes You Can was a 3-year Female Enterprise Programme, which was a collaboration between the 11 Local Councils, Invest NI and Women in Business WiB. The programme, delivered by WiB across Northern Ireland, is funded by Invest NI and the 11 councils.

Yes You Can supported females through a range of activities for females who had an innovative idea, who were ready to launch a new business or who were already trading (under 2 years). The programmes, which concluded in December 2021, offered the following:

Activities:

Yes You Can £20k Pitching Competition – May 2021 (Online)

Yes You Can £20K Pitching Competition gave female entrepreneurs at the idea stage, early-stage trading and trading up to 2 years the opportunity to pitch for funds for their business. 6 regional winners received £3000 and were invited to pitch for an additional £2000 at the All-Island Virtual Female Entrepreneurs Conference on 10 & 11 June 2021.

Explore It – March to July 2021 (event online)

An initiative which targeted women with an idea, at pre-start, early-stage start-up and low-level trading. Explore it supported participants over 4 months through 6 x 2-2.5hr online training workshops followed by up to 8hrs Buddy support from an experienced entrepreneur, monthly evening meet ups and 3 1/2 days digital marketing workshops.

Sell It – November 2021

A 2-day residential to inspire women already trading, to encourage growth, ambition, diversification, and scalability of their business.

The table below provides a summary of the events, including webinars, held in 2021

Events	Attendance
Pitching Competition 17.05.21	14 applications from AND, 6 pitched , 3 finalists, 1 winner pitching at the conference (winner was from DCSD Council area).
Webinars: Finance; Sales; Pitching; Resourcing; Digital; Marketing; Resilience/Confidence	29 attendees
Explore it Bootcamps	10 attendees
Sell it residential	2 attendees
Closing event	9 attendees
Total	56 attendees

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The co-operation agreement signed by all 11 Councils estimated that around 50 female entrepreneurs in our Council area would become engaged in the programme.

In the case of Ards and North Down Borough, the number of total participants was 56 which exceeded the target of 42.

The *Yes You Can* programme completed in December 2021, however the ED section continued providing support for this sector following the needs expressed from participants in the former Women in Business Yes You Can Programme.

The “Make It In March” programme provided continued support to help local female businesses at pre-start stage to start-up and existing businesses to develop and grow their business. The programme consisted of a series of series of 4 bootcamp and networking events.

“Make It in March” 2022 Grow It and Imagine It on-line events were delivered by Women in Business and SEED Mentoring

Event Dates:

- 15 March 2022 'Image It' and 22 March 2022 'Image It'

Bootcamp and Networking event targeted at female entrepreneurs thinking of starting a business and gain insights on the value of building a brand

- 29 March 2022 'Grow It' and 31 March 2022 'Grow It'

Bootcamp and Networking events targeted existing business female owners/managers

Each event offered a combination of key speakers, networking, and discussion groups to share challenges and knowledge.

Outcomes of the “Make it in March” Programme:

13 female businesses entrepreneurs availed of the programme, with 100% of respondents stating that they were 100% Highly Satisfied/Satisfied with the support provided. The direct impacts to their businesses are highlighted below:

Potential Impact Upon Business	% of Respondents
Impact Turnover	55%
Improve Profitability	64%
Affect Staffing Levels	9%
Affect Productivity / Processes	91%
Help to Expand the Business	91%
Help to Enter New Markets	64%
Improve Employee / Customer Relations	18%
Increase your Knowledge and Skills	91%

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11 Prince's Trust

Prince's Trust Development Award 2021/2022

The Prince's Trust Development Award scheme is provided by the Trust in Northern Ireland to support disadvantaged young people (aged 16-30) and enable them to overcome significant barriers and achieve positive outcomes by progressing into education, training or employment.

The Prince's Trust has provided 20 young people in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area with Development Awards with the aim of achieving the goal of the project "Working Together to Transform Young Lives".

The programme ran from April 2021 to March 2022 and the Prince's Trust supported the young people in various ways with the overall objective of developing their skills and qualifications to enhance their ability to gain employment. The average cost per award was £150. The provision of the funding enabled participants to gain skills and qualifications that they otherwise would not have been able to access.

All the twenty young people progressed into a training or education outcome. Please see the summary table below in relation to the level of course undertaken.

Course Level	% of Young People
Level 1	5%
Level 2	60%
Level 3	10%
Other	25%

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12 Signal Facility

Income	2020 - 2021 TARGET	2020 - 2021 ACTUAL	2021 - 2022 TARGET	2021 - 2022 ACTUAL
OFFICE RENTAL (inc Virtual Office)	£7,000	£0	£0	£0
CATERING	£24,000	£0	£24,000	£0
ROOM HIRE & AV	£50,000	£0	£50,000	£0
POSTAGE	£500	£0	£500	£0
PHOTOCOPYING	£400	£0	£400	£0
TOTAL	£81,900	£0	£74,900	£0

COVID-19 has meant that the facility remained closed to the public in 2021-22 and therefore activity against targets was not possible.

Unclassified

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ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development Committee
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	23 May 2022
File Reference	RDP157
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	East Border Region Westminster Exchange Visit
Attachments	

Background

East Border Region (EBR) is a local authority-led cross-border network comprising six Local Authorities: Ards and North Down Borough Council; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council; and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council in Northern Ireland with Louth; Monaghan; and Meath County Councils in the Republic of Ireland, encompassing a total population of 826,000.

To support capacity building activity of its Members, EBR has received funding from the Reconciliation Fund. One of the activities planned is an East-West Capacity Building Exchange visit to Westminster. As part of the visit, an official launch at Westminster will take place to highlight the aim and commitment being undertaken across the region. A full schedule of events/meetings over two days will also be planned. EBR officers are still working out the detail of this visit, but the following provisional dates are proposed:

Monday 19 September & Tuesday 20 September 2022

It is anticipated that departure would be on an early flight on Monday, returning on Tuesday evening, and Members are requested to indicate their intention to participate.

The funding would cover the costs of hotel, travel and most meals for EBR Board Members, which for ANDBC are Alderman Carson, Alderman McDowell and

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Alderman Keery. Some additional subsistence, at approximately £150 per person, may be required.

Participation in the Exchange Visit of other Members - who sit on the EBR Members' Forum and/or any officers - would need to be funded from individual Council budgets. The costs of hotel per person are approximately £200 and flights are approximately £100-£150, depending on how soon they can be booked. Subsistence may be required as above. The ANDBC Members on the EBR Members' Forum are Councillor Boyle, Alderman Girvan, and Councillor Thompson.

Aside from the EBR annual subscription, there is no additional budget for EBR activity.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that due to budget demands, Council approves travel and participation in the Westminster Exchange visit, as outlined above, for the three EBR Board Members to be funded predominantly by the Reconciliation Fund.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	9 June 2022
Responsible Director	Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	23 May 2022
File Reference	160127
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Regeneration Performance Report, Quarter 4 (January - March 2022)
Attachments	Q4 Report

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

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The Council's 17 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 of 2021-22 is attached.

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports, some financial information has not been updated.

Key points to note:

- The Business Adaptation and Improvement Grants Scheme has now been completed with over £876K being delivered to businesses across the Borough.
- DfC had agreed an extension of the Recovery funding until 31 September 2022, however, a request will now be made for a further extension as there are still key projects to be delivered.
- The Letter of Offer for the Small Settlements Grants has been received and returned. Permission to commence with the projects is still awaited from DfC.
- The two projects in Portavogie to be funded by SEAFLAG is still awaiting permission to proceed.

Key achievements:

- The masterplan for the Commons in Donaghadee has been completed.
- Consultation on the Small Settlements projects has commenced.
- The tender for the works to Portavogie have been assessed and are within the budget available.

Emerging issues:

- Delivery of certain elements of the Covid Recovery programme is taking much longer than anticipated. Also, certain issues have emerged since the planning applications have been submitted.
- Due to a number of vacancies in the unit the commencement of certain projects may be delayed or deferred.
- The time frame for the delivery of the Small Settlement projects may not be achievable (March 2023) as permission to commence has not been given.

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Action to be taken:

- To continue to monitor the implementation of all projects.
- To try and recruit key staff as quickly as possible.
- Open discussions with DfC about the Small Settlements programme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.
















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Quarterly Performance Report - Regeneration

Generated on: 20 May 2022

Last Update Q4 2021/22

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	To deliver the town recovery plans and a rural recovery plan	0	1
	To monitor the compliance of the Rural Development Programme grant from the various applicants	46	46
	% staff attendance	98.85%	95%
	Pride and Performance review complete with all staff	100%	100%
	No of staff meetings including updates on service plan delivery	10	9
	Roll out of Village Plan Actions	3	3
	To develop, agree, secure funding and commence delivery of a public realm scheme for Portaferry	No	Yes
	To commence phase 1 of a feasibility study for the development of the Parklands in Donaghadee	1	1
	To undertake a feasibility study for the development of the Parklands in Portaferry	0	1
	To agree detailed technical design for Marine Gardens QP with Bangor Marina	0	1
	To progress the Bangor Waterfront Scheme, to agree Operating Model with BYC	0	1
	To complete the Portavogie promenade scheme	0	1
	To deliver an agreed scheme and obtain funding for a public realm scheme at Portavogie Harbour	1	1
	To complete the Grey Point fort scheme	1	1
	Schemes to be delivered via the Heritage Lottery Scheme in Donaghadee	1	1

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	New Chambers of Commerce 2-year Business Plans	5	5
	Manage the full commitment of the Rural Development Programme budget	£445,230.00	£823,882.00
	To administer the delivery of the funding that has been allocated for business recovery within the towns, villages and smaller settlements by March 2021	100%	100%
	To continue the activity at Project 24 in order to provide a mean-while use facility and to animate the site	100%	100%

Unclassified

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ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development Committee
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	20 May 2022
File Reference	RDP72
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Donaghadee Commons Masterplan Update
Attachments	Appendix One - Donaghadee Commons Masterplan

Background

Members will be aware that in the last financial year the Council agreed to undertake consultations with a view to developing a Masterplan for the Commons in Donaghadee. Aecom was appointed and, after a period of extensive consultation, has finalised a Masterplan for the Commons. A copy of the Masterplan is attached.

The Plan

The Commons presents a great opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town, with a contemporary mix of opportunities for all.

The Vision is that the Commons will offer enhanced walking, cycling, relaxing and outdoor play opportunities for all within the parkland that has biodiversity at its core. As a tourism, recreation and leisure destination defined by its wellness opportunities, the Commons Coastal Park, combined with the urban regeneration and development of the Town, will continue the revitalisation of Donaghadee and grow appeal as a visitor destination and a place to live.

Implementation

Members will be aware that to take forward the Masterplan, it will need to be considered in phases or even individual projects. Funding will need to be sought to develop the Outline Business Case for each phase or project, which will have to

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determine how each will be funded and delivered in the long term. The following is an indicative phasing plan, but this subject to change based upon the funding that may become available in the future:

- Phase 1: Central. Transformation of the landscape, paths, and coastal boardwalks plus enhanced biodiversity.
- Phase 2: South. Recreational vehicle park, enhanced pavilion and natural play and recreational facilities.
- Phase 3: North. A mixed-use urban regeneration and development scheme, including the multifunctional visitor centre.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. agrees the vision of the Donaghadee Commons Masterplan and;
2. tasks officers to commence seeking funding opportunities, on a phased approach, to deliver the Masterplan.

Concept Design Report

Donaghadee Commons Masterplan

Concept Stage

60668704

March 2022

Quality information

Document name	Ref	Prepared for	Prepared by	Date	Reviewed by
Concept Design Report	60668704	Concept	Adam Grudgings	Mar 2022	Ricky Martin

Revision history

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorised	Name	Position
01	25-03-22	For Submission	Ricky Martin	Adam Grudgings	Landscape Architect

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- a. Concept Masterplan
- b. Accessibility Report
- c. Planning Overview Report
- d. Transportation Report
- e. Business Report
- f. Public Consultation Questions and Answers
- g. Public Survey: Summary Report



1.0 Introduction

AECOM and The Destination Developers have been appointed by ANDBC to develop a concept plan with commercial study for Donaghadee Commons Park. The concept plan, which will be non-statutory, will provide a framework for the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration, recreation, tourism and leisure initiatives in Donaghadee.

The Commons presents an amazing opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town with a contemporary mix of live, work, visit, play and study opportunities. As a signature tourism, recreation, and leisure destination, the Commons parkland defined by its wellness opportunities, and sea views, combined with adjacent lands for development, will continue Donaghadee's revitalisation and growing appeal as a place to live and visitor destination.

1.1 Project Benefits

Benefits of a reimagined Commons include:

1. Offer a high quality outdoor leisure, recreation, entertainment and wellbeing experience
2. Enhanced parkland delivering more biodiversity
3. Support civic pride, quality of life and to shape improved perceptions of the town regionally and nationally
4. A place to accommodate new uses and experiences, for example a home for the Sir Samuel Kelly, flexible hall to accommodate small scale events, markets, conferences and exhibitions; business spaces "co-working spaces", a boutique hotel, more homes
5. A visitor centre to welcome tourists with gallery and exhibition spaces to tell Donaghadee stories
6. More day and overnight visitors in the town
7. Adds more to the overall Ards Peninsula offer, helps develop a stronger visitor experience
8. Gives Tourism NI a strong product to support the "Giant Spirit" proposition and spread visitors across Northern Ireland
9. The Commons and new development present Donaghadee as a sustainable growth town as the population expands
10. Direct and indirect jobs, training, education, and spend

2.0 Site Context

The Commons is a linear stretch of open parkland situated on the east coast of Northern Ireland in the Town of Donaghadee. Donaghadee has a long maritime heritage with key assets in the historic train line, the harbour and RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly. It also has a wealth of listed buildings, structures and monuments which provide a unique character to the town with conservation area status protecting the built heritage and surrounding boundary. The Coastline is also a major natural heritage asset protected through RAMSAR, ASSI, and SPA designations. The town has also benefited from retaining its open spaces of which the Commons is the most significant. This provides a unique opportunity to create a linear coastal park of local and regional significance which will appeal to both locals and visitors building on its combined maritime, built and natural heritage assets to create a unique and distinctive visitor experience as this area is located on the Mourne Coastal Route.

The Copeland Islands located off the coast of Donaghadee are internationally important sites for breeding seabirds and waders such as the Manx Shearwater and Arctic Tern and nationally important breeding sites for the Mediterranean Gull and Common Elder, in addition to their native plant communities and geological features.

The existing characteristics of the park are illustrated on photographs 1 -16 and summarised below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Underutilised pavilion and poorly maintained carpark | 9. Narrow uninviting park access from Marine Drive |
| 2. Narrow uneven pathways | 10. Under utilised shelters |
| 3. Overly maintained grassland | 11. Unattractive boundary fencing and poly-tunnel housing Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat |
| 4. Underutilised former putting green | 12. Overgrown vegetation on historic railway line |
| 5. Hidden access to Ballyvester coastal walk | 13. Well utilised path with potential for..... surfacing upgrades |
| 6. Underutilised picnic area close to community centre | 14. Underutilised carpark |
| 7. Coastal landscape interface close to marina | 15. Poor location for recycling centre |
| 8. Unattractive boundary fencing at boatyard | 16. Attractive wall art hidden from pedestrian footfall |

Prepared for: Ards and North Down Borough Council





3.0 Site Analysis

Site analysis was undertaken to identify key themes within the existing Commons and wider context. A swot analysis (see table below) study was undertaken to determine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to explore potential solutions for negatives and also to enhance existing positives.

The diagram plan (right) visually represents the analysis study providing rationale through our development of the masterplan proposals.

S_{trengths}

- Location and **Views** (Copeland Islands & Beyond)
- Designations – ASSI/RAMSAR/ Natura 2000
- Maritime **Heritage** and Settlement History
- RNLI – **Sir Samuel Kelly** Lifeboat
- Existing User Groups
- **Positive Developments**
- The Harbour and Lighthouse
- Marina
- Tennis and Bowls Clubs
- Playground
- Large Open **Greenspace**
- Sites in council ownership

W_{eaknesses}

- Poor **signage** and information
- Lack of adequate **pedestrian connections**
- DDA compliance
- **Segregation** through parking areas
- Recycling centre location
- Extensive areas of mown grass
- Hidden marina
- **Inaccessible** shore/sea
- Playground location

O_{pportunities}

- Stronger **role/purpose** for the town
- Strengthen the **live, visit, study** and **work** reputation
- Growing population
- **Active community**/business groups
- Connections with the town centre
- Destination branding
- **Lighting** Strategy
- Visitor **Hub Building**
- Path network enhancements
- **Re-wilding**
- **Wayfinding** and **Interpretive Signage**
- Hotel
- Links to wider Greenways and Hunts Park
- **Gateway** from Millisle Road
- **Cycle** Hub
- **Sculpture** Park

T_{hreats}

- **Exposed** location to the **weather**
- Planning **regulations** and **designations**
- Lack of **capital** and **operation funding**
- Market demand
- **Parking** pressures
- Disconnected public open space

- Existing playground under refurbishment
- Recycling centre inhibits potential pedestrian links
- Potential development site
- Car parking bisects open greenspace
- No sense of arrival
- Unwelcoming park entrance
- Wide pedestrian path frequently used
- No connection with historic railway
- Steep, uneven, narrow footpath
- Isolated playpark location
- Unwelcoming shelters
- Lack of gateway to Commons
- Frequently used sports facilities
- Underutilised putting green



- Harbour and lighthouse proximity
- Poor pedestrian connections. No footway
- Site exposed to the elements
- Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat to be repositioned
- Boatyard positioning and transparency
- Hidden marina
- Unightly sewage treatment
- Potential access to rocks and sea

Open landscaped areas

Motorhome aire de service

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

- 1 Harbour and Company Wood Fired Kitchen
- 2 RNLI Charity Shop
- 3 Pier 36
- 4 Meadowbank Social & Rec Club
- 5 Donaghadee Lifeboat Station
- 6 The Copeland Distillery
- 7 Donaghadee Community Centre
- 8 Amenity Building
- 9 Historic Lighthouse

P Existing Carpark

Existing Tennis Courts

Existing Bowling Green

Dog walking route

Running route

Disability access route

Viewpoint

----- Line of historic railway

4.0 Proposed Park Redevelopment

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4.1 Commons Link

The Sir Samuel Kelly Square visually attracts pedestrians from the waterfront to a new mixed use Visitor Hub with a strong linear pedestrian connection to the Commons Park

- 1.** Sir Samuel Kelly Square paved in natural stone including feature lighting, seating and native tree / shrub planting. Servicing access to commercial developments will be maintained
- 2.** Two storey Visitor Hub with a double height at the southern end to house the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat overlooked by a gallery level on the first floor. A flexible space for small occasional markets, exhibitions, a small museum dedicated to the Sir Samuel Kelly is also included within the space. Furthermore, a cafe and co-working meeting room spaces can be provided
- 3.** Carpark reconfiguration with new tree planting and improved pedestrian links. Shared carpark between visitor hub and Community Centre. Spaces removed from the Sir Samuel Kelly Square will be incorporated within this car park
- 4.** Exposed aggregate concrete path (4m wide) connecting Plaza and Visitor Hub to The Commons. Natural stone wall between path and carpark with openings will allow pedestrian flow. Native planting with pockets of wildflower to provide a colourful, biodiverse buffer between the path and property boundaries
- 5.** Repositioning of the Boatyard with new screening boundary fencing and re-configured access.
- 6.** Coastal path safely connecting The Parade to new pedestrian path
- 7.** Potential development site by others





Tree planting in civic space



Coastal planting - perennials and grass mix



Biodiversity rich wildflower planting



Natural stone wall between pedestrian path and car park



Tree lined avenue at community centre car park



Boatyard screening fencing



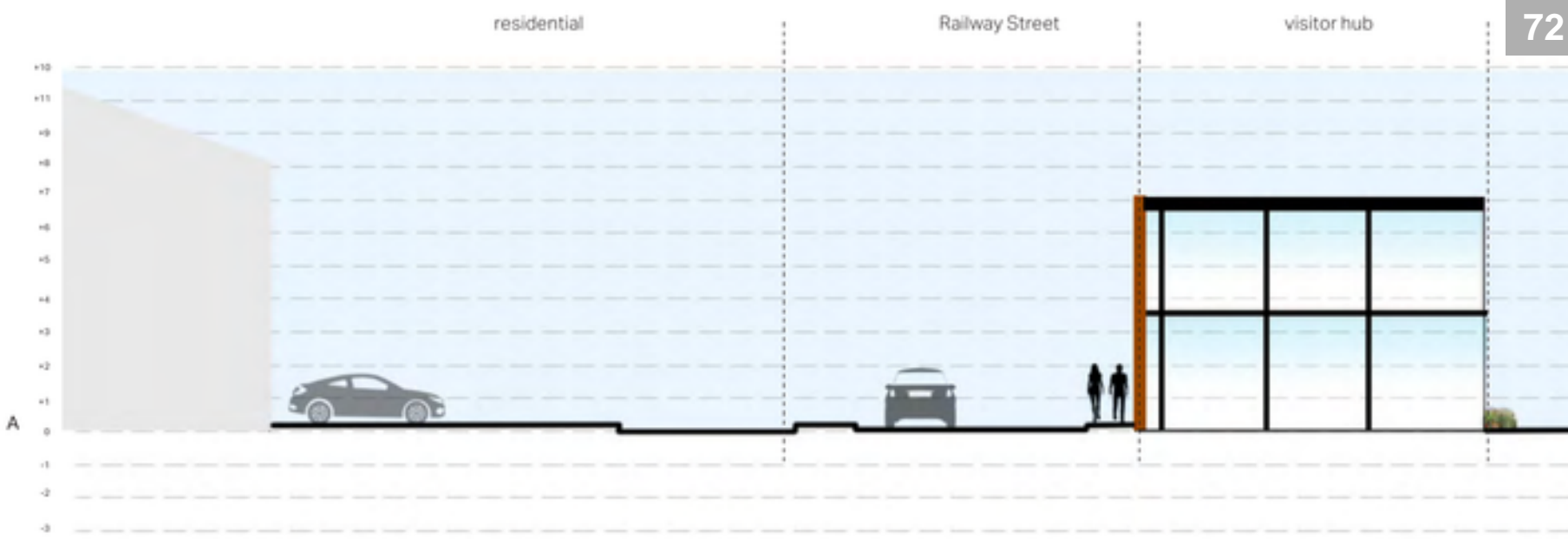
Two story visitor hub



Pedestrian link

4.2 Section A-A'

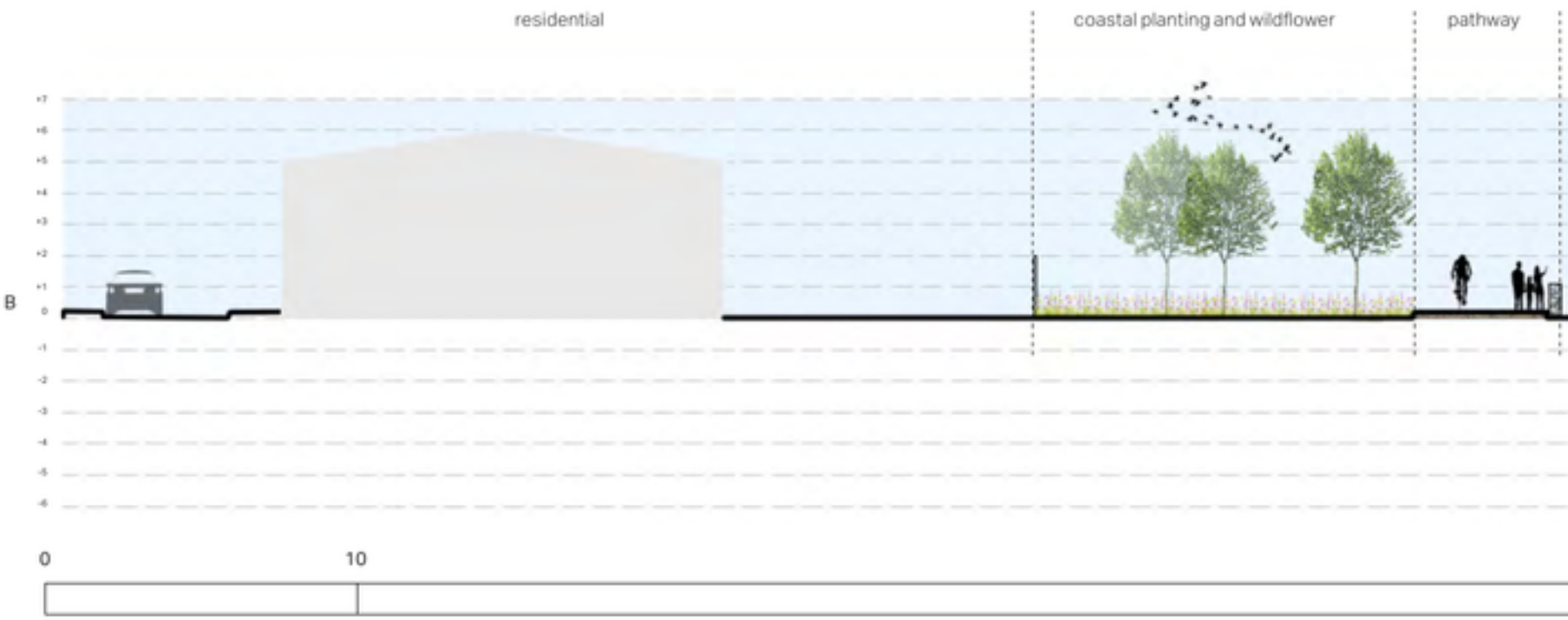
Proposed Visitor Hub located next to the Sir Samuel Kelly Square and Community Centre encourages pedestrian movement to the commons via the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat located to the southern end of the building

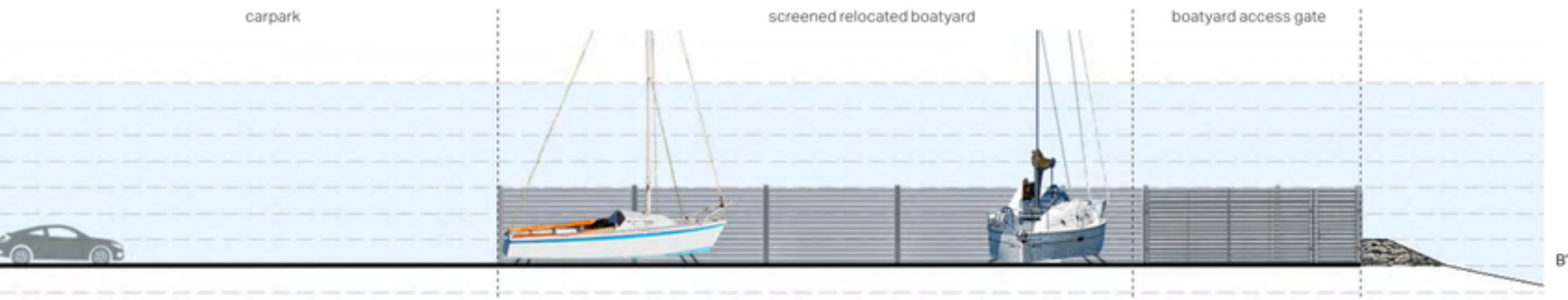


4.3 Section B-B'

4m wide Pedestrian Commons link with coastal buffer planting located at residential boundary edge

Boatyard fencing replaced with new attractive panelling





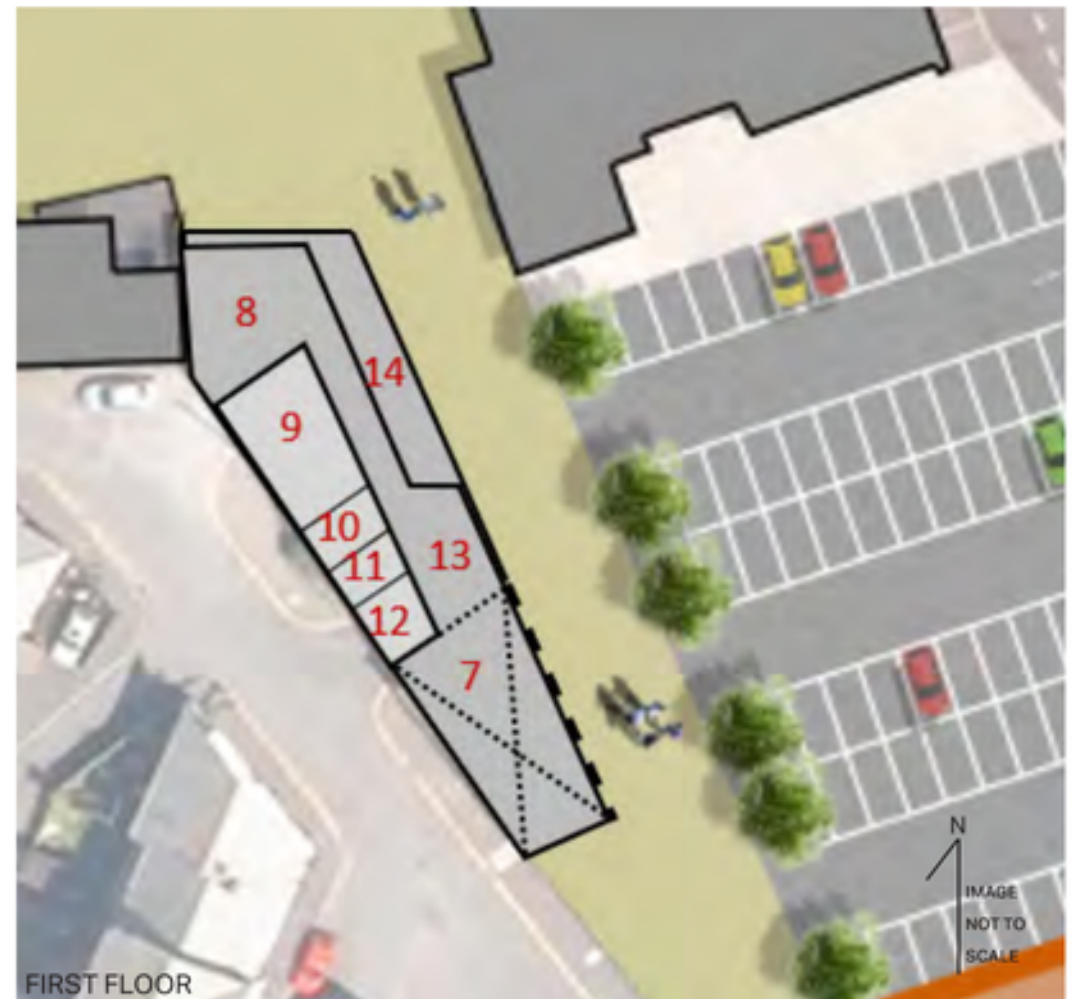
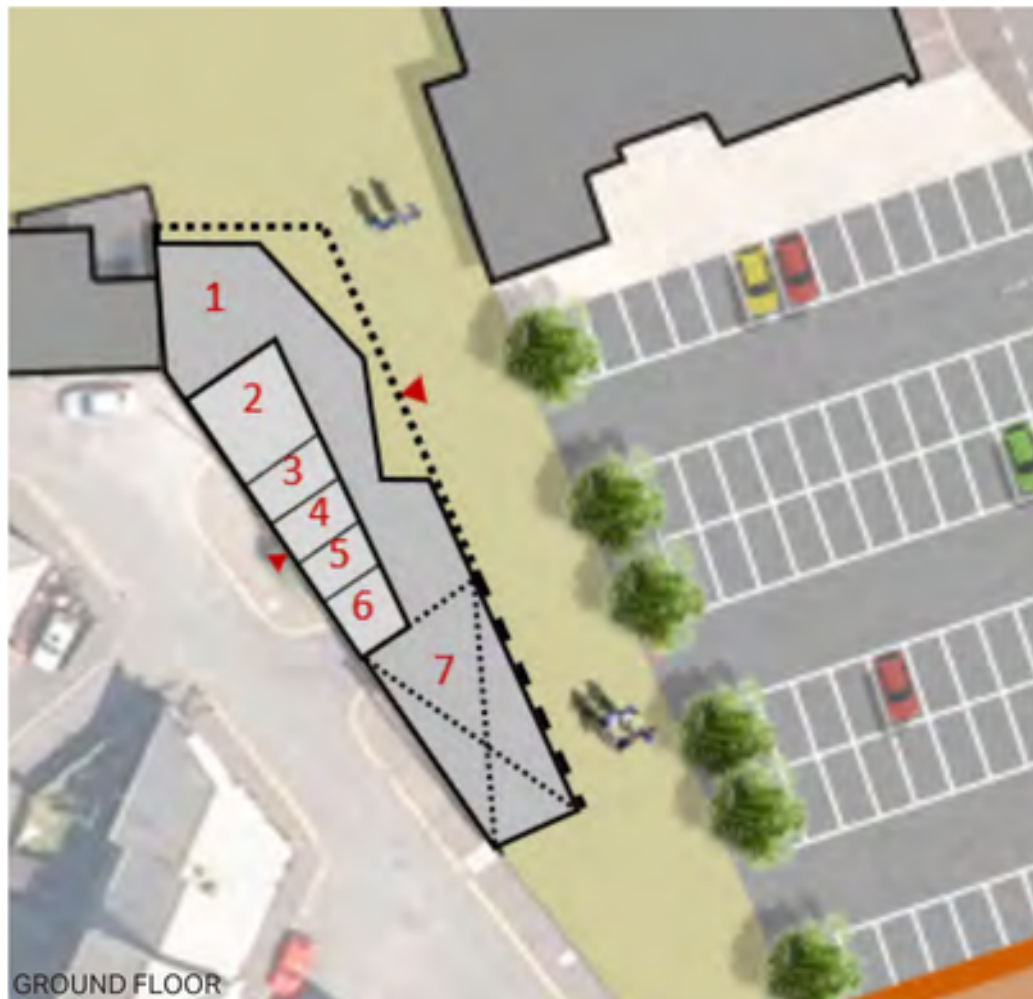
4.4 Visitor Hub Concept Design

The Visitor Hub concept is a two storey multifunctional showcase space for visitors and the local community. It will educate visitors on Donaghadee's local history incorporating opportunities for sensory interaction.

Ground floor will provide a double height space at the southern end where Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat is housed, overlooked by a "gallery/mezzanine level" from the 1st floor. It is a flexible space for small occasional markets, exhibitions with potential for a small dedicated Donaghadee museum/gallery area close to the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat.

The ground floor will also contain visitor amenities, services, lift/stair core and back of house. Simple coffee dock/small café; Co-working spaces; Classroom/Meet room space; Entrance/Exit focusing towards the pedestrianised square at the north end will optimise activation.

The 1st floor will provide gallery/exhibition spaces; Co-working space with outdoor terraced seating area.



- 1. Museum / Gallery
- 2. Classroom / co-working area
- 3. Office / counter
- 4. Service Access
- 5. Toilets
- 6. Stairs / Lift for visitors
- 7. Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat
- 8. Gallery / exhibition area
- 9. Co-working Space
- 10. Service Access
- 11. Bar
- 12. Stairs / lift for visitors
- 13. Bar seating area
- 14. Terrace



Visualisations of proposed Visitor Hub





Pop-up weekend market stalls



Maritime memorabilia



Arts and crafts events



Pop-up coffee stalls



Collaborative work spaces



Bar / wine tasting experience

4.5 Precedent images

Images to showcase ideas for both the intended internal function of the Visitor Hub as well as the exterior aesthetics.



Double height exhibition space



Glass facade



Open plan entrance foyer

4.6 Commons Park

Reconfigured path network meandering through the coastal landscape, subtly enhances the existing character. A new elevated timber board walk with sculptural bird hide behind the marina and sculptural land form terracing can be used for summer events

1. Potential location for public art installations
2. Land form terracing allows elevated platforms for events
3. Existing shelters to be re-imagined as a part time art / photography gallery
4. Reconfigured, widened and illuminated shared pedestrian / cycle path network. The new path network could be used to host a local 5K Parkrun event.





Existing views and character retained



Potential for coastal boardwalk that allows accessible coastal exploration



Potential hi-tech bird hide with live footage of wildlife on the Copeland Islands



Boardwalk platforms



Landscape terracing



Enhanced biodiversity



Shared path networks



Public art focal point



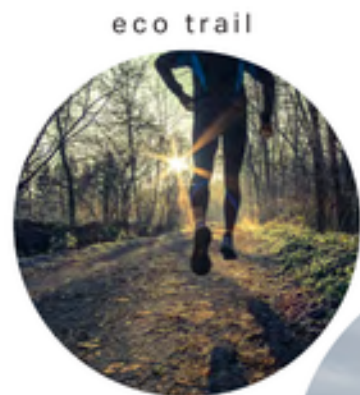
Rewilding coastal planting

4.7 Section C-C'

Compacted gravel eco trail reopens route of historic train line and light columns illuminate upper path

Rewilding through the introduction of coastal and wildflower planting encourages biodiversity. Landscape terraces provide daily exploration as well as amphitheatre use for public events

Existing open space has been enhanced through realignment of path networks which could provide opportunities for a 5K Park Run and a public art piece acts as an eye catching focal point



eco trail



viewpoint pathway



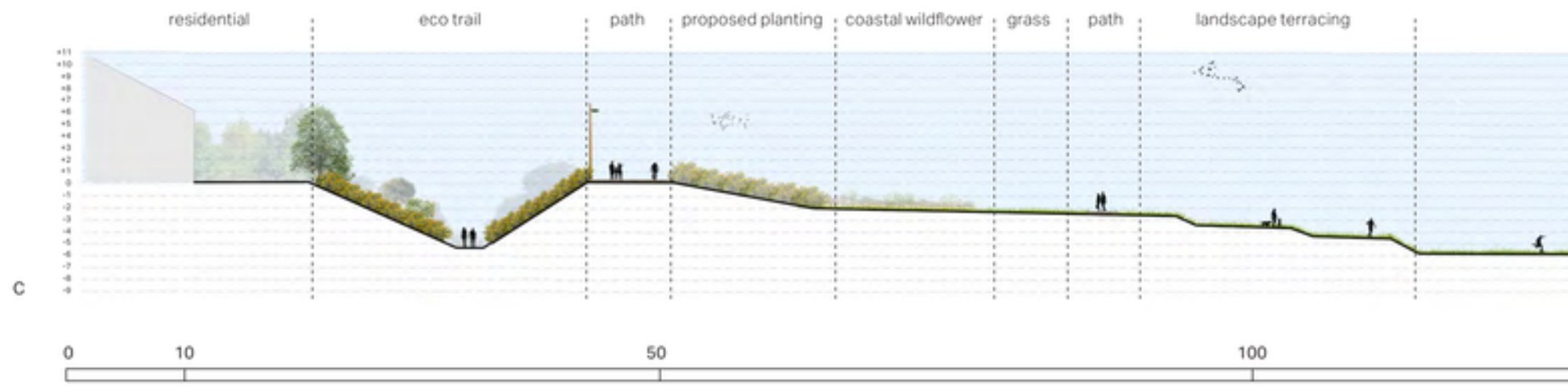
coastal planting



wildflower planting



landscape terracing



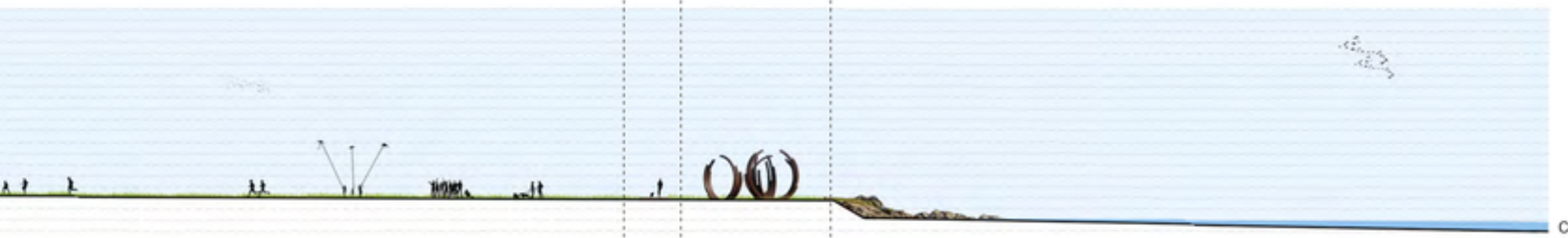


events space

path

public art

shore



200m

4.8 Activity Hub

Activity hub featuring a mix of recreational activities including a pump track, skate park, play zone, outdoor exercise zone as well as a cafe extension to the pavilion and RV site

1. Pump track incorporated into the landscape, Final configuration to be developed at the next design stage.
2. Coastal rewilding planting to enhance biodiversity
3. Pump track (for beginners) incorporated into the landscape. Final configuration to be developed at the next design stage.
4. High end inclusive active play zone
5. Compacted gravel Eco Trail through historic railway cutting
6. Architectural shelter / viewpoint and stepped access to carpark
7. Recycled rubber surfaced outdoor exercise zone with new gym equipment
8. Car Park resurfacing / extension providing additional parking spaces
9. Pavilion refurbishment and extension to incorporate cycle hub with food and beverage facilities which will provide a different offer to the facilities within the visitor hub to the North.
10. Sculptural gateway feature with incorporated signage
11. Environmental improvement scheme with improved pedestrian connection to Hunt's Park
12. Surface improvements and entrance features at Hunt's Park gateway
13. Quick win project - RV site with promenade access and private path to Pavilion for wash room access
14. Jetty to allow water sport sea access
15. New seawall to reduce tidal flooding





Coastal edge and character retained



Wooden play zone



Sunken cycle / skate track



Outdoor exercise zone



Sculptural gateway feature



Architectural shelter



RV site



Park run 5k



Cycle rental hub

illuminated pathway



eco trail



recreational grassland

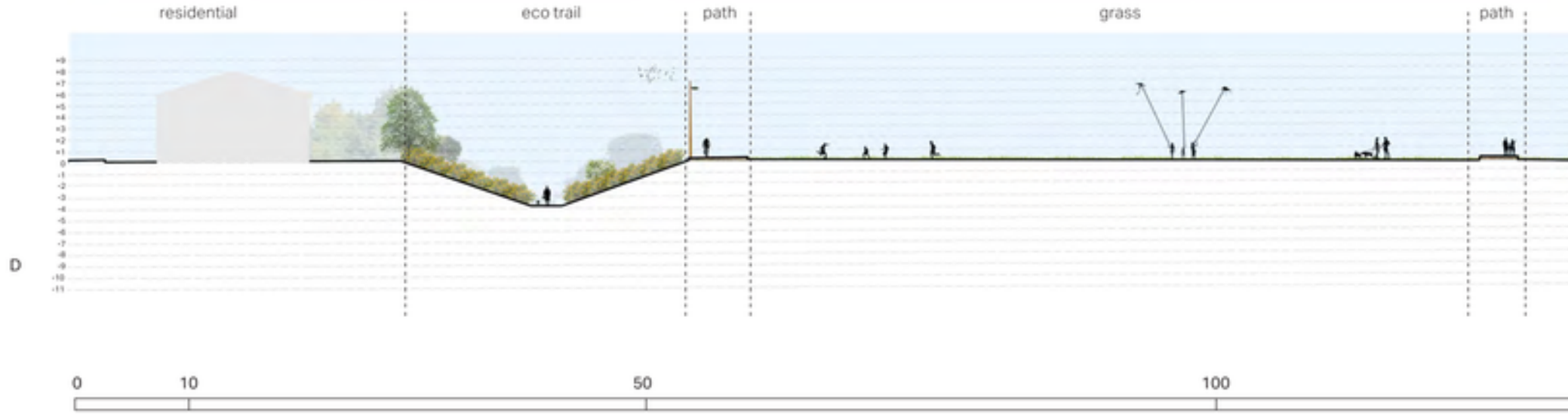


4.9 Section D-D'

Compacted gravel eco trail reopens route of historic train line and timber light columns illuminate upper path

Open green space retained and additional rewilding coastal / wildflower planting to enhance biodiversity

Activity play zone is easily accessible from the car park adjacent to the sunken pump track and skate park further screened by planting



coastal planting



wildflower planting



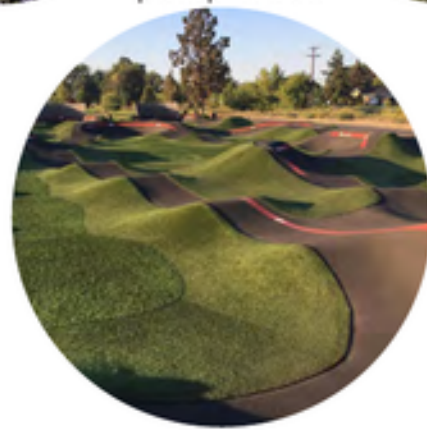
low level lighting



play zone



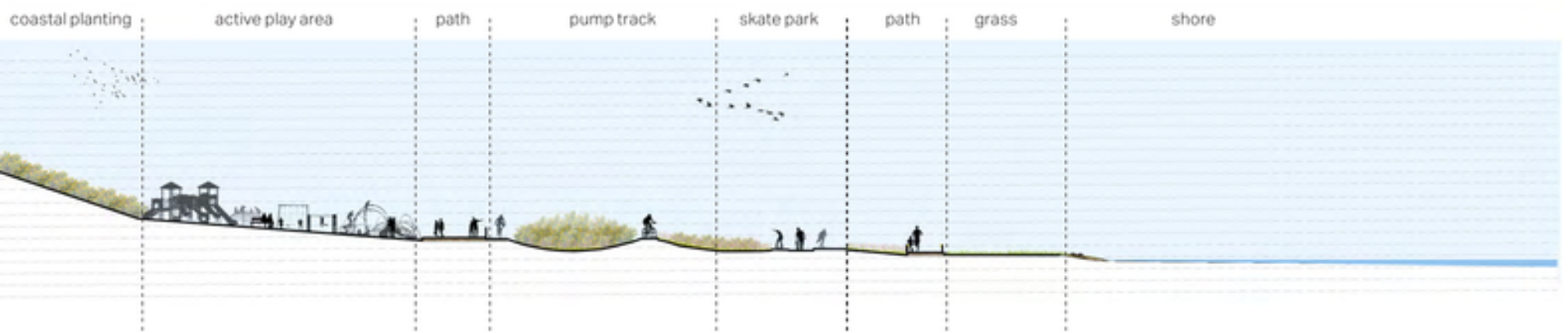
sunken pump track



sunken skate park



coastal interface



200m

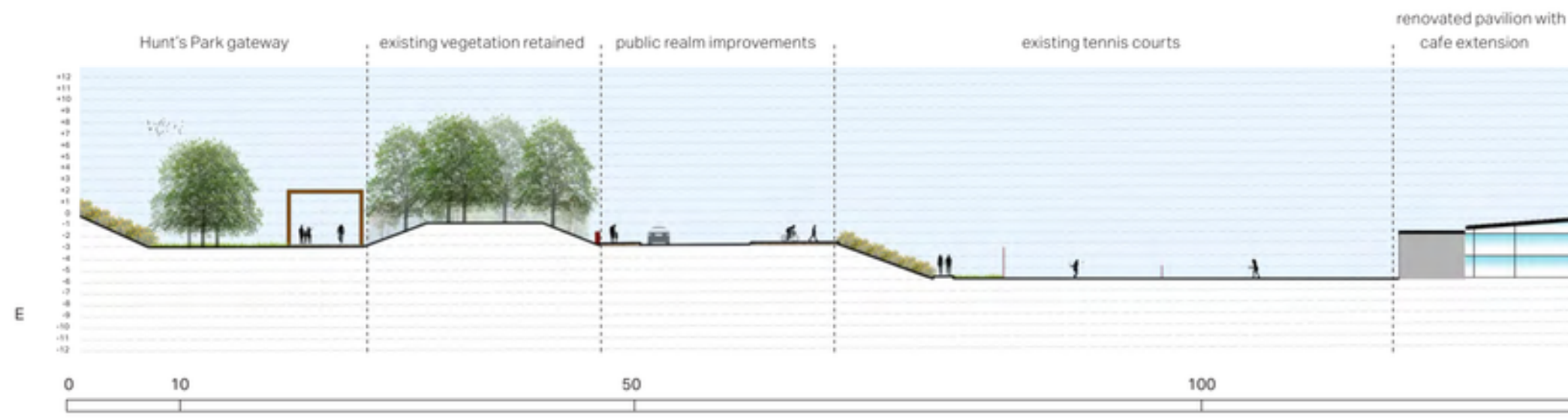
Hunt's Park access



park entrance feature



pavilion cafe



outdoor seating area



coastal interface

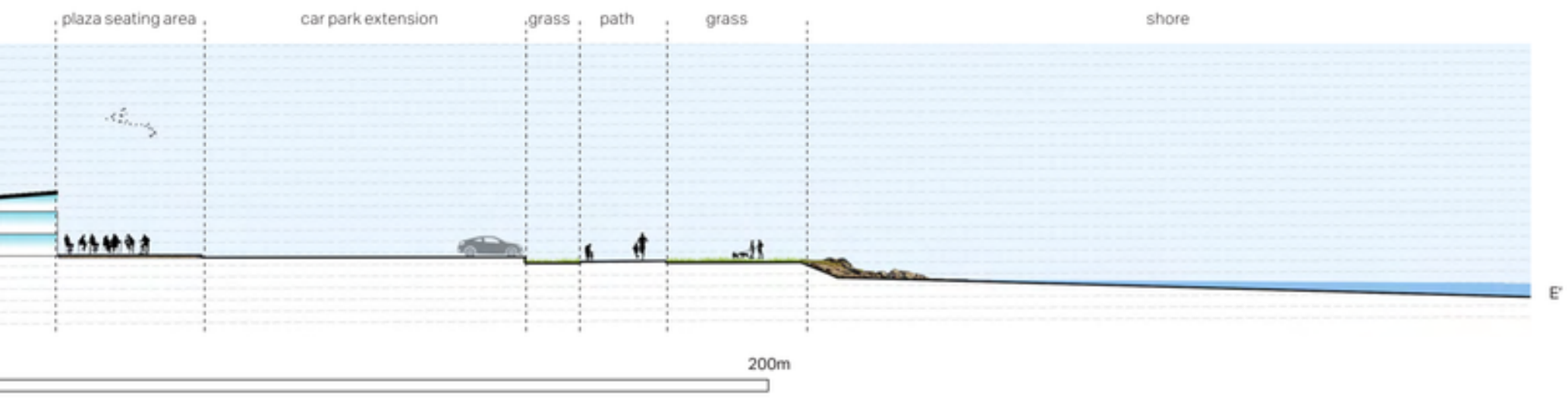


4.10 Section E-E'

Pedestrian connection strengthened from Hunt's Park through the use of gateway features reflecting the route of the historic railway line.

Environmental improvements on the Millisle Road enhances pedestrian flow to and from the Commons.

Pavilion refurbishment and cafe extension with outdoor seating provides southern hub for congregation and place making.



5.0 Phasing Programme

5.1 Strategy

In establishing the Commons as a stronger destination for Donaghadee and the wider Ards Peninsula, the phasing strategy is centred initially on enhancing the core coastal park experience. These "public space" interventions are likely to be lower cost and in Ards and North Down control, so subject to funding, should be able to be implemented quickly. This then starts to change perceptions of the Commons, build more interest and prime the context for the larger improvement and development projects in phases 2 and 3.

Phase 1 - *Paths and Planting*

Delivering the first phase as a park enhancement through path upgrades and additional planting a step change in the park offer and its environmental experience, the Commons can offer for the core existing users. This means the upgrade of the paths and inclusion of a boardwalk, jetty and flood prevention seawall, as well as additional planting to provide a more natural and higher level of biodiversity. This will set the tone for further phases to the south and north and start to change perceptions of the Commons, that could be elevated more by a fresh destination brand.

The former putting green presents an opportunity for the Council to earn income through a use where there is proven demand for Donaghadee; this is from the owners and users of recreational vehicles ("RVs") or motor homes. In phase one the old putting green will be upgraded to accommodate RVs.

The southern pavilion will be refurbished and extended offering a conservatory style café open to all. Phase 1 projects

- Main Park – planting to enhance biodiversity
- Paths, boardwalks and jetty and flood prevention requirements
- Refurbished shelters
- Entrance archway and signage
- Old putting green converted to RV parking for overnight stays, ideally relocation of "aire de service" to this location
- Southern pavilion extended to include conservatory café area and more welcoming offer for all weather members and visitors.

Phase 2 - *Activity Area*

With the Commons coastal park revitalised offering an enhanced user experience phase 2 will deliver contemporary amenities for users of all ages. These are the primarily civic leisure and recreational park uses that will help to add more interest and appeal from the town and greater Belfast region.

- Bike "pump track"
- Skate Park
- Activity play zone centred around natural play
- Outdoor gym ("functional training") and classes area

Phase 3 - *Development and Urban Wellness*

With the brand of the revitalised Commons established the market will see Donaghadee through fresh eyes, the aim will be for private sector developers, in partnership with Ards and North Down Council, to deliver a high quality mixed use scheme. An urban extension for Donaghadee will complement the core town centre and the Commons itself. With more moving parts in this phase this will be more complex, requiring the relocation of the recycling area to a new location, the boatyard moved a short distance to join the marina, plus the rationalisation and improvement of car parking to also include some dedicated coach park spaces, to accommodate tours from cruise ships and other coach trips.

The vision will be centred on urban wellness and comprise the following projects:

- Visitor centre where many Donaghadee stories might be captured, a permanent home for the Sir Samuel Kelly plus space for the cultural uses (gallery for art and photographs), civic tourist office, spaces for pop up speciality retail, co-working office space and food & beverage
- A business space, leisure and entertainment offer
- Potential for residential development

The aim will be to generate a mix of capital to help fund the visitor centre and income to support high quality maintenance and management of the Commons as an enhanced community asset and visitor destination for Ards and North Down.

Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3



6.0 Materials Palette

6.1 Seating

100% robust recycled polymer contemporary seat. Root fixed suitable for coastal conditions with few maintenance requirements. Anti-graffiti, does not absorb water and dries quickly



6.4 Picnic Table

100% robust recycled polymer contemporary Picnic Table. Root fixed suitable for coastal conditions with few maintenance requirements. Anti-graffiti, does not absorb water and dries quickly



6.2 Feature Lighting

Hardwood timber feature lighting to be located in the Sir Samuel Kelly Square. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



6.5 Path Lighting

Hardwood timber lighting to be located on Upper path. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



6.3 Low level lighting

Hardwood timber low level path lighting. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions. Designed to illuminate when motion is detected close by. Minimises adverse impacts to nocturnal wildlife



6.6 Finger Post Signage

Hardwood timber signage to be located at secondary park entrances. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



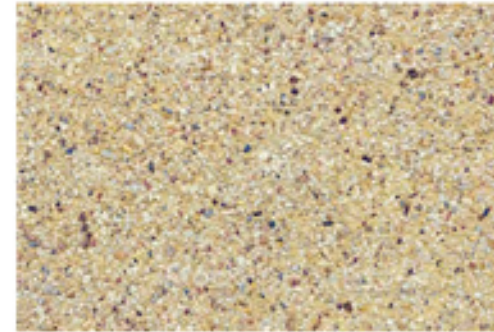
6.7 Paving

Natural stone paving in colour Buff, to extend the public realm scheme, strong and attractive with high slip resistance



6.8 Exposed Aggregate Concrete

Exposed aggregate concrete colour Buff, strong and attractive with high slip resistance



7.0 Public Consultation Analysis

7.1 The Purpose

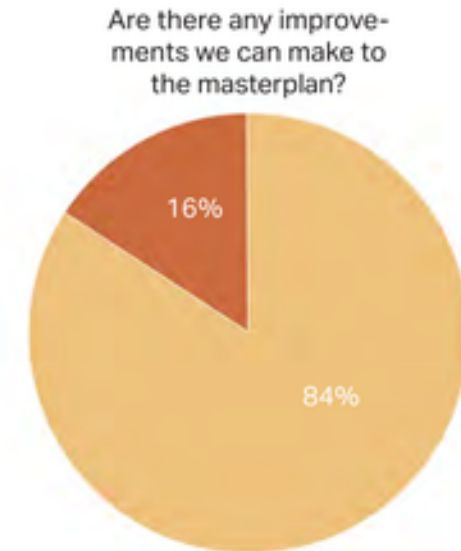
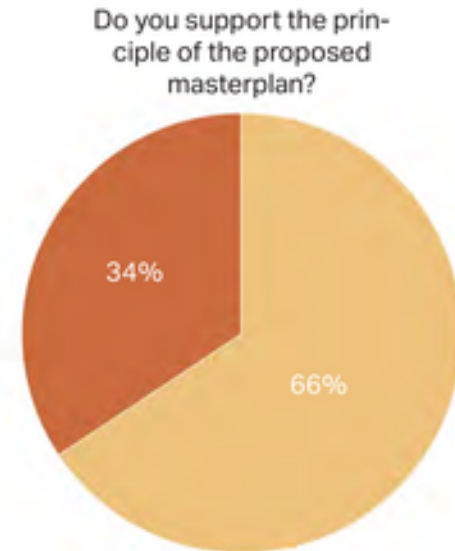
The purpose of the public consultations were to tailor concept design proposals which derived from stakeholder meetings during the analysis stage of the project. They involved local residents and traders in providing opinions and feedback on a draft masterplan which allowed for refinement of the subsequent design proposals

7.2 The Process

ANDBC and AECOM carried out two online public consultation events on the evenings of January 27th 2022 and February 24th 2022. The process involved an introduction by ANDBC to the background of the project and progress to date. AECOM then explained the design proposal through a power point presentation and concluded with a questions and answers session with option to either verbally ask or type questions into the open chat room. Online and hard copy questionnaires were also provided to gain further feedback about the proposals. The pie charts (right) show the results of the collective responses

7.3 The Outcome

Online, handwritten feedback forms as well as questions raised during the public consultations were collated and analysed to produce a list of proposed variations to the masterplan. This determined which proposals were altered in the masterplan



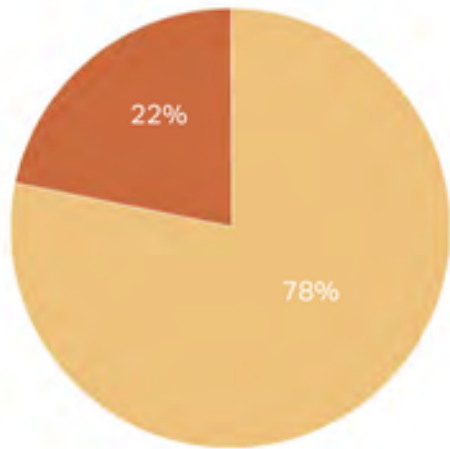
"Any improvements to Donaghadee, particularly The Commons, would be very welcomed"

"It is a great area and with some purposeful development will add so much more to the community for local people and for those visiting"

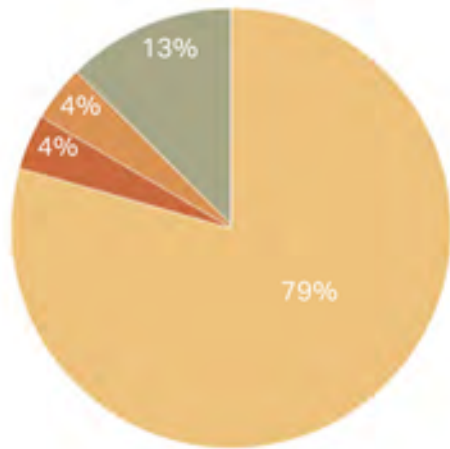
"We love going to the commons to walk the dog and let the kids play in the park. It would be great to have more things to do"

"Plenty to keep kids entertained. Will bring a lot of people to the town"

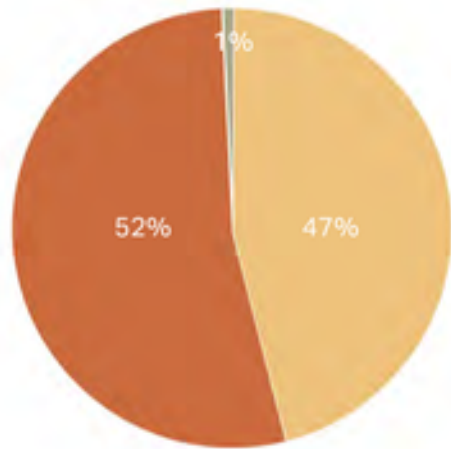
Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed masterplan?



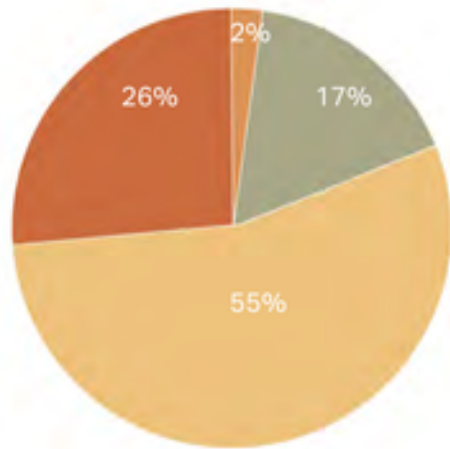
In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?



Please tell us your gender



Please tell us your age



- Yes
- No

- As a member of the Public living near the project area
- As a business owner/service provider located near the project area
- As a representative of a public/community organisation
- Other
- Male
- Female
- Other

- 40-60
- 61+
- 25-39
- 18-24

8.0 Executive Summary

The Commons presents an amazing opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town with a contemporary mix of live, work, visit, play and study opportunities for all.

The Commons will offer enhanced, walking, cycling, relaxing and outdoor play opportunities for all within the parkland that has biodiversity at its core. The wider study area can be "stretched" to accommodate more uses on brownfield lands. As a signature tourism, recreation, and leisure destination defined by its wellness opportunities, the Commons Coastal Park, combined with the urban regeneration and development on brownfield lands, will continue Donaghadee's revitalisation and grow appeal as a visitor destination and place to live.

8.1 A MARKET OPPORTUNITY EXISTS

The initial target visitor market will be more day visits and overnight stays, from the 1 million people in the Belfast City Region (City Deal definition) within approximately 60 minutes' drive.

Product, brand, marketing and sales initiatives will extend this to:

- The rest of NI and Eastern Coastal Corridor to the 2.2 million people in the Greater Dublin Area all within a 3 hour drive
- City break visitors to Belfast who with improved transport could access Donaghadee - Great Britain, rest of the Republic of Ireland and overseas visitors to Belfast
- Coach trips from the c 149 cruise ships who call at Belfast
- Overseas market segments will primarily be a mix of touring Great Escapers and Culturally Curious from

the island of Ireland's core markets of Britain, North America, France and Germany

The town centre health check undertaken in 2015 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan essentially remains valid. There is an improved context of population growth. In the post Covid world, Donaghadee with its attractive setting and lifestyle advantages should outperform NI population growth. This will bring about increased demand for more things to do and for spaces for people to work from in Donaghadee through hybrid working/working from home.

- The large area of brownfield land currently used as free car parking presents a significant opportunity cost. It presents a superb opportunity to be Donaghadee's urban regeneration and development project to drive more critical mass for the town centre and accommodate contemporary uses. Crucially with large areas in public sector ownership it presents an opportunity for the Council to capture value from its ownership. Through development the Council should seek a capital and/or income receipt that will contribute to the capital cost to deliver the Commons masterplan and provide ongoing financial support for operations
- This commercial development is likely to comprise a hotel (est 40 key) and spa & wellness facility, business space (co-working/serviced office space), appropriate retail, food & beverage, leisure and multifamily residential
- Non-commercial development opportunity exists for a visitor centre hub to tell the many stories of Donaghadee and offering high quality visitor services.

8.2 EMERGING PROPOSITION

The vision is for a premium urban coastal park with an enhanced town centre offer.

The Commons will be reimagined into a high-quality coastal parkland destination with activities – indoor and outdoor – welcoming everyone. A new network of trails will reach out across the foreshore, plus bind the Commons into the urban fabric. A destination brand with consumer appeal will leverage the public and private investment to support visitor growth.

There will be three zones of activity

1. North. A mixed-use development as an urban extension of the town centre
2. Central. The core Commons parkland a place to walk, run, relax, and enjoy Irish Sea views plus an appropriate programme of events and activities
3. South. Amenities for activity by all ages plus a new Recreational Vehicle overnight stay facility to cater for this fast growing market

Points of differentiation will include:

- A compelling tourism, leisure, and recreation offer outdoors and indoors
- A mixed use integrated urban extension of new development
- Premium independent market positioning across all offers
- Takes ownership on telling Irish Sea stories within the new Visitor Centre, including the locally iconic Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat
- Wellness will form a key part of all offers

8.3 STRATEGIC ACTIONS TOWARDS DELIVERY

Improvement & Development

- Phase 1. Central. Transformation of the landscape, paths, and coastal boardwalks plus enhanced biodiversity.
- Phase 2. South. Recreational Vehicle park, Enhanced pavilion and natural play and recreational facilities.
- Phase 3. North. A mixed-use urban regeneration and development scheme, including the multifunctional visitor centre

Branding and marketing

We consider not enough people know about the Commons. The reimagined Commons needs a fresh brand and marketing strategy to leverage proposed investment by the public and private sectors.

The Commons should be split into identifiable zones with a supporting brand proposition that appeal to identified audiences and markets.

Management

Local people are passionate about the Commons parkland with numerous active community groups. A new vehicle that engages local people attracts multiple funding sources to ensure high quality maintenance and operations. Perhaps a form of Tourism Business Improvement District that expands on the work existing businesses, organisations and individuals have done.

A Business Plan for the reimagined Commons

A very early business plan has been prepared to consider the Commons as an integrated destination centred around a multifunctional Visitor Hub of some 800 sqm gross. This high level work suggests

- A high quality multifunctional Visitor Centre Hub could attract 25,000 visitors in year 1 rising to 30,000 in year 5.
- Average turnover during the 5 year period might be £431,500 pa (Ticketed events, Café + Retail, Room Hires, Coworking space, Festival & Events, RV Park and Sponsorship and Donations)
- Average Costs during the 5 year period might be £366,000 pa (Costs of sales, Staff costs 8 FTE and operational costs)
- Average net surplus during the 5 year period might be £65,500

The multifunctional visitor centre hub and associated amenities will not be viable a viable property development. Like the rest of the Commons coastal park need to be funded by public sector sources. However the early indication is that it could cover its operational costs. More detailed concept, design, and business planning work is required.

Funding sources are likely to include

- Capital: Levelling Up, Peace Plus, NI Executive, Capital from enabling development, National Lottery, Ards & North Down Council borrowing, Sponsorship/Naming rights/Donations
- Land: sale of council owned land might mean £350,000 per acre for a multi-family apartment scheme. Adopting a development position and working with an experienced

developer/builder this then might be translated into an investment asset that is likely to have attractive investment prospects and a potential capital value of c £1million + and deliver income to support ongoing operations of the Commons

- Operational: Income from enabling development, Ticketed events and activities, Local businesses, Sponsorship/Naming rights, Precept on local tax for and Ards & North Down

8.4 BUSINESS CASE FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMONS

- More day and overnight visitors, making more trips, staying for longer and spending more money
- Larger town centre population supporting vibrancy and spend at existing businesses and traders
- Direct and indirect jobs, training, education, and spend. Estimate of 8 FTE jobs to deliver the Visitor Centre and Commons experience.
- The Commons combined with new and appropriate development (including workspaces for local start-ups, homeworkers) presents Donaghadee as a more sustainable growth town not solely a tourist town
- Civic pride, Quality of Life, Engagement, and Wellness, plus enhanced biodiversity
- Adds more to the overall Ards Peninsula offer, helps develop a stronger visitor experience
- Gives Tourism NI a strong product to support the "Giant Spirit" proposition and spread visitors across NI
- Will be a showcase of the best of Environmental, Social and Governance ("ESG") investing.

Unclassified

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ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	23 May 2022
File Reference	RDP43
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Covid Recovery Projects
Attachments	None

As previously reported, the Department for Communities (DfC) issued a Letter of Offer for c£1.75M for Covid 19 Revitalisation Projects. This funding comprised of DfC, Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA) contributions in response to the impact of the pandemic on the local area and to assist the revitalisation of towns and rural areas.

Further to the update to Regeneration and Development Committee on 7 April 2022, the following projects have been developed and internal consultation has been held on what could be reasonably delivered within the timescales required. These projects have been supported by the appropriate Town Advisory Group and have met the criteria set by the three Departments. Approval in principle has been received.

Comber Town Improvement Scheme Phase 2 (Bridge Street/ Leisure Centre Car Park)

Proposed budget: £82,074. Funding stream: DfC £61,859 | DfI £20,185.

Unclassified

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The proposed project aims to:

- Improve linkages between the existing greenway, leisure centre and the retail core of the town centre.
- Promote connectivity by enhancing the existing area to create a safe and attractive environment.
- Encourage and support active travel by providing a safe route for people to walk and cycle.
- Introduction of LED lighting which would support active travel in the evenings and improve residents' and visitors' safety and security.
- Provide infrastructure for the future installation of Electrical Vehicle Charging Points.

It should be noted that the proposed scheme is currently being costed and as such, these are indicative costs. It is felt that this scheme could be enhanced if additional funding was available.

Project constraints to be aware of are statutory consents and external issues such as rising contractor and material costs.

Bangor Lighting Improvement Scheme (Castle Park/ Abbey Street)

Proposed budget: £30,000. Funding stream: DfC

The proposed project aims to:

- Improve linkages to the retail core of the Town Centre
- Promote connectivity by enhancing the existing area to create a safe and attractive environment
- Improve safety and accessibility for all users (pedestrians, wheelchair users, cyclists, parents with prams, etc)
- Encourage and support active travel by providing a safe route for people to walk or cycle
- Support active travel in the evenings and improve residents and visitor's safety and security

Although this was considered as a suitable project, the requirement for statutory consents was always a concern as the deadline for the completion of the project is September 2022. The Planning Section has advised that a number of consents would be required. Therefore, it is deemed that this project could not be delivered in the given time period.

Other projects are now being considered which will be brought to the Town Advisory Group.

Donaghadee Digital Information Screen (Donaghadee Toilets Foyer) Proposed budget £20,000. Funding Stream: DfC

This project aims to:

- Act as an information hub for the town.
- Allow for up-to-date information on events and offers.
- Can be linked to historical information for walking tours and heritage attractions (e.g., The Moat, Sir Samuel Kelly, the Harbour, Commons etc).
- Can be utilised for maps and wayfinding.

Unclassified

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This project has replaced the Parklet, which the TAG agreed was not required. The TAG requested a different project that met the funding criteria and could be delivered on time. Fifteen projects were considered, and this was deemed the most suitable.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Notes this report and;
2. Agrees to allocate £30K from Castle Park/Abbey Street project to the Comber Town Improvement Scheme Phase 2.

Unclassified

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ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	23 May 2022
File Reference	RDP60
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Five Chambers of Commerce/Trade Plans 2022-2024
Attachments	None

The Regeneration Unit continues to work closely with the Chambers of Commerce/Trade in each of the five town to engage and develop the capacity of the Chambers and to improve the business environment in the towns. The Regeneration Unit has successfully developed a partnership approach aimed at assisting the Chambers to improve the profile of the Chambers and provide activities for the wider benefit of the towns, through an agreed programme of activities and the allocation of annual funding up to a maximum of £12,000 per Chamber. The purpose of the funding is to assist with the following:

Initiatives aimed at growing the Chamber:

- Drives to increase membership and attract new members
- Initiatives which help businesses/traders improve skills
- Initiatives to keep an updated Web and social media presence
- Initiatives which enable networking

Initiatives aimed at increasing the profile of the town:

- Shop Local initiatives
- Initiatives which add value to visitors/tourists to the town
- Bespoke Christmas activity
- Standalone events
- Covid recovery

Unclassified

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Administration support for the Chamber:

- To assist with communication sharing news, events, and training opportunities
- To increase the use of the social media/digital presence of the Chamber
- To assist with the delivery of the Chamber yearly plans/ activities
- Collecting membership fees
- Liaising with Council in relation to funding support

The five Chambers have devised a 2-year business plan for 2022-2024 that clearly demonstrates the main issues in each town, alongside actions to assist the Chambers to grow and develop with key deliverables, which demonstrate value for money. The following is a synopsis of some of the work that will be undertaken during the year by the Chambers.

Bangor

The 2021 financial year provided Bangor Chamber with opportunities not possible in the previous 'Covid affected' two years. Businesses began to re-open without major restrictions. The Chamber had the opportunity to engage with many of new traders who have started enterprises in the town. Coffee mornings and presentations resumed, and we have gained new members with some consistency. Aims:

- To increase and improve engagement with business and all stakeholders in Bangor.
- To increase membership and provide a platform for the business community in Bangor.
- To continue our support for major capital projects including Queens Parade and the Waterfront Scheme.
- To continue to provide free training opportunities for local businesses. We hope to extend this Borough-wide and share the benefits with the other four Chambers.
- To employ a part-time Administrative Assistant who can deal with day-to-day activities.

For this year, the Chamber intends to run a number of events which include:

- Regular monthly meetings / events for members.
- New Legislation events.
- Showcasing events for new members.
- Supporting Sea Bangor with our Gazebo and free merchandise (as well as future Council-led events).
- 2022 Business Awards – Details to be confirmed.
- Support the Bangor Christmas Lights switch-on.

Comber

The Chamber continues to focus on helping businesses develop skills, promoting the town as a destination and identifying projects that will assist with the economic development of the town.

The committee works to increase membership of the Chamber and reach out to all businesses in Comber and surrounding area to offer support and networking opportunities.

Unclassified

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An exciting pilot initiative was launched this year with Comber Chamber of Commerce opening a Pop-up shop in the town, taking a vacant unit and offering it out to small businesses on a weekly basis. This has proved an exciting and innovative project with the shop being filled every week and booked ahead for three months.

A Town Manager was recruited in February 2022 to help develop projects, seek funding, and professionally market the town via social media and advertising campaigns. The Chamber also has a website which is continually updated that has local business features highlighted.

Despite the restrictions and difficulties of the last two years, the Chamber has continued to work to ensure members and business in the area felt they were being supported and promoted.

Comber Chamber of Commerce aims to promote Comber as a top visitor destination to eat, shop and explore. Comber is home to great small independent businesses, amazing restaurants and cafes and tourist and historical attractions. In 2022/2023 the Comber Chamber of Commerce will focus on helping small business reach their audiences and promote the wealth of fantastic products available. It will focus on general promotion of the town as a whole including:

- Promotional activities
- Training for members
- Pop-up-shop
- Networking events
- Collaboration with other regeneration initiatives and partners

Donaghadee

The Chamber will continue with the administration duties required for the delivery of initiatives aimed at growing the Chamber and at increasing the profile of the town. Some of the planned activity for the year includes:

- To promote and retain membership across all categories. Current membership is Traders (83); Community Orgs (25) and Individuals (34)
- To organise additional public meetings.
- To organise a summer festival each year with a target of involving 35 different organisations and holding more than 75 events across the Summer.
- To organise and co-ordinate the Christmas Santa Parade.
- To involve the wider community in the Crommelin Wood Environmental Project and the Marine Litter Project.
- To continue to inform members, visitors and the general public on issues affecting Donaghadee via the website and social media
- To ensure businesses are informed of sources for advice and grants
- To help traders and businesses improve skills
- Increase the number of members in the trader category from (83) to (95)
- To develop at least two "shop local" campaigns each year
- To promote footfall at festival and other events by marketing events outside the town
- To take up and create opportunities for networking.
- To secure trader involvement in Ulster in bloom.

Unclassified

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- To continue work on the restoration of Crommelin Wood.
- To support schools in the Marine Litter Project.
- To retain our Ulster in Bloom title.
- To maintain pressure on Elected representatives and officials to keep Donaghadee tidy.
- To examine the potential for community allotments.
- To examine the potential for a Sensory Garden incorporating a Mens Shed.
- To circulate material received from other sources to members.
- To promote and support well-being initiatives.
- To advise and support groups who require help with grant applications.

Holywood

After two years of limited activity due to Covid -19 Pandemic, the Chamber of Commerce is now holding regular events and continue its work promoting the Town.

All activities will be in line with pandemic restriction and will be adjusted if needed. The objectives of the Holywood chamber are:

- *Membership:*
 - Mapping exercise to establish current profile of Holywood Business sector and identify possible new members.
 - Drive to support current membership and attract new members.
- *Networking Events:*
 - Continue to offer a range of networking events to support the business community's as well as working in partnership with the Council and supporting events relevant for County Down.
 - To promote working in partnership by offering networking possibilities in formal as well as social setting.
- *Training/Information session:*
 - Support Initiatives which help businesses/traders improve skills.
 - To be guided by the membership of issues relevant to the business community.
- *Shop local initiatives:*
 - Support activities that increase the profile of Holywood.
 - Support Initiatives which add value to visitors/tourists to the town.
- *Seasonal Activities:*
 - Support activities that increase the profile of Town Holywood.
 - Bespoke Christmas activity as well as Standalone events or partnering with other events to add value.
- *Social media:*
 - To support initiatives to keep an updated Web and social media presence.

Unclassified

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Newtownards

The Chamber plans to return to regular networking events, training events, engagement on Council-led events and support for their members.

Some of the planned activity for the year includes:

- *Initiatives aimed at growing the Chamber:*
 - Drives to support current membership and attract new members.
 - Initiatives which help businesses/traders improve skills.
 - Initiatives to keep an updated Web and social media presence.
 - Initiatives which enable networking.
 - Initiatives to aid in issues arising from Covid recovery and Brexit.
 - Initiatives to help businesses understand and achieve net Zero Carbon emissions green recovery.

- *Initiatives aimed at increasing the profile of the Town:*
 - Shop Local initiatives - Initiatives which add value to visitors/tourists to the town - Ensure that events do not detract from trade - Standalone events - Recruitment drive.
 - Partnering with other events to add value.
 - Easter /Halloween Family Orientated Event - Campaign for Council managed Christmas Event that encourages spend Identify and improve the Ards product through involvement in Council and subsequent groups (Steering and public realm TAG etc.)

- *Administration:*
 - To assist with communication sharing news, events and training opportunities.
 - To increase the use of the social media/digital presence of the Chamber.
 - To assist with the delivery of the Business Plan.
 - Collecting membership fees.
 - Liaising with Council in relation to funding support.
 - Business Awards.
 - Reward businesses within the Chamber for their Merit.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the report and agrees to continue with the funding.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Regeneration and Development
Date of Meeting	09 June 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	25 May 2022
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Rural Development Programme Funding
Attachments	None

Members will be aware that, at the April 2022 meeting of the Council, it was agreed not to proceed with the Ropewalk Scheme and to advise the Local Action Group (LAG) accordingly. It was further agreed to ask that the LAG make representations to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to ascertain whether the funding allocated to the Ropewalk project (c£350K) could be diverted for use on other projects. It is important to remember that the funding was timebound, and has to be spent by the end of September 2022. The LAG advised that DAERA has enquired which projects the Council was considering, and whether the time condition could be met.

A quick review of the Village Plans revealed that no projects had reached Outline Business Case stage, nor did they have the appropriate statutory consents in place to be taken forward within the timescale. As no project was suitably advanced, the Council has not made provision for the 25% contribution of the building costs.

It is important to note that the Rural Development Manager has resigned, with a further post remaining vacant, leaving one Assistant Regeneration Officer tasked with delivering the two SEAFLAG and six Small Settlement projects. In light of this change, there is currently no capacity to take on further project delivery even should suitable projects have been identified.

Unclassified

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council agrees, in light of the above, to make no further applications to the Rural Development Programme and advises the LAG of this position.