

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

7 June 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend an in-person meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards on **Thursday 13 June 2024**, commencing at **7.00pm**.

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough  
Chief Executive  
Ards and North Down Borough Council

**A G E N D A**

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Deputation - Kircubbin and District Community Association re Kircubbin Harbour

**Reports for Approval**

4. Response to Notice of Motion Ards TT Races 2028 – Update Report (report attached)
5. Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (report attached)
6. Proposed Regeneration Projects (report attached)
7. Economic Development Q4 Performance Report (report attached)

**Reports for Noting**

8. Economic Development Annual Activity Report (report attached)
9. Tourism Q4 Performance Report (report attached)
10. AND Events and Festival Fund 23/24 – Tranche 1 Update Report (report attached)
11. Annual Tourism Events Evaluation Report 2023 (report attached)
12. Visitor Information Centres Annual Report 2023/24 (report attached)

13. Regeneration H2 Performance Report (report attached)

14. CAG and TAG Minutes (attached)

- 14.1 Bangor CAG – 25.3.24
- 14.2 Comber TAG – 20.3.24
- 14.3 Donaghadee TAG – 26.3.24
- 14.4 Holywood TAG – 28.3.24
- 14.5 Newtownards TAG – 19.3.24

15. Response to Notice of Motion Dereliction Scheme (report attached)

16. Capital Projects H2 Performance Report – (report attached)

17. Any Other Notified Business

### **ITEMS 18 – 24 \*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

#### **Reports for Approval (In Confidence)**

18. AND Innovation Hub OBC (report attached)

19. Bangor Waterfront Court House (report attached)

#### **Reports for Noting (In Confidence)**

20. LMP Update & 2023/24 Action Plan Outcome Report (report attached)

21. Pickie Quarterly report (report attached)

22. Exploris Quarterly report (report attached)

23. Bangor Marina Quarterly report (report attached)

24. Kinnegar Logistics Base Update (report attached)

### **MEMBERSHIP OF PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)**

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

Unclassified

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## ITEM 4

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	14 May 2024
File Reference	RDP14
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: screened as part of Events Programme at appropriate juncture
Subject	Response to Notice of Motion Ards TT Races 2028 - update report
Attachments	

In November 2023, the Place and Prosperity Committee received a report on early discussions regarding the following Notice of Motion:

‘That this Council notes that 2028 will mark the centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT Races and tasks officers to prepare a report in relation to options on events to best commemorate this sporting anniversary and celebrate the area’s rich motorsport heritage.’

The report highlighted that early engagement had been undertaken with representatives from The Ulster Vintage Car Club, TT Historians, other local vintage car enthusiasts and an initial conversation with the Member who proposed the Notice, to seek their thoughts on how to appropriately mark the occasion. Since that time, a further tentative discussion has also taken place with a potential sponsor facilitated by a race specialist.

## Not Applicable

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The event date of 18 August 2028 and indicative event outline as 'a motor sport themed weekend similar in style and presentation to Goodwood Revival Festival located at the Ards Airfield' is still the working context.

Although the event is some years away it is now prudent to begin planning by following up on Council's approval in November 2023 to form an Ards TT Working Group of Members. As the previous report stated, the group will be supported by Tourism and Heritage Officers and motorsport historians/enthusiasts. It is anticipated that other stakeholders could also be considered at the first meeting of the Working Group if deemed appropriate. It is the intention that a Terms of Reference for the Working Group would be agreed at the first meeting, anticipated to take place in September 2024. In the interim, Officers will engage with relevant contacts as the need arises for planning purposes. Updates on any discussions would be available to members of the Working Group at the first meeting and updates as agreed by the Working Group would be presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

It should be noted that during the budget setting process Council approved a budget of £60,000 per annum which is allocated in earmarked funds during 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 to attribute a potential budget of up to a maximum of £180,000 to cover all planning, delivery and marketing of the event in 2028.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council determines an appropriate number of, and nominates, members for the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group and further notes the planning arrangements as set out in the report.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 5

**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	28 May 2024
File Reference	RDP236
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter to Minister for Education, Paul Givan, MLA Appendix 2 - Moss Road Walk & Cycle Trail

**Background**

Members will be aware a report was presented to the March Place and Prosperity Committee providing an update on the progress of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (CRSSP). It was agreed that Officers would provide a subsequent report giving a detailed update on specific projects within the programme.

**Update on specific projects.****1. School Lane, Ballywalter**

School Lane is located at the rear of Ballywalter Primary School and connects the main village to the school, sports pitches, play area and residential area.

## Not Applicable

The current path is not accessible for all and regularly floods, becoming unusable during wet weather. The proposed works will raise, widen, and resurface the path to improve its accessibility and connectivity.

The pathway covers 3no different land folios; the Council, the Education Authority (EA), and a private owner. All potential path designs will entail works on the folio owned by the EA.

The EA is requiring the Council to assume full liability for the pathway during and after the works, which is a concern as it adds to the Council's existing obligations and sets a precedent for future similar projects.

The Council had previously agreed to write to the Minister for Education, Paul Givan MLA, to request his assistance in encouraging the Education Authority to reconsider its stance and a copy of the letter sent dated 10 May 2024 is attached at Appendix 1. To date no response has been received.

## 2. Ballygowan Village Improvements

Ballygowan Village has received circa. £181,000 under the CRSSP. As Members will be aware the initial scheme was not in line with the objectives of the funding contract, and it was agreed officers would work with Department for Community officials and members of the Ballygowan & District Community Association to look at alternative options.

Council Officers met with the Ballygowan & District Community Association on 29 April 2024 to discuss three proposals, including two submitted by the Association and one proposed by Council Officers. The Officers presented each proposal with estimated costs, and the Association were asked to indicate their preferred option. The Chair confirmed the Association has agreed to proceed with Option 3 – Moss Road Walk & Cycle Trail.

The proposed Walk & Cycle Trail at Moss Road will create a trail loop through the site which will encourage walkers and cyclists to visit the site from Ballygowan Village and vice versa. The site is approximately 0.5miles from Ballygowan Village Centre. The works will start at the road junction where pedestrians will be able to access the trail and then follow it through the loop as outlined in Appendix 2. The pedestrian access point and part of the works are within the 30mph zone, and the remainder is outside the 30mph zone, linking this area to the village settlement and encouraging residents to walk/cycle.

The project seeks to:

- Improve linkages in/out of the village and retail core
- Promote connectivity by enhancing the existing site to create a safe and attractive environment
- New pedestrian crossing which will improve safety and accessibility for all users
- Encourage and support active travel by providing a safe route for people to walk or cycle

Not Applicable

- Introduction of seating and picnic benches providing leisure facilities and resting points
- Marked car parking spaces which will improve safety and enhance accessibility
- Promote and support the village centre by increasing footfall, enhancing the aesthetic appeal, and promote a sense of community; thereby attracting more visitors, supporting local businesses, and fostering a stronger sense of place and identity.

Under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme the following targets will be met:

- Encourage people to change from car use to more environmentally friendly choices such as walking and cycling (Dfl).
- Increase the land used for active travel and connect people with key services whilst ensuring accessibility for those with disabilities (Dfl).
- Encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area (DfC).

The proposed Walk & Cycle Trail will be delivered under the Dfl funding stream. The project will provide an accessible and enjoyable route. The trail promotes physical activity, social interaction, and community engagement, ultimately benefiting local businesses and the economy.

The trail offers residents a convenient and accessible option to exercise from their own homes, reducing the need for lengthy drives to other destinations such as the Comber greenway. This will likely encourage people to engage in walking and cycling more frequently, not just at the Moss Road site, but across the village.

The trail will also facilitate social gatherings and group activities, an opportunity for social park run, friends meeting up to exercise together, and then exploring the local village, visiting shops and cafes, thereby boosting local businesses and the economy.

The project proposal has been submitted to the relevant funding officials, Department for Communities (DfC) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and approval has been received for the project to move forward.

Should the Council approve the project, officers will move forward to deliver the project within the approved funding budget and timeframes.

### 3. **Kircubbin Coastal Path**

The Kircubbin Coastal Path will welcome improvement works from the play park to the Main Street. Works will include lighting to improve safety and accessibility, street furniture including new benches and picnic tables and incidental tree planting. The scheme aims to promote connectivity for the village services, playpark, community centre, school, and housing.

Planning approval has now been received for this project and officers are further progressing the project by appointing a measured term contractor, allowing works to commence in the coming months.

Not Applicable

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## New Projects

Officers have been working closely with DfC officials to develop additional projects to be taken forward under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme in line with existing budget allocations.

The following projects have been submitted to DfC, which has approved the projects to be submitted as a formal variance request should the Council approve.

### 1. Shop Front Improvement Scheme, Portaferry

The proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme is designed to empower local businesses within the Portaferry Public Realm Scheme's boundary to enhance their shop fronts, thereby creating a visually appealing and cohesive public space that compliments the public realm enhancements.

The scheme will provide financial assistance to businesses by offering a grant of up to £2,500, enabling businesses to invest in exterior improvements to their premises, such as façade renovations and signage, which will not only enhance their shop frontage but also contribute to the overall aesthetic appeal of the public realm. The business owners will be expected to pay 10% of the overall costs of the proposed works.

The outcomes of a Shop Front Improvement Scheme can include increased footfall, improved customer perception, enhanced visual appeal, and a sense of community pride, as well as economic benefits such as increased sales and property values.

The proposed launch of the Shop Front Improvement Scheme in July 2024, with a completion of December 2024, will result in a comprehensive transformation of the village, bringing about a cohesive and invigorated appearance that will enhance the overall experience for visitors and residents alike.

The estimated cost of the grant scheme is £75,000 (30no businesses receiving the maximum grant available of £2,500).

It is proposed to reduce the DfC funding allocation for the Portaferry Public Realm Scheme from £985,000.00 to £910,000.00 to enable the delivery of this scheme. This will not affect the completion of the public realm works as was agreed.

### 2. Animation Grant Scheme

The proposed Animation Grant Scheme aims to empower local community groups to take an active role in animating and promoting the Small Settlements Programme capital projects, providing a grant of up to £2,500 per village to support their efforts and enhance community engagement, celebration, and awareness.



## Not Applicable

It is proposed the Animation Grant Scheme will be rolled out following the completion of the capital projects in the following rural areas – Ballygowan, Portaferry, Kircubbin and Greyabbey. The grant can be used to host animation activity in the area of the completed works.

The outcomes of an Animation Grant Scheme, may include:

- Increased community engagement and participation
- Improved visibility and promotion of the capital projects, showcasing their benefits and successes
- Enhanced sense of community pride and ownership
- Increased opportunities for local businesses and services to benefit from the projects
- Better representation of the community's needs and interests in the development and delivery of future projects

The proposed scheme will have an application period of 2 weeks following completion of the capital works, and each village will have a maximum budget of £2,500 to support community group animation activities.

The deadline for animation delivery will be no later than 01 March 2025, to allow sufficient time for the claim process.

The estimated cost of the grant scheme is £10,000 (4no scheme areas – Portaferry, Greyabbey, Ballygowan and Kircubbin). It is proposed to reduce the Professional Services budget allocation from £35,087.67 to £25,087.67 (DfC Revenue funding stream). This will not affect any other work planned.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the proposed projects as outlined above and officers proceed to submit a formal variance request to DfC.



**Ards and  
North Down**  
Borough Council

10 May 2024

Mr Paul Givan MLA  
Minister for Education  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Sent by email to: [paul.givan@mla.niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:paul.givan@mla.niassembly.gov.uk)

Dear Minister,

### **Re: Ballywalter Pathway Improvement Scheme**

The Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme (CRSSP) is a collaboration between the Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, to work closely with local government to identify priority projects which address long standing issues that support the needs of local citizens. The programme will see an investment of over £2M into the rural areas across Ards and North Down.

The Council has been negotiating with Education Authority officials about the potential to commit capital funding under CRSSP to support the delivery of an improvement scheme to the pathway adjacent to Ballywalter Primary School, located at Dunleath Drive. The proposed works to improve the pathway will involve both Council and Education Authority owned land and collaboration and agreement between the two entities will be crucial for the successful implementation of the project.

The current poor condition of the pathway underscores the necessity for enhancements to ensure safety and accessibility for residents, children, and visitors. By investing in upgrading the pathway, the Council can improve connectivity within the village, fostering a more inclusive and vibrant environment for all. It will also provide a safe path for children attending the Primary School. This is a relatively small scheme with a total works value of c£20,000.

Regrettably, even though the Education Authority welcomes the scheme, the proposal to improve the pathway is currently at a standstill due to the Education Authority's requirement for the Council to take on the liability for the path from the date work commences and thereafter.



Whilst safety and liability are important considerations, it is understandable that the Council does not wish to take on indefinite liability of the pathway which is predominately used by children and parents coming to and going from the School.

It is essential to find a solution that allows for the necessary improvements to be made to create a safe and attractive pathway for the community. The Council has agreed that I write to you to seek your assistance to encourage the Education Authority to reconsider its position and accept that these works will improve the situation and negate its need to repair the path, particularly the sections owned by them. The basic fact is, that the undertaking of these works will reduce the liability to the Education Authority.

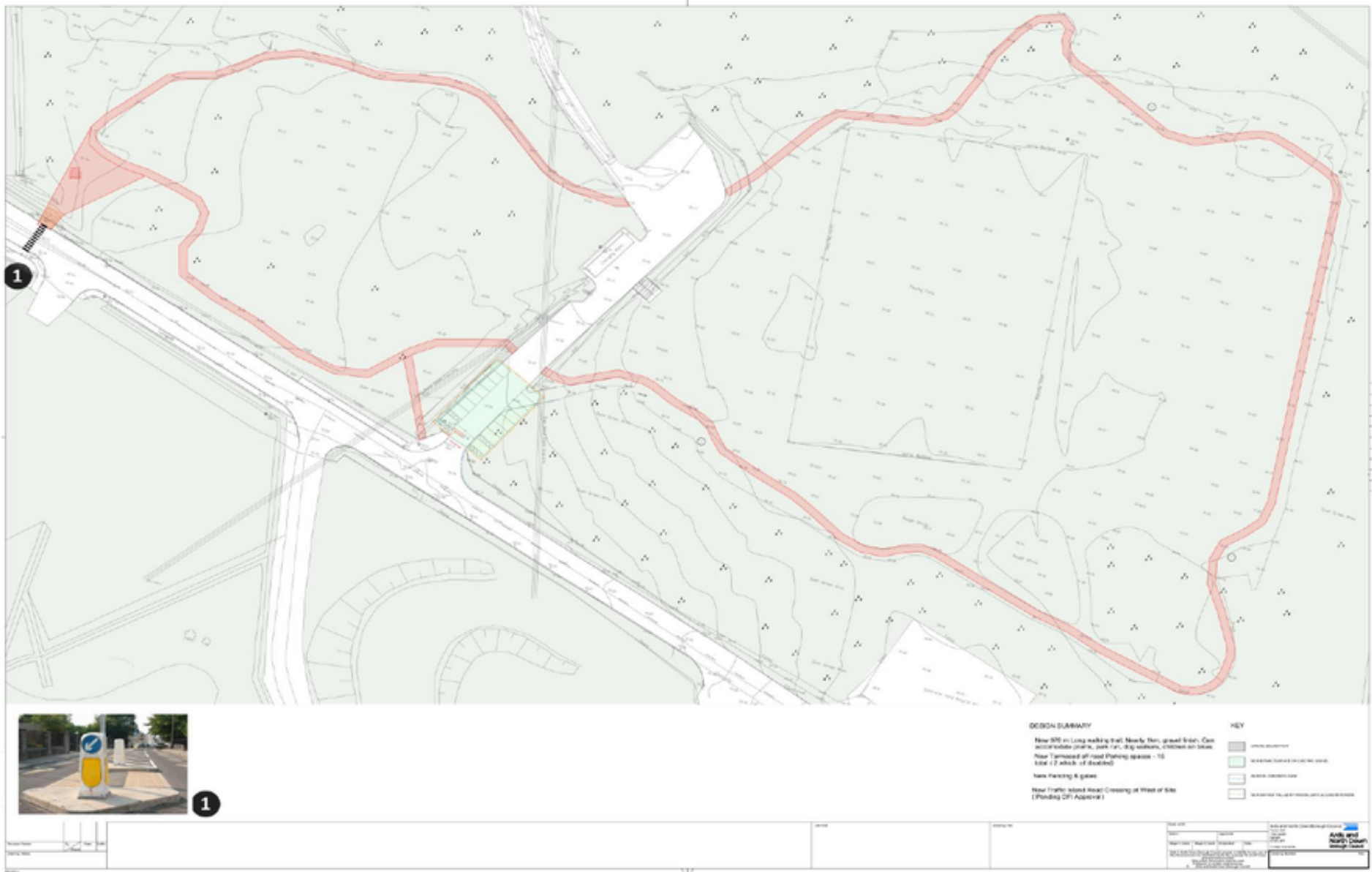
The Council thanks you in anticipation and looks forward to a reply in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie McCullough".

Susie McCullough  
Interim Chief Executive

APPENDIX 2 – MOSS ROAD WALK & CYCLE TRAIL



APPENDIX 2 – MOSS ROAD WALK & CYCLE TRAIL



Unclassified

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**ITEM 6****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	28 May 2024
File Reference	RDP152
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Proposed Regeneration Projects 2024/25
Attachments	None

**Background**

As Members will be aware a budget of £200,000 (£100,000 Rural | £100,000 Urban) was allocated in this year's Regeneration Unit budgets to work up future projects. This budget provides the opportunity for officers to develop projects to technical design stage and planning approval (where required). The benefits of working projects up to be 'shovel-ready' for funding is that it increases the likelihood of securing capital funding and enables a rapid deployment once funding is secured.

**Working Up Projects 2024/25**

Officers are taking a proactive approach to identifying potential projects that can be progressed this year, by reviewing the urban Masterplans, rural Village Plans and engaging with the rural communities to determine which initiatives can be taken forward.

Not Applicable

The following projects are recommended to be taken forward:

<p><b>URBAN</b></p> <p><b>Donaghadee Commons Pump Track</b> Design and Planning Application.</p> <p>The Donaghadee Commons Pump Track has been selected as one of five final projects to be considered for PeacePlus funding under <i>Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation of Ards and North Down</i>, offering a significant opportunity to bring this project to life and provide a unique recreational facility for the community, as well as bringing additional footfall to Donaghadee.</p> <p>The design and planning application will provide a critical foundation for the project, allowing it to move forward with the necessary approvals in place should it successfully secure funding under the PeacePlus programme.</p> <p>If the project is not successful in securing the funding, officers will proactively pursue alternative funding sources to deliver the project.</p> <p>The project aligns with the Donaghadee Commons Masterplan.</p> <p>Approx. Budget: £10,000</p>
<p><b>Meetinghouse Lane, Newtownards</b> Design and Planning Application.</p> <p>The project will seek to develop a design that incorporates resurfacing, improved lighting, decorative archways, and planting, enhancing the overall aesthetic and user experience of this well-used town centre location. It will then be another useable space for markets, fairs and town activities.</p> <p>The proposed project is supported by Newtownards Chamber of Commerce and directly aligns with the Newtownards Town Masterplan- <i>Priority C 'A Connected Town' and Priority D 'Streets for All'</i>. DfI Roads has also accepted this project and will be undertaking most of the works required.</p> <p>Approx. Budget: £10,000</p>
<p><b>Pedestrian Walkway (from Bingham Lane to Main Street), Bangor</b> Design.</p> <p>The project aims to develop a design to transform this key connecting laneway into a vibrant and inviting public space. In doing so will enhance the overall experience for both visitors and residents by creating a design that provides a welcoming atmosphere that fosters social interaction, community engagement, and a sense of place.</p> <p>The proposed project aligns with the Newtownards Town Masterplan – <i>Priority C 'Making the Streets People Friendly'</i>.</p> <p>Approx. Budget: £10,000</p>

Not Applicable

**Community Enterprise Hub, Comber**

Feasibility Study.

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

The proposed project aligns with the Comber Town Masterplan – *Priority B 'Making the Most of Valuable Space'*.

Approx. Budget: £8,000

**Urban Mapping Exercise**

Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards Mapping Study.

Following the recent review of the city/town advisory groups, it was highlighted the need to reinvigorate the Advisory Groups with wider representation. The proposed project seeks to appoint consultants to conduct a mapping study that will provide a comprehensive overview of the community and voluntary groups in each town and city, enabling the Council to establish more diverse and representative Advisory Groups that reflect the needs and interests of the local community, providing a more informed and effective decision making process that better serves the community, whilst also fostering improved relationships with groups, organisations and stakeholders.

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

Approx. Budget: £15,000

**Dereliction/ Vacancy Study**

Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards  
 Identification of key properties | Identification of appropriate interventions | Explore options for short and long-term use.

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

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

Dereliction and vacancy projects can help grow the local rate base by revitalising underutilised or abandoned properties, increasing property values, and attracting new business and residents, thereby increasing the overall property rate base, and generating more revenue for the council.



Not Applicable

The project aligns with the Masterplan for the city and each town centre.

Approx. Budget: £40,000

**RURAL**

**Ballyhalbert Pathway**

Design to include required surveys.

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

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

The project aligns with the Ballyhalbert Village Plan, Action 2.5.

Approx. Budget: £20,000

**Station Square, Helen's Bay**

Revise existing Environmental Improvement Scheme and Planning Application.

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

Given the time since the technical design was completed, it is recommended to revisit and revise the design to ensure it aligns with the current community aspirations, incorporates updated costs reflective of the current economic climate, and submits a planning application to secure the necessary approvals.

The project aligns with the Village Plan, Action 5.1.6

Approx. Budget: £15,000

**Main Street Square, Ballywalter**

Design and Planning Application.

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

The project aligns with the Ballywalter Village Plan, Action 7.1.

Approx. Budget: £15,000

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

Not Applicable

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**Design and Planning Application.**

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

The project aligns with the Village Plan, Action 3.

Approx. Budget: £20,000

The budget allocated to the rural areas has not been fully utilised as officers continue to work closely with the rural communities to identify projects, allowing for a more targeted allocation of funds.

The estimated costs provided are preliminary and will be refined if the Council agrees to proceed with them.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council approves the proposed projects as outlined.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	22 May 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Economic Development Performance Report Q4 2023-24
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 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 in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

Not applicable

The Council's 18 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 half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2023-24 is attached.

### Key points to note:

- The targets for job creation through business start activity were established and agreed with councils when the statutory responsibility for local economic development transferred to councils in 2015 as part of the Review of Public Administration. In 2023 the targets were revised and incorporated into the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2023. Due to the change in delivery of support from the *Go For It* Programme to the Go Succeed service and timescales DfE has proposed that the targets for 2023-24 should be a combination of the 2015 and 2023 Orders. The target therefore for the last year was 117 which was calculated on a pro-rata basis relative to the delivery mechanism. It is anticipated that this target figure will remain for 2024-25 so the ED Annual Service Plan will require adjustment
- The Go Succeed Service, whilst up and running, still has elements that need to be fully realised to allow correct, appropriate monitoring and full reporting of target achievements. The performance data is therefore not fully available at the time of writing this report. Once collated further updates will be brought to Council.
- The procurement exercise to appoint a new Operator for Bangor Marina resulted in no compliant bids being received. Officers have therefore had to revisit and recommence the process, which is currently live.

### Key achievements:

- Despite the delay in receiving the Letter of Offer for funding for the LMP, the team managed to put measures in place to prepare to hit the ground running to deliver a full suite of interventions that have had an immediate and positive impact on individuals needing support to get into employment.
- The outline business case for the AND Innovation Hub received Executive Board approval to proceed to casework which is now in process.
- Despite the challenging economic climate and steep rises in utility costs, especially in the first half of the year, the Operators of our facilities have managed their performance to continue to deliver across all contractual elements, continue to attract visitors and deliver value for Council.

Not applicable

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### **Emerging issues:**

- Once again, the Department for Communities has failed to confirm an annual budget allocation for the Labour Market Partnership for 2024-25. This presents issues in terms of planning and delivery of support and security for staff.
- The Go Succeed Service requires intensive input and resources to deliver and only has confirmed funding to March 2025. Given that there are elements which are still being refined it is imperative that the service can continue as envisaged for an additional 3-year period.

### **Action to be taken:**

- Collective action by the 11 Councils, led by Belfast City Council, must continue with DLUHC to ensure future funding for Go Succeed.
- Pressure from Councils must be maintained to secure future funding for the Labour Market Partnership from DfC.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council:

- 1) notes this report;
- 2) approves the amendment to the jobs target in the Economic Development Annual Service Plan to reflect the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2023

Not applicable

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## Half yearly Performance Report - Economic Development

Generated on: 24 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Number of surveys to identify needs and value of the ED and business support services	1	1
	% spend against budget	81.24%	100%
	Manage operator agreements performance	100%	100%
	Appoint an Operator for Bangor Marina and Harbour	0	1
	% staff attendance	94.97%	93%
	Team Briefings to be communicated to all available staff monthly (unless Sick or on leave)	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	Number of business owners/employees signing up for Health and Wellbeing initiatives	35	24
	Creation of Action Plan to progress Innovation Hub concept	1	1
	PR & thought pieces placed in relevant publications	7	6
	No of 1:1 Business Advice sessions (cumulative)	102	100
	Number of business research assignments (cumulative)	105	75
	Number of businesses supported through the DTFF programme	2	12
	Delivery and implementation of Digital Strategy Action Plan	1	1

Not applicable

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Draw down of Seal Sanctuary claim from DAERA	100%	100%
	Number of projects delivered in ILMP Action Plan	12	12
	Creative Industries Development - number of 1-1 mentoring sessions (cumulative)	0	4
	No of new jobs created through NIBSUP	63	85
	Number of new jobs created through Go For It (GFI) /NI Enterprise Support Service	63	123
	Number of sector specific fact sheets with best in class promotion	2	2

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	20 May 2024
File Reference	ED55
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Economic Development Annual Activity Report 2023-2024
Attachments	Appendix 1 - ED Annual Activity Summary 2023-2024

**Background**

The role of the Economic Development Service Unit 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, a business intelligence service, signposting to other support agencies, workshops, advice sessions, networking opportunities.



## Not Applicable

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This year, the Economic Development Section has worked to launch the new Enterprise Support Service which has now replaced the *Go For It* Programme. The new service now provides flexibility and joined up support for new and aspiring entrepreneurs and established business owners continued to deliver its support, as well as managing the delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan.

The team has worked in conjunction with colleagues across other NI Councils and across other service units to provide timely, crucial advice and support to assist businesses in navigating the issues associated with the cost-of-living crisis and other emerging issues.

This annual report, as in previous years, provides a summary overview of the elements of the support services provided to local businesses between April 2023-March 2024.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

### CONTENT

2023.24 KPIs	Target	Actual
One-to-One business Advice	100	102
Number of Research Assignments	75	105
Number of Jobs created through NIBSUP2	85	64
Number of Jobs created through GFI/NIESS Service	117	64
Number of Business Employees registered for Health and Wellbeing initiatives	24	35
Number of Surveys to identify needs and value of ED and Business support services	1	1
Number of Projects delivered in the LMP Action Plan	12	12

### **1. BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES - START-UP and GROWTH**

- 1.1 Business Advice Service
- 1.2 Business Research Service
- 1.3 Business Support Services – Information & Communication
- 1.4 Annual Business Survey

### **OTHER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES, SERVICES AND EVENTS**

2. Go Succeed
3. *Go For It* Programme (ended September 2023)
4. SHINE Programme
5. AND Social Enterprise Programme 2023-24 (ANDSEP)
6. Mind Body Business 2023-24
7. VITAL Programme
8. NI Apprenticeship Week 2024
9. Female Leadership Programme
10. Ards and North Down Labour Market Partnership

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

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### 1 Business Support Services

#### 1.1 Business Advice 2023-2024

From April 2023 - March 2024 businesses have sought the assistance of the business support team across a wide variety of topics. The assistance varied 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. Go Succeed, SHINE, Creativity Unleashed and Digital Programmes. The business advice service take up is as shown in the table below.

Service	No Clients / Projects Apr 23 - Mar 24	Target
<b>1-1 Business Advice Clinics</b>	102	100

#### 1.2 Business Research Service 2023-2024

The Business Research Service responded to a wide range of enquiries, relating to market intelligence and consumer trends, commercial property searches, and searches for potential sources of funding.

Frequent types of research requested from local businesses include the following:

- Assistance to identify sources of funding to start or grow the business.
- Business listings – identification of potential suppliers and customers (B2B).
- General business guidance (particularly for start-up businesses).
- Assistance to identify suitable commercial property and to encourage investment in the borough. The AND Business website includes a webpage dedicated to investment opportunities, which was updated to include a downloadable brochure detailing current investment and development opportunities in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Other research requests can cover a wide range of topics – examples within the last year have included research into sustainable clothing fabric, information on local and regional tourism events, and business tax queries. When the request is outside the Economic Development Team's area of expertise the Business Research Unit signposts to other bodies with the relevant expertise.

The business research service take up is shown in the table below.

Service	No Clients/Projects Apr 23-Mar 24	Target
<b>Business Research Service</b>	107	75

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

### 1.3 Business Support Services – Information & Communication 2023-2024

In addition to the Business Advice and Business 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.

<b>Information Service</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
<i>Fortnightly Business Newsletters</i>	<i>25 issued</i>
<i>Thematic Business Ezines</i>	<i>15 issued</i>
<i>Go Succeed Business Ezines (November 2023 onwards)</i>	<i>14 issued</i>
<i>AND Business Website</i> <a href="https://www.andbusiness.co.uk/">https://www.andbusiness.co.uk/</a>	<i>12,701 unique clicks during the year (up from 3,608 last year). Significant LMP Traffic on website Nine news articles added</i>

As of 31 March 2024, there are 1,443 subscribers to the online newsletter and email service (down from 1,535 in the previous financial year).

Registration to the ezine is encouraged when the ED team interacts with businesses and all events are also used to promote such registrations. The number of subscribers is subject to small variations around the 1,500 mark.

### 1.4 Annual Business Survey

The Economic Development Team conducts an Annual Business Survey, to gain insight and views of the local business community on current trading conditions and business needs, and what interventions the council might implement to support them. The survey was open from 15 June - 8 July 2023 and was promoted through a number of channels including via the email business newsletters. The headline findings from the survey results were as follows:

- **Important focus areas for businesses**
  - Marketing
  - Sales / e-commerce
  - Digitisation (inc. website development & social media)
  - Finance management
- **Preferred delivery methods for business support**
  - Networks (local small groups) - Developing social capital, encouraging collaboration partnership working, developing soft relationships
- **Highest rated support elements for starting / growing the business**
  - Starting a business - Ideas Generation & Value Proposition

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

- Growing a business - Growth Strategies & Strategic Leadership

The survey received a total of 76 responses from local businesses and assisted in shaping the programme of support for the 2023/24 financial year.

### 1.5 Business Support Services – Business Workshops

A total of four face to face workshops were delivered as follows.

No	Date	Title of Event	No registered	No Attended	Businesses Attended	% Overall Excellent Satisfaction/ Vgood
1	27 Sep 23	The Growth Imperative - Strengthening Conscious Leadership	10	9	7	100%
2	18 Oct 23	The Growth Imperative - Adapting to Change	8	4	4	100%
3	15 Nov 23	Innovation Masterclass	9	5	5	100%
4	5 Mar 24	Go Succeed Entrepreneurship Networking Event	37	29	25	95%

## Support Programmes and Events

### 2. Go Succeed – NI Enterprise Support Service



#### Background

As previously reported, the 11 NI Councils have been working collaboratively to develop a new service for business start and growth to replace the *Go For It* business start programme and to work on a collaborative bid for funding to support the service. With the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) replacing the EU funds in March 2023, SPF is managed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Councils were successful in receiving funding up to March 2025 with the potential for an additional 3 years to be confirmed.

#### Community Outreach

One element of Go Succeed is to roll out a Community Outreach Plan to engage and raise awareness of the services to targeted groups/areas:

- Females

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

- Persons with a disability
- Individuals who are economically inactive
- Students/graduates
- Minority/ethnic community
- Asylum seekers and refugees and
- Placed based interventions

Community Outreach activity for Year 1 included participation in the following events with the aim to raise awareness of **Go Succeed**.

Ref	Date	Event	Location	Participants
1	15.11.23	AND Innovation Masterclass	Ards Business Hub	4
2	21.11.23	DFFF Launch	Signal	12
3	05.12.23	Lets Grow Together Network	Market House, Bangor	9
4	12.12.23	Go-Succeed online launch	On-line	8
5	11.01.24	Women in Leadership Prog	SERC	10
6	07.02.24	Careers Convention	Aurora Bangor	212
7	08.02.24	South East YENI Trade Fair	Bloomfield Shopping Centre	32
8	28.02.24	Disability Employment Support Day	Signal Centre, Bangor	80
9	28.02.24	NDDO PSN - Female	NDDO	7
10	06.03.24	NDDO PSN - Female	NDDO	5
11	13.03.24	NDDO PSN - Female	NDDO	5
12	20.03.24	NDDO PSN - Female	NDDO	5
13	05.03.24	Go Succeed Networking Event	Strangford Arms Hotel	39
14	08.03.24	Bring IT On		5
15	12.03.24	Information Sharing Event	Signal Centre	8
16	21.03.24	Job Fair	ABMHWLC	290
			<b>Total</b>	<b>731</b>
		Go Succeed Target for year 1	<b>Exceeded</b>	<b>490</b>

### Go Succeed Entrepreneurship Networking Event

The Go Succeed Entrepreneurship Networking Event took place on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at Strangford Arms Hotel, Newtownards. Facilitated by Wendy Austin MBE the aim of the event was to raise awareness of the Go Succeed service amongst stakeholder groups and to prepare a Community Outreach Action Plan for 2024.

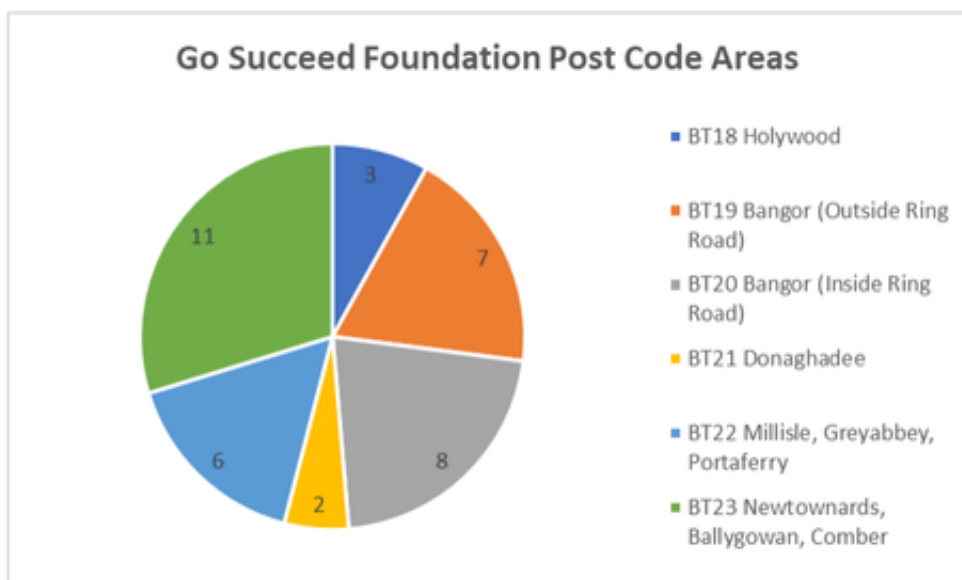
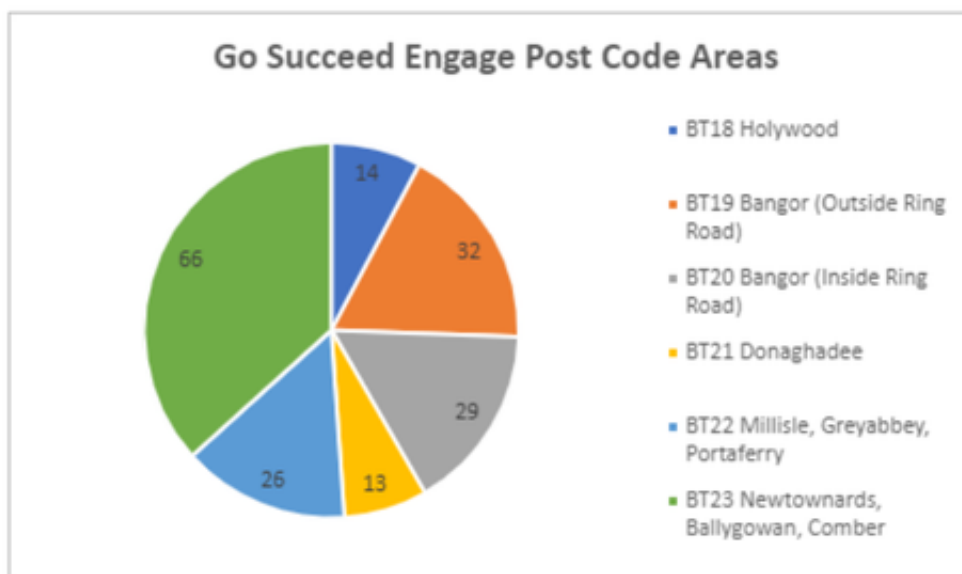
The event featured talks from the following speakers:

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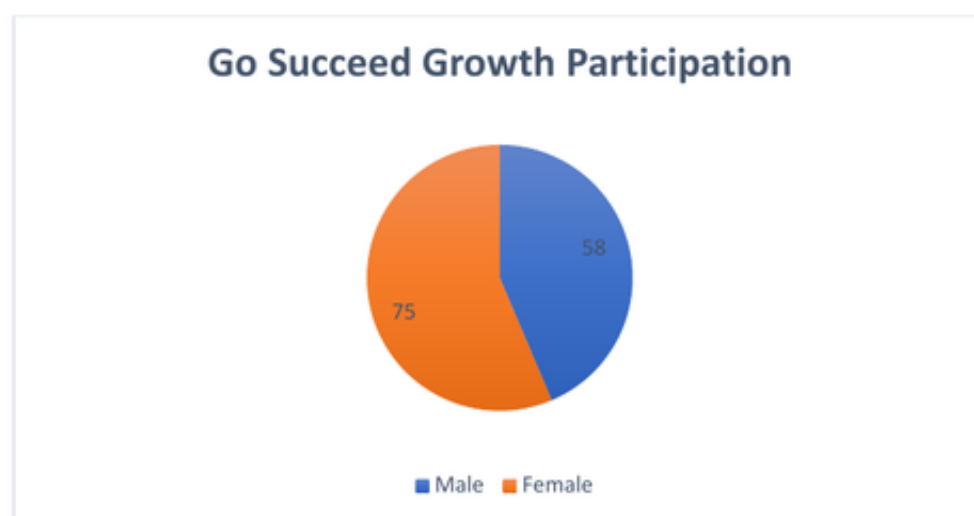
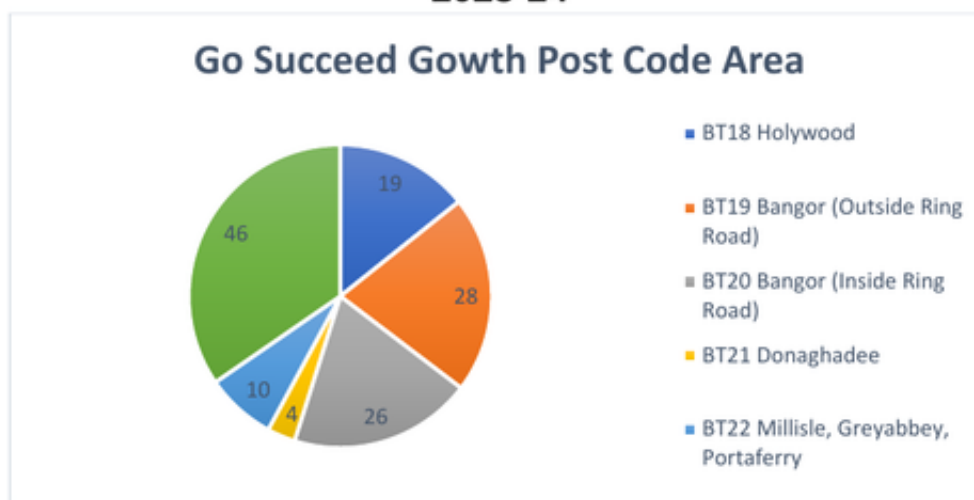
- Philip Bain, Director, ShredBank Ltd
- Jenny Potter, Regional Manager, NOW Group
- Mairead Moore, Director, Whytematter Staffing Solutions Ltd
- Matthew Gibson, Customer Service Manager, Gibson Plus Ltd

### Go Succeed Participation

The geographic spread and participation of the service in AND is summarised below.



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### 3. Go For It Programme

The *Go For It* Programme, predecessor to **Go Succeed** ended in September 2023. 64 jobs were created against a statutory target of 43 for the 6-month period April to September 2023.

As the Go Succeed service is only now getting embedded, at the time of reporting the jobs created figures are not available for Go Succeed. Further reports will be brought to Council as monitoring progresses. The *Go For It* figures will be added to the annual jobs created outcome when the data becomes available for Go Succeed

### 4. SHINE Programme

In September 2023 Ards and North Down Borough Council produced its Final External Evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Business Growth Programme, SHINE funded under the Local Economic Development – Measure 2 (LED) Investment for Growth & Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020). An external provider, Full



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Circle was commissioned in June 2023 and delivered report by September 2023.

SHINE started recruiting in February 2019 to run for four years. During the programme delivery, it had to contend with challenges of the COVID pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis. In 2020, after consulting with INI, it was decided to move the one-to-one mentoring online and host interactive workshops online, enabling the programme to continue but at a much slower pace due to these challenges.

Some targets were not met by the end of programme as the programme was run on the basis of best endeavours. A rigorous recruitment drive was carried out by telephone in addition to a marketing campaign on social media and council promotion channels. The ED section created an on-line expression of interest form and application, allowing potential participants to complete online. The SHINE Marketing Social Media Plan continued during the programme to drive recruitment with the aim to meet targets, however, the lack of participation during the COVID years, combined with the cost-of-living crisis meant that, despite a high level of participation in the last year of the programme, the target could not be met.

The table below gives an overview of project performance against the SHINE Programme objectives, with comments explaining the reasoning behind some of the variances against each objective:

Objective	Target	Actuals	Notes	%
1. At least 330 businesses to complete a business diagnostic by 31 March 2023	330	192	188 approved onto SHINE	58.1%
2. At least 70 businesses to be referred to relevant economic development support provided by stakeholders by 31 March 2023.	70	40	40 businesses referred to other ED support	57.1%
3. Deliver at least 6,250 hours of "one to one" mentoring to at least 330 participating businesses by 31 March 2023	6,250 330	3222 182	Hours Businesses	51.5% 55.1%
4. Deliver at least 24 half-day workshops by 31 March 2023 (with a minimum of 12 businesses participants per workshop).	24	24	-	100.0%
5. Work in partnership with stakeholders to minimise potential duplication of support for the target business base.	-	-	See commentary below	-

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6. Regular quarterly reports to be provided on programme activity up to 31 March 2023.	-	-	Completed	100.0%
7. Interim evaluation to be completed for programme activity undertaken during initial 18 months.	1	1	Completed	100.0%
8. A final independent programme evaluation report to be completed by 30 September 2023.	1	1	Completed	100.0%
9. The council shall use all reasonable endeavours to create at least 280 jobs above baseline by 31 December 2023.	280	171.8 202 - 212	Actual Reported Estimated Real Impact	61.4% 72.1% – 75.7%
10. The council shall use all reasonable endeavours to provide at least 30 quality referrals to Invest NI by 31 March 2023.	30	16	Invest NI accepted	54%

**Objective 1:** As per the Programme's Master / Delivery Spreadsheet, a total of 188 businesses completed a business diagnostic. Actual performance was below the KPI of 330 businesses to be recruited to the Programme by 31 March 2023 as a result of the reasons highlighted earlier (Covid 19 and cost of living crisis).

**Objective 2:** A total of 40 businesses received onward referrals to a total of 74 supports. This equates to 57% of the overall target for businesses to be referred.

**Objective 3:** A total of 3,222 mentoring hours were delivered to a total of 182 businesses (the remaining six businesses which completed the diagnostic process did not draw down any mentoring hours).

This equates to a total of 51.5% of the overall Programme Target.

When considering the number of businesses actually recruited (188), the highest level of delivery to be expected based on this number of businesses would have been in the region of 3,560 hours. This underlines the importance of prioritising recruitment as the lynchpin on which many other KPIs rest. The delivery agents achieved 90.5% of this proportionate 'target', which, when taking external factors such as Covid-19, individual business circumstances etc. into account represents reasonable endeavours on the part of the delivery agents to service those clients that were recruited.

**Objective 4:** A total of 24 half-day workshops and events were delivered by 31 March 2023 – all workshops/events exceeded the target of 12 business participants with the exception of two which were held online in May 2020, shortly after the onset of Covid-19.

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The average attendance at workshops was 18.6 attendees which is well above the minimum target. Workshop delivery on this programme was a particular strong point.

**Objective 5:** The SHINE Programme was written / designed by Council to have a natural place in the NI Business Support Eco-System and with a view to minimising duplication of support from other Economic Development Stakeholders. There was also a clear onward referrals system to further support built into the Programme which was clearly utilised as were additional linkages to the Local Enterprise Agencies delivering the *Go For It* Programme.

**Objective 6:** Regular quarterly reports to be provided on programme activity up to 31 March 2023, including progress towards key actions, key performance indicators, programme expenditure and claim profile. Regular quarterly reports were completed for the time periods up to 31 March 2023. These contained progress towards key actions, key performance indicators, programme expenditure and claim profile.

**Objective 7:** An interim evaluation of Programme Activity undertaken during the initial 18 months was completed by Council Officers with additional input from Brilliant Red and Directus (Mentoring and Marketing Delivery Agents). The report, whilst acknowledging that uptake for support on the Programme had been slower than anticipated, in part due to external factors such as Covid-19, recommended that the Programme Delivery should continue in line with the Letter of Offer.

**Objective 8:** A final independent programme evaluation report to be completed by 30 September 2023 measuring progress towards job creation target to be achieved by 31 December 2023 and quality referrals to Invest NI.

**Objective 9:** The job creation figure of 172 Full Time Equivalent Roles was obtained by combining monitoring data from two main sources.

**Objective 10:** The Programme Delivery Agents provided a list of 16 business referrals to Invest Northern Ireland. These 16 referrals were considered as "quality referrals", which means that these companies had the potential to become Invest NI clients. Invest NI accepted all 16 quality referrals.

### 5. ANDSEP - AND Social Entrepreneurship Programme 2023-24

The Social Entrepreneurship Programme (ANDSEP) delivered a best practice model that made a significant impact with participating Social Enterprises. A key element of the ANDSEP programme was the development of the Social Enterprise micro-business/SME leadership skills, knowledge and application through structured masterclasses, networking opportunities and 1:1 mentoring.

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Table below gives an overview of project performance against ANDSEP programme objectives:

Objective	Actuals
Minimum 140 mentoring hours undertaken (may be hybrid basis online and/or face to-face to meet client needs)	<b>Target Exceeded:</b>  170.25 hours of 1-1 mentoring delivered as follows:
Five themed masterclasses/networking opportunities delivered in person by subject experts	<b>Achieved</b> - 5 Masterclasses delivered with 49 attendees  Workshop 1: Embracing Social Value Workshop 2: Innovation and Creativity Workshop 3: Sustainability for Social Enterprises Workshop 4: Strategic Planning Workshop 5: Social Media  Feedback received from attendees at the above workshops was very positive and the number of attendees at each workshop, was evident that there was a preference for the online mode of delivery.
20 ANDSEP Mentoring Plans completed	19 mentoring plans completed  Mentoring was delivered in a wide range of areas to meet the individual needs of the clients on the programme including Measuring Social Impact, Business Modelling new proposals, Access to Finance, Business Strategy, Assistance with securing social investment and Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement
Signpost at least 10 businesses to other support providers	<b>Target Exceeded</b> 11 businesses signposted:
Facilitate the development of funding applications (combined total £100K)	<b>Target Exceeded:</b> £268K
Progress reports and monthly meetings with council representative	Meetings took place with the EDO, AEDO and EDM as follows: May 23, September 23, November 23 and January 24.
Create at least 5 jobs (best endeavours)	9 jobs created / sustained and 2 projected as a result of the programme which is very encouraging given the short-term nature of the support provided through the programme.
Follow up evaluation and final report completed.	Final Report and Evaluation Completed Key notes:  - 30% of clients (6/20) are in the top 30% deprived areas

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average SOA is 510 v 278 in Belfast City Council Programme which illustrates relative affluence of the area and explains low level of social enterprise start-up</li> <li>- 13/19 participant organisations are female-led reflecting overall social economy sector in Northern Ireland</li> <li>- ANDSEP participant awarded 'Best New Start Up' at SENI Awards</li> </ul>
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### 6. Mind Body Business 2023-24

Mind Body Business (MBB) is a joint initiative by the Public Health Agency and Ards and North Down Borough Council that aims to benefit local businesses and their employees, by providing initiatives that encourage employers to put "health" at the centre of their business agenda.

The Mind Body Business 2023-24 Programme offered a small grant of financial support, up to £250 (per business), to businesses based in Ards and North Down Borough who are interested in providing a workplace health and wellbeing initiative for their employees under the Take 5 Approach to Wellbeing.

35 businesses applied for the small grant of financial support, however only 26 of the businesses participated in the workplace health and wellbeing initiative and were provided the small grant to the value of up to £250. Out of the 26 businesses, a total of 1,098 employees benefited from various Health and Wellbeing Initiatives on offer through the Small Grant Scheme.

Mind, Body, Business programme of activities and outputs included:

Activities	Outputs												
To increase sign up to MBB by an additional 10 businesses by end March 2023	34 businesses signed up to MBB												
MBB website updated	Regularly updated with MBB activities and health and wellbeing promoted material												
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Webpage stats</th> <th style="text-align: center;">No of views</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Unique users</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mind Body Business</td> <td style="text-align: center;">329</td> <td style="text-align: center;">168</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workplace Health &amp; Wellbeing Initiative</td> <td style="text-align: center;">183</td> <td style="text-align: center;">87</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Health and Wellbeing</td> <td style="text-align: center;">35</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Webpage stats	No of views	Unique users	Mind Body Business	329	168	Workplace Health & Wellbeing Initiative	183	87	Health and Wellbeing	35	7
	Webpage stats	No of views	Unique users										
	Mind Body Business	329	168										
Workplace Health & Wellbeing Initiative	183	87											
Health and Wellbeing	35	7											
Regular MBB e-zines and emails to connect with businesses and promote activities and health messages.	6 ezine articles issued 260 unique clicks to MBB link												

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Survey undertaken to assess the needs of businesses and employees, to inform the MBB programme	Survey carried out in 2022-23. Following the success of the 2022-2023 scheme, as verified by evaluation by participating businesses, it was agreed to repeat the scheme in 2023-2024.
Distribution of employee health & wellbeing boxes for businesses.	9 provided
To provide a small grant of financial support for businesses to complete a wellbeing initiative within their business relating to the Take 5 Approach to Wellbeing	26 participated representing 1,098 employees
Additional support	Attended Job Fair on 21 <sup>st</sup> March 2024 at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex and distribute information around business support via MBB and literature to take back to businesses (no. of attendees: 266, 45 employers and 12 support organisations).

As part of the Grant Scheme, the Council encouraged businesses to use local providers and to use the services offered by the Business Researcher to avail of contact lists of local providers.

A small example of the types of funded activities businesses carried out included:

1	Staff completed 6 valuable weeks of team building through aerobic exercises (spinning/circuits)
2	We had a relaxation and well-being mind and body yoga evening
3	Fresh fruit daily for 8 weeks, Healthy Friday lunch x 4, 3 personal training sessions
4	Provided bottled water and fresh fruit and nuts. Also provided a chiropody session.
5	Provided fresh fruit daily for all staff
6	Swimming lessons
7	We did 2 healthy wellbeing lunches for staff and encouraged walking/exercise during lunch breaks by giving extra time.
8	Physical activity - Stepping Challenge and 5-a-side, Coffee and Connect events with refreshments and getting staff together to connect, Relaxing and rewinding in the wellbeing rooms with treatments, learn more about the wellbeing being offered in the college and external agencies and Mindfulness breathing techniques information session
9	Psychological Wellbeing in the Workplace Live 1 hour webinar on Developing Psychological Resilience

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	for World Mental Health Day - 10th October and recording for future use.
10	We ran a mood matters course provided by AWARE NI for our staff.
11	Coffee and planting morning for the staff. Planting flowers and trees and window boxes.
12	Healthy Breakfasts for all staff and lunch time chair yoga - over 4 weeks.
13	We had a staff wellbeing day.
14	Implemented a program to provide fresh fruit to our staff members regularly.

### 7. VITAL Programme

The **VITAL Programme (Vision, Innovation, Teamwork, Achievement and Leadership)** aimed to deliver a best practice model that will have a significant impact on participating enterprises.

VITAL was specially targeted at micro-business/SME enterprises that were registered and operating within the AND. A key element of the programme was the development of micro-business/SME enterprise leadership skills, knowledge and application through structured masterclass networking opportunities and 1:1 mentoring. In a post Covid and cost of living crisis era, it was expected that by developing VITAL competencies, business leaders would move their enterprises from survival to significance.

#### Project Objectives

The objectives of VITAL were to:

- Market the VITAL programme in AND to recruit 20 micro-businesses/SME Enterprises
- Support the development of a VITAL Mentoring Plan for each participating business
- Deliver five VITAL Masterclasses with networking opportunities
- Provide a minimum of 160 mentoring hours mentoring to support businesses
- Increase employment opportunities

#### Project outcomes:

Key deliverables	Targets	Outcomes
Recruitment	Recruitment of 20 micro businesses / SMEs	<b>23 companies were approved to participate on the programme</b> (1 withdrew following programme launch resulting in 22 companies completing the programme).
Baseline Audits	Audits delivered for all recruited companies	Baseline audits were developed for all participating companies as part of the application process.

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Provision of mentoring support	Ability to deliver 160 hours of mentoring by 31st October 2023	Legacy action plans have been developed for <b>all 22 companies</b> who completed the programme.
Masterclasses / Networking opportunities	Ability to deliver 5 effective workshops and networking opportunities by subject experts	5 effective workshops were delivered during the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>
Job creation	Ability to create 5 jobs as a result of the VITAL programme	To date <b>8 jobs have been created</b> by participating companies and <b>159.5 have been sustained</b> . (For reporting purposes a part time staff member is recorded as 0.5 FTE)
Signposting	Signpost at least 10 businesses to other support providers	All 22 participating companies on the programme have had access to signposting through the workshops, mentoring and other identified opportunities emailed to them.

### 8. NI Apprenticeship Week 2024

Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week 2024 was held from 5 – 10 February 2024. 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 the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) and the Council.

The project's objective was to produce a promotional video and animated images showcasing Cyber Security and All Age Apprenticeship support schemes. The project, co-ordinated by the ED team, provided the following:

- 1x 3-minute promotional video with 2 - 4 short social media videos and 1x 1-minute Motion Graphics animation. The focus highlighted Cyber Security Apprenticeship Scheme delivered by SERC, using a mixture of filmed interviews, B-roll, stock footage and motion graphics



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- The All-Age Apprenticeship focused on the aspect of Apprenticeships, showcasing the opportunities on offer using animated images and content provided by Apprenticeships Development and Marketing Branch Department for the Economy.

The videos were promoted during the NI Apprenticeship week 5 – 10 February 2024 as a route to employment, focusing on awareness of both schemes for employers on the Cyber Security video and the All-Age Apprenticeship. Placed on many different platforms and marketing, i.e. press, social media, council's Facebook, X (formerly twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn, each shared and tagged on DfE and SERC social media platforms, Council's website page and issue of ezines.

The Council issued an ezine to our database of approximately 1500 local businesses during NI Apprenticeship Week featuring #NIAW2024 with links to council webpage detailing the DfE apprenticeship schemes and SERC courses. A press release was issued week prior to NIAW to promote all activities offered by DfE, SERC and the Council promotional online videos.

### Media analytics

<b>Ezine promotion:</b>
17 Jan – General ezine, open rate 37%. 9 Clicks, 3 unique clicks
5 Feb – Stand-alone NIAW ezine, open rate 36, 48 clicks, 29 unique clicks
8 Feb – general ezine, open rate 29.5%, 19 clicks, 9 unique clicks.
<b>Press Coverage</b>
In the week prior to #NIAW2024, two press release articles placed in Ards Chronicle and Bangor Spectator promoting #NIAW2024, all apprenticeships schemes and upcoming events.
<b>Social Media Promotion</b>
Social Media Insights for messages shared on ANDBC channels in February 2024:
17 posts were shared across ANDBC social media channels. This included both picture and video posts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 Facebook posts</li> <li>• 3 Instagram posts</li> <li>• 3 tweets</li> <li>• 2 LinkedIn Posts</li> </ul>

### 9. Female Leadership Programme (FLP) 2023-24

This year's FLP programme provided the opportunity for women business owners and/or nominated female employees and entrepreneurs the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence to become future leaders by offering participants the following:

- one-to-one mentoring
- an accreditation in leadership and management
- participation in two networking events

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The Programme's aim was for female business owners, employees and entrepreneurs to become leaders and managers by learning new techniques to help address many of the barriers that women must overcome to pursue their ambitions in leadership and management roles.

### Key Performance Indicators:

<p>Brand and market the Female Business Support and Accredited Training Leadership Programme 2022-23 in the Ards and North Down.</p>	<p>Unique landing page was created on the Ards and North Down Borough Council's website: <a href="#">Female Leadership Programme   AND Business</a></p> <p>Photo launch with press release issued to local press including The County Spectator and Newtownards Chronicle.</p> <p>Interviews with 2 students who completed the 'Women in Leadership' programme 22/23.</p> <p>Organic social media on all council and SERC Facebook, LinkedIn, twitter pages.</p>
<p>Recruit <b>30 female</b> business owners and/or nominated female employees and entrepreneurs</p>	<p>In total 30 Women from the Ards and North Down council area were recruited onto this course bringing with them a diverse range of skills, knowledge, and experience to the Female Leadership programme. Over the 3 cohorts, SERC provided learning and mentoring to two Business Owners, eight Employees, two Entrepreneurs, six Self-employed individuals, two Directors, two Operations Managers and one Practice Manager.</p> <p>From this pool of successful businesswomen who entered the qualification, they came from a varied background which included a Jewellery Designer, Beauticians, Office Manager, Recruitment Specialist, Head of Policy, Funeral Director, Scientist, HR Manager, Graphic Designer, Directors and Manager of an Arts and Heritage Museum.</p>
<p>Provide 5 hours of one-to-one mentoring to each participating company/individuals to address business needs and their challenges. The number of places was restricted to two per company</p>	<p>Mentors were matched with mentees based on needs assessed at the networking and training stages. Each participant received 5 hours on 1:1 mentoring, 150 mentoring hours has been completed.</p>
<p>Provide an approved and recognised accredited training Leadership &amp;</p>	<p>Level 5 - This programme was delivered from 18th January 2024 – 7th March 2024 online</p>

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

<p>Management qualification between level 3 and 5, this should be split 50/50 between levels</p>	<p>via MS Teams. 14 completed                  Level 5 – The second programme delivered in this qualification was from 30th January- 12th March 2024 online via MS Teams.                  10 completed                  Level 7 - This programme was delivered from 9th January – 26th March 2024 online via MS Teams.                  6 completed the learning</p>
<p>Provide two networking events pre and post qualification</p>	<p>Network event 1 “Engage and Collaborate” delivered 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 10 participants attended                  Network event 2 “Next steps on your journey” delivered 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 8 participants attended</p>
<p>Follow up with end of programme evaluation (contract complete date) and a post project report (+6 months after contract complete).</p>	<p>A plan is in place to deliver the required impact reporting with all participants by end of September 2024. This will assess the ‘distance travelled’ and assessment of how the programme has impacted on job creation, confidence, and other outcomes.</p>

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

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### 10. Ards and North Down Labour Market Partnership 2023-24

Ards and North Down Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was established on 17 August 2021. The 2023-24 Action Plan was developed to follow the achievements of the 2021-23 Action Plan and was approved by Council and the Department for Communities. Council provides the secretariat to the LMP.

#### **Structure:**

##### ***LMP Members and Sub-committees***

Membership of the LMP consists of around 30 members from sectoral bodies, voluntary and community organisations and Council representatives.

The two subcommittees relate to the themes within the 2023-24 Action Plan. The four themes are as follows:

- **Theme 1** – Economic inactivity
- **Theme 2** – Youth unemployment
- **Theme 3** – Disability
- **Theme 4** – Skill and labour supply

The subcommittees report back to the full LMP.

#### **AND LMP Action Plan 2023-2024 Launch:**

The Launch of the 2023-2024 Action Plan took place in the Chamber in the City Hall, Bangor from 9:30am -11am on the 23 November 2023. The Mayor, senior Economic Development staff, LMP Members, representatives from DfC were in attendance, along with past participants, employers and Delivery Agents. In total 31 people attended. Photos were taken at the event and a press release went out shortly after the event.

#### **Training of LMP Members:**

OBA training was organised through DfC's Learning and Development unit, this was an online course and had been sent out to members email addresses. Code of Conduct training also took place on the 16 January 2024 at the City Hall. An e-learning course was hoped to be developed before the end of March however a delay in the procurement of the new Council's elearning platform has postponed this.

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

### *AND Labour Market Partnership 2023-24 Action Plan*

#### Thematic Group 1 – Economic inactivity

##### **Rapid Response Academies:**

After quite a few attempts to get a delivery agent, the Partnership took a vote on these academies, and it was decided to run an additional Classroom assistant academy due to the number of Expression of Interests received by the LMP. The Academy went out to quotation and People 1<sup>st</sup> were awarded the contract.

- 22 candidates were selected.
- The employment workshop has been delivered along with the Safeguarding and Child Protection accredited element training.
- The Pediatric First Aid took place on the 2 May 2024.
- So far 3 candidates have moved into employment.

This academy has been approved for an accrual into 2024-25 financial year.

##### **Enterprise Readiness Programme:**

The Partnership decided to redistribute these funds as this programme overlapped too much with SPF and the Engage element of Go Succeed. The Action Plan was written and agreed before SPF and Go Succeed were finalised. A change request was approved by DfC on the 17 November 2023. These funds were redistributed towards the Transport Academy, the Academy for People with Disabilities and the Employer-Led Upskilling Programme.

#### Thematic Group 2 – Youth unemployment

##### **Videos for schools:**

12 videos were produced featuring different sectors and employers across the borough to highlight routes to employment and opportunities that are available within various sectors. These videos have been distributed to the 13 post primary schools/education providers across the Borough.

The data on views of the videos are summarised in the LMP Update Report June 2024.

#### Thematic Group 3 – Disability

##### **Academy for People with Disabilities:**

This tender was awarded to the NOW Group and all 33 participants for this academy were recruited.

Academies that have been undertaken are:

- Customer Service
- Employability

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

- Catering and Hospitality (including a Pizza Academy)

Currently 27 participants have completed the Academy (82%) with another 2 participants requiring additional support, although the academy has finished these 2 participants will continue to be supported.

11 participants have moved into employment (41%) and are currently receiving salaries totalling £103,439.52 per annum. Another 10 participants are in placements and are being supported to search for jobs along with the remaining participants. Jobs and outcomes will continue to be monitored.

### Academy for People with Disabilities Job Outcomes\*

Sector	ROLE	SALARY	BENEFITS	GENDER	AGE RANGE
Health and Social Care	Care Asst. p/t	£5,501.76	NONE	MALE	25-45
Education	Cleaner p/t	£6,666.00	UNKNOWN	FEMALE	25-45
Education	Cleaner p/t	£6,666.00	PIP	FEMALE	46-65
Food Retail	Baking Asst. p/t	£3,715.20	PIP	FEMALE	16-24
Retail	Customer Asst PT	£12,504.00	NONE	MALE	16-24
Education	Bus Escort P/T	£7,999.20	PIP AND ESA	FEMALE	25-45
Education	Cleaner p/t	£4,266.24	PIP AND ESA	MALE	25-45
Hygiene Services	Driver FT	£21,120.00	UNKNOWN	MALE	25-45
Health and Social Care	Support Worker FT	£10,243.20	PIP AND ESA	FEMALE	16-24
Retail	General Asst.	£18,756.00	PIP AND ESA	MALE	16-24
Hospitality	General Assistant	£6,001.92	PIP AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT	MALE	16-24
	TOTAL	<b>£103,439.52</b>			
<b>8 part-time 3 full time</b>	AVERAGE	<b>£9,403.59</b>		<b>6 MALE 5 FEMALE</b>	

\*Jobs will also be tracked for 6 months to obtain a sustainment rate.

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### Thematic Group 4 – Skill and Labour Supply

#### **Transport Academy:**

The tender for the Transport Academy was awarded to DFPP (People 1<sup>st</sup> and Hendersons).

All 66 participants went through a recruitment and selection process and were notified of their selection onto the programme.

As of the 30 April 24 the progress of this Academy is listed below:

#### 66 Participants:

- Awaiting Licence/Further Information – 1 candidate
- Theory Stage (3 part) – 18 candidates
- Practical Stage (2 part) – 31 candidates
- Complete Training – 16 candidates
- 13 Candidates now in employment

This academy has been approved for an accrual into the 24-25 financial year and jobs and outcomes will continue to be monitored.

#### **Academies:**

The Classroom Assistant/ Early Years Academy Cohort 1 is performing as planned.

Two workshops have been undertaken and so far, 13 participants have passed the Safeguarding and Child Protection accredited training element. 14 participants have passed the Paediatric First Aid. CV work and interviews skills has all been done and the candidates are now looking for placements/ jobs, once in a placement/ job they will undertake their OCNNI Level 3 in working with children with special needs. So far one candidate has moved into employment. Half term break in February and the early Easter holidays have delayed this academy.

This academy has been approved for an accrual into the 24-25 financial year and jobs and outcomes will continue to be monitored.

#### **Employer Led Upskilling Programme:**

The scheme opened on the 10<sup>th</sup> November and closed on the 27<sup>th</sup> November.

- 13 companies applied
- 11 companies were awarded funding.

A second round opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> December and closed on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

- 4 companies applied
- 2 were awarded funding.

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

From the 13 companies who were successful:

- 11 completed their training and were awarded their grants.
- 37 staff in total benefitted from the training grants
- 16 gained a qualification.

Additional industry related training was also organised to utilize the funding:

- 3 one-day **Level 3 First Aid at Work** courses were organised.
- 30 people in total attended the training,
- 30 people received a qualification.
- **Level 2 Food Safety** training was organised
- 14 people attended
- 14 people received a qualification
- **QuickBooks training** was also organised
- 10 people attended. This course did not offer a qualification.

In total:

- 54 people and 28 companies benefitted from the additional training
- 44 people gaining a qualification.

This year a Hospitality Academy was unable to be facilitated however the additional training the LMP secretariat organised was utilised by hospitality businesses.

In total 16 hospitality/ tourism companies sent 35 staff to the Level 2 Food Safety training and the Level 3 First Aid at Work courses.

### Theme- Increased Awareness

#### Careers Convention:

The Careers Convention took place on the 7 February 2024 in Aurora Aquatic Leisure Complex, Bangor. Paid online marketing as well as adverts in the papers and a Press release were developed along with poster and flyers which were widely distributed.

The targets associated with the Careers Convention were 20 exhibitors and 120 attendees. In total 29 exhibitors registered, and 212 people attended. A feedback survey was done on exiting the event and 90% of attendees rated it very good/ excellent.

A feedback survey was sent to the exhibitors and 24 have responded so far. Out of the 24 who responded all 24 exhibitors rated the event as good or above. 12 out of the 24 reported that the event would assist in filling vacancies. A further survey will be conducted 6-month post event.



## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

### Disability Employment and Support Day:

This was an additional event which was identified by a need to support individuals, carers or guardians of those with a disability or neurodiverse condition.

The event was held in the Signal Centre on the 28 February 2024, with 12 support organisations exhibiting.

In total 95 people attended of whom 8 were employers.

35 exit questionnaires were completed and all of them rated the event as 3 and above. From the exit survey 93% felt more informed about the opportunities and support available in Ards and North Down.

From the exhibitors' survey, the LMP was informed that 11 participants had signed up to the programmes available on the day.

The LMP Secretariat also received some complimentary comments and emails post event. A further survey will be sent out 6 months post event.

### Job Fair:

The Job Fair took place on the 21 March 2024 in Ards Blair Mayne Leisure and Wellbeing Complex. (See LMP Update Report June 2024 for details)

### PR Campaign:

The PR Campaign was launched on the 11 March and was about showcasing the successes achieved. The message was "I retrained/ I upskilled to get my dream job- You Can Too!". (See LMP Update Report June 2024 for details)

### Summary of outcomes (2023-24 LMP Plan)

Activities	Target	Actual Numbers of attendees/participants
Events such as Careers Convention, Job Fair and the Disability Employment and Support Day	270	573
Participants in activities and programmes	197	236
Employers engaged with across all programmes	64	162
Support Organisations engaged with	10	34
Employment	87	33 (3 academies are being accrued into 24-25) job

## Appendix 1: Economic Development Annual Activity Summary Report 2023-24

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		creation numbers will be confirmed at a later date.
<b>New qualification</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>136 (3 academies are being accrued into 24-25). Final figures will be confirmed at a later date.</b>

### Action Plan for 2024-25

A Consultant was appointed in early January 2024 and a three-year Strategic Assessment was undertaken. This involved a "Turning the Curve" exercise with LMP Members and Council Officers. The 2024-25 Action Plan was agreed by the Partnership and submitted by the February deadline to DfC and a presentation in person to the Regional LMP was undertaken in March 2024.

The LMP Secretariat are waiting for a Letter of Offer to secure the budget to be able to progress with the delivery of the Action Plan during the financial year 2024-25.

Unclassified

## ITEM 9

### Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	23 May 2024
File Reference	TO/MAR4/160127
Legislation	The Local Government Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Q4 Tourism Report 2023/24
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 in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

Not Applicable

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The Council's 18 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 half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for Q4 October 2023 – March 2024 is attached.

### Key points to note:

- Staffing vacancies which were advertised during this period have been successfully recruited in both the Tourism and Events service.
- Implementation of Joint Advisory Groups pre each Tourism Event was a new working model throughout 2023.
- No event or part event cancellations – weatherproofing key aspects of events remains a focus.
- Return to higher level of 'out of borough' visitors, especially out of NI post-Covid at events/experiences has not returned to pre-Covid levels. Also, collecting data from 3<sup>rd</sup> party event operators has not returned results as anticipated.
- Spend at events is lower likely due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Food and Drink meet the buyer event is rescheduled to autumn 2024.
- One grant aided event was cancelled reducing overall attendee numbers.

### Key achievements:

- Launch of Growth Event Fund.
- Digital communications channels are critical to promoting the borough as an appealing visitor destination by growing audience reach. During this period web traffic to the visitardsandnorthdown.com website increased by an exceptional 127% to 272k users and the visitAND social media audience increased by 36% with over 10k followers. Growth is stimulated by the creation of engaging content which showcases the tourism offering across the borough.
- A series of promotional campaigns were delivered including two destination campaigns, experience and Food Festival campaigns. These delivered growth in website traffic and followers.
- Waste service has reported 0% contamination in waste collected at Tourism events where model was successfully applied.
- Tourism Development's successful collaboration with Parks service to deliver Chilli Fest 2023 which welcomed circa 6,000 attendees over the two days.
- 20 Food and Drink Network Members, supported by Council, achieving 90 awards at national/international food and drink awards.

Not Applicable

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**Emerging issues:**

- New models/systems of gathering data from 3<sup>rd</sup> party operators to be explored.
- Tourism NI (TNI) forecasts cost-of-living crisis will continue to impact NI/ROI market in summer 2024.
- Cost implications of additional health and safety and signage requirements at events for future budget planning.

**Action to be taken:**

- Monitor funding options to support events and project spend accordingly with new considerations factored into each event at budget planning stage for 25/26.
- Complete all outstanding staff appraisals end of June.
- Monitor Tourism NI consumer sentiment for change in propensity to spend/travel – May 2024 data and forward.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note this report.














Not Applicable

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## Half yearly Performance Report - Tourism




















Generated on: 23 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Number of visitor servicing outreach activities	17	15
	% spend against budget	97.7%	100%
	Event Grant Programme cost per attendee	£4.18	£1.10
	Market Research Plan implemented at key tourism events	1	1
	Creation of 3 year Events programme with aligned procurement	1	1
	Development and delivery of High Tier Grant Scheme	1	1
	% customer satisfaction at events	82%	85%
	% staff attendance	97.99%	93%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	76%	100%
	% staff receiving team briefings	100%	100%
	No of event organisers and volunteers receiving support/training (cumulative)	57	40
	Increase VAND social media audience by 10% annually	36%	10%
	Borough Marketing Strategy - No of PR pieces	30	10

Not Applicable

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Review of Borough Marketing and Communications Strategy outputs	1	1
	VAND web platform - 1 technical enhancement initiative	1	1
	% increase in Visit Strangford Lough social media	13%	5%
	No. of Experience Walks and Tours (cumulative)	13	14
	% of Out of Borough sales of bookable Experiences	60%	50%
	% of Out of Borough sales of AND Experience Walks and Tours	33%	50%
	% of Out of Borough sales of Food Tours/Showcases	23%	33%
	Number of new bookable AND Experiences	8	8
	No of Taste of AND Food Tours/Showcases (cumulative)	4	4
	Tour Operators - Delivery of in person and virtual familiarisation tours (cumulative)	6	4
	Number of attendees to grant assisted events	58,303	63,880
	Number of Tourism and Food and Drink Clusters/Networks supported	3	3
	Average engagement rates from e-zine to tourism trade and consumer database	43%	30%
	Management of Open House Contract - monitoring of SLA	100%	100%
	% of Out of Borough Visitors attending events	20%	25%
	% of Ex NI Visitors attending events	1%	2%
	Event Visitor spend per attendee	£9.01	£12.00
	Number of attendees at Tourism events (cumulative)	78,700	75,000
	Development of food and drink meet the buyer event	0	1

Not Applicable

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Attendance at National/International food and drink shows to promote AND food and drink	4	2
	Delivery of online maps (screen and food and drink)	3	2



Not Applicable

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	07 May 2024
File Reference	TO/EV67
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 - Tranche 1 Update Report
Attachments	Appendix 1 - AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 Summary

**Background**

In October 2022, Council approved the delivery of the new Events and Festivals Fund, a merge between Community and Tourism Events grants, a recommended action of the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2012-2026 (BESD).

Tranche 1 of the Events and Festivals Fund 2023/24 for events taking place from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, opened on 9 January 2023 and closed on 1 February 2023. Tranche 2 is reported to the Community and Wellbeing Committee and to the Department for Communities in line with the required monitoring and evaluation process.

Council approved a report detailing the awards for Tranche 1 2023/24, supporting 12 applications in March 2023.

Not Applicable

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Out of the 12 successful applications, 8 were administered by the Tourism Team and the remaining 4 by the Community Development Team. This breakdown was based on the Applicant response to the first question within the application form – if the primary aim of the event was to either encourage attendees to the event and enhance local economic benefit OR promote community cohesion/social inclusion.

### **Final budget**

Council approved Tranche 1 Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 awards to the value of £135,806 in March 2023. Due to event cancellations and some events not drawing down the full amount, the actual amount drawn down by applicants was £120,681.04. The underspend was utilised across the overall Events service budget.

- Ards Peninsula Kite Festival's actual eligible expenditure was less than its original grant offer. Therefore, the grant paid out was reduced accordingly.
- The World Darts Federation Grand Prix was cancelled by the Event Organiser.

Appendix 1 summarises the events supported through Tranche 1 with approved awards, plus targets contained within the Letters of Offer, and the applicants' post event evaluation figures.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the report.

## Events Grants Summary 2023/24

Organiser	Name of Event	Event Date	Funding request	Grant		Attendees	
				Award	Paid Out	Projected	Actual
Comber Regeneration Community Partnership	Comber Fringe Festival	1/6 – 5/9/23	£19,808	£14,856	£14,856	12,000	10,500
Bangor Swimming Club	Bangor Summer Sizzler Open Swim Meet	4-5/6/23	£5,560	£4,245	£4,245	600	800
Ards Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann	Columbanus Community Folk Festival	4-11/6/23	£10,000	£7,500	£7,500	2,100	2,100
Donaghadee Community Development Association	Donaghadee Summer Festival	24/6 – 27/8/23	£17,500	£13,125	£13,125	17,500	15,250
Open House Festival	Music in the Park	Sundays in July and August	£20,000	£15,000	£15,000	31,377	26,500
Portaferry Gala Festival	Portaferry Gala Fest	15-31/7/23	£20,000	£15,000	£15,000	24,000	9,600
Emerald Isle Highland Dancing Festival Committee	Emerald Isle Highland Dancing Festival	29-31/7/23	£10,000	£7,500	£7,500	1,000	1,260
Camerata Ireland	Clandeboyne Festival	19-26/8/23	£8,256	£6,192	£6,192	1,230	1,417
Culloden Estate and Spa	Art and Soul 23	19/8 – 9/9/23	£19,900	£14,925	£14,925	18,000	18,323
Ards Peninsula Village Partnership	Ards Peninsula Kite Festival	28/8/23	£9,950	£7,463	£7,338.04	5,000	7,000
Ultimate Strongman Productions	WDF Grand Prix	November 2023	£20,000	£15,000	0	3,500	0
Portico of Ards Ltd	Feel Good Festival	2-9/3/24	£20,000	£15,000	£15,000	1,100	786
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£181,074</b>	<b>£135,806</b>	<b>£120,681.04</b>	<b>117,407</b>	<b>93,536</b>

**Yellow** – grant administered by Community Development Team

**Blue** – grant administered by Tourism Events Team

**Red** – cancelled event

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	17 May 2024
File Reference	TO/EV121
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Annual Tourism Events Programme Evaluation Report 2023
Attachments	Appendix 1 Tourism Events 2023 Evaluation Summary Appendix 2 - Tourism Events Programme 2024

**Background**

In February 2023, Council agreed the following Tourism Events programme as part of the Rates setting process:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date (2023)</b>	<b>Budget</b>
May Day, Holywood	Monday 1 May	£10,000
Sea Bangor	Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 June	£75,000
Summer Food Festival including Comber Earlies Food Festival (Saturday 24 June)	Monday 20 June – Sunday 3 July	£65,000
Ards and North Down Pipeband Championships, Ards Airfield	Saturday 22 July	£33,850

Not Applicable

Autumn Food Festival incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (Saturday 2 September)	Saturday 10 September – 25 September	£65,000
Bangor Switch On	Saturday 18 November	£15,000
Newtownards Switch On	Saturday 25 November	£15,000
		£278,850

This report presents an evaluation of the seven events delivered in the period from May to November 2023. The 2023 Tourism Events Programme delivered a total of 78,700 attendees against a target of 75,000. An additional 6,400 attendees were recorded at collaborative and experiential events during the two seasonal Food Festivals.

Market research was undertaken at each of the tourism events. Three events had market research undertaken by the in-house team (May Day and the two Switch On events). Sample sizes for each event ranged from 120-266 surveys. Results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary is included in Appendix 1.

### **May Day – Monday 1 May 2023**

Working in partnership with Holywood and District Community Council (HDCC), the event's programme followed the traditional format. Community elements were delivered by HDCC including the Bonnie Baby and fancy-dress competitions, the crowning of the May Queen, recruitment of charity stalls and bouncy castles in the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church and two maypole dancing sessions. These were, as always, a very popular attraction with many spectators.

All commercial stalls were set up in the car parks on Hibernia Street. This was a larger area than 2022 incorporating 32 stalls spread over the two car parks. Additional entertainment based at this market area created a festival atmosphere with the extra space allowing a large seating area and 'Art on the Rails' hosting 30 stalls along Church Street.

#### *Challenges and observations*

- Reliance on gazebos – no alternatives are possible for May Day as over 70 traders/exhibitors are in attendance – meaning the event is at risk during weather events.
- More signage required at Hibernia Street car park to direct attendees to both sites.
- Several shops in the town chose not to open on the public holiday.

#### *Successes*

- Recycling stations – the new initiative of manning the recycling stations with cleansing staff resulted in zero contamination across the event bins.

Not Applicable

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- Use of Hibernia Street car park and 'Arts on the Rails' were deemed successful as a new layout.

### **Ards and North Down Pipe Band Championships – Saturday 22 July 2023**

The Royal Scottish Pipeband Association Northern Ireland (RSPBANI) Pipe Band Championships were held at Ards Airfield with a total of 34 bands in attendance. Due to the weather forecast and an imminent major competition, grade one bands withdrew from the competition the day before the event. A Park and Ride service was successfully operated between the site and Newtownards Town Centre.

#### *Challenges and observations*

- Cost – the hire charge for the Airfield was significantly higher than previous years or projected at budget planning.
- Traffic Management is challenging at the Comber Road entry for pedestrian access.
- Unfortunately, a sudden death of a competition participant occurred during the event. All partners responded in a coordinated approach to the incident. However, it highlighted the need for more robust procedures for event organisers for this type of rare occurrence. Officers have now implemented procedures which can be put in place for future events.
- RSPBANI feedback from competitors to officers after the event stated that some members, in their view, thought the airfield site was too large and fully open which provided them with very little shelter.

#### *Successes*

- Partnership working with RSPBANI
- Recycling stations – the cleansing team manned the recycling stations and sorted 480 kg of dry recycling waste and 560 kg of organic waste at the event with only 16 kg of landfill waste. Another event with zero cross contamination and just over a tonne of waste diverted from landfill.
- Shuttle bus into Newtownards ran throughout the day. The uptake was good resulting in many of the attendees going into the town to shop.

### **Sea Bangor – 3 and 4 June 2023**

An event with very favourable weather throughout, the footprint of this event worked well using a mixture of stretch tents and self-contained trucks which provided weather mitigation. It is proposed a similar layout will be implemented in future years.

A range of food stalls lined Eisenhower Pier with an artisan bar at the far end, encouraging attendees to relax and spend the day increasing dwell time in Bangor. The addition of the military ship, HMS Penzance, was a highlight and was complemented by on-water activities and the rowing races. The family 'rave' was a new and popular addition to the programme and worked well alongside the urban beach.

Not Applicable

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For note, party composition for families has grown from 38% in 2022 to 65% in 2023, age profile 35-44 has grown from 20% in 2022 to 34% in 2023 but spend at the event decreased from 91% to 55% in 2023. Average dwell time reduced per attendee from 2-3 hours to 1-2 hours although overall total spend increased.

#### *Challenges and observations*

- Communication around the recycling station message for bins was acknowledged as not being as effective as required for an event of this scale.
- HMS Penzance closed on Sunday for operational reasons meaning attendees could not board but remained berthed in the harbour. The reserves vehicle remained onsite.

#### *Successes*

- HMS Penzance – Ticketing was a successful model to manage attendees.
- Recycling – The cleansing team at the event was praised for its efforts and another event with zero cross contamination with 4 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill.
- Site was cleared and Quay Street carpark was reopened a day earlier than scheduled.
- Rowing Competition was welcomed back and well received by attendees and participants.

### **Summer TASTE Food Festival 20 June – 3 July Incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival – 25 June 2023**

A series of small-scale experiential events delivered by operators and supported by the Tourism team were part of the overall Food Festival. The campaign for the festival delivered 1.3 million digital impressions across coverage on VisitAND channels.

The 2023 festival, after extensive consultation, moved to Comber Leisure Centre car park. This enabled set-up to take place the day before the event and allowed the use of chalets which enabled the event to be 'weather proofed'. Meeting necessary criteria with new programming, the event was successful in securing a NI Regional Food Programme grant at £9,022.

Commentary and advice from members of the stakeholder working group suggested refocussing on the event's authenticity i.e. the PGI status potato and artisan food. To this end, a Producers' tent was added allowing local producers to showcase their produce, this being hosted by Lottie Duncan, a well renowned food podcaster. A podcast of the day has been broadcast. SERC ran a 'Cookery School', showing the best and innovative ways to cook with Comber Earlies.

Other new elements were added on the larger site, including a music stage. The artisan bar returned to the event and was well received, both in terms of numbers



## Not Applicable

attending and feedback from traders. Local suppliers and McBrides on the Square worked with Indie Fūde offering a selection of paired local beers with cheeses. Paula McIntyre was the celebrity chef for the event, supported by SERC, who cooked a range of different dishes featuring Comber Earlies, available to sample by attendees. Anecdotally, it is thought that the addition of new elements hosted at the site increased average dwell time stay to 2-3 hours.

The event was blessed with good weather and record numbers of 11,000 were recorded at the new event location.

The average dwell time of 2-3 hours per attendee increased from 32% in 2022 to 42% in 2023. Overall spend at the event increased by 45% in 2023 compared to 2022.

*Challenges and observations*

- Traffic Management – while the new location worked well for attendees, it is acknowledged there were issues regarding traffic management in the town.
- Some traders on Bridge Link experienced some difficulties with deliveries and use of their parking spaces. Officers met with this group and have agreed preventative measures.
- Some residents in Bridge Street were unclear about the road closure arrangements. A letter has now been issued outlining plans for the 2024 event.
- The car park closed from Thursday afternoon set up meaning displaced parking was required. The additional car parking will be arranged and clearly signposted for 2024.

*Successes*

- Partnerships with local businesses.
- Introduction of a producer stage at the new site.
- Increased dwell time.

### **Autumn TASTE Food Festival 10-25 September 2023 Incorporating Tide and Turf Festival, Portavogie - Saturday 2 September**

A series of small-scale experiential events delivered by operators and supported by the Tourism team, two key shoulder events of Tide and Turf and a new collaborative Parks led Chilli Fest event in the Walled Garden were part of the overall Food Festival. The event successfully secured £8,800 from the NI Regional Food Programme.

*Stargazing at Burr Point – Thursday 31 August*

This popular event is organised in conjunction with The Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society (NIAAS). 100 tickets were sold, however due to forecasted poor visibility, the decision was taken to move the event to the following night which unfortunately resulted in some attendees seeking refunds. Transport was provided by bus from Millisle car park to alleviate car parking issues, creating a more

Not Applicable

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sustainable event. Volunteers from NIAAS set up 8 telescopes and offered customers instruction on how best to view the planets. The ticket price included hot chocolate and smores from local companies 'Hotties Chocolate' and Mallow Makers.

#### *Dine at the Dock Friday 1 September*

The Fish Market at Portavogie was transformed into a temporary space offering a high-end restaurant quality experience. Officers worked with Paula McIntyre and SERC to devise an attractive menu, showcasing the best of local produce (based on the Tide and Turf theme). Paula McIntyre started preparation with the students preceding the event and whilst the students had only been in college for three weeks, it was a once in a lifetime experience for them all. 75% of the available 100 tickets sold.

#### **Tide and Turf Festival - 2 September 2023**

The music stage returned with performances from the String Ninjas and the Florentinas. This area was well attended with many staying at this location for several hours. There were two demo kitchens at the event one 'Tide' and one 'Turf'. Celebrity chef Paula McIntyre and SERC tutors provided demos which were well attended throughout the day. A children's area was created at the entrance of the harbour using 'the urban beach' along with other children's activities. Wooden chalets were provided for traders ensuring trading would be able to take place in most weather conditions. Officers were able to use some of the empty shop units at the harbour allowing some additional activity i.e. model boat display by local enthusiasts. The event was very well attended reaching capacity for the event site.

Traffic management remains an issue at this venue, fortunately officers were able to secure the use of nearby fields for parking. It was encouraging to see the free bus service being used by attendees; however, some routes were at capacity along the route leaving a number unable to access the buses at points at certain stops along the peninsula. The roads around the harbour became very congested which resulted in the bus service being unable to access the original pick-up point. Officers took the decision to close the Harbour Road and move the pick-up point to a less congested area which alleviated the congestion, however it created some difficulties in communicating the new location to the public. Officers are reviewing options to improve the bus service to the event by ticketing at a nominal charge to anticipate demand and enable better planning of this service. Additional work with the appointed traffic management company is ongoing to find ways to reduce congestion e.g. the introduction of a one-way system.

#### *Challenges and observations*

- Free bus service capacity.
- Distance to travel for deliveries, set up, pre-meetings etc adds to planning costs.
- Site management issues re: a working harbour and anecdotally it is thought some anti-social behaviour increased with the favourable weather.

#### *Successes*

- Overflow parking – acquirement of field.

Not Applicable

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- Use of the shop units extended programme of the event.
- PSNI support on site during the event.
- Chalets instead of gazebos weatherproofed the event.

### **Bangor Christmas Switch On – 18 November 2023**

The event was delivered in partnership with Bangor Chamber of Commerce. The vacant TK Maxx building was used for the second year to house an indoor Christmas Market and entertainment space on Saturday and Sunday. This was populated by local choirs and groups.

A 'passport trail' was introduced in partnership with local businesses proving very popular and encouraging attendees to increase their dwell time by visiting local businesses. Additional entertainment and hot food stalls were placed at the McKee Clock, with the finale show by The Real Princesses for the family audience. Sponsorship was provided by a local car company to support the actual timed light switch on element.

#### *Challenges and observations*

- Use of TK Maxx means additional resource for health and safety and staffing.
- Road closure cost implication on a very limited budget.

#### *Successes*

- The 'passport trail' proved popular.
- Use of TK Maxx – popular with attendees and traders.
- Partnership with the Chamber.

### **Newtownards Christmas Switch On – 25 November 2023**

The event was organised and managed in partnership with Newtownards Chamber of Trade. The event included a switch on finale programme, a community programme throughout the day and a Christmas market showcasing Newtownards and local businesses. The traditional Ards Saturday Market moved to the car park at Kennel Lane. Fortunately, weather was favourable on the day.

New to the programme and like Bangor was the addition of a "passport trail". The town retailers delivered 'activity' in their premises and attendees received a stamp at each venue. 1000 passports were printed, and all were distributed. The feedback from the retailers was very positive and deemed a very successful way of ensuring footfall moved around the town and into the shops.

It was agreed with the Chamber that 20 wooden chalets would accommodate the Christmas market. The chalets were well received by vendors and added a festive look and feel to the event site. To facilitate this a road closure was implemented on Friday night to allow for the four hour build time. The take down was also longer meaning the road did not reopen until midnight on Saturday night, but there were no

## Not Applicable

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issues reported around this later reopening time. The Chamber managed and delivered the community entertainment programme also making use of the covered stage.

### *Challenges and observations*

- The weather continues to be a concern at this time of year (for both switch ons) although the provision of a covered stage and wooden chalets at Newtownards mitigate the risk.

### *Successes*

- Community stage programme and engagement.
- Passport trail – 1000 passports were printed, and all were given out on the day.

## **Event Service Developments in 2023/24**

Joint Advisory Groups (JAGs) have been a very beneficial addition to the event planning process. Members of the Blue Lights services, relevant Council Officers and stakeholders attend these meetings to discuss the Event Management Plan and increase partnership collaboration.

Enhanced communication and robust systems are critical during event delivery. It is the intention that all tourism events will now have professional stewarding, radio communications and a control room with a dedicated loggist. This is a consideration for budget planning but deemed essential for outdoor events.

One of the successes for the events team in 2023 was the introduction of 'manned' recycling centres. The purpose of this was twofold, offering an effective recycling system to the customer (market research had indicated that attendees felt this was very important) and allowing Waste team colleagues an opportunity to widen their educational outreach. The Council has reported zero contamination at all tourism events in 2023. For this process to be effective, it is necessary to seal up the other bins at the event site. A communication plan along with increased visibility (branding) and uniformed staff who can advise attendees on recycling help to address this. Costs to deliver this Council corporate priority at events are an additional element to the events budgets.

## **Emerging Issues Facing Tourism Events Delivery in 2024**

Service improvements in line with Council corporate priorities, safety measures and legislative requirements e.g. additional Dfl signage for road closures are significantly impacting the overall programming allocation of the budget. Considerations for budgeting regarding the programming element must be equally considered to ensure events remain a quality experience for attendees.

Not Applicable

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**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the above report.

## Appendix 1 - Tourism Events 2023 Evaluation Summary

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Event	Date	Sample Size	Budget	Actual Net cost	Target Attendees	Actual Attendees	Cost per Attendee	Total Estimated Attendee Spend	Estimated Average Spend per Attendee	OoB % of attendees	Ex NI % of attendees	% Customer Satisfaction
May Day	1 May	134	£10,000	£9,203	5,000	9,000	£1.02	£170,030	£19.76	28	2	97
AND Pipe Band Festival	22 July	214	£33,850	£30,347	5,000	3,000	£10.12	£20,322	£6.77	40	0	72
Sea Bangor	3 & 4 June	152	£75,000	£67,979	30,000	30,000	£2.27	£471,388	£15.71	30	2	86
<sup>1</sup> Summer Food Festival CEEF 24 June	20 June – 3 <sup>rd</sup> July	212	£65,000	£63,300	10,000	11,200	£5.63	£111,516	£10.14	27	1	87
<sup>2</sup> Autumn Food Festival T&T Fest 2 Sept	10 – 25 Sept	266	£65,500	£66,300	8,000	9,700	£6.84	£102,482	£10.79	11	0	88
Bangor Switch On	18 Nov	128	£15,000	£21,564	10,000	10,000	£2.16	£3,227	£25.21	7	0	66
Newtownards Christmas Switch On	25 Nov	120	£15,000	£22,060	7,000	6,000	£3.68	£4,923	£36.47	0	0	76
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£278,850</b>	<b>£280,753<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>78,700</b>	<b>Av. £4.53</b>	<b>£883,889</b>	<b>Av.£11.23</b>			

<sup>1</sup> Final pre issue of month 12 finance reports

<sup>1</sup>11,000 attendees CEEF & 400 at other Festival activity. Total estimated attendee spend, av. spend, OoB, ex NI attendees and customer satisfaction data CEEF only

<sup>2</sup> 9,700 attendees T&T during Festival circa 6,000 attendees at Chilli Fest event in collaboration with Parks Service. Total estimated attendee spend, av. spend, OoB, ex NI attendees and customer satisfaction data T&T only

## Tourism Events Programme 2024

Appendix 2

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<b>Date 2023</b>	<b>Event</b>
Mon 6 May	May Day, Holywood
Sat 18 May	United Kingdom Pipe Band and Band and Drum Major Championships
Sat 1 & Sun 2 June	Sea Bangor
Wed 19- Sun 30 June	Summer Food Festival including Comber Earlies Food Festival (Sat 22 June)
Thurs 5 – Sun 15 Sept	Autumn Food Festival, incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (Sat 7 Sept)
Sat 18 Nov	Bangor Switch On
Sat 25 Nov	Newtownards Switch On
October	Eco Festival (pilot event)
<b>TOTAL</b>	

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	16 May 2024
File Reference	TO/VIC4
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: not applicable - evaluation report
Subject	Visitor Information Centres Annual Report 2023/2024
Attachments	Appendix 1 - VIC Summary 2023/24

**Background**

The Tourism Service manages two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in Bangor City and Newtownards town centre. Open daily, Monday to Saturday, servicing visitors (pre and during visit) and locals by answering enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time and spend in the Borough, alongside providing a retail offering and a box office ticket service.

The Service also operates a seasonal centre at Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport and facilitates a local information provision, through a Service Level Agreement, at Exploris, Portaferry.

This report provides an overview of the activity at Bangor and Newtownards Visitor Information Centres from April 2023 – March 2024 along with detail on both Cockle Row Cottages and Exploris sites.



Not Applicable

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## Visitors and Enquiries

Within the VICs, the profile of visitors continued to be dominated by the 'Staycation' and 'Day trip' market.

The VIC's are a primary point of contact for tourist information on the Borough and NI, as well as offering local ticket sales relating to Council events, third party events, experiences and tours.

Almost 90% of VIC customers visited the centres in person, highlighting the importance of the team's face-to-face interaction and ambassadorial function.

Excluding self-service visitors or "browsers", a total of 20,062 customers were serviced via direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post and email. These enquiries cover a wide range of topics from what's on in the area, where to stay or eat locally, directions, local history, activities, attractions, and ticket sales across the Borough and NI.

Bangor and Newtownards VICs	April 23 - March 24
Total footfall to the Centres	19,985
<b>ENQUIRY TYPE</b>	
Face to face enquiries	17,882
Self-service visitors/browsers	2,103
Enquiries Post/Fax/Email	386
Enquiries Phone	1,794
<b>TOTAL SERVICED</b>	<b>22,165</b>

This is an increase of 2% on last year, which is indicative of the return of visitors to NI generally post covid, albeit slow for the VIC.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	April 23 – March 24 % of total
NI	82%
GB & ROI	10%
Rest of the World	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

In comparison to the previous year's visitor profile, the results indicate little change, with NI dropping 1%, GB & ROI static at 10% and the Rest of the World seeing a small increase of 1%.

## Income

Whilst visitor information provision is the core function of the VICs, both permanent centres provide a retail space, comprising mainly of locally produced gifts, souvenirs and books as per customer demand. Both VICs encourage sales via special promotions for residents which are advertised in the local press, for example Christmas, Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, with themed displays, and regularly "merchandising" to attract both new and repeat customers.

Not Applicable

The VICs actively advertise a box office service allowing third parties e.g. drama/musical productions to be bookable online and via the VisitAND website generating over £1,400 in income.

Retail sales continue to increase year on year, against the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis. This suggests that when on holiday visitors remain willing to spend.

Income increased by circa 11% in comparison to the previous year. Customers using the VICs continue to support the retail element with an average spend per customer of £2.19.

<b>Income type</b>	
Retail sales	£36,390
Ticket sales commission	£1,440
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£37,830 (ex VAT £31,032)</b>

The VIC team continued to engage with local tourism businesses developing effective 'client' relationships. The monthly trade ezine distributed in 2023/24, highlights industry information e.g. training and promotional opportunities, staff's top picks for places to visit and a reminder of the full complement of support available from the Tourism service.

The VIC team actively support 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.

The Centres also participated in seasonal activity with both Ards Chamber of Trade at Easter and Halloween and Bangor Chamber of Commerce at Christmas.

**Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO) – Exploris Aquarium**

Located in reception, it offers visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Christmas closure). In summer 2023 an advertisement was installed on the slipway bus shelter highlighting the LVIO and with a footfall of circa 99,000 to Exploris throughout the 23/24 season, the exposure to visitors is significant.

The provision consists of visitor literature, alongside an interactive touch screen highlighting what to explore in the Borough. Exploris staff are trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to address visitor enquiries directly.

Council provides additional visitor servicing support at peak periods during July, August, Halloween and Bank/Public Holidays (14 days outreach).

<b>Exploris LVIO</b>	
<b>ENQUIRY TYPE:</b>	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	8,439

Not Applicable

Exploris Phone Enquiries	73
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (14 Peak Days)	1,218
<b>TOTAL SERVICED</b>	<b>9730</b>

This equates to almost 10% of footfall to Exploris and total serviced is circa 19% increase on the previous year.

### **Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport**

Post covid-closure the cottages re-opened for summer 2023 with two visitor servicing staff facilitating information provision, small gift shop and heritage centre. It opened June through August (Thursday–Sunday, 11am–5pm) with additional key dates (Easter, May Day, Hallowe'en and Christmas). A family entertainment programme ran each Sunday afternoon, 2–4pm.

The VIC team worked with Discover Groomsport and the Ulster-Scots Association for support activity across the season. Educational visits also returned with 3 visits (98 pupils) and 3 private group tours.

The Cottages attracted 5,700 visitors and generated circa £2,000 income.

### **Outreach Activity**

An additional 2,868 visitor enquiries were serviced at manned pop-up information stands throughout the season over ten dates. These ranging from Council tourism events to trade shows and sites such as Pickie Fun Park.

### **Literature**

The Tourism service continues to produce VisitAND literature e.g. visitor guide and map which are distributed by VIC staff to external sites. Outlets include Visit Belfast, Bangor Bus and Train Station, Pickie Fun Park, The Ark Open Farm and other tourist 'honey pots'. Within AND almost 20,000 pieces of literature were distributed highlighting the continued demand for print. The VIC's also provide bedroom packs for the accommodation sector.

### **Online Activity**

Digital communication continues to grow as a source of information for the visitor, this is a trend that is likely to continue and therefore a crucial part of visitor messaging.

In relation to "visit" channels (visitardsandnorthdown.com, Facebook and Instagram), the VIC team works with the Corporate Communications and Marketing service to support these channels. For example, provide content for blogs, a regular rolling review of the site for quality assurance purposes and engagement with tourism businesses to ensure they complete the relevant upload procedure for their business profile.

## Not Applicable

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Ards VIC continues to provide content for the Visit Strangford Lough Facebook page. Through engaging posts, the page has a following of 9,400 (an organic increase, +12%, on last year) with regular positive interactions.

### Summary

While new technology has improved accessibility to information, consumers still cite the value of face-to-face interaction with 'welcome and hospitality' rated highly among all aspects of a trip by consumers who had recently visited (Tourism NI Consumer Sentiment research). The VIC statistics demonstrate that visitors seek the 'trusted' and 'personalised' service offered at VICs with face-to-face enquiries dominant at the centres.

Across all face-to-face platforms the Tourism VIC service has engaged with almost 30,000 customers showcasing the Borough's tourism offering for holidays, short breaks, day trips and events.

### Activity - 2024/25

In addition to the service's business-as-usual activity, the coming year will see:

- Increased business development with local providers through more direct engagement, ezines and site visits.
- A reintroduction of familiarisation visits for out of borough tourism providers/bodies.
- Increased outreach provision at both council and external events and "honeypot" sites including Ulster Folk Museum, Mount Stewart, Castle Espie, Pickie Fun Park, Exploris Aquarium, Council and grant aided events.
- Developed promotion and awareness of the VIC services locally.
- Opening of Cockle Row Cottages as per model applied in season 2023 with entertainment every Sunday during July and August. Continuing collaboration with Discover Groomspoint and the Ulster Scots Agency.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

## VIC Summary 2023/24

## Ards VIC

Enquiries increased by 6% and total sales increased by 18% in comparison to 22/23.

NEWTOWNARDS VIC	23/24	22/23	COMPARISON
<b>ENQUIRIES TYPE</b>			
ELECTRONIC EYE	13,598	12,696	5%
COUNTER	11,638	10,978	6%
NON-ENQUIRIES	1,960	1,718	14%
CORRESPONDENCE (post, email)	216	309	-30%
PHONE	764	748	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,578</b>	<b>13,753</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>INCOME £S</b>			
RETAIL SALES	£ 22,436.77	£ 19,232.32	16.50%
TICKET SALES COMMISSION	£ 324.25	£ 111.00	192%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 22,761.02</b>	<b>£ 19,343.32</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>AVERAGE SPEND PER VISITOR</b>	<b>£ 1.96</b>	<b>£ 1.75</b>	<b>12%</b>

## Bangor VIC

Enquiries decreased by 5% and total sales increased by 2% in comparison to 22/23.

BANGOR VIC	23/24	22/23	COMPARISON
<b>ENQUIRIES TYPE</b>			
ELECTRONIC EYE	6,387	6,849	-7%
COUNTER	6,244	6,506	-4%
NON-ENQUIRIES	143	43	232%
CORRESPONDENCE (post, email)	170	224	-24%
PHONE	1,030	1,205	-14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,587</b>	<b>7,978</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<b>INCOME £S</b>			
RETAIL SALES	£ 13,953.69	£ 13,447.95	4%
TICKET SALES COMMISSION	£ 1,115.25	£ 1,371.48	18.50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 15,068.94</b>	<b>£ 14,819.43</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>AVERAGE SPEND PER VISITOR</b>	<b>£ 2.41</b>	<b>£ 2.07</b>	<b>16%</b>

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	N/A
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	24 May 2024
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 H2 Performance report
Attachments	Report

**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 in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

N/A

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The Council's 18 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 half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half yearly (H1)	April – September	December
Half yearly (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H2 is attached.

### Key points to note:

- Temporary staff have been recruited to help deliver some projects.

### Key achievements:

- Small Settlements projects are progressing well and community engagement is supportive of the proposals. Planning permission has been obtained for the scheme in Kircubbin and a new project has been developed for Ballygowan.
- Portaferry Public realm works is ongoing with an estimated completion of September 2024. This project is currently on schedule and on budget.
- The review of the City/towns Masterplans have been completed and projects for development are being considered.
- The Council still has two projects included in the Peace Plus programme.

### Emerging issues:

- No further progress has been made in accessing funding from the general Peace Plus streams for regeneration projects. However, the Council will continue to work with EBR on this.
- It is becoming evident that funding for regeneration projects from central government in the next financial year will be limited. Within DfC the budget has not been agreed so no forward work plan can be considered. Also, DAERA has given no indication if any funding will be available for rural projects or if a successor to the Rural Development Programme is being considered.

### Action to be taken:

- Continue to work with government departments to try and secure funding.
- Work closely with EBR over the development of future projects.
- Work with the various groups to agree projects to be developed in the next financial year.

N/A

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note this report.

















N/A

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## Half yearly Performance Report - Regeneration

Generated on: 24 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	84.62%	100%
	No of Urban/Rural projects to planning stage to access funding streams	6	7
	% staff attendance	88.86%	93%
	Team briefings delivery to all staff who are not on leave/maternity/long term sick	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	No of staff meetings including updates on service plan delivery	22	18
	To develop, agree, secure funding and commence delivery of a public realm scheme for Portaferry	Yes	Yes
	To agree detailed technical design for Marine Gardens QP with Bangor Marina	No	Yes
	To progress the Bangor Waterfront Scheme, to agree Operating Model with BYC	0	1
	To commence a Strategic Masterplan for Kinnegar Logistics Base	0	1
	To commence an OBC for the Kinnegar Logistics Base development	1	1
	No of meetings with Town Advisory Groups to develop regeneration improvements	5	5
	Number of capital schemes commenced using funding from Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme	6	6
	To assess the outputs from the Town Chamber business plans and assist in growing the membership base	Yes	Yes

<b>Minutes of the Bangor City Advisory Group Meeting</b>	
<p><b>Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>  <b>Time: 4pm</b>  <b>Location: Bangor City Hall, Bangor Castle</b></p>	
<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Chair, Councillor Craig Blaney – Ards and North Down Borough Council  Alderman Wesley Irvine – Ards and North Down Borough Council  Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards and North Down Borough Council (Via Teams)</p> <p>Carly McMullan – Rural Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Sonia Logan – Assistant Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Calum Symington – Administration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Clare McGill – Head of Economic Development, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Stephen Gardiner – Section Engineer for Ards and North Down, Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>Niall McVitty – Deputy Director, Department for Communities</p> <p>Frank Shivers – Bangor Chamber of Commerce  Alison Blayney – Kilcooley Women’s Centre  Philip McMillan – Faith Representative  James Hennessey – Paul Hogarth Company</p>
<b>Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
<b>Item 2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	<p>Apologies were received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor Chris McCracken, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Brian Dorrian, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- David Shivers, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- John McConnell, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> </ul>



**Ards and  
North Down**  
Borough Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jim Russell, Kilcooley Community Forum</li> <li>- Geoff Thompson, Chamber Representative</li> <li>- Ryan O'Neill, Department for Communities</li> <li>- Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</li> </ul>
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	No Declarations of Interest were received.
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>
	The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the previous meeting, 28 November 2023. Proposed by A Blaney and seconded by Alderman W Irvine.
<b>Item 5</b>	<b>Project Artemis Update   Clare McGill, Head of Economic Development</b>
	<p>C McGill provided an update regarding the Belfast Maritime Consortium and the following points were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As part of Belfast Maritime Consortium, Artemis is developing an electric hydrofoil ferry</li> <li>- The project was 2nd largest award by the Innovate UK SIP Fund, receiving £32m</li> <li>- It is an R&amp;D project to decarbonise the maritime industry</li> <li>- It is currently at test stage and sea trials are currently taking place</li> <li>- There are plans to run a pilot scheme during 2024-2025</li> </ul> <p>Councillor C Blaney noted that this is a massive project and questioned if we should arrange a visit with the project as he wished to impress on them that the CAG is fully in support of the project.</p> <p>F Shivers noted that C McGill is doing very well as a liaison for the project, he hoped to get more details about the pilot and wished the project good luck.</p> <p>Chair asked if Eisenhower Pier was ready to accommodate. C McGill responded that officers are working with the Consortium and have advised on the considerations that will be required to operate the pilot.</p> <p>F Shivers noted that a cruise ship had docked at Bangor in recent years.</p> <p>N McVitty added that he expects a significant number of environmental challenges for planning.</p>



	<p>Chair enquired if the Council was holding the project up in any way.</p> <p>C McGill advised that the Council is working with the consortium and advising on requirements. The pilot will be carrying passengers, and there is the need to plan for this and any associated infrastructure at Eisenhower Pier.</p> <p>P McMillan asked if it was worth putting a comment to the consortium to draw their attention to the reality of planning.</p> <p>C McGill stated that the ferry is at proof-of-concept stage. A full business case would be required before any decision could be made on the full operation of a ferry service.</p> <p>Alderman W Irvine noted that the ability to carry 150 people emission free would be a help towards sustainability.</p> <p>N McVitty noted that there was a lot of work ahead, but it was a very exciting project</p> <p>C McGill agreed to keep the CAG updated.</p> <p>Chair requested another update at the next meeting. C McGill responded that progress updates are provided quarterly by the consortium and information will be provided as required.</p>
<p><b>Item 6</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Ward Park   John McConnell, Parks and Cemeteries Manager</b></p>
	<p>Apologies were received from John McConnell. Due to the change of date for the meeting, J McConnell was unable to attend.</p> <p><b>ACTION: J McConnell to be invited to attend the next meeting of Bangor City Advisory Group.</b></p>
<p><b>Item 7</b></p>	<p><b>Review of the Bangor City Advisory Group   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company &amp; Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</b></p>
	<p>J Hennessey introduced the project and informed the group that he is meeting with all the Town Advisory Groups</p> <p><b>Evolving NI Policy</b>                  J Hennessey noted the following points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involved in town centre management.</li> </ul>

- Roll out of subregional plans.
- How it rolls out will be key
- Positioned within an evolving context (resumption of Stormont)
- There is a number of perspectives.
- We are at the cusp of major change.
- Living High Streets Craft Kit creation of local action groups

#### **AND Strategic Context**

J Hennessey drew reference to The Big Plan, the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy.

J Hennessey advised that it would be useful to see what is going on in NI and abroad. J Hennessey stated that there was a number of challenges to deal with at a local level and noted the establishment of local actions groups referencing a pilot scheme in Downpatrick whereby business people are leading on the project, and also informed the members of the use of Town Teams in Scotland and Ireland which were comprised of a variety of organisations with town boards on them.

It was suggested that the solutions lie with the people who live and work in the town. J Hennessey stated that this is an opportunity to tweak and tune the city advisory group.

#### **Key Issues arising from Survey (distributed to all members)**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- Using the masterplan as a framework but other issues may arise
- Be in the best place to sort issues
- Push on action of delivery of masterplan
- Clear need for keeping momentum going between meetings
- Move towards digital solutions
- Bringing in youth and faith representation

#### **Key Questions**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- How do we take this opportunity to rework structure
- The difficulty of bringing in a budget which would be multiplied by five to cover all urban areas
- Communication should be two way and free flowing
- Communication issues
- Use this framework to help process
- There is a need to individualise the advisory groups

**Relationship with NI Executive**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- There is no statutory requirement for DfI and DfC to attend
- It of great benefit that they attend
- Suggested other departments be brought in

**Relationship with Council**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- The primary point of contact is the regeneration team
- Difficulty in isolating issues
- How we can involve all areas of the council
- The role of elected members on the advisory groups

**Relationship with Bangor**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- Members are feeding back and forwards on a daily basis
- Looking to Council departments and community

**A Way Forward for Hawick**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- Very interesting
- Reflective of the groups
- What extent does communication flow
- Really important process to go through

J Hennessey advised several things to consider moving forward. How do council communicate with the advisory group members while being careful it does not become unmanageable and suggested that there be one point of contact for all the advisory groups or a support group.

J Hennessey stated that the advisory group is a conduit of information, and it is a forum for issues or opportunities. It should be a positive and an effective force for driving the City forward. J Hennessey finished by suggesting a new name for the group.

<b>Item 8</b>	<b>Update on Bangor Wayfinding Strategy   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company</b>
	<p>J Hennessey advised that his team are now working up the report and it will be very visual, and graphic led.</p> <p>J Hennessey advised that draft document will be circulated to council officers during the Easter break. It will include design guidance, suggested mapping, and estimated costings.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Council officers to issue draft report for advisory group feedback.</b></p>
<b>Item 9</b>	<b>Update and Information from Dfl   Stephen Gardiner, Section Engineer – Ards and North Down</b>
	<p>S Gardiner provided an update on behalf of Dfl. S Gardiner advised that there was a lot of investment into Bangor including Clandeboye Heights and two other schemes.</p> <p>S Gardiner informed that he had received approx. £600K from the headline figure of £8.1M allocated to Dfl due to the splits of the four divisions and five sections in this division.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised of a traffic scheme at Bloomfield Road for approx. 4-6 weeks and a scheme at the Groomsport Road roundabout.</p> <p>S Gardiner noted that the roundabout had been promised to be delivered in 2019 and 2021 but yet had not been delivered. S Gardiner advised that it is one of his priorities to deliver due to a high volume of unreported incidents in the area that the Department had been made aware of.</p> <p>S Gardiner informed there are two traffic schemes being planned for the next financial year and that he has a meeting with PSNI to discuss on 10<sup>th</sup> April.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that his expected budget for the year was £1.7M which would allow for the completion of four schemes. S Gardiner advised that the expected four schemes are Portaferry Road, Comber Road in Ards, Clandeboye Road, Bangor and Belfast Rd, Comber. Groomsport Road is currently sitting in the top ten of schemes Dfl plan to deliver this financial year, if we get the budget.</p> <p>Chair queried the criteria Dfl set using the technologies available.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that Dfl look at claims, complaints and the scientific data, such as SCRIM, Deflectograph and SCANNER when making decisions. S Gardiner noted that he can take suggestions from the advisory group and assess them.</p>

Alderman W Irvine suggested Aurora Leisure Centre, Bangor Academy and Glenlola Collegiate as an area in need of assessment.

S Gardiner advised he can look at the area and work with N McVitty to tidy area up if businesses wanted bike racks etc.

Concern was raised regarding utility works and the reinstatement.

S Gardiner advised there is a working group chair by Dfl and attended by utilities but the meetings were not productive, he advised that any works completed by Dfl are covered for one year which NIE and NIW are usually good with but Telecoms operators mark all their works "Commercial in confidence", so no clarity is forthcoming.

N McVitty stated that in England if utilities dig up roads within 5 years of being resurfaced then they must resurface the whole road.

F Shivers questioned if some of the utilities even have the correct permissions and gave an example in Ballyholme outside Fetherston Clements.

A Blayney noted it appears to be an "easier to ask forgiveness than permission" approach.

S Gardiner stated that Traffic Watch NI lists all road closures, so it is helpful to check there.

Chair suggested writing to the Assembly to action.

S Gardiner noted that Dfl wanted 5 years warranty on road resurfacing but only 1 year was given.

Chair asked if it was the advisory groups role to bring forward.

P McMillan noted that it was outside the boundary of the city centre.

N McVitty stated that the masterplan was much broader and that the advisory group should follow that.

F Shivers asked if there were community interest items that the chamber could get involved with, he added that the chamber have insurance that would cover litter picks etc.

S Gardiner stated that Dfl could provide traffic management or heavy machinery if needed. S Gardiner noted that cleaning up the chevrons around roundabouts would have a big impact, noting 23 roundabouts in





Antrim and Newtownabbey that DfI have done initial work with Council to make them maintenance free and tidying up the approaches to them. S Gardiner noted an example in Randallstown where DfI own the verges, but local community groups received funding to maintain the trees on the verges and Monkstown Football Club bought and provided lawn mowers for the group.

A Blayney noted an issue at the top of Main Street where non-council bins were being left in a large group outside the Bank of Ireland Building and they were very unsightly. A Blayney noted that Councillor A Cathcart has been in conversation with Craig Burnside (Waste Collection Services Officer) regarding this.

Councillor A Cathcart stated that he has raised the issue at the Environment Committee and been advised it is a DfI enforcement issue. Councillor A Cathcart noted that DAERA appear to be doing something about the issue now, but we need an update on it. Councillor A Cathcart noted that he wants the Council to have the power to enforce these issues as we can only send a report letter currently. Councillor A Cathcart noted it is an issue in residential areas as well and it will be difficult until new regulations are introduced.

S Gardiner advised he can follow up on obstruction and send notices.

**Action: Councillor A Cathcart to provide S Gardiner with list of issues**

**Item 10 Update on Outstanding Actions | Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC**

ACTION	COMMENTS	COMPLETION
F Shivers requested changes to the meeting minutes.	Complete.	30/11/2023
Update on waterfront development communications plan with Regeneration Communications Manager	S Logan provided an update on the communications plan.  Regeneration Communications Manager to be invited to attend the next meeting.	Complete  Next meeting.



**Ards and  
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	Send shop local figures to advisory group.	S Logan provided requested information to the group.	29/11/2023
	B Dorrian to speak with Ann McCullough regarding planner to attend CAG meeting.	Planning officer is invited to attend all meetings. Due to availability, it is proposed that the officer attends as necessary (regeneration officers to inform of any agenda items that require input)	Ongoing
	John McConnell to be invited to next meeting for Q&A on Ward Park	Carried over to next meeting.	Ongoing
	Review of Hamilton Road - N McVitty to keep the group informed	N McVitty to bring update when available.	Ongoing
	N McVitty to provide a contact from DfC arts team	Ongoing.	Ongoing
	Lack of partnership raised by F Shivers	F Shivers updated that a positive meeting was held with Council officers and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, and partnership matters were being addressed.	Complete
	Ferry/Hydrofoil plan - Brian to ask Clare Magill to attend a future meeting of the CAG and present update	C McGill provided update to CAG.	Complete
	Bangor Waterfront Public Presentation to be provided to CAG members.	Issued to group by S Logan (BWF Comms email)	19/02/2024



<b>Item 11</b>	<b>Asylum Seekers Update   Marianne Kennerly, Boom Studies</b>
	<p>P McMillan provided an update on behalf of Marianne Kennerly in relation to Asylum Seekers. P McMillan advised the numbers of asylum seekers has significantly reduced and stated he was unsure of the reason, but it was speculated that most had moved to Belfast.</p>
<b>Item 12</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	<p><b>Bangor City Entrance/Gateway Signs</b>                  C McMullan referred members to the documents circulated with the meeting papers relating to the request for feedback on whether the Council should continue the use of 'by the sea' strapline on its welcome signage.                  C McMullan advised the Council have agreed the 5no welcome signs are to be updated to reflect Bangor achieving city status. Budget has been allocated to this for the 2024-25 financial year.                  It has already been agreed by elected members that the new signage will include the City of Bangor logo and reference to the Platinum Jubilee.</p> <p>C McMullan advised two options have been made available to the members of the advisory group for review and feedback-                  Option 1 - without the strapline 'by the sea'                  Option 2 – with the strapline</p> <p>C McMullan informed the Head of Communications updated that there were differing views between elected members as to whether the strapline should be included, therefore it was agreed to welcome thoughts from members of the advisory group.</p> <p>Chair asked if we had gone external for the design. C McMullan confirmed the Council have an in-house design team.</p> <p>F Shivers asked if DfC was funding the replacement boards. C McMullan confirmed that DfC funded the original signs and advised that the Council have agreed to allocate council budget to the replacement/updating to reflect city status.</p> <p>Chair asked if costs were available at this time, C McMullan advised she did not have this information. Chair asked if we could just sticker over the original signs, advising the group he would be hesitant to agree significant budget for replacement. C McMullan informed the budget has been agreed by Council.</p>

N McVitty noted that a council at the North Coast had run a competition to see who could take the furthest photo of the logo.

P McMillan stated that some had thought the "By the Sea" messaging was valuable.

Chair stated that if we were replacing the signs then why not add it.

Councillor A Cathcart stated that he thought the Platinum Jubilee wording was good and suggested to keep the strapline 'by the sea'. Councillor A Cathcart suggested removing the DfC logo as the new signs would not be funded by them.

Chair stated that he was concerned about how much this would cost.

#### **Parking strategy**

F Shivers enquired about a 2-hour parking window for on street parking.

N McVitty asked if this was a chamber initiative.

F Shivers advised that it was looked at 8 years ago.

#### **ACTION: Add Parking Strategy to agenda going forward.**

S Gardiner advised there might be some delay as Traffic Section would need to change legislation and pass through Stormont for approval.

F Shivers asked what the situation was regarding the "Red Coats" and if there would be a possibility of some leniency when ticketing due to the upcoming loss of 300 spaces from Queen's Parade.

S Gardiner advised he can speak to parking enforcement but that it is down to the individual officer.

F Shivers stated that he had received a lot of complaints.

A Blayney noted that the film crew working in the Market House building were receiving a lot of leniencies regarding parking.

Chair noted lorries taking up 20/25 spaces in Bingham Lane car park and stated that he thought as the Advisory Group we should put a press release out.

S Gardiner noted that we don't want vehicles in Main Street, we want footfall.

N McVitty noted that it would be part of the Hamilton Road review.



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Item 13	Date and Time of Next Meeting
	To be agreed  Meeting adjourned 18:05.

### Minutes of the Comber Town Advisory Meeting

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Time: 4pm**

**Location: Comber Leisure Centre**

<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Chair, Alderman Trevor Cummings – Ards and North Down Borough Council Councillor Patricia Morgan – Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Carly McMullan – Rural Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council Sonia Logan – Assistant Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council Calum Symington – Administration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council Wendy Smith – Events Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Stephen Gardiner – Section Engineer for Ards and North Down, Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>Niall McVitty – Deputy Director, Department for Communities</p> <p>Iris McBride – Chamber of Trade Representative</p> <p>Liz Hamilton – Faith Representative</p> <p>Sharon Scott – Place Solutions James Hennessey – Paul Hogarth Company</p>
<b>Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	Alderman T Cummings welcomed everyone to the meeting.
<b>Item 2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor Libby Douglas, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Councillor Rachel Ashe, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Brian Dorrian, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- David Shivers, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> </ul>



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North Down**  
Borough Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- David Birch, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Ryan O'Neill, Department for Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	No Declarations of Interest were received.
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>
	The minutes of the previous meeting, 13/12/2023, were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting content. Proposed by Councillor P Morgan and seconded by L Hamilton.
<b>Item 5</b>	<b>Update and Information from Dfl   Stephen Gardiner, Section Engineer for Ards and North Down</b>
	<p>S Gardiner provided an update on behalf of Dfl:</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that he has two schemes for the area. One definite which is Belfast Road to Castle Street, expected around September and October. Secondly, Railway Street and Castle Street should funding become available. S Gardiner advised that he would need to spend £4.5M before it was at the top of the priority list.</p> <p>Chair enquired if Dfl were waiting for budget to come down to them.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that the £8.1M headline figure was for the whole of the country and therefore was separated down for each division and section. S Gardiner stated that this year's budget was £2.1M and through bidding rounds he had managed to spend £4.8M. S Gardiner expects his budget to be approx. £1.7M this next financial year and he has a plan of approx. 15no schemes in place. S Gardiner further stated that the Belfast Road Scheme was 3<sup>rd</sup> on his priority list and Railway Street was approx. 6<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>W Smith asked if there would be any impact on the Comber Earlies event in June. S Gardiner advised work would not be commencing until September or October. S Gardiner stated that Dfl are pretty flexible outside of working around school times and asked anybody to let him know of any key dates for the year so he can try to work with them.</p>
<b>Item 6</b>	<b>Review of the Comber Town Advisory Group   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company &amp; Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</b>
	Chair welcomed James Hennessey and Sharon Scott to provide the Review of Comber Town Advisory Group:

S Scott provided an introduction to the project.

#### **Evolving NI Policy**

S Scott noted the following points

- Involved in town centre management
- Roll out of subregional plans
- How it rolls out will be key
- Positioned within an evolving context
- We are at the cusp of major change

#### **AND Strategic Context**

S Scott explained each of the Big Plan, the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy,

J Hennessey advised that it would be useful to see what is going on in NI and abroad. J Hennessey noted a number of challenges to deal with at a local level and noted the establishment of local actions groups including a pilot scheme in Downpatrick whereby business people are leading on the project. J Hennessey noted the use of Town Teams in Scotland which comprised of a variety of organisations with town boards in them. J Hennessey noted that the solutions lie with the people who live and work in the town. J Hennessey shared the use of Town Teams in Ireland that consist of a group of representatives from across the town.

J Hennessey advised this is an opportunity to tweak and tune the Town Advisory Group.

#### **Key Issues arising from Survey (survey was previously circulated to all members of the Town Advisory Group)**

S Scott noted the following points

- Using the Masterplan as a framework but other issues may arise
- Be in the best place to sort issues
- Push on action of delivery of Masterplan
- Clear need for keeping momentum going between meetings
- Move towards digital solutions

#### **Key Questions**

S Scott noted the following points

- How do we take this opportunity to rework structure
- Communication should be two way and free flowing



- We are all grappling with communication issues
- Use this framework to help process
- There is a need to individualise the Advisory Groups

#### **Relationship with NI Executive**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- There is no statutory requirement for DfI and DfC to attend
- It is helpful that they attend

#### **Relationship with Council**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- The primary point of contact is the regeneration team
- Difficulty in isolating issues

#### **Relationship with Comber**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- Members are feeding back and forwards on a daily basis
- Looking to Council departments and community

#### **A Way Forward for Hawick**

J Hennessey noted the following points

- Very interesting
- Really important process to go through

J Hennessey advised several things to consider moving forward-

How do council communicate with the TAG members while being careful it doesn't become unmanageable.

Should there be one point of contact for all the Advisory Groups or a support group?

What the channel of communication to the town should be.

J Hennessey stated that the Advisory Group is a conduit of information and it is a great forum for issues or opportunities. It should be a positive and effective force for the town. J Hennessey noted the Advisory Group has the potential to be great for Comber. J Hennessey finished by suggesting the group look at a new name that is reflective of their purpose.

S Scott asked how the Advisory Groups are positioned and identified by the community.

Chair stated that the concept of constant communication is good but it needs to be relevant. Chair advised that if you give local people an issue they can deal with it and the Advisory Group shows cohesion between all agencies.

Councillor P Morgan concurred with most points, stating that the relationship with the Council is very interesting.

Councillor P Morgan stated the meeting gets reported to Place & Prosperity Committee but questioned if this was necessary, stating it seems unhelpful and suggested an annual update report to Council.

Councillor P Morgan noted that it was very ambitious for Comber and suggested working up a project even in the absence of funding but then drive to find the funding.

Councillor P Morgan also noted the difficulties in communicating with all sectors of the Town, advising that Comber Rec FC are desperate for a new pitch and that we should be talking about it.

Chair added that it also contributes to the town economy.

Councillor P Morgan asked why to hold a separate meeting when the issue could be brought to the Advisory Group.

N McVitty advised that the original purpose of the group was to drive the former Masterplans and deliver the Public Realm Scheme in the area, deciding what issues that needed decisions. The same group now has a broader purpose.

S Scott added that through place-making there is tourism, regeneration etc.

N McVitty stated that he is happy to commission colleagues in other departments to attend if required.

W Smith asked who is aware of this group if you don't work in Council or the Chamber.

J Hennessey noted the strength of the Advisory Groups was its members.

I McBride stated that she had noticed the evolution of the group and members were aware they need to change from wish list to action.

W Smith stated she would love if schools, churches etc had representatives.

N McVitty enquired the possibility of a dedicated website for the group.



	<p>Chair noted that the Council Communications Team could be engaged for the use of virtual platforms. Recognised the need for a communications plan that shares achievements and gives credit to all partners.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Officers to liaise with ANDBC Communications Department.</b></p> <p>Councillor P Morgan advised that some schools have ways of communicating between themselves.</p> <p>S Scott asked if the Youth Council could be brought in to which Chair suggested their remit would be too wide.</p> <p>S Scott asked if the support group would be useful to which the Chair felt that it would be too many layers.</p> <p>I McBride added that the five chambers meet every quarterly.</p>
<p><b>Item 7</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Comber Wayfinding Strategy   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company</b></p>
	<p>J Hennessey provided an update on the wayfinding strategy for Comber.</p> <p>J Hennessey stated that they were very busy and it was coming together well, advising that the draft report will be complete by the end of next week. J Hennessey explained that the document will be very visual and set out the rationale and costed action plan.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Officers to issue Wayfinding Strategy to Advisory Group once complete.</b></p> <p>*J Hennessey and S Scott left meeting 17:00*</p>
<p><b>Item 8</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Council Tourism Events   Wendy Smith, Events Manager</b></p>
	<p>W Smith provided an update on the Comber Earlies Festival:</p> <p>Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2024 Comber Leisure Centre car park.</p> <p>Last year there was approx. 11,000 visitors with 42% staying for 2-3 hours and 62% spending money in the town on snacks.</p> <p>W Smith noted that some lessons had been learnt including having alternative car parking available from the Thursday. W Smith stated that the buses worked well, last year they were free of charge but this year it</p>

was expected to have a nominal fee of £1 or £2 to allow for a better customer experience. W Smith did note that there were some difficulties with owners parking outside their businesses.

Chair noted that people had ignored the double yellow lines which is an enforcement issue.

W Smith shared the following for this year's event:

- A new traffic management company has been appointed
- Suggested marshals to watch cones to ensure they are not moved
- Council vehicles have been advised not to park nearby
- Businesses have been asked not to organise mass deliveries during the period – where possible to liaise with officers to enable deliveries to be accommodated
- There will be no one way system in the event
- Letter drop to residents has been organised
- New management agent appointed for the stall holder Expression of Interest
- 'Business Passport' to encourage people to move around the various businesses
- The events team will be going out to businesses to engage
- Bus timetables are being revised to make them clearer
- The actual running of the day will look very similar
- Music stage and bar to remain
- Highlighting local artisans
- A cookery school will be in attendance working with SERC students
- The tractor display to remain

Chair queried where the bus drop was located. W Smith replied that she was unsure of exact locations, but it would cover Belfast, Ballygowan and Saintfield.

N McVitty advised that he was very positive about the event as the works to the car park had been completed under DfC & DfI Covid Recovery funding. N McVitty asked for the positive feedback and statistics from last year to be fed into the Post Project Evaluation. N McVitty noted that it was a great project to share with colleagues in DfC.

L Hamilton asked if the stats can be made available to the public to let them see the benefits of the festival. W Smith advised she will ask and can maybe tie it into launch of the festival.



	<p>Chair advised on a soft launch and then launch with Mayor to get people enthused.</p> <p>Councillor P Morgan noted the need to spread good news, such as DfI spending more on the borough than the allocated budget.</p> <p>I McBride advised that the chamber was very happy to share the 'Business Passport'. W Smith thanked I McBride and noted that the personal touch is always good.</p> <p>W Smith noted that there is a 10k race the night before and there has been an agreement between the two traffic management companies operating in the car parks.</p> <p>Councillor P Morgan asked if anything had come from the discussion on having a map. W Smith advised that she has not met with the communications team yet but it is something to look at for more than just the day as it had been done in Newtownards previously and worked very well.</p> <p>*W Smith left 17:15*</p>
<p><b>Item 9</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Outstanding Actions   Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b></p>
	<p>S Logan provided an update on the actions arising from the last meeting</p> <p>Item 1 – S Logan to request an update in relation to Laurel Bank area. Update provided – issued to members 27 February 2024.</p> <p><i>"ANDBC recently launched its Local Biodiversity Action Plan in November 2023, one of the actions listed in the plan is to 'Secure funding to commission a feasibility study to explore the options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen'. Council have been able to secure funds to meet this action. Invitations to quote for the provision of this study closed on the 16<sup>th</sup> February and a successful applicant will be appointed soon. We await the outcome of the feasibility study and will provide a further update to the group upon its completion.</i></p> <p>Item 2 – Councillor P Morgan to contact Paul in relation to the Brent Goose Floral Sculpture. Update provided – Councillor P Morgan contacted Paul and he explained his thoughts are to do a topiary.</p>

<b>Item 10</b>	<b>Update on Gap Sites   Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b>
	<p>S Logan provided an update on behalf of D Birch in relation to the Comber Gap site scheme</p> <p>“Contract for funding has been received from DfC, work is ongoing to have the property agreements in place. Work is also ongoing to produce draft artwork”</p> <p>Chair asked about interested parties for the artwork. C McMullan advised that there was a slight delay in obtaining the images, D Birch continues to liaise with relevant persons and is working alongside the Council’s graphic designer.</p> <p>I McBride noted that D Birch had mentioned a possible copyright issue. Chair advised he believes that old photos can be used without copyright.</p> <p>I McBride advised she would be willing to liaise with the Comber Historical Society for possible images. C McMullan advised this would be welcomed.</p> <p>N McVitty added that DfC have used historic photos of Holywood so it is possible.</p> <p><b>ACTION: I McBride to contact Comber Historical Society</b></p> <p>C McMullan noted that the artwork will only be circulated to TAG members and property owners given the restricted timescales.</p>
<b>Item 11</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	<p><b>Artificial Christmas Tree</b></p> <p>Councillor P Morgan advised that the chamber would like to do a different type of tree. Councillor P Morgan noted that Holywood had an artificial tree and that some correspondence had been negative about previous trees. Chair concurred that it was the way forward</p> <p>C McMullan advised that she had liaised with Property and Asset Services who had stated that the time, money and storage investment would be excessive for the benefit.</p> <p>I McBride advised that it had been done in Ballynahinch and in towns in England. I McBride noted that the idea would have to be consulted on so as not to feel like an agenda is being pushed and that it should not just be the chambers decision.</p> <p>Councillor P Morgan noted that an artificial tree can be polarising.</p>

Chair noted there was previously budget available for Christmas decorations.

C McMullan advised that Comber received new Christmas lamp post motifs and festive lighting for the Square under DfC funding in 2017/18.

I McBride noted that the decorations around the town are excellent.

L Hamilton suggested a Christmas Tree Festival with trees reflective of each organisation and have it around Comber Town.

I McBride noted that the chamber does five trees for the schools around Comber and it is already a lot of work.

L Hamilton noted that the festival could bring in different groups.

Chair enquired as to how the group would like to move forward with this item.

I McBride stated she can take it back to the chamber. Chair advised that we need to ask our groups how they feel and that a wider conversation is needed.

Councillor P Morgan asked if a Christmas decoration fund was available. Alderman T Cummings advised that there was on historically but not available any longer.

C McMullan advised that the cost of an artificial tree can range from £8K to £18K, additionally £1.5-2.5K per year for installation plus take down and storage.

**Comber In Bloom Report (Attached for reference) | Councillor Patricia Morgan**

Councillor P Morgan advised that the report has come back and it noted weeds in the main car park which look scruffy and Parkway was also noted as being not up to standard. Councillor P Morgan noted her disappointment and asked if a message can come from the advisory group to Stephen Daye, Head of Parks.

S Gardiner asked when judgment is made and if it is the same time each year, advising that it is a timing issue when to spray weedkiller but if he is advised of the judging date then he can arrange the spray to coincide.

**Communications**



	<p>N McVitty stated that <a href="http://www.comber.co.uk">www.comber.co.uk</a> is not in use. Chair responded that there is no money available to purchase the domain.</p> <p>C McMullan added that the new ANDBC website is being launched and will have a dedicated regeneration section where a page can be created for the advisory group.</p> <p>L Hamilton stated that the Comber Regen website was originally for Tourism etc.</p> <p>Chair advised that people do go to the ANDBC site and suggested speaking to Corporate Communications Team.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Officers to liaise with the Corporate Communications Team re the Advisory Group having a dedicated area within the website.</b></p>
<b>Item 12</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>
	<p>The date of the next meeting was set to be arranged for June 2024.</p> <p>Meeting finished 17:33</p>



<b>Minutes of the Donaghadee Town Advisory Meeting</b>	
<p><b>Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>  <b>Time: 4pm</b>  <b>Location: Donaghadee Community Centre</b></p>	
<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Chair Adrian Kerr – Donaghadee Community Development Association</p> <p>Councillor James Cochrane – Ards and North Down Borough Council  Councillor Gillian McCollum – Ards and North Down Borough Council  Carly McMullan – Rural Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Sonia Logan – Assistant Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Calum Symington – Administration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Niall McVitty – Deputy Director, Department for Communities  Stephen Gardiner – Section Engineer for Ards and North Down, Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>Kate Boyd – Donaghadee Chamber of Trade  John Caldwell – Donaghadee Chamber of Trade</p> <p>James Hennessey – Paul Hogarth Company  Sharon Scott – Place Solutions</p>
<b>Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
<b>Item 2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	<p>Apologies were received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Alderman Mark Brooks – Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>-Councillor Janice MacArthur – Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>-Councillor Hannah Irwin – Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>-Brian Dorrian – Head of Regeneration, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>-David Shivers – Urban Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>-Ryan O'Neill – Deputy Principal, Department for Communities</li> <li>-Sam Eccles – Police Service of Northern Ireland</li> </ul>
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>

	No Declarations of Interest were received.
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>
	The minutes of the previous meeting, 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2023, were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting. Proposed by Chair, seconded by K Boyd.
<b>Item 5</b>	<b>Update on Anti-Social Behaviour from PSNI   Sam Eccles, PSNI</b>
	Apology was received from Sam Eccles.  ACTION: S Eccles to be invited to attend the next meeting.
<b>Item 6</b>	<b>Update and Information from DfI   Stephen Gardiner, Section Engineer for Ards and North Down</b>
	S Gardiner provided an update from DfI raising the following points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Street and Union Street were on a list of fifteen schemes to be completed.</li> <li>• It is anticipated that four schemes would be completed in the following financial year due to budget constraints.</li> <li>• If a scheme is on the list, they will not be removed until they were completed.</li> </ul> <p>Councillor J Cochrane requested an update on Warren Road. S Gardiner advised that there were substantial utilities works ongoing on Warren Road and that NI Water have a 3-year warranty on deep excavations.</p>
<b>Item 7</b>	<b>Review of the Donaghadee Town Advisory Group   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company &amp; Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</b>
	J Hennessey and S Scott provided a presentation- Review of the Donaghadee Town Advisory (Appendix 1)  Chair thanked J Hennessey and S Scott for the presentation and stated that he would like to see some kind of action plan with milestones.  Councillor G McCollum advised that it brought a lot to think about and welcomed any input from J Hennessey and S Scott on a framework. Councillor G McCollum asked what issues they expected from the advisory support group and if they had a suggestion on redefining the Terms of Reference for the group.  J Hennessey advised they are working on a draft report but stated that that it is not for them to set an action plan. J Hennessey advised that they could help guide how the group prepares the action plan.

Chair suggested information bulletins to keep up the lines of communication between the members and asked how far the minutes of the group's meetings were distributed. Chair suggested that most government departments are not aware the group exists. Chair suggested a more proactive meeting agenda and suggested that the governance of the group can be straightforward, but the administration and budget can be more difficult and requires a commitment from the Council. An annual conference was suggested with all TAG's sending two members. Chair also suggested a dedicated officer is assigned within the Council per TAG.

J Hennessey noted that the survey results showed a wish to rely less on Council.

Chair suggested that the group can be dominated by personalities and re-iterated the need for an individual who is responsible.

S Scott noted that other areas have a town centre manager.

J Caldwell thanked J Hennessey and S Scott for the presentation. J Caldwell noted that the group used to have a faith representative and a youth representative and suggested the group should have more traders from the town centre represented.

J Caldwell thanked DfI and DfC for attending the meetings and suggested that it would be helpful if Regeneration Team restructured to include a Town Centre Manager for each town.

Councillor G McCollum suggested that the groups may be more effective if they had a more specific agenda.

Chair acknowledged that the traders are the heart of the town and hoped they would increase opening hours to support any events in the Town.

K Boyd stated that Sunday traffic is a major issue and without a proper car park, Donaghadee Town will suffer. K Boyd informed the group that Saturdays are not busy because people cannot get parked and are parking in the bus stop which causes traffic disruptions. K Boyd hoped that when Bangor is updated it will draw people to Donaghadee.

J Caldwell noted that the traffic issue has been on DfI list for years and that the car park strategy is included in the masterplan.

N McVitty asked which car park is the group referencing. J Caldwell advised that it is a car park just beyond the "red line".

Chair suggested that the next stage in the process would be to get all stakeholders involved and committed.



	<p>S Gardiner asked if relocation of the bus stop might help solve some of the issues and queried the one-way system. J Caldwell stated that he had met Translink but no actions had yet been carried out. J Caldwell suggested two circles around the town as High Street is a pinch point and there is only one road in and out for emergency vehicles.</p> <p><b>Action: S Gardiner to contact Translink in relation to bus stop location</b></p> <p>J Caldwell noted an increased population in Donaghadee.</p> <p>S Gardiner asked if an origin and destination survey would be useful to which J Caldwell confirmed.</p> <p>N McVitty advised that he is happy to use network contacts to commission anybody from other departments as needed.</p> <p>J Caldwell noted that communication with the Regeneration Team is excellent.</p> <p>S Scott asked who would be helpful in the Council to have contact with. J Caldwell noted that Tourism, Lands etc would all be helpful.</p>										
<p><b>Item 8</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Donaghadee Wayfinding Strategy, James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company</b></p>										
	<p>J Hennessey provided an update on the wayfinding strategy for Donaghadee</p> <p>J Hennessey thanked those who attended the workshops and advised that they aim to distribute the draft after the Easter holidays, it will include rationale, components, design guidance and mapping, feedback will be welcomed when it comes through and Gleeds will have a cost extent to allow the group to look for funding opportunities.</p> <p>Chair thanked J Hennessey and S Scott</p> <p>*J Hennessey and S Scott left the meeting 17:00*</p>										
<p><b>Item 9</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Outstanding Actions   Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b></p>										
	<p>S Logan provided an update on the outstanding actions:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="391 1809 1516 1998"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="391 1809 606 1877">Action Arising</th> <th data-bbox="606 1809 790 1877">Date of Meeting</th> <th data-bbox="790 1809 981 1877">Member Responsible</th> <th data-bbox="981 1809 1332 1877">Action Taken</th> <th data-bbox="1332 1809 1516 1877">Date Completed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="391 1877 606 1998">Contact to be made with PSNI re ASB Issue</td> <td data-bbox="606 1877 790 1998">12/12/2023</td> <td data-bbox="790 1877 981 1998">S Logan</td> <td data-bbox="981 1877 1332 1998">Invite sent to Sam.Eccles@psni.police.uk</td> <td data-bbox="1332 1877 1516 1998"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Arising	Date of Meeting	Member Responsible	Action Taken	Date Completed	Contact to be made with PSNI re ASB Issue	12/12/2023	S Logan	Invite sent to Sam.Eccles@psni.police.uk	
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Contact to be made with S Cochrane re information for Sir Samuel Kelly Mural (names)	12/12/2023	S Logan	Email sent to Alderman Brooks to enquire about contact with Shirley – follow up email sent 14/02	15/02- Alderman Brooks will collate info.
S Gardiner to contact Dfl coastal erosion team and feedback to group	12/12/2023	S Gardiner	S Gardiner advised he is on the email list for the coastal erosion working group with Dfl responsible for 55km of coastal area where they own the sea wall or road adjacent to the coast. S Gardiner advised any unadopted land will be third party ownership.  J Caldwell noted the issues mainly are with the damage that cannot be seen on the sea wall defences  S Gardiner stated that Dfl take structural damage very seriously but noted that costs could exceed £500,000.	
S Gardiner to share Autumn report to group	12/12/2023	S Gardiner	S Gardiner provided Autumn report with group	
S Logan to circulate S Gardiner contact details	12/12/2023	S Logan	actioned	Complete
S Logan to enquire with the Housing Executive if any funding is available for upgrade improvements	12/12/2023	S Logan - Councillor MacArthur	Councillor MacArthur leading on this item.	Councillor McArthur following up- see email
C McMullan to follow up re Men's Shed with relevant officers- no response was rec from AND (J Caldwell to forward email)	12/12/2023	J Caldwell/C McMullan	D Birch leading for Regen Email sent to Community - no response received.	



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	C McMullan to provide response re availability of the regeneration unit for presentation from statistical society (J Caldwell to forward email)	12/12/2023	J Caldwell/C McMullan	Complete	Regeneration team in attendance.
	S Logan to provide relevant officer contact info for Live Here, Love Here scheme	12/12/2023	S Logan	Followed up - external grant programme - unable to assist.	A Kerr content to follow up
	C McMullan to follow up with relevant officers regarding sensory garden at putting green (J Caldwell to forward email)	12/12/2023	J Caldwell/C McMullan	Email sent to internal officers for update 13/12 - no response received.	
	C McMullan to provide a report to the group on The Moat, to include visitor numbers, proposed operation moving forward	12/12/2023	C McMullan	Added as agenda item	
	Regeneration to look at progress on existing sports facilities and provide update	12/12/2023	Regeneration Unit	Response from Leisure:  The Council sought and has now received the preferred configuration of facilities from the four clubs and their preferred operating model outline for these proposals. This has been circulated to the project group and will now be considered. It is likely there will need to be some further work on this aspect before a subsequent meeting with the Clubs in due course.	Complete

	<p><b>Sports Hub</b> Councillor G McCollum stated that herself and Alderman Brooks are to meet Graeme Bannister who is to provide a plan for next 5-10 years</p> <p><b>Action: Councillor G McCollum to provide update to members with information from meeting with Graeme Bannister</b></p>
<p><b>Item 10</b></p>	<p><b>DCDA Update   John Caldwell, DCDA</b></p>
	<p>J Caldwell provided an update on behalf of DCDA (attached)</p> <p><b>Point 3.5</b> J Caldwell stated that an objective in the masterplan was to create an RV site, Clifton School have suggested working together with the town. J Caldwell noted that the putting green is close to car park and toilets and sent a request to parks to make use of the area but parks felt it was too big and suggested Hunts Park.</p> <p>Councillor G McCollum advised she had written to Ann McCullough to set out the issue, A McCullough advised that it was a statutory issue. Councillor G McCollum asked if the RV users are staying and spending money in the town.</p> <p>K Boyd advised that they are spending money, noting a recent event where RV users parked at the rugby club for a donation and spent more in the town than some residents.</p> <p><b>Point 4.2</b> J Caldwell advised that he had a meeting with Brendan George, Urban Designer ANDBC, regarding a project to purchase lock ups at £125K for small business incubation and craft areas. This would include 14 units being joined to create 6 larger units.</p> <p>J Caldwell informed the group that the Climate Action Plan meeting was due to take place the following day.</p> <p><b>Point 3.2</b> Chair noted the whole area is very flooded but new toad stool and 2000 crocus bulbs had been planted and statue added. J Caldwell noted that £46K had been spent in the area and stated that "Live Here, Love Here" was very positive and helpful.</p> <p>Chair praised the Councils efforts.</p>
<p><b>Item 11</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Wheel/Skate Park – The Commons, Donaghadee   Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b></p>

	<p>S Logan provided an update on the Wheel/Skate Park and raised the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the Council meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 Council agreed to include a total of five applications in the Ards and North Down PEACEPLUS Action Plan to proceed to the next stage for consideration by SEUPB.</li> <li>• Following consideration of the five projects SEUPB have confirmed the application for a Donaghadee Pump Park is included in the list of five which will proceed to the next stage of the process.</li> <li>• Council will then consider the approved projects and make a final decision on which project or projects it will implement in the Borough using the total maximum budget of £1,555,205.</li> <li>• It is not anticipated that there will be any further direction from SEUPB before August 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: S Logan to keep Advisory Group updated with any developments in relation to the Wheel/Skate Park</b></p>
<b>Item 12</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	<p><b>Motte Car Park</b> C McMullan advised that Brendan George is working on plans currently and planning had been submitted with some changes now requested.</p> <p>Councillor J Cochrane raised an issue with dog fouling in the town and advised that he had spoken with Jonny Bettes in the Parks Team regarding. K Boyd noted that Manor Street was particularly bad.</p> <p>J Caldwell asked if it was possible to get a statement from David Brown re how many wardens, fines etc.</p> <p><b>Action: Regeneration to ask David Brown for a statement regarding wardens, shifts, and fines for dog fouling in the Donaghadee area.</b></p> <p><b>Agreed: The group agreed to support evening shifts of dog warden patrols.</b></p>
<b>Item 13</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>
	<p>Date of next meeting to be agreed.</p> <p>Meeting finished 17:33</p>





<b>Minutes of the Holywood Town Advisory Meeting</b>	
<p><b>Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>  <b>Time: 4pm</b>  <b>Location: Queens Leisure Complex, Holywood</b></p>	
<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Councillor Martin McRandal – Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Carly McMullan – Rural Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Sonia Logan – Assistant Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Calum Symington – Administration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Wendy Smith – Events Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Niall McVitty – Deputy Director, Department for Communities</p> <p>Marilyn Toogood – Faith Representative</p> <p>Tim Kerr – Community Representative</p> <p>Christine Layton – Community Representative</p> <p>James Hennessey – The Paul Hogarth Company</p> <p>Sharon Scott – Place Solutions</p>
<b>Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	<p>The chair of the Advisory Group, Councillor L McLaren, was unavailable.</p> <p>Councillor M McRandal agreed to chair the meeting in the absence of Councillor McLaren.</p> <p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were carried out.</p>
<b>Item 2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	<p>Apologies were received from –</p> <p>Brian Dorrian – Head of Regeneration, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>David Shivers – Urban Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p>



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	<p>David Birch – Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council                  Stephen Gardiner – Section Engineer for Ards and North Down, Department for Infrastructure                  Ryan O'Neill – Deputy Principal, Department for Communities</p>
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	No Declarations of Interest were received at this time.
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>
	The minutes of the previous meeting (6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023) were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting, proposed by C Layton and seconded by the Chair.
<b>Item 5</b>	<b>Update and Information from DfI   Stephen Gardiner, Section Engineer – Ards and North Down</b>
	Apologies were received from S Gardiner. S Gardiner will provide an update at the next meeting.
<b>Item 6</b>	<b>Review of the Holywood Town Advisory Group   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company &amp; Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</b>
	<p>J Hennessey introduced the project.</p> <p>S Scott explained her background was placemaking and town centre management. S Scott explained that policy context is changing rapidly and we are seeing a re-emergence of community planning. S Scott also explained that the advisory group is ahead of the curve and is well positioned to capitalise on the emerging frameworks.</p> <p>J Hennessey and S Scott provided a presentation – please refer to Appendix 1. Discussion followed.</p> <p>T Kerr asked what the current terms of reference for the group are.</p> <p>J Hennessey explained that they came from the public realm schemes where the group was created to take forward regeneration as part of the masterplans. They were to include representatives from community groups, youth, faith, chamber of trade, elected members, council officers and department officials.</p>



	<p>N McVitty explained originally the town steering groups had a key role in revitalisation funding and were involved in a number of schemes by Council and were instrumental in revitalisation of the towns. N McVitty explained that now possibilities existed to expand beyond just the masterplan projects and not just be driven by one project.</p> <p>T Kerr noted that the group doesn't have policy making powers or budget, they can suggest projects but there is no funding available.</p> <p>J Hennessey noted the groups can evolve but financing and resourcing have to be realistic.</p> <p>N McVitty noted the group could have a budget to work up for a funding bid.</p> <p>T Kerr asked who would be responsible for working up a funding bid.</p> <p>S Scott explained that this is part of the review and it will include a mix of people and funding to align efficiencies. S Scott noted it has to relate back to what the community want, and it will be different in different towns. S Scott advised that the group will have to establish priority for themselves and develop a business case from that.</p> <p>Chair noted that it would be good to have the group drive the agenda and not Council.</p> <p>C Layton noted that residents have limited resources but need more engagement with community groups to see what the collective want.</p> <p>S Scott noted that categorisation is the key to seeing representation, allowing spread and focus.</p> <p>M Toogood stated that there were lots of groups in Holywood but that Council are not supporting, for example with hanging baskets or planting. M Toogood noted in Donaghadee small groups are doing the planting around the town and Council are resourcing with seeds and plants.</p> <p>S Scott noted in Broughshane there is a rota of people responsible for watering plants and lifting litter to supplement council.</p>
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	<p><b>ACTION: The review of the Advisory Group report will be provided to Council officers in the coming weeks for distribution to advisory group members.</b></p>
Item 7	<p><b>Update on Holywood Wayfinding Strategy   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company</b></p>
	<p>J Hennessey provided an update on the wayfinding strategy.</p> <p>J Hennessey began by thanking attendees of the wayfinding workshop and stated that the document is being drafted. It will be circulated very soon and sets out a wayfinding system with orientational signage, design guidance and costings. J Hennessey advised that it would allow the group to seek out the first stage of funding. J Hennessey added that they are looking forward to feedback from members of the group.</p> <p>Chair added that it could be useful talking to local guides about places of interest in the area.</p> <p><b>ACTION: The Wayfinding Strategy to be provided to Council officers in the coming weeks for distribution to advisory group members.</b></p> <p>*J Hennessey and S Scott left 17:04*</p>
Item 8	<p><b>Update on Council Tourism Events   Wendy Smith, Events Manager</b></p>
	<p>W Smith provided an update on the Mayday event in Holywood on behalf of the events team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will be held Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May from 10am – 4pm</li> <li>- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May will involve a partial road closure from 9-11am for rehearsal</li> <li>- Full road closure on day of event to include High Street and Shore Road</li> <li>- 30 charity stalls along road</li> <li>- Stalls along Church Street</li> <li>- Hibernia Street car park will have a one way system</li> <li>- Lessons had been identified from last year</li> <li>- Expression of interest being placed on Council website this week</li> </ul>



	<p>M Toogood added that there will be face painters and tattoo artists for kids and Holywood Trust will be running tag rugby sessions. Additionally, there will be a petting zoo and the rugby club will be running events.</p> <p>W Smith advised M Toogood to contact Environmental Health reference the petting zoo and advised a risk assessment will be required.</p> <p>M Toogood advised that Ken will be carrying out walking tours and he will do two tours during the day. M Toogood added that an updated list of activities will be sent out that afternoon.</p> <p>Chair noted that there were funding issues last year and asked if the issues were resolved for this event.</p> <p>M Toogood advised that they were able to apply and receive an answer in February but received £200 less than applied for, they are seeking to fundraise to cover the shortfall.</p> <p>W Smith advised that she was a panel number and advised the Council did not receive the funding required to accommodate the high number of applicants.</p> <p>M Toogood noted that it was good to get the guaranteed money early in the year.</p> <p>Chair noted that permission had been given to contractors to store heavy equipment in Hibernia Street car park. W Smith replied that the permission condition was that they had to liaise with the events team and she will follow this up.</p> <p><b>ACTION: W Smith to contact contractor reference Hibernia Street car park</b></p>
<p><b>Item 9</b></p>	<p><b>Update on outstanding actions   Sonia Logan, Assistant Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b></p>
	<p>S Logan provided an update on the outstanding actions</p> <p><b>ACTION: Edel Trainor to be invited to attend the next TAG meeting</b></p> <p>E Trainor provided the following update:</p> <p>As it stands nothing has changed since previous updates. There is no update to the Play Strategy as such, it is a 10-year document, as you will be aware in relation to Holywood we recently refurbished Jonny the Jig,</p>



	<p>which is a Tier 1 play park, and we have been directed to conduct further consultation in relation to the older children provision.</p> <p>As previously advised we are planning the additional consultation requested in response to the report that was brought to Committee in October, which outlined the results of the consultation that was undertaken in September 2023. This will involve visiting the post primary schools in Holywood to conduct a consultation. We are also still looking into other sites in Holywood outside Council ownership that could potentially accommodate the older children provision facility and any identified will need to form part of that consultation. It will involve speaking to landowners in the first instance as we can't include a site as a potential location in the consultation if we don't have the support of the land owner.</p> <p>As you will be aware the public consultation that was carried out in September identified Seapark as the preferred location and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) as the preferred facility type.</p> <p>Once we have identified the potential locations, which will still include those previously outlined in Council ownership (Ballymenoch Park, Praeger's Field and Seapark), as well as any others identified that are outside Council ownership, we will pose again the choice of facilities (MUGA, Skate Park, Pump Track or Parkour) and locations, then we will present the results to Council again before we proceed towards delivery. It should also be noted that once we complete the additional consultation the delivery of the facility may require planning permission so that may also have an impact on delivery time.</p> <p>Chair stated that the Play Strategy for older children had selected three locations away from the town for a skatepark which was inappropriate. Chair noted that the public consultation had only garnered 50/60 responses when Kircubbin had 300 responses by comparison.</p>
<p><b>Item 10</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>
	<p>T Kerr asked if there had been any further development with the Northern Community Leisure Trust for Queens Leisure Complex.</p> <p>Chair responded that there was no answer as of yet.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Councillor M McRandal to contact NCLT</b></p>



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Item 11	Date and Time of Next Meeting
	Next meeting to be organised for June 2024.  Meeting finished 17:08

<b>Minutes of the Newtownards Town Advisory Meeting</b>	
<p><b>Date: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>  <b>Time: 4pm</b>  <b>Location: Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre</b></p>	
<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Councillor Steven Irvine – Ards and North Down Borough Council  Councillor Victoria Moore – Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Carly McMullan – Rural Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council  David Birch – Regeneration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Calum Symington – Administration Officer, Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <p>Niall McVitty – Deputy Director, Department for Communities</p> <p>Stephen Gardiner – Section Engineer for Ards and North Down, Department for Infrastructure</p> <p>James Hennessey – Paul Hogarth Company  Sharon Scott – Place Solutions</p> <p>Ian Foster – Newtownards Chamber of Trade  Derek Wright – Newtownards Chamber of Trade  Heather Lavery – Newtownards Chamber of Trade</p>
<b>Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	<p>Councillor V Moore accepted the role as interim chair in Alderman S McIlveen's absence, welcoming everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Introductions were carried out.</p>
<b>Item 2</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	<p>Apologies were received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alderman Alan McDowell, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Councillor Richard Smart, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Brian Dorrian – Head of Regeneration, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> </ul>





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- David Shivers – Urban Development Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council</li> <li>- Pam Williamson, Ards and North Down Street Pastors</li> </ul>
<b>Item 3</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	No Declarations of Interest were received.
<b>Item 4</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>
	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting, 23 November 2023, were reviewed. I Foster raised an issue with the validity of B Dorrian's statement on page 4 regarding the design likely to pass planning process.</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by I Foster and seconded by Councillor S Irvine as an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p>
<b>Item 5</b>	<b>Update and information from Dfl – Meeting House Lane Project, Court Square, Conway Square Vehicle Usage, By-pass   Stephen Gardiner, Section Engineer – Ards and North Down</b>
	<p>S Gardiner provided an update on behalf of Dfl</p> <p>S Gardiner explained that there was no progress as of yet on the Meeting House Lane project, but it is high on his agenda and Dfl will be delivering it. S Gardiner explained that Dfl had received an injection of money from the Executive, but it is to be spent on road safety issues.</p> <p>I Foster noted that the Chamber have organised a separate meeting with Dfl to discuss issues.</p> <p>Councillor V Moore asked if there were any timescales available yet. S Gardiner responded that there were no timescales as of yet but would hopefully develop after meeting with Chamber and possibly DfC.</p> <p>N McVitty noted that S Gardiner and himself are planning to create a more joined up approach where the two departments would share a joint interest.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that he would keep everything on his agenda and bring to the next meeting.</p> <p>S Gardiner advised that he has been planning several schemes. A20 Portaferry Road from 40mph sign to Teal Rocks, leaving the section outside Ards Football Club to a later date. Comber Road to be resurfaced which is 1/3 funded by DfC and 2/3 funded by Dfl including the roads and</p>



	<p>footpaths. Finally, Movilla Road from Donaghadee Road to Rivenwood including a layby on Abbey Primary School side for the school and a re-alignment of the road to accommodate.</p> <p>Councillor S Irvine asked if double yellow lines are to be installed at Movilla High School, S Gardiner responded that there isn't the room to accommodate them at present.</p> <p>Councillor S Irvine asked if there was an update on West Winds Estate, S Gardiner advised that they are looking at drainage schemes, he did not have a date yet but was targeting completion in the 24/25 financial year when budgets are released (approx. July). S Gardiner noted that last year his budget was £2.1M but through bidding rounds etc he had managed to spend £4.8M, adding that he aims to bring his priority list and budget to the next meeting.</p> <p>*D Wright entered 16:17pm*</p>
<p><b>Item 6</b></p>	<p><b>Review of the Newtownards Town Advisory Group   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company &amp; Sharon Scott, Place Solutions</b></p>
	<p>J Hennessey introduced himself to the group and advised that he will be joining each of the advisory groups for feedback to conduct the review of the advisory groups.</p> <p>S Scott introduced herself and advised on her background of Town Centre management and place-making. S Scott delivered the introduction of Business Improvement Districts into Northern Ireland, advising that place-making is a large area and that we are currently seeing introductions of policies to support which offer huge opportunities.</p> <p><b>Evolving NI Policy Context</b> S Scott stated that community planning is key and considering how the plans will sit amongst each other.</p> <p><b>Living High Streets</b> J Hennessey advised that the Living High Streets framework was very relevant to the interests of this group, thinking about places as a whole i.e. transport, economics etc. J Hennessey stated that this comes from the UK High Street Task Force and centres around the creation of local action groups. These groups are representatives who are supported to drive forward regeneration. J Hennessey introduced the Downpatrick Pilot Program where people from the town are playing a key role, drawing elements from the masterplan to support the action plan.</p>

J Hennesey advised that in the RoI, the town teams are assisted by Council with a designated Council Officer.

J Hennesey noted the variations in approach i.e. Town Teams in Ireland were very tourism focused, adding that while not all perfect they were mostly positive.

#### **Key Issues**

S Scott advised on the need to be flexible to shape the unique needs of each town, noting the wider community context and how to manage so many people.

#### **Relationship with Council**

J Hennesey noted that the TAG felt more like a council sub-committee with a strong emphasis on the Regeneration Team. J Hennesey advised that there was a very positive workshop held with other council officers and noted the need for more effective communication.

#### **Relationship with NI Executive**

J Hennesey noted that the TAG was very lucky to have a great relationship with DfI and DfC and to have both attend regularly.

#### **Relationship with Newtownards**

J Hennesey noted that the TAG was broadly representative and queried the communication between the group and the town itself.

#### **A way forward for Hawick?**

J Hennesey noted the town team is a base for growth of the town.

#### **Town Advisory Groups**

J Hennesey noted the possibility of an advisory support group for all the TAGS and suggested members from each TAG meet to allow the ability to learn from each other.

J Hennesey asked how the TAG's can be a conduit for information for what is happening in the town and a passage of information on what is going to impact the town. J Hennesey noted this review was about redefining and revitalising the TAG to be a positive force, adding that the group is a great source of knowledge about the town, and recommended a new name for the group.

I Foster asked how much cognizance there was in the High Street Task Force (HSTF) report, noting the report recommendation that not one size will fit all. I Foster noted problems in linking up communication with the

council but informed the Chamber did have a meeting with the Council in reference to their six projects for the town. I Foster suggested the need for someone to lead the council side as there was no accountability.

D Wright noted issues with the model for funding not always matching. S Scott queried if there was a disjoint between departments. I Foster advised that if the chamber was informed before starting a project whether they were likely or not to get funding for it then they wouldn't do it. I Foster noted that they are trying to get Newtownards designated as a gateway town with the main change would be the signage.

J Hennessey asked what I Foster saw as the role of the advisory groups. I Foster felt that there was no need for them.

J Hennessey asked if the Chamber supports the town centre businesses, to which I Foster confirmed. J Hennessey then asked if Chamber support residents which I Foster advised they do not.

H Lavery advised that she felt that the TAG doesn't feel like an open group, noting there is no pulling together to achieve a goal and people in the group were not opening to support each other.

Councillor V Moore asked if there was a shared purpose to the group. H Lavery advised that communication is needed at the early stages and that time should not be allowed to be wasted when somebody already knows the answers to issues.

S Scott asked if the priority lay with the masterplans.

I Foster suggested that everyone around the table should work together, but potentially spin off to deal with other items. I Foster noted that pages 9-11 of the HSTF report was not good reading.

D Wright stated that there has to be somebody to drive and lead otherwise nothing would get done and noted the lack of results coming forth.

S Scott noted the need to be proactive instead of reactive, enquiring if the Chamber is seen as the leader.

Councillor V Moore asked where barriers are seen.

I Foster stated that there is no accountability and it's the rate payers who suffer.

S Scott noted the renewed focus on Strangford as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and noted the challenges around that due to Strangford being split over two council areas.

I Foster suggested that we do our own improvements and let NM&D Council focus on their area.

Councillor V Moore asked who was creating the agenda for 10<sup>th</sup> April meeting and what were the outcomes and outputs expected. I Foster advised it was the regeneration department creating the agenda and the Chamber were laying out six proposed projects.

D Birch advised an economist has been invited to attend to explain the various funding streams and provide support on how to successfully complete an outline business case.

D Wright stated that Newtownards has an extraordinarily strong High Street, the shopping centre in 1970's was highly successful, and the shops went to the centre instead of the High Street. D Wright noted the belief in a future for the high street as there is still independents, butcher, grocers etc.

D Wright noted the need for a champion of the town as the TAG does not have enough power, adding that he hoped a new ANDBC Chief Executive might help and noted a possible over shadow by Bangor's City status.

I Foster noted a recent report of Belfast as a 20-minute city and asked why this could not be Newtownards.

S Scott noted the shift in town centre management focus to housing.

D Wright advised that Newtownards is well situated, with housing only one street behind the High Street. D Wright noted the Chambers business background and the fact that if something is not done then it will lead to failure, adding that he felt that the group is a "talking shop".

I Foster advised that the chamber want to work with the departments however the Conway Square seating was due to take six months and is now in its fourth year.

J Hennessey advised that what I Foster was saying chimed with this whole review and noted the reliance on Council to deliver and suggested a change to collaborative approach to take issues forward. I Foster stated that there were already people that do that.



	<p>N McVitty added that the TAG's were originally built for delivering public realm schemes but now it needs to be significantly broader. N McVitty advised that it cannot all just be regeneration focused and needs the right people in place. N McVitty added that he attends the meetings as he can see the benefit and he is happy to commission any departments we need, noting that we all want to see success.</p> <p>J Hennessey noted the need for each TAG to be unique while still maintaining some consistency for Council.</p> <p>Councillor V Moore finished by stating that Ards has a very distinct and independent identity, and we all need to be able to work together.</p>								
<p><b>Item 7</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Newtownards Wayfinding Strategy   James Hennessey, The Paul Hogarth Company</b></p>								
	<p>J Hennessey provided an update on the draft wayfinding strategy.</p> <p>J Hennessey stated that there had been two very good workshops and that they were currently working up a document to be presented to the TAG.</p> <p>J Hennessey advised a draft report will be available in the coming weeks and will include costings from Gleeds.</p> <p>J Hennessey advised that he had met with DfI's active travel team and advised that there could be lots of opportunities arising from them.</p> <p>I Foster asked about the possibility of including signage to mark Newtownards as the "Gateway to the Peninsula".</p> <p>J Hennessey noted that the designation of gateway would tie in and would help with achieving funding.</p> <p>I Foster noted that Wrexham in England had been designated as a gateway town and had received £40M of the strength of that.</p>								
<p><b>Item 8</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Outstanding Actions   David Birch, Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b></p>								
	<p>D Birch provided an update on the outstanding actions arising from the last meeting:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="391 1881 1428 2016"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Arising</th> <th>Member Responsible</th> <th>Action Taken</th> <th>Progress</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>S Logan to contact D Wright at the beginning of</td> <td>S Logan</td> <td>Complete</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Arising	Member Responsible	Action Taken	Progress	S Logan to contact D Wright at the beginning of	S Logan	Complete	Completed
Action Arising	Member Responsible	Action Taken	Progress						
S Logan to contact D Wright at the beginning of	S Logan	Complete	Completed						



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	January regarding response from traders for inclusion in Council report			
	Conway Square Covering comments to be sent to B Dorrian to include in report for Council in February	B Dorrian	Complete	Completed
	S Logan to contact D Wright beginning of January regarding briefing paper of potential projects and to set up a workshop for February	S Logan	Workshop April 2023	10th Completed
	Meeting House Lane - DFI to provide drawings when available to chamber	S Gardiner	Ongoing	S Gardiner will provide when there is more information available.
	DFI and Chamber to meet ref Meeting House Lane	S Gardiner & Chamber	Ongoing	S Gardiner to meet Chamber when there is more info.
	Invite Wendy Smith to next meeting to provide an events update	S Logan	Response from Sharon Mehaffy, Head of Tourism - a written update will be provided, and Wendy Smith will attend meeting in June.	Update provided and a member of events team will attend meeting in June.
	<p>D Wright noted that Ards Chamber had made a presentation to B Dorrian of a suggestion for an event for Newtownards as they have a strong contender for the summer Olympics. D Wright suggested funding for a Fan Zone in Conway Square.</p> <p>ACTION: C McMullan to follow up with B Dorrian.</p>			
<b>Item 9</b>	<b>Conway Square Seating   David Birch, Regeneration Officer, ANDBC</b>			
	<p>D Birch provided an update regarding the seating to be installed in Conway Square.</p> <p>D Birch advised that he has been advised by ANDBC Assets and Property Services that the installation of the seating is due to be completed before the end of April 2024. D Birch advised that there were issues with the storage of the seating leading to the requirement for a small touch up which has now been completed. D Birch showed a copy of the install layout and noted that there had been some minor changes, also advising that there has also been a reduction in the size of bench.</p>			

	<p>I Foster expressed concerns and queried the delay.</p> <p>C McMullan advised that the proposed locations of the benches and tables were positioned over drainage etc and this had to be revised. C McMullan added that the touch ups required were currently in progress and regeneration officers are working with the Assets and Property Services to install as soon as possible but noted that new windows are currently being installed in the Town Hall and was best to schedule the install following this work to cause least disruption.</p> <p>ACTION: D Birch to issue location drawing to members. It was agreed this would not be circulated outside of the group.</p>
<b>Item 10</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	<p>D Wright gave special thanks to NIFRS, PSNI, NIE, NIW etc in the role they played in responding to the fire at Cordners in Newtownards Town Square. D Wright noted that help may be required from the departments to assist in getting the area back to normal.</p> <p>I Foster asked if DfC and Dfl were able to attend the workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> April. C McMullan advised she will forward the invite.</p>
<b>Item 11</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>
	<p>The next meeting to be arranged.</p> <p>The workshop is schedule for 10th April 2024 at 4pm</p> <p><b>Meeting finished 17:30</b></p>



Unclassified

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## ITEM 15

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	28 May 2024
File Reference	RDP246
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Update on Notice of Motion Dereliction Scheme
Attachments	None

At a previous meeting of the Council the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

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

It was accepted at the meeting that it may take some time to finalise a report as there were several key components within the NoM.

## Not Applicable

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Since then, officers have had several internal meetings and met with colleagues from the Department for Communities (DfC). Officers have also examined what legislative powers the Council has in this area and enquired if DfC would wish to partner with it on any project. Both these areas will be fully reported on in the substantive report which is hoped to be present to Council in the Autumn.

Officers have also been in contact with Belfast City Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council regarding dereliction schemes they have initiated. Although these schemes were different in nature, they had the common principle of the Council providing grant aid to property owners of commercial premises in a city/town centre to bring them back into vibrant use.

This type of scheme would enhance the offering in the city/town centre and help to increase the non-domestic rate base which is a key component of the draft Corporate Plan.

It is felt that if the Council was to introduce a scheme of this nature it may be the catalyst to encourage property owners to renovate vacant properties within the centres and bring them back into commercial use and possibly create living accommodation above the premises. This would fit well with the current planning policy of Town Centre First.

However, to take forward this proposal there are several considerations that would need to be addressed before any such scheme could be launched. These are:

1. Staffing – as Members will be aware, staffing within the Regeneration Unit has been reduced for some time. Three posts have now been filled with temporary staff, however the Urban Development Manager retired at the end of April and this post remains vacant. As the Council is undergoing a structural review, it is now prudent to examine the structure within the Regeneration Unit. To take forward key strategic development projects such as this scheme and the development of the former NIE site, consideration is being given to the employment of a Strategic Development Manager and support staff (titles to be agreed). They would be tasked to take forward this work and also seek funding opportunities to deliver other key development projects. A Business Case for a slight re-structure is currently being produced.
2. Corporate Governance – with any scheme proposed by Council, either on its own or in partnership with a government department, a well-defined terms of reference and business case would need to be developed and agreed. Underpinning this is the corporate governance of any scheme which would ensure the protection of the Council and partner. It is acknowledged that in some instances an overly complicated process can put applicants off applying, so a balanced process would need to be developed.
3. Pilot and Budget – once a scheme has been developed and agreed by the Council and any partner, a suitable budget would need to be allocated to the project. The allocation of funding to any one project would need to be of a

## Not Applicable

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level that would attract a property owner to renovate the property and bring it back into use. The property owner's contribution would also need to be realistically set. It is also felt that a scheme of this nature would need to be over a three-year period to permit property owners to apply, obtain statutory consents and then deliver the schemes.

As members will be aware Council has established a Tax Base Development Fund, which as of March 2024 sat at £750k. The purpose of the Fund is to support the growth of the non-domestic rate base, local businesses and jobs. It is envisaged, subject to Council approval, that the proposed Dereliction Scheme and NIE site development would be funded through Council's Tax Base Development Fund, with the potential to also secure funding from partner/other sources.

It is acknowledged that our city and towns have different levels of vacancy and dereliction within them. However, Bangor and Newtownards have the largest share. The latest DfC vacancy survey (31 October 2023) shows that Bangor City Centre had a total number of non-domestic premises of 669 of which 138 (20.6%) were vacant. This is the lowest number since April 2016. Newtownards has 539 premises with 108 (20%) vacant. This is the highest number since April 2016. Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood had the following vacancy rates respectively 12.6%, 14.3% and 10.6%.

Considering this, it is believed that a pilot scheme, once developed and agreed, should be launched in both Bangor and Newtownards. The exact city/town boundaries within both that applicants would be eligible for grant aid would also have to be carefully considered and defined.

Once all these issues have been worked through a further report will be brought back to the Council for consideration.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this update report.

Unclassified

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**ITEM 16****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	13 June 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Capital Development
Date of Report	30 May 2024
File Reference	160127
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Strategic Capital Development Performance Report H2
Attachments	

**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 in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

Not Applicable

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The Council's 18 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 half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	June

The report for INSERT TIMEFRAME is attached.

### Key points to note:

- There continues to be good investment in staff briefings with regular fortnightly team meetings, alternating between Teams and in person.
- Professional development is also continuing as the unit continues to deliver a capital portfolio in excess of £170m over the next 10 years.
- There continues to be a good level of consultation with other Councils and Government departments through BRCD, Community Estates, the Greenways projects, Councils Estates Forum, and individual meetings.

### Key achievements:

- Continued to share capital knowledge and allow a holistic approach to all large, small and maintenance capital projects undertaken by a wide range of directorates through CPAG.
- Working with CPD to produce tender documents which take account of social value on all funded project as council policy develops.
- Completion of successful de-silting works in Ward Park.

### Emerging issues:

- Council resources to deliver ambitious capital delivery.
- High construction inflation.

### Action to be taken:

- Continue to review capital cost estimates.
- Assist in the Estate Strategy development.
- Assist in capital transformation projects.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report.

Not Applicable

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## Half yearly Performance Report - Strategic Capital Development

Generated on: 30 May 2024

Last Update H2 2023/24

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	No of engagement sessions with potential partnering organisations (cumulative)	8	8
	% spend against budget	97.78%	100%
	% staff attendance	99.04%	93%
	% staff reporting regular receipt of team briefings	100%	100%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	No of NEC Training Sessions to support project officers achieving accreditation	0	0
	% staff receiving PowerBI training	100%	100%
	Risks identified and escalated	Yes	Yes
	% procurement in line with TEO requirements using CPD templates	100%	100%

Not Applicable