

July 25th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 31st July 2024** at **7:00 pm** in **City Hall, Bangor**.

Agenda

Agenda

[C 31.07.2024 Agenda.pdf](#)

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1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month (attached)
[Mayoral Engagements July 2024.pdf](#) Page 4
6. Deputation – Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
7. Minutes of Council Meeting held on 26 June 2024 (Copy attached)
[C 26.06.2024 Minutes.pdf](#) Not included
[C 26.06.2024 Minutes PM.pdf](#) Page 6
8. Minutes of Committees
 - 8.1. Audit Committee dated 24 June 2024 (Copy attached)
[AC 24.06.2024 Minutes.pdf](#) Not included
[AC 24.06.2024 Minutes PM.pdf](#) Page 24
 - 8.2. Planning Committee dated 2 July 2024 (Copy attached)
[PC.02.07.24 Minutes.pdf](#) Not included
[PC.02.07.24 MinutesPM.pdf](#) Page 41
9. Consultations

9.1. The Executive Office – Truth Recovery Programme

The Executive Office – Truth Recovery Programme – Consultation available at: <http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/truth-recovery-mother-and-baby-institutions-magdalene-laundries-and-workhouses-public-consultation> Responses to be submitted by 19 September 2024 (Correspondence attached)

 *9.1. Consultation - Launch of Truth Recovery - Public Consultation.pdf*

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9.2. Department for the Economy – The ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill

For Approval

Department for the Economy – The ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill – Consultation available at: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/df/e/good-jobs-employment-rights-bill> Responses to be submitted by 30 September 2024 (Correspondence attached)

 *9.2 Consultation - The Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill.pdf*

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9.3. Housing Executive – draft Community Safety Strategy 2025-2030

Housing Executive – draft Community Safety Strategy 2025-2030 – Consultation available at <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/partners/consultations>. Responses to be submitted by 30th September 2024 (Correspondence attached)

 *9.3. Consultation - Community Safety Strategy.pdf*

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10. Response to Resolution – Autism waiting times in Northern Ireland

Report attached

 *10. Response to Resolution - Autism waiting times in Northern Ireland.pdf*

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 *10. Appendix 1 Response from the Minister for Health.pdf*

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 *10. Appendix 2 Response from the Minister of Education.pdf*

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11. Changes to conducting Committee and Council meetings and changes to the Standing Orders

Report attached

- [**11. Changes to the Standing Orders - Committee and Council meetings July 2024.pdf**](#) **Page 68**

- [**11. Appendix 1 - Letter to Chief Execs - LG \(Remote Meetings\) Regulations \(NI\) 2024 - Assembly approved.pdf**](#) **Page 73**

12. Whitespots Country Park Update and Letter of Offer

Report attached

- [**12. Whitespots Country Park Update and Letter of Offer.pdf**](#) **Page 74**

- [**12.1 Appendix 1 Letter of Offer.pdf**](#) **Page 77**

- [**12.2 Appendix 2 Updated OBC.pdf**](#) **Page 118**

13. Application for indoor Entertainment Licences

Report attached

- [**13. Application for indoor Entertainment Licences.pdf**](#) **Page 212**

14. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants

Report attached

- [**14. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants \(WG June 2024\).pdf**](#) **Page 215**

- [**14. Appendix 1 - Successful Anniversary Report for Approval.pdf**](#) **Page 218**

- [**14. Appendix 2 - Successful Coach Education Report for Approval.pdf**](#) **Page 219**

- [**14. Appendix 3 - Successful Coach Education Report for Noting.pdf**](#) **Page 220**

- [**14. Appendix 4 - Successful Equipment Report for Approval.pdf**](#) **Page 221**

- [**14. Appendix 5 - Successful Event Report for Approval.pdf**](#) **Page 222**

- [**14. Appendix 6 - Successful Individual Travel Accommodation Report for Noting.pdf**](#) **Page 223**

- [**14. Appendix 7 - Unsuccessful Report.pdf**](#) **Page 226**

15. Response to Notice of Motion - Ballywalter Road Car Park, Millisle

Report attached

[15. Response to Notice of Motion - Ballywalter Road Car Park.pdf](#)

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16. Street naming - Castle Lane Mews, Comber

Report attached

[16. Street Naming Report - Castle Lane Mews Comber.pdf](#)

Page 231

17. Nomination to Trustees on Northern Community Leisure Trust

Report attached

[17. Nomination to Trustees on Northern Community Leisure Trust.pdf](#)

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18. Sealing Documents

19. Transfer of Rights of Burial

20. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

[20. NoM status report.pdf](#)

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[20. NoM Tracker.pdf](#)

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

21. Tenders for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage Services

Report attached

[21. Tender for the Provision of external cleaning and tankerage services.pdf](#)

Not included

22. Land Purchase at Whitespots

Report attached

[22. Land Acquisition at Whitespots.pdf](#)

Not included

[22. Appendix 1 - Maps Whitespots.pdf](#)

Not included

23. Ward Park Bangor June 2025 – Licence Agreement

Report attached

[23. Ward Park Concert June 2025.pdf](#) *Not included*

24. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25

Report attached

[24. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024 - 2025.pdf](#) *Not included*

25. DfC Funding Application - Urban Regeneration Programme 2024-25

Report attached

[25. DFC Funding application Urban Regeneration Programme 2024 - 2025.pdf](#) *Not included*

26. Greenway - Acquisition of Dfl Land

Report attached

[26. Greenway - Aquisition of Dfl Land.pdf](#) *Not included*

[26. Appendix 1 - map of area.png](#) *Not included*

27. Greenway - Floodgates to Green Road Update

Report attached

[27. Greenway Project Update.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.1 Appendix 1 Dfl Letter of Offer for Newtownards to Green Road.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.2 Appendix 2 Dfl approval to appoint the Contractor Charles Brand.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.3 Appendix 3 Dfl Letter of Intent Comber to Newtownards.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.4 Appendix 4 Updated Comber to Newtownards OBC \(Floodgates Addendum\).pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.4.1 Appendix A - Map of Route.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.4.2 Appendix B_MMD OB Comber.pdf](#) *Not included*

[27.4.3 Appendix B_MMD OB Floodgates.pdf](#) *Not included*

 [27.4.4 Appendix C - Programme.pdf](#) *Not included*

 [27.4.5 Appendix D - Risk Register.pdf](#) *Not included*

 [27.5 Appendix 5 LUF0305 Grant Letter July 2024.pdf](#) *Not included*

 [27.6 Appendix 6 Response to the Request to meet the DFI Minister.pdf](#) *Not included*

28. Bangor Waterfront (Pickie Fun Park) - Appointment of Integrated Consultancy Team

Report attached

 [28. Pickie Fun Park ICT Award.pdf](#) *Not included*

29. Kinnegar Logistics Base Update

Report attached

 [29. Kinnegar Logistics Base update.pdf](#) *Not included*

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

25 July 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 31 July 2024 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of July 2024 (Copy attached)
6. Deputation – Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
7. Minutes of Council meeting dated 26 June 2024 (Copy attached)
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 - 9.1. The Executive Office – Truth Recovery Programme – Consultation available at: <http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/truth-recovery-mother-and-baby-institutions-magdalene-laundries-and-workhouses-public-consultation> Responses to be submitted by 19 September 2024 (Correspondence attached)

- 9.2. Department for the Economy – The ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill – Consultation available at: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe/good-jobs-employment-rights-bill> Responses to be submitted by 30 September 2024 (Correspondence attached)
- 9.3. Housing Executive – draft Community Safety Strategy 2025-2030 – Consultation available at <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/partners/consultations>. Responses to be submitted by 30th September 2024 (Correspondence attached)
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15. Response to Notice of Motion - Ballywalter Road Car Park, Millisle (Report attached)
16. Street naming - Castle Lane Mews, Comber (Report attached)
17. Nomination to Trustees on Northern Community Leisure Trust (Report attached)
18. Sealing Documents
19. Transfer of Rights of Burial
20. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

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

21. Tenders for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage Services (Report attached)
22. Land purchase at Whitespots (Report attached)
23. Ward Park Bangor June 2025 – Licence Agreement (Report attached)
24. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/25 (Report attached)
25. DfC Funding Application – Urban Regeneration Programme 2024-25 (Report attached)
26. Greenway - Acquisition of Dfl Land (Report attached)
27. Greenway – Floodgates to Green Road Update (Report attached)

28. Bangor Waterfront (Pickie Fun Park) - Appointment of Integrated Consultancy Team (Report attached)
29. Kinnegar Logistics Base update (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Harbinson
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Brooks	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman Graham	Councillor Irwin
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McRandal	Councillor Kendall
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McIlveen	<i>Vacant</i>
Alderman Smith	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKee
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Cathcart (Mayor)	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Chambers	Councillor Moore
Councillor Creighton	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Rossiter
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Smart
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Wray

LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS
FOR JULY 2024

Thursday 4th July 2024

09:45 10th Comber Farmers Market, Comber

11:00 Launch Event for Quarry Heights, Newtownards

Saturday 6th July 2024

13:00 Lifeboat Festival Day Open Day, Donaghadee Harbour

Sunday 7th July 2024

15:00 Happyfest, Crawfordsburn Scout Centre

16:00 Picnic in the Park Bandstand, Ward Park, Bangor

Monday 8th July 2024

13:30 The Narrows Series, Portaferry Sailing Club

Tuesday 9th July 2024

11:00 ILCA6 Youth European Championships Photo Op Ballyholme Yacht Club

Wednesday 10th July 2024

11:00 Balloo Wetlands - Radius Balloo Wetlands (Behind Signal Resource Centre)

14:30 Visit to Whitespots Country Park

18:00 Chinese Consul Evening Farewell, Culloden Hotel

Thursday 11th July 2024

11:00 Translink Summer Days Out Photo Op, Pickie Park, Bangor

Friday 12th July 2024

12:00 Annual Boyne Pageant & Celebration, Londonderry Park, Newtownards

Saturday 13th March 2024

14:30 Linfield Match, Clondeboye Park

Tuesday 16th July 2024

09:30 Visit of Lord Clanmorris' Daughter, Bangor Castle

Wednesday 17th July 2024

11:00 Rare Disease Community Network Visit, Bangor Castle

19:00 Groomsport Football Club 50th Mayoral Reception, Bangor Castle

Thursday 18th July 2024

- 15:00 Meeting with Conor Roberts, Bangor Castle
- 18:00 Rowley Family Mayoral Reception, Church Street, Newtownards

Friday 19th July 2024

- 10:00 Young Aviators Day, Ulster Flying Club, Newtownards
- 12:30 High Street Heroes Regional Launch Photo Call, Donaghadee Harbour
- 13:30 Ards Peninsula Kite Festival Photo Call, Millisle Beach
- 15:00 Portaferry GalaFest 2024, Market House, Portaferry

Saturday 20th July 2024

- 14:30 Donaghadee Sailing Club Regatta

Wednesday 24th July 2024

- 11:00 Visit to Neurodiversity Charity 57-59 Castle Street, Comber
- 18:00 AND Residents Group Visit, Bangor Castle

Saturday 27th July 2024

- 15:00 Cockle Island Boat Club Annual Regatta, Groomsport

Sunday 28th July 2024

- 14:00 Emerald Isle Highland Dance Festival, Nendrum College, Comber
- 17:45 EurlLCA 6 Youth Euro and Open Euro Championships, Kingsland/ Ballyholme Yacht Club

Wednesday 31st July 2024

- 10:00 Green Flag Awards 2024, Island Arts Centre, Lisburn

Item 7

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on Wednesday 26th June 2024 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Cathcart)	
Aldermen:	Adair	McAlpine
	Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
	Brooks	McIlveen
	Graham	Smith
Councillors:	Ashe	Kennedy (7.18pm)
	Blaney	Kerr
	Boyle	Martin
	Chambers	McCracken
	Creighton	McCollum (8.03pm)
	Cochrane	McKee
	Douglas	McKimm
	Edmund	McLaren
	Gilmour	McRandal
	Irwin (8.03pm)	Morgan
	Kendall	Smart
		Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Interim Director of Place (B Dorrian), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. PRAYER

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

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman Cummings and Councillors Harbinson, Hollywood, S Irvine, W Irvine, Moore, Rossiter and Thompson.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor sought declarations of interest and the following was declared:

Councillor Gilmour – Item 8.5 – 24. Social Supermarkets (declared at 8pm)

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor reflected on the sad passing of Councillor Wesley Irvine's mother, Yvonne, and on behalf of the Council commented that he was deeply sorry for Councillor Irvine and his family's loss and added that everyone's thoughts and prayers were with them.

Continuing, the Mayor extended his congratulations and those of the Council to the eight people from the Ards and North Down Borough who received Honours in HM The King's Birthday Honours 2024;

- MBE – Dr Robert Grundy, Elaine Hunniford, Richard Moore
- BEM – John Caldwell, Michael Levers, Stephen Newell, Mandy Kilpatrick, Brian Adams

On behalf of the Council, he congratulated Ciara Mageean on winning the 1500m gold at the European Championships in Rome and wished her the best of luck in future competitions.

In respect of the upcoming Somme Commemoration Wreath Laying Service, he reminded Members that this was being held on Sunday at Ward Park, Bangor. Members were asked to meet at the Bowling Pavilion at 1.15pm and inform Democratic Services if they required their Council robe.

Finally, for the public, the Mayor highlighted an upcoming concert. The band of the Royal Irish Regiment would be performing at Conway Square, Newtownards on Thursday 4 July at 1.30pm. This event would be publicised through Council's Corporate Communications Department.

NOTED.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2024

(Appendix I)

The Mayor reflected on the first weeks of his term which had given him an opportunity to see the best of the Borough. He recalled a school production of Aladdin at Kilcooley Primary School, where he had sat on the Board of Governors, and commented that it had been a huge honour to attend the Beacon Lightings at Bangor Castle to mark the anniversary of D-Day. He also thanked the Deputy Mayor for representing the Borough in Newtownards.

(Councillor Ashe entered the meeting – 7.06pm)

The Mayor highlighted visits to a Regatta Day Reception at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club, Ards Cycling Club town centre races in Newtownards, the Eco School Awards in which Portaferry Primary School had won Eco School of the Year. He

congratulated all those that had been awarded flags including individual pupils that had been recognised.

Continuing, the Mayor reported attendance at an information session in Portaferry to see the public realm works that were being completed in the town centre as part of a Council Regeneration grant programme. He also welcomed the scheme and in particular the social benefits that were part of the contract for its delivery.

The Mayor recalled a visit to meet pupils at St Mary's Primary School in Newtownards and had been entertained by some of the questions which he shared with the Council. Those included being asked if the Mayor had a private jet and bodyguards. He joked that he had not been aware of any threats made against him and then shared what he felt had been the most damning question of all, when a pupil had asked him who the real Mayor was.

He recalled a visit to the Comber Earlies Festival, and had taken part in a cookery demonstration in competition with the High Sherrif which he had lost, noting that his competitor had failed to declare previous experience.

Earlier in the day the Mayor had attended Beverly Lodge Nursing Home to mark Care Home Open Week 2024 where he reported an encounter with a therapy pony. The pony was renowned for performing a 'kissing' trick where it gently pinched a biscuit from its subject's mouth. The Mayor had been a willing accomplice and jokingly warned his fiancée that he had been photographed by the local press in an uncompromising position.

NOTED.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 29 MAY 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the minutes be signed as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING DATED 5 JUNE 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the minutes be signed as a correct record.

Raising a matter of accuracy, Alderman McRandal clarified that he should have been recorded as the Alliance Party Nominating Officer rather than Alderman McDowell.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the minutes be signed as a correct record.

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Planning Committee dated 11 June 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

8.2 Environment Committee dated 12 June 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.

Item 10 – ANDBC Waste Resource Management Performance Review 2015-2024

Alderman Brooks sought clarity on the HRC online booking initiative and noted that, according to the above report, it was implemented in September 2023. His understanding was that the online booking system had only been a trial and a review was to take place, but he had been unaware of that process happening. Responding, the Director of Environment advised that the online booking system had not been introduced on a trial basis however its implementation had included update reports and he recalled those had been issued in November and December.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McAlpine, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

8.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 13 June 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Ashe, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

8.3.1 Item 4 – Matter Arising – Nominations to Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive referring to a report at item 4 of the Place and Prosperity which 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.”

It was agreed:

C.26.06.24 PM

10

“That Council notes the planning arrangements set out in the report and that seven elected members be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group at the June meeting of the Council.”

RECOMMENDED that Council appoint seven elected members to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted and that Alderman McIlveen, Councillor Kennedy and Councillor Douglas be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

Further nominations were made as follows:

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that Councillor Moore be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

Proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that Alderman Smith and Councillor Smart be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Alderman Graham be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

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

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Aldermen Graham, McIlveen and Smith and Councillors Douglas, Kennedy, Moore and Smart be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group.

8.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 18 June 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the minutes be adopted.

(Councillor Kennedy entered the meeting – 7.18pm)

Item 24 – Support Options for Sustainability and Climate Change

Alderman McIlveen referred to the above item and asked that the DUP be recorded as against the decision.

Item 17.1 – Notice of Motion

Councillor Gilmour asked for an update with regards to the proposed war memorial at Conlig. The Director of Corporate Services advised that a report including the timeline would follow in the next couple of days once the decision had been ratified.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Alderman McAlpine, that the minutes be approved and adopted.

8.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 19 June 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 11 – Performance Report Q3 and Q4 Parks and Cemeteries

Alderman Adair took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor and Deputy Mayor following their recent appointments. In relation to Item 11 of the minutes, he highlighted concerns, expressed by five local football clubs, around the current condition of playing surfaces despite a commitment from officers that maintenance work would be completed in time for the start of the upcoming football season.

Alderman Adair asked what contingencies were in place in the event of the work not being completed in time. The Director of Community and Wellbeing responded that work had been carried out on the pitches at Portavogie with additional grass and fertilizer applied to the surfaces. The Parks team would continue to water and maintain the pitches and he was confident that they would be ready in time for the start of the football season.

Having inspected the pitches earlier in the day, Alderman Adair said he could not share that optimism. He reiterated his concerns and highlighted the need to ensure this was not a recurring problem as he believed it had been for the last three years.

Councillor Boyle referred to a meeting with the five local football clubs affected and he too had noted the concerns expressed. He questioned how the remaining works would be completed within the next five weeks and asked what work was still required. He noted that there were upcoming public holidays that would no doubt affect staff availability.

The Director added that some Members had enquired directly with officers and had received a detailed update on the plans which he was happy to share. He explained that a significant amount of work had started in mid-May and that further work, under the remit of a private contractor, had started later than that which had led to the concerns, but the major work required in terms of installing new grass had been completed.

Councillor Wray explained that he had spoken to officers directly and had been given a detailed update which was self-explanatory and included a commitment for officers to meet with club representatives in the next two weeks. While he shared some of the concerns raised, he felt it was important to review the matter after officers had met with the club. He was content that the Council was doing everything it could but he did hear the genuine concern.

Item 16 – Good Relations Annual Report

Councillor McKee praised the work of the Good Relations team and all those, including volunteers, who had helped to deliver all the positive work throughout the last year. He was disappointed to note the funding shortfalls that had hampered the work of both the Council's Good Relations team and the community however, particularly the failure of the NI Executive to provide a 75% portion of grant aid last year that had forced groups to scale back their events.

He noted that the uncertainty over the NI Executive funding had occurred again this year with no Letter of Offer coming in time for events that were due to run in the coming weeks.

Councillor McKee had been in contact with Clandeboye Village Community Association which, in light of the financial challenges, was having to make even tougher decisions than it had done last year in terms of who it was able to provide for and how they were going to put on the events.

He had found it terrible to hear that from people who were trying to do their best for their community. He also highlighted the uncertainties in relation to the available funding from the Northern Ireland Executive and understood it had not even had the courtesy to provide an update on if it would be providing the funding at all. That was not an acceptable way to treat anyone let alone those who were volunteering.

While it was not the Council's own making, Councillor McKee felt that it could not let the situation occur and indicated that he wished to propose an amendment.

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that this Council writes to the Executive Office to highlight our disappointment at their failure to provide their share of funding for Culture Expression events and festivals. Furthermore, that this Council asks the Executive Office to commit to providing their full share of funding for the Good Relations programme in 25/26.

Speaking in support of the amendment Councillor McKimm referred to a recent event in Bangor which the limited funding had aimed to support. It had been largely attended by those seeking asylum and had provided a fabulous opportunity for the community to engage with those people, given reported tension from some small quarters. That had been a great opportunity to pave the way for an understanding and it would have been considerably shameful if the Council did not take the action that was being proposed. He pointed to many cross-community benefits that resulted from the programme.

Councillor Martin added his support for the amendment. While recognising that budgets were tight, he stressed the positive impact that volunteers had on the Borough and how volunteering was the backbone of society and the amendment would underpin the Council's commitment to all of the volunteers across the Borough.

RESOLVED, on that proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that this Council writes to the Executive Office to highlight our disappointment at their failure to provide their share of funding for Culture

Expression events and festivals. Furthermore, that this Council asks The Executive Office to commit to providing their full share of funding for the Good Relations programme in 25/26.

Item 24 – Award of the Social Supermarket Service Level Agreement

Councillor Martin indicated that he wished to raise a matter in relation to Item 24 which had been heard 'In Committee'. That would be deferred until later in the meeting after the press and public had been excluded.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the minutes (with the exception of Item 24) be approved and adopted.

9. REQUESTS FOR DEPUTATION

9.1 Deputation Request from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that a deputation request had been received from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) which was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council accepts the request for a deputation from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and refers it to the next Council meeting or the appropriate Committee.

Proposed by Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the Council accepts the request for a deputation from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and refers it to the next Council meeting.

On proposing Alderman McRandal felt it was appropriate to hear the deputation at a full Council meeting given that it was relevant to both the Council's Planning and Community and Wellbeing Committees. The seconder, Councillor Kendall agreed, adding that NIFHA provided vital services including to a range of vulnerable groups and she felt it would be useful for Members to hear about the funding challenges and budget cuts that the sector was facing.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McRandal, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that that Council accepts the request for a deputation from Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and refers it to the next Council meeting.

10.1 RESOLUTION - NIPSA PAY AND GRADING REVIEW OF NON-TEACHING STAFF IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR (CORRESPONDENCE FROM MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL ATTACHED)
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council regarding the NIPSA pay and grading review of non-teaching staff in the education sector.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Council notes the correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council.

10.2 LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM COUNCIL

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that they had received a request from Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) to write a letter of support to submit alongside a funding bid they were contributing to, led by Ulster University, under the Coastal and Marine Management investment area of PeacePlus by 1st July 2024.

GSNI was proposing to deliver a number of coastal monitoring pilots to get a better understanding of the geohazards at the coast and how they impacted upon the economy, environment and society. The aim was that GSNI could develop a methodology to assess the vulnerability to coastal change for each of these locations and combine this with the projected impacts of climate change, so that they could be better managed in the future.

If successful, GSNI would be monitoring three sites including Kearney, Co. Down, located at the end of the Ards Peninsula and within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. Each site represented a specific geological setting that GSNI were hoping to apply to other areas of the coast.

Kirstin Lemon of GSNI delivered a deputation to the Place and Prosperity Committee in May 2024 and there was significant interest in the threats from coastal erosion especially in relation to planning. One of the aims of the work that GSNI would be doing was to produce spatial tools to support planning decisions in this area.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the letter of support for the CMAP funding bid.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. CORPORATE PLAN 2024 – 2028

(Appendix V - VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Council would be aware that significant work had been undertaken over the last 12 months to develop a new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, outlining the strategic direction of the organisation. This work had been progressed by an internal

project team with representation from all Directorates as well as a workshop with Elected Members, workshops with staff and a review of the 2023 Residents Survey.

Formal public consultation was undertaken in February and March 2024 and was now complete. This included public advertisement, resident focus groups and engagement with Community Planning Partners, our Consultative Panel on Equality and Good Relations, our Business Community, Elected Members and Officers. The Corporate Plan had been updated (see attached) following this public consultation. The document was in Word version as this was required by multi-media/graphics for publication purposes. It was proposed that an easy read version of the document was produced which could also act as a summary document.

The main changes to the document could be summarised as follows:

Commitments

We had previously referenced 17 'commitments' within the plan, which were essentially actions that we planned to undertake. However, feedback indicated a lack of understanding that that was the case. As a result, the word 'commitments' had been replaced with 'strategic actions'.

Outcomes

- Outcome 5 had been changed from, 'We have socially sustainable communities that were safe and welcoming' to 'We have safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing'. Feedback suggested that 'socially sustainable' was not understood and was not plain English, so it had been simplified.
- Outcome 6 had been changed from 'We have active and healthy people' to 'We have opportunities for people to be active and healthy'. Feedback suggested that the original wording was a big ask of the Council and, while important, it was not clear what our responsibility might be.

Strategic Actions (formerly commitments)

Following feedback, a number of the strategic actions had been reworded for clarity.

- Strategic Action 2 – 'Developing and implementing a plan to transition Council operations towards our long-term net zero carbon targets'.

This outcome now included an additional measure of success in relation to tree planting, based on feedback and the need to reference biodiversity as part of transitioning to net-zero.

- Strategic Action 9 – 'Managing and promoting working with businesses and enhancing the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination'. This previously said 'of choice' at the end.

Based on focus group feedback this outcome now included an additional measure of success in relation to sustainable visitor numbers.

- Strategic Action 11 – ‘Working in partnership with citizens to help develop and promote culture and diversity’. Originally this was, ‘Working with citizens to help them embrace culture and diversity’. Feedback suggested that the original wording was condescending.
- Strategic Action 12 – ‘Developing sustainable communities by creating safe public spaces that encourage social interaction and help to improve wellbeing’. Originally this was, ‘Achieving positive placemaking with a focus on creating sustainable communities’. Feedback suggested using the words placemaking and sustainable communities was jargon so had been reworded to simplify.
- Strategic Action 13 – ‘Improving physical and mental wellbeing for all abilities.’ Feedback suggested we should make sure that this action considered people with disabilities.

Vision

Some additional wording had been included to better explain the vision and it was suggested we included a diagram to show the link between the vision, priorities, outcomes, strategic actions and service plans.

Costs

Some feedback was received about the costing of the plan and specific actions so the role of service unit plans had been specified.

Indicators

Some feedback was received regarding indicators and measurable targets. The following had now been included:

- Proposed whole population indicators and Council specific targets for the three priorities.
- Big Plan whole population indicators have been included to help monitor our outcomes.
- Biennial residents survey indicators have been included and mapped against relevant outcomes.
- Statutory indicators and targets have been included and mapped against relevant outcomes.

Throughout the document, based on consultation feedback, extra wording had been added to each of the priorities, or existing wording amended, not all of which was highlighted in this paper. By way of example:

- In economic growth it had been clarified that increasing the money received from the non-domestic rate was not about raising business rates but spreading the burden across more businesses.
- Net zero had explained the potential cost and implications of not prioritising this.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Word version of the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, whilst design work is completed, with a view to publication in July 2024.

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

The proposer, Councillor Morgan, commented that it was important that the Council had a Corporate Plan.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Alderman McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

12. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: - On the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burials: D40496 – D40525
- (b) Conveyance from ANDBC to Peter Booth – land to the rear of 28 Beverley Crescent.
- (c) Ards and North Down Borough Council and WH Stephens LTD - NEC4 PSC Contract for the provision of Integrated Consultancy Services for BYC Watersports Centre
- (d) Conveyance from ANDBC to Clint McMillen – land to the rear of 129 Quarry Heights
- (e) Planning Agreement between ANDBC and Dr and Mrs Craig
- (f) Deed of Rectification Ballyholme Yacht Club
- (g) War Years Remembered Grant Agreement
- (h) Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Trustees of Ballyholme Yacht Club - Deed of Variation of Lease
- (i) Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Trustees of Ballyholme Yacht Club - Development Agreement
- (j) The following wayleaves in relation to Portaferry public realm works:
 - i. Dermot McAdam, 15 The Square
 - ii. Richard Henry Anderson, 16 - 17 The Square
 - iii. Anna Curran, 23 – 24 The Square
 - iv. Colum O'Neill, 30 – 31 The Square
 - v. Pauline Donnelly, 2 Ferry Street

- vi. James O'Neill, 5 – 7 Ferry Street
- vii. Alan & Joanne Milligan, 8 Ferry Street
- viii. Mary Arthurs, 9 – 11 Ferry Street
- ix. Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, Former VIC Building

13. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Transfer:

Thomas Corbett to Kim Lottie Mary Corbett
Clandeboye LX 5075

Error:

Lynn Calwell
Clandeboye Cemetery tree X22

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kerr, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the transfers be approved.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching Notice of Motion Status Report.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kennedy, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council tasks Officers to bring forward urgent proposals for ground maintenance to address the poor and unkept condition of Millisle Beach Park in order to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-kept to welcome visitors to Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further Council bring forward a report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage.

Amendment received by the original proposer and seconder as follows:

That Council tasks Officers to implement a ground maintenance schedule of works to address the poor and unkept condition of Ballywalter Road Car Park Millisle in order to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-kept to welcome visitors to Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th.

Further that Council bring forward a report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie beaches following recent storm damage.

The Mayor explained that he had granted a request to hear the Notice of Motion at this meeting due to the time sensitive nature and Members had been notified accordingly. He understood that the proposer now wished to proceed with the original Notice of Motion.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman Adair thanked the Mayor for allowing the motion to proceed at this meeting. He advised that unfortunately the work that the motion and subsequent amendment was calling for required permission from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). It was unlikely that that permission was going to be granted in time for the Kite Festival which was therefore the reason why he was now proposing the original Notice of Motion.

He outlined the location of the car park in Millisle which had previously fallen under the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure but under the reorganisation of Local Government it was now under the ownership of the Council.

Following years of neglect, much of the car park and surrounding amenities were covered in sand including 93 car parking spaces along with picnic tables. Alderman Adair and colleagues had been contacted by Millisle and District Community Association in relation to the matter which had led to his Notice of Motion.

While he understood that work to address the matter was unlikely to come in time for the Kite Festival, he appreciated that the Council would do the best it could within its remit to tidy the area for the popular event which would be held at the end of August.

He provided some background on the Kite Festival, explaining that it was organised by the Ards Peninsula Village Partnership and had been very successful in Millisle and Ballywalter and was a free day out for many people to come and enjoy the Borough's beautiful beaches.

He felt that a report was now necessary to look at how the Council could clean up this important asset. While the issue had been inherited from central government, it was important that once NIEA approval was given, the Council made it clean and accessible.

The second part of the motion referred to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie beaches. He explained that recently accessibility had been damaged during recent storms and made it inaccessible for those with disabilities. He was aware that the Council was doing all it could to get permission from NIEA to address the matter but it was impacting constituents who had highlighted to him that under the Disability Discrimination Act, allowances could be made for reasonable adjustment. He agreed that providing access to the beach was reasonable adjustment. He felt that it was important to make the beaches accessible to as many people as possible.

He was aware of a similar issue at Cloughey where the Council was still awaiting permission from NIEA, but he urged Council to increase its efforts as the Borough with the longest coastline in Northern Ireland, to make it accessible which was underlined by this Notice of Motion. He urged Members to support it.

The seconder, Councillor Edmund, felt that the proposer had summed up the issue well, adding that the area was popular for both locals and tourists, particularly those with camper vans. He pointed to the benefits this brought for the local economy and emphasised the importance of providing access to the beach for people with disabilities and hoped that Members could support the motion.

Adding his support, Councillor Wray agreed that the upkeep of the car park and disability access to the beaches were very important issues. The car park issue was even more important this year given that the Kite Festival was being held on 26th August and he noted its popularity, pointing out that a figure estimated between 5,000 and 7,000 people had attended the event in Ballywalter last year. He noted that it was organised and run by volunteers and it could be argued that it attracted more visitors than some of the Council's own events. It was important that the Council did what it could to resolve the situation.

He recalled that the issue had been raised with him at two previous Millisle Interagency meetings and residents in Portavogie had also brought the issues around the beach access to his attention. He had since been working with the Council's Assets and Property officers and he referred to that as a team approach, and he felt it was important that Members did not attack Officers, though he was not suggesting that was happening tonight, but it was important to work together to find solutions.

The Council had requested to have the sand removed and at the same time had sought a quote from contractors to undertake the work in removing that sand along with vegetation from the car park. He also noted that NIEA had now granted approval for the Council to undertake the work. In terms of disability access, he noted that the existing ramp was not DDA compliant and he would like to see one that met DDA provisions installed in future, but he recognised there was a long way to go to achieve that.

He asked the Director for the price that had been quoted for removal of the sand and vegetation and if the proposal this evening allowed the Council to commence with those works before 26th August or would it need to be a separate decision.

The Mayor advised that the motion was only calling for officers to bring forward proposals and was not calling for immediate action. He invited the Director of Environment to respond and he advised that a report could be brought back to the July Council meeting with a recommendation for proceeding with the work and he suspected that the work could be completed before the Kite Festival, though he would need to clarify that.

He confirmed that there had been a service request made for the work to be completed and officers had been able to establish that the cost would be in the region of £13,000. He explained that the Council required NIEA approval to remove

sand on such an environmentally sensitive location so approval was sought and the removal of the sand would need to be carried out in line with NIEA protocols. The work would involve filtering out sand that was contaminated for disposal and the remaining sand could be returned to the beach.

Councillor Wray was content with the response and further queried the existing ramps and for confirmation that they were not DDA compliant. He also asked if the Director believed that the Council had fulfilled its duties in making reasonable adjustments as referred to previously. In terms of meeting the DDA requirements, he asked the Director what steps that Council needed to take to make the access compliant. He wondered if engagement with NIEA and the May Murray Foundation would be helpful.

The Director clarified that the existing ramps were only there to aid access and were not DDA compliant. Officers had previously undertaken detailed research on what was possible but there were great challenges in implementing DDA compliant access at natural beaches. If Council was to agree to this Notice of Motion then this information could be included in the requested report for Council to consider.

Alderman McAlpine highlighted the level of demand for parking at the Kite Festival and last year Lord Dunleath had given over a field to help organisers meet that demand. She had noted last year that people had travelled from outside of the Borough to attend. She had already raised the issue with the Director but would welcome anything that could be done to facilitate the festival.

Councillor Kerr added his support and spoke of the event's popularity, explaining that it attracted thousands of people to the Ards Peninsula. He hoped that the maintenance work could be completed in time for the festival and looked forward to a great day.

In summing up, Alderman Adair thanked Members for their comments which he felt had been mostly positive. Reflecting on comments by Councillor Wray, he wished to clarify that he did not bring motions to attack officers, it was only to prioritise issues. He felt that, during his 14 years as a Councillor, he had developed a good working relationship with Council Officers and never intended to offend or attack anyone. He suggested that the Councillor put his own comments in to practice without judging others.

The Mayor intervened and asked the proposer to stick to the Notice of Motion.

Continuing, Alderman Adair explained that the ramps were installed to facilitate disabled people on to the beach although he appreciated they were not fully compliant but they did help the majority of disabled people access the beach and they were currently out of action. The purpose of the motion was to get them repaired and reinstated as quickly as possible. He recognised that the Council required permission from the NIEA and the intention of bringing the Notice of Motion was for Council to make it a priority. He added that the motion was only highlighting the concerns of his constituents and not a criticism of the Council as he knew it was awaiting permission from NIEA. He asked Members to support the motion and send

a clear message that everyone was working together to make its beaches and coastal areas accessible to all.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

15.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers

That the Council, following the 80th anniversary of D-Day, recognises the service of US regiment(s) stationed in Donaghadee and our Borough prior to D-Day and tasks officers to bring a report back looking at ways in which our Borough could provide a lasting memory to them.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Committee.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

8.5 MINUTES OF COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE DATED 19 JUNE 2024 (ITEM 24 CONTINUED)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

(Councillor Gilmour declared an interest in the above item and left the meeting – 8pm)

Queries on Item 24 of the above minutes concerning Social Supermarkets were raised and responded to by the Director of Community and Wellbeing.

(Councillor Gilmour returned and Councillors McCollum and Irwin joined the meeting – 8.03pm)

16. TENDER AWARD AND UPDATE ON GREENWAYS CONSTRUCTION (FILE CW30)

(Appendix VIII - X)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – EXEMPTION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS IF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON.

A report was presented to Council detailing the tender and update on Greenway Construction

The Report recommended that Council award the tender in line with process.

The recommendation was agreed and a request for a meeting with the Minister was approved.

17. REVIEW OF CROSS COUNCIL MUTUAL AID PROTOCOL (MOU)
(Appendix XI)

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6:4 – INFORMATION RELATING TO CONSULTATIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS

Council was asked to continue to participate in an MOU agreement which provides a statement of intent to assist partner councils in the event of a major Incident occurring.

A recommendation was agreed that Council sign the proposed MOU through the Chief Executive.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.17pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday 24th June 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor Hollywood

Councillors:	Cochrane	McKee
	Harbinson	McLaren
	McCollum (19:05)	Wray

Independent Member: P Cummings

In Attendance: NIAO – Brian O’Neill
Deloitte – C McDermott
Deloitte – N Sammon

Officers: Chief Executive (S McCullough), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Transformation & Performance (S Denny) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for lateness were recorded for Councillors Ashe and McCollum.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting including the internal auditors from Deloitte.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were declared. Members were reminded that they could declare throughout the meeting.

NOTED.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from 19 March 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be noted.

(b) Follow-Up Actions

(File ref: AUD02)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that, in line with best practice, the purpose of this report was to make the Audit Committee aware of the status of outstanding recommendations or any outstanding actions from the previous Audit Committee meetings.

There was one item from the previous committee which had since been actioned.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

The Head of Finance explained the report's content to Members. Of the five actions outstanding at the last meeting, three had been completed, one was outstanding, and the Director would later update on the remaining item.

Proceeds from the vesting of William Street were in line with normal protocol for the Committee. Members were asked to note that the Audit & Assessment report recommended a review for the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Corporate Services Committees in respect of performance matters which would be done through a Scheme of Delegation review.

The Head of Finance had worked on draft policies for Travel and Employee Benefits which had gone to the Director and Head of HR today, 24th June. The policies would go to the Corporate Services Committee after a consultation process, with a target for the end of the financial year.

The Director of Corporate Services provided a brief update on William Street, advising that the Council was still amid discussions with the Dfl and DSO and that numerous statutory declarations made by the Council had not been deemed sufficient for the DSO to progress. Another declaration had been sent in the last week and updates would be presented to Members when available.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

Paul Cummings asked if NI Audit Office could resolve the statutory declaration issue for William Street given the accounting treatment of the asset was different in both organisations. Brian O'Neill advised that though they were external auditors for both parties, until the Department believed all requirements were in place, it was not a matter that NIAO could involve themselves in and also would not certify accounts of either party until the accounts were correct. Brian O'Neill would however raise the

issue with the responsible Director in the Department for Infrastructure in this year's audit.

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

5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

(a) Statements of Assurance Report

(File ref: SOA1)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services which explained that, in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, Heads of Service were required to provide Statements of Assurance. Assurance Statements comprised of 4 main sections to be completed by each Head of Service following consultation with each of their Service Units. Period of this report, 1 October 2023 - 31 March 2024.

Findings

General – Identification of Risk, Monitoring and Control measures

No key issues had been declared as not having appropriate internal controls in place beyond those which had been identified by audit and were being worked through as part of management actions. All Services had confirmed that any risks identified had appropriate internal controls and any further actions taken, or to be taken, to adequately mitigate or resolve the risk had been identified.

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed by the Heads of Service Team and Corporate Leadership Team, for which owners had been assigned for each of the Risks.

Section 1 – Strategic and Operational Risk Management

Services report appropriate controls were currently in place and had identified satisfactory actions to review, monitor, control, mitigate and resolve issues, where appropriate.

Administration had reported that The Digital Strategy had identified the EDRMS as a priority workstream and that the existing paper files posed a risk. A filing rationalisation project was underway to ensure that Council was retaining records in accordance with the Retention and Disposal Schedule.

HR and Organisational Development had reported that an absence management action plan was in place and an Absence Dashboard had been developed to be presented to CLT and HOST on a quarterly basis.

Parks and Cemeteries had reported that cemetery grave spaces were running low, resolution of this issue was being progressed by the Cemetery Provision Project board.

Planning had escalated a service risk regarding the Local Development Plan timetabling of independent examination and ongoing issues associated with statutory consultees to the Strategic Planning Group (Department for Infrastructure) to the Corporate Risk Register.

Tourism had reported that a Fire Risk Assessment was carried out for the Ards Visitor Information Centre and that several recommendations from this were now being progressed by the Assets and Property team.

Waste and Cleansing reported that Arc21 had been informed that the current landfill used was to close in January 2025, and therefore the award of the interim residual waste contract was critical for the Council for service delivery. Reported previously, significant financial liability risk remained an issue with hope that progress could be made. The previously reported challenge by an unsuccessful bidder regarding the tender putting in place interim measures to treat residual waste remained to be heard in the High Court.

Section 2 – Internal Control

Generally, there had been no key issues arising to cause significant concern or requiring immediate action.

Administration had reported that they received the draft Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman guidance on dealing with promoting positive behaviour. The policy would be developed to localise this guidance to ANDBC. The review of the Land Use policy was completed in November 2023 and had gone live, and the Health and Safety team had caught up on the backlog of training previously reported.

Capital Projects advised that their Capital Project Handbook and Brief were kept under review to ensure they had been updated to reflect good practice. Work was also ongoing with the Finance Service to refine Business Case templates, and with Procurement Services or CPD, where applicable, in relation to procurement templates.

Communications and Marketing had reported on the launch of Citizen Lab which was a digital engagement platform to improve engagement and address lack of trust with key stakeholder groups. Their work was ongoing on the development of an engagement framework to achieve more consistency across Council on this matter. HR and Organisational Development reported that Deloitte had completed an internal audit on Absence Management, a draft report on this was produced in March 2024 and a final report was to be submitted once management responses had been received. An outworking of this audit was that a report was to be put in place to allow HR to inform Managers if staff are exceeding permitted flexi balances.

Economic Development reported that Work was ongoing with consultants and solicitors to progress the procurement of operators for the Bangor Waterfront project.

Licensing and Regulatory Services reported that an audit had been completed by Deloitte resulting in three outstanding Priority 3 findings relating to the system for dog licensing which were being resolved.

Leisure had reported that an unsuccessful recruitment exercise and consistent lower than acceptable staffing levels across the section were resulting in service delivery being negatively impacted. A significant redesign of posts was ongoing.

Strategic Transformation and Performance reported that across the three service units within it, there are three Priority 1, nine Priority 2 and nine Priority 3 recommendations which were being progressed.

Tourism reported that the five Priority 3 recommendations that they had outstanding would be implemented in the 2024/25 season.

Waste and Cleansing reported that they had one Priority 2 finding and one Priority 3 finding, both of which were being addressed.

Section 3 – Governance

Administration reported that Council had approved the extinction of a Public Right of Way which may result in a Public Enquiry. They also reported one instance of deviation from the Procurement Policy in a trial of digital postal services; a deviation form had been submitted.

Assets and Property Services reported that the legal action regarding construction defects at the Aurora leisure centre remained ongoing.

Economic Development reported a deviation for the Labour Market Partnership public relations campaign which was duly reported on a deviation form.

Environmental Health Protection and Development reported that the Appeal, in the Magistrates Court, against the Council for failing to revoke caravan site licence conditions relating to unregulated access to council carparks used for overnight stops in campervans remained adjourned. The review of council by-laws and physical barriers at the Commons Donaghadee to prevent overnight stays or provision of a compliant facility at that site, or another, was ongoing.

Finance reported that the first payments for holiday pay arrears had been made, but some aspects of this were still being worked on by HR and Organisational Development service in conjunction with the Unions. A Direct Award contract had been made to facilitate the upgrade of existing software to a cloud based system; this necessitated a deviation from Procurement Policy, the deviation form had been completed.

Licensing and Regulatory Services reported that the NET Kennelling contract was awarded to the sole quotation provided. Out of those approached, they were the only company prepared to offer this service.

Leisure reported there were two direct awards in the project to supply new fitness equipment at Comber Leisure Centre. In addition, a deviation was reported in the repair/upgrade works for the pool in Aurora Leisure Centre as the supplier concerned is the manufacturer of the system concerned.

Planning advised that the case reported in Period 1 with papers seeking a Judicial Review of planning approval granted was not resolved. Awaiting Judge's direction.

Tourism reported a Direct Contract award for delivery of a hospitality/tourism careers takeover day as the supplier was the only one providing this.

Section 4 – Miscellaneous

Finance had again reported that workload and long-term sickness inhibited the execution of service and governance improvements, that the failure to implement a corporate information management strategy was inhibiting service efficiencies from being explored.

Parks and Cemeteries reported that the impacts of changing weather patterns and the lessening 'seasonal' variation effecting service delivery. This had resulted in criticism of the service with regard to grass cutting across the Parks and Cemeteries service and also sports pitch availability. Mitigations were planned with increased investment in drainage projects and realignment of staffing structures / maintenance schedules.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing had commented that a proposed transformation programme for Leisure was in progress and the effects of the second phase of this on the swim programme had grown income and resulted in a full complement of staff. The next phase which was proposed for Leisure and Fitness Associates in 2023 had been approved by CLT and whilst not yet implemented, the recruitment adverts which reflect this evaluation pending had resulted in the highest interest in recruitment into Leisure for 5 years.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCollum referred to Page 2, Residual Waste Contract and asked for more information on Waste, Cleansing and Landfill with the residual waste contract. The Director of Environment explained that an initial award that been made on behalf of Belfast City Council through Arc21 had been challenged. Ards and North Down Borough Council were reviewing elements of risks regarding continuation of the process and further tenders. Residual waste was not sent anywhere other than landfill. A process of procurement was proceeding, and various assessments of risk would be undertaken before that contract. He hoped the Council would get a tender contract awarded in time for the target set at the beginning of the year which was when landfill options would begin to diminish.

In response to a query on cemetery provision by Councillor Wray, the Director of Corporate Services explained that a Project Board had been established to analyse the issue. With regard to Movilla, surveys were ongoing to support planning applications. Another solution was to look at new potential sites which was being explored as part of the Project Board.

Councillor Wray asked what progress was being made whilst the court case was adjourned regarding caravans in Council Carparks and what plans existed for the changing of Council bylaws. The Director of Environment advised that bylaws in the context of a legal position prevented overnight stays which Council could not permit under licensing legislation and planning. The court case had been adjourned pending the issue of revised terms and conditions for licensing of caravan sites which should be due this year. When clarity of licensing requirements would arise from new model bylaws, a move would be made to make arrangements to provide a certain level of provision in the number of carparks around the borough to provide an offering to the caravan and touring segment of tourism. Until that time, the law prohibited overnight stays.

Councillor McCollum asked if the review of bylaws was contingent on the magistrate appeal. The Director of Environment explained that if revised model conditions for licencing sites came out sooner than later, it may be better waiting to decide what the Council does in finality but if later, Council would review again and make a decision earlier. Much of the issue was contingent upon identification of suitable capital funding. The best scenario would be having a solution for next season but that could not be guaranteed.

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

(b) Corporate Risk Register

(File Ref: AUD02)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services explaining that, as had been previously reported, the redesign of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) was undertaken following the Deloitte facilitated workshop on 25 July 2023. The redesign incorporated improved headline Risk descriptions aligned to the achievement of strategic priorities, associated risk categories and assignment of the Risk Appetite agreed by Council.

A further development action followed to improve assurance and reporting capability. The outworking of this was the attached CRR Action Plan. The enhanced level of detail provided in the Action Plan includes:

- more detail on Current Controls. Note that the actions being undertaken may not always relate to current controls. Similarly, Current Controls would not require further action if the Service determined the control remained sufficiently effective
- Risk Detail, this describes the specific risk being addressed (headline risk descriptions are broad)
- associated Operational Risk Lead. The Lead would normally be the Head of Service associated with the particular risk being addressed however, in some cases other officers were identified as the appropriate lead for the risk treatment
- a Target date for completion of the risk treatment and a status update.

The CRR and Action Plan remained a live document. It was reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service, and biannually reported to Audit Committee.

There were, at the time of writing, 17 risks on the CRR. There were five risks with a residual risk rating of High. Of these, CR4 and CR5 related to climate change with an *Averse* risk appetite. External factors associated with cost of measures, and additionally in the case of CR5, the availability of affordable technologies, political and public were considered primary barriers to lowering the risk. CR11, decline in the non-domestic tax base, had a *Risk Taking* risk appetite, was similarly affected by external factors with legislation and funding for the transfer of regeneration powers not in place. CR15, provision of burial space, had an *Averse* risk appetite. A progress report was to be brought to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in June 2024. CR17, Council lands being taken without permission, had an *Averse* risk appetite. A project to detect early encroachment was at the design stage at the time of writing.

There are four other risks on the Register with a residual risk rating of medium that were showing a Risk Status of Action. Actions, along with primary current controls, were detailed in the attached Action Plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council note this report.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that the Committee would have had oversight of the improvements made to corporate risk. A report on risk appetite had been presented last year and in the most recent Committee, identification of corporate level risks and work ongoing in relation to producing an action plan to combat those risks. That work was outlined in Item 5b, produced on a top-down basis. The future would involve a bottom-up approach with departments reviewing their own risk registers to be updated for the Corporate Risk Register with the ability to escalate any risks to a corporate level for monitoring.

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

(c) Performance Improvement Update

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Corporate Services, which advised of The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 placing a duty upon Councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to account for it. At the beginning of each financial year, the Council was required to determine its priorities for improvement which were aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Plan and to publish a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) by 30th June, which would set out improvement objectives for the year ahead, and by 30 September to publish a Self-Assessment Report to review performance against the improvement objectives set in the preceding year.

Performance Planning and Management

To fulfil this requirement, Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028 soon to be launched)
- PIP – published annually in June
- Service Plans – developed annually

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service were to contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Section 90 of the Act required a council, during each financial year, to collect information which would allow it to assess its performance in achieving its improvement objectives and to measure its performance against performance indicators or standards set by the Department or any other indicators or standards which the council chooses to use.

The Council had governance arrangements in place to assure accountability for improvement and to ensure the delivery of its plans took place in an open, effective, honest and accountable manner.

These arrangements included:

- Alignment of the service planning and budget process to ensure all costs are included in the estimate process
- An electronic performance management system (Ideagen), which can:
 - analyse data on a range of frequencies for trends and comparison
 - track the progress of indicators and actions
 - provide and communicate regular and robust performance information to managers, Elected Members and the public
- Half yearly reporting on Service Plans to relevant standing committees; in December and June.
- Half yearly reporting on progress against the Performance Improvement Plan to Audit Committee
- Monthly reporting on Capital Projects to Corporate Projects Portfolio Board
- Reporting to Strategic Policy and Finance Group on at least 3 occasions per year
- Appropriate risk management in relation to main programmes of work

Performance Improvement Plan 2023/24

This year council's PIP identified 5 improvement objectives with a corresponding 42 actions together with 7 Statutory Indicators and 4 self-imposed indicators.

It should be noted that this report reflected performance of the PIP only and was not necessarily representative of the overall performance of the organisation.

Where PIP measures were not being met, Action Plans would be presented to parent Committees as part of half yearly Service Plan performance reporting.

An update on performance against the 2023/24 PIP was attached at **Appendix 1**.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the attached Performance Update Report for the 2023/24 PIP.

The new PIP for 2024/25 will be published by 30th June, following Corporate Committee and Council approval.

A formal annual Self-Assessment Report for 2023/24 will be completed and published by 30th September 2024, following Corporate Committee and Council approval in September.

Councillor McCollum proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCollum recalled suggestions of this item going between Corporate and Audit Committees and asked what the future held. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the plan had been to make it a Corporate Committee only item. The issue had been that Plans came to Audit whilst Monitoring was discussed at the Corporate Committee. The Terms of Reference would be updated as part of a Scheme of Delegation approved by the Corporate Committee earlier in the month.

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

6. EXTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Draft Audit Strategy

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above report from Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Brian O'Neill explained how the strategy outlined NIAO's approach to auditing the year's accounts as well as audit assurance throughout the process. Materiality was £1.7m based on 2% of expenditure of last year. Fees had increased from last year to £77k with Performance Improvement Audit costing £18k.

Fees had increased as the private sector contractor who had been tendered five years ago had increased their fees whilst audits are carried out to an international audit standard resulting in a higher level of work.

Actions listed for the Audit Committee included discussing if assessments of risk were complete and whether management had any suspected fraud/compliance issues with the Council. The report confirmed NIAO's independence of Council, how it managed personal data, and changes to the code of practice.

Two significant audit risks had been identified, namely managing overriding controls (an element of all audits involving looking at journal entries when counting estimates and attempt to discover any transactions outside of the norm) and financial resilience (high inflation rates 2023-24 with significant impact on Council finances). Chief Financial Officer's assessment of growing concern, ensure financial projections and plans adequate and consider disclosures re financial position 31st March 24.

The output VAT recoverable relating to supporting services was a Council-wide subject, brought forth by an HMRC ruling which NIAO would audit to discover how the Council had accounted for it.

Last year, NIAO referenced outstanding amounts receivable through the Department for Infrastructure which NIAO would again look at through Audits for any progress made. In terms of timescales, NIAO's Audit was due to start in a few weeks with a view to certification by a Local Government Officer by the 30th September; a timeframe shared by the Performance Improvement Audit.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McCollum asked if NIAO was satisfied with progress on the vesting of lands and the amount outstanding from the Department of Infrastructure. Brian O'Neill advised that such subjects would be looked into as part of the Audit and could not be assessed until all information had been investigated.

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

7. INTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Annual Report 2023-24

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above report from Deloitte.

Camille McDermott (Deloitte) explained that this evening's report had come in a draft form at the previous committee meeting. Final Audits had been completed to the end of March 2024 with no change to the overall assurance rating with a note on the continuation of making progress on the implementation of recommendations. Of note, at the last Committee meeting, three Priority #1 had been identified as outstanding while the progress report for this period showed that two of them had been completed; a good evidence base for progress being made.

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

(b) Annual Plan 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above report from Deloitte.

Camille McDermott explained that the Annual Plan had been presented at the last Committee meeting and approved. The only update was to propose start dates.

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

(c) Progress report 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above report from Deloitte.

Camille McDermott explained that the report was to update Members on what had been completed since the last Committee. There were two parts; the closure and completion of the 2023-24 plan and progress on the 2024-25 plan. Fieldwork had already commenced for the 2024-25 plan and planning had commenced for three further audits.

The outstanding recommendations database update sought management status updates on open internal recommendations. If these were a Priority #3, advice would be taken and a test sample at the years' end whilst if they were Priority #1 or #2, a detailed review of evidence for assurance would be carried out to ensure recommendations were being implemented. There were 44 issues open at the last Audit Committee, 21 of which had been closed. With those added at the previous meeting, 37 recommendations were open, 15 of which were in progress. There were no Priority #1 that were not at least in progress with page 21 identifying a Priority #1 with only 1 aspect of the overall recommendation that had yet to be implemented and would happen at the end of the year.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

(c-1) Vehicle Management

This report had been requested in addition to the 2023-24 plan involving Vehicle procurement, disposal and maintenance. Two Priority #1s and three Priority #2s had been raised with overall limited assurance. The key points of Priority #1s related to the disposal of vehicles. The Replacement Strategy document did not consider buy/lease cost analysis. It had also been noted that information on forms had not been fully completed with a lack of documented approval from Heads of Service on the needs analysis. There was a purchase order that should have been approved at Director level but had not been whilst some information was missing on purchase order forms that would have been expected and a lack of documented rationale. In other instances, vehicles were purchased through a framework supplier but the framework provided the option of further mini-competitions with potential suppliers whilst a direct award option had been taken without any rationale.

The second Priority #1 related to vehicle checks which were important for evidencing health & safety. In a sample of 15 vehicles, 2 had no evidence of a vehicle check in their lifetime, 4 with no evidence in 15 months and a larger majority where signature inspections were undated. Some of the sections of the periodic inspection forms were incomplete and though this may have been due to being non-applicable,

leaving them blank raised the question as to whether they should have been completed. Recommendations were accepted by management and responses had been provided.

In Priority #2 findings related to having specific policies and procedures for vehicle procurement, replacement and disposal that were separate from the broader asset management policy. When investigating three vehicles disposed of, it was noted that disposal forms did not require the Head of Service Approval which should be a requirement. There was no documented rationale for the disposal of vehicles; how the trade-in price was reached and a valuation of the trade-in method. There was no process for review by Heads of Service. In another Priority #2 finding regarding vehicle parts inventory, a clear process should be required to carry out stock counts with documentation and the restriction of access to the storeroom. It was noted that staff should be trained in making use of technology as on the site inspection date, staff were unable to provide a report of the stock count.

Councillor McCollum queried if the issues outlined related to inadequate staff resources or training. Camille McDermott confirmed it had been a training issue with the system.

Councillor McLaren asked if the lack of safety inspections would invalidate insurance, noting concern of Council vehicles in public that may not be safe. Camille McDermott could not confirm that the daily checks were not completed, just that they were not documented which was a challenge for Council but was unable to comment on its effect on insurance. It had been listed as a significant Priority #1 risk and in the event of an accident, the Council would have to demonstrate all checks had been completed.

(c-2) HR Absence Management

Camille McDermott summarised the report to Members, explaining that the report looked at processes around Occupational Health and Absence Management. It had been noted in the overview that overall absence for the reporting period was 6% made largely from long-term absences. Of note, any person absent for four weeks or more was referred to Occupational Health which helped to manage long-term absences with monitoring of attendance to Occupational Health appointments. Line Managers and HR would monitor longer term absences and there was a clear process to undertake such reviews. This review sought satisfactory assurance. There were no Priority #1 findings, two Priority #2 findings and two Priority #3 findings.

Priority #2 findings related to automatic notifications for particular absence trigger points which would assist HR Staff monitoring by removing duplicated effort. The second finding related to a small number in the sample of supporting documentation not being uploaded to the HR Core system. The Priority #3 findings were with regard to enhancements for key person dependency risk with one reporting system, Power BI having only one staff member trained to use reports.

(c-3) IT Control Systems

This report investigated user access management controls with the Core HR system and Windows Active Directory. The report received limited assurance with two Priority #1 findings, one Priority #2 finding and one Priority #3 finding.

The first Priority #1 related to privileged accounts on the system that had a greater level of ability in terms of systems and access. On seventeen of these accounts, Council were unable to confirm the appropriateness of accounts to have that level of access and were undertaking an assessment. There were a number of generic accounts on the system that did not have rotating passwords with accounts that did not expire and no management tool for the protection of passwords. The second Priority #1 referred to password settings in Windows and Core. An Access Control Policy existed for minimum length of passwords with two systems not meeting that policy. Some passwords did not expire whilst others did not have double authentication for logging in. Those findings were accepted by management and responses had identified required actions.

The first Priority #2 was with regard to the monitoring of what the Core HR in Council systems does and, ensuring as a process, applying the principle of leased privilege whilst periodically reviewing users with that level of access. The second Priority #2 was with regard to two accounts having privileged-level access to payroll and security menus which would result in a segregation of duties conflict. Management confirmed manual monitoring controls were in place for any unauthorised actions, however, it was noteworthy that this kind of dual access did not adhere to best practice guidelines. Both findings were accepted by management with an action plan in place to implement them.

The Priority #3 finding related to having a process for when a staff member leaves and ensuring work is saved into a shared folder which would assist in the event of a Freedom of Information request that may require access of a leaver's account as had been exemplified in one instance reviewed by the team. That process was not set out within documents and has been accepted by management with an action plan in place.

Councillor Wray referenced the review of IT Controls to Support Remote Working and how five of the six management responses had been implemented with the sixth requiring automated SIEM. He asked what the associated costs would be and to where the funding application had been submitted. The Head of Transformation & Performance explained that applying for funding was actually part of the estimates process and had been secured for the year. It was profiled to happen in October of 2024.

Councillor Wray queried Travel & Subsistence and the requirement for a single policy with clarification around essential and casual car users. He asked why the original date cited had been 2019 with target dates changed yearly from 2022 to 2025. The Head of Finance explained that this had been part of a range of policies. Policies had been an issue for finance as noted in the Audit Committee. In the past fifteen months, the Head had reviewed one policy and had six pass through Council. A draft of this policy had gone to the Director and the Head of HR as well as an

Employee Payments Policy on the 24th June 2024. Challenges existed for various reasons such as resourcing and the number of Directors involved as well as Coronavirus, Cost of Living etc. Significant progress had been made over the past year with additional resources secured.

Councillor McLaren asked if the systems in place for absence management were sufficient as the topic was raised at meetings regularly. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the review had been around processes, procedures and controls with a focus on the Core HR System. Recommendations from the review would allow for enhancing the functionality of the IT system. A working group had been established between the Head of Finance, Head of Transformation & Performance, HR and other departments to review the use of the Core HR system. The system package had recently been increased after exploring additional uses.

In the broader point of absence, this issue was not just limited to Council but for many Public Sector Organisations. The Director had presented a paper on Absence Management at the Corporate Committee which showed that absence statistics were increasing but that also stated the various approaches to managing it from supporting the individual through a number of methods like Occupational Health, Westfield and new initiatives like early-intervention mental health services, as was being piloted with seventy staff with the aim of preventing mental health-related absences before they happened. The other issues identified around internal controls such as return to work meetings being carried out when they were due, and absence management review points have improved which was reflected in the action plan. However, there were a number of elements outside of the Council's control such as appointment waiting times.

Councillor McCollum commended the efforts of Deloitte in identifying areas of improvement such as the absence trigger notification which may assist in the 5% plus threshold being addressed more easily. She suggested that it should be elementary that return to work interviews were completed and monitored and that all return to work interviews had a pathway of due diligence for reasons such as employee welfare and the culture of the organisation as a whole. Though Councillor McCollum understood that elements such as doctor appointments and medical forms took longer to access and were outside of Council control, they still required some kind of improvement. The Director of Corporate Services agreed, explaining some issues had been due to a lack of technology that should be in place as standard and were being worked through by the aforementioned Working Group. Absence Management was the number one priority for the group and with automated return to work notifications, an improvement would be made. It could be possible that, similar to the vehicle management report, some return to works may have been completed but were not documented which may be corrected by more system-based checks.

Councillor Cochrane recalled an experience of staff leaving and accounts not being shut off such as the NET email which appeared to no longer be in use. He believed an automatic email should be placed on such accounts if they remain open to inform senders of the accounts' invalid status. The Director of Corporate Services was not aware of the NET email issue but agreed that in circumstances where an email group ceased to be used, action was required.

Councillor Harbinson asked what the nature of account holders had been, believing it to be a concerning issue. The Head of Transformation & Performance welcomed Deloitte’s efforts in flagging issues which were actioned quickly. Of the nine Priority #1s, four had been closed, 4 were about to close and the other was likely to close around September 2024. The team were aware of the account holders and the reasons for access and were not concerned.

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

8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION

The Chairman (Councillor Hollywood) drew Members’ attention to the four items circulated for information.

[Planning Fraud Risks | Northern Ireland Audit Office \(niauditoffice.gov.uk\)](https://niauditoffice.gov.uk)

[Internal Fraud Risks | Northern Ireland Audit Office \(niauditoffice.gov.uk\)](https://niauditoffice.gov.uk)

[Grant Fraud Risks | Northern Ireland Audit Office \(niauditoffice.gov.uk\)](https://niauditoffice.gov.uk)

[Procurement Fraud risk guide | Northern Ireland Audit Office \(niauditoffice.gov.uk\)](https://niauditoffice.gov.uk)

NOTED

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business at 20:06.

11. DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(File Ref: FIN23)

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

3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

A report was provided from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the draft Financial Statements for 2023/24 were attached for the Committee’s information and

to note, before submission to the Department for Communities, Local Government & Housing Regulation Division and the commencement of the external audit.

It was recommended that the Council notes the draft Financial Statements for 2023/24.

The recommendation was AGREED.

9. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE (FILE 231329)

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

3. Exemption: relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Council was asked to note that there had been one single tender award since the previous Audit Committee meeting. The recommendation was adopted.

10. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA PROTECTION MATTERS

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

12. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE AND INTERNAL AUDIT OFFICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

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

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 21:08.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Wray

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell

Councillors: Creighton Kendall
Harbinson Morgan
Martin

Officers: Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Planning (G Kerr), Principal Planning Officer (Acting) – Development Management (C Blair) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from the Mayor (Councillor Cathcart), who was on Council business, also from the Chair (Aldermen McIlveen), Alderman Smith, and Councillors McKee, Kerr, Rossiter, McCollum and McLaren.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest were notified.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 11 JUNE 2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2024/0075/F – Demolition of garage and erection of a one and a half storey side extension and double garage with a single sotrey link between, 6a Cultra Terrace, Holywood

(Appendices I & II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer’s report.

DEA: Hollywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Called in by two Members of the Committee, Alderman Graham and Councillor Creighton

Proposal: Demolition of existing garage and erection of a one and a half storey side extension and double garage with a single storey link between.

Site Location: 6a Cultra Terrace, Hollywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Head of Planning explained that the application was for the demolition of the existing garage at the property and the erection of a one and a half storey side extension and double garage with a single storey link between at 6a Cultra Terrace, Hollywood.

The application was coming before Members due to a call in from Alderman Graham and Councillor Creighton.

The recommendation was to approve planning permission.

Members were asked to note that since the publication of the case officer report an additional objection had been received from a previous objector bringing the total to three from two addresses. No new material planning issues were raised in the most recent objection.

Members were also advised that there was extant permission on the application site for a replacement dwelling and garage.

A slide was shown with a Google Earth image and the application site was described as being within the development limits of Hollywood as identified by the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) 2015. The application site was within the proposed Marino, Cultra and Craigavad Area of Townscape Character (HD 09). The site was flat and currently comprised a dwelling with a detached single garage. The surrounding area was considered to be residential with a variety of house types, designs, plot sizes and layouts.

There was an existing access from the southwest onto Cultra Terrace with another access to the north corner of the site leading onto Cultra Avenue.

There were a variety of boundaries to the site which included wooden fencing to the northeast, a wall to the northwest, a mature hedge to the southeast with gates and wall, hedging and post and wire fence to the southwest.

The plot on which the dwelling stood consisted of a front garden extending to approximately 21m to the southwest and the side garden approximately 14m to the northwest.

Slides were shown along with pictures of the site to provide some context.

As previously mentioned, there was a previous extant approval for a replacement dwelling on the application site which was a material consideration in the determination of the application being presented.

Planning reference LA06/2019/0433/F proposed the demolition of existing dwelling with a replacement dwelling with a new access onto Cultra Avenue. Planning permission was granted for that application on 02 April 2021.

For Members' benefit the slide showed the approved 2 storey dwelling on the application site.

However, referring back to the current proposal, the overall design was considered to be acceptable with the incorporation of render and slate roof tiles. There was evidence of timber cladding within the surrounding area therefore the finishes were sympathetic to the appearance of the proposed ATC. The main public views of the site would be from the existing laneway on Cultra Terrace, and the extension was not considered to be incongruous within the local street scene.

There were several high-level Velux roof lights that would be incorporated into the design. The proposal included a side extension projecting 8.8m from the gable elevation of the existing dwelling measuring 7.35m in length. The extension would have a pitched roof, with a ridge height of 5.8m sitting approximately 0.8m higher than the existing ridge height of the host dwelling. Two large flat roofed dormers were incorporated to the front elevation measuring 2.65m.

The proposal also included a link extension between the main dwelling and a garage. That link extension would measure 6.45m in length and 1.95m in width, with a flat roof measuring 2.55m in height. As there would be varied roof heights, that would help break up the overall massing of the proposed extension.

Other works included the erection of a new garage to the south-eastern corner of the site, which would measure 8.27m in length and 6.86m in width. It would have a pitched roof with a ridge height of 5.8m. It would be finished in matching materials to the extension, with a dormer window to match the design of those proposed on the extension. External steps would provide access to the first floor of the garage.

As the existing dwelling was single-storey and small in scale, it was not considered that the two-storey extension and link extension could be considered to be subordinate to it. However, since there was extant permission for a replacement dwelling on the site, that had to be taken into account in the assessment of the proposal with a weighing of balance of material considerations in the consideration of the proposal.

The design was appropriate to the proposed ATC and the extended property would be suitably integrated with existing buildings including the detached two-storey properties 12a and 14 Cultra Avenue to the east.

The extant permission held significant weight in the determination with it considered that the proposed extension was less visually dominant or intrusive within the area of the proposed ATC.

There were strong boundaries to the site and being located off Cultra Avenue views were extremely limited of the site.

Material planning concerns raised by third parties had been considered in the case officer's report and assessment of the proposal.

The Planning Officer requested Delegated Powers for an additional condition to be added to the application should it be approved, to remove any permitted development rights in respect of further development within the site.

Approval of planning permission was recommended.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the information presented and invited questions from Members.

Alderman Graham, referred to the matter of drainage at the proposed site and allowances for soakage since the texture at the site would change from grass to hard surfaces and he wondered if that was a significant matter. The Officer explained that the site was not within an area of recorded surface flooding, there was still an area of lawn remaining and the driveway to Cultra Avenue was permeable gravel. No drainage assessment had been required at the site.

At this point the Chair invited Mr Philips, an objector to the application, to come forward and address the Committee.

Mr Philips thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and outlined the differences between Planning Permission LA06/2019/0433/F, upon which the Case Officer placed significant weight on the assessment of the application, and Planning Application LA06/2024/0075/F namely in the orientation of the 2 plans. The permission of 2019 had the building 11m from the boundary wall and at the southwest boundary which would not be visible from the rooms of his home, whereas the 2024 application had the extension at the northeast boundary and only 5m from the northwest boundary wall. Being 1m higher and over 8m closer, the gable end of the extension in his view would be 'visually dominant' to his home, 6 Orchard Way, while the report stated that the new proposal would be less visually dominant.

The report went on to state that the dormers of the extension looked out on the applicant's own amenity space but did not consider the field of view to anyone standing in the dormer window with the Juliet Balcony. That would give a person a field of vision of over 180 degrees which would allow them to overlook the area at a height above the boundary wall which would include his home and garden.

Mr Philips then referred to potential loss of light. He said that the report included a diagram from the 2019 Planning Permission which showed shadow detail of the proposed new building, in mid-summer, to demonstrate there would be insignificant loss of light, but as above the proposed extension in the application now under discussion was 5m closer to the boundary wall and at the northeast of the site, throwing shadow over his garden to the northwest.

Additionally in respect of hard standing surfaces the report stated that there would not be a significant increase. He therefore asked what would be significant when within that site there would be a building with an increased land area of 65 square

metres. He asked Members to consult the "Site Location Plan" 2 of the report to see the original hardstanding (as approx 2020) and compare that with the proposed Site Plans, either 2019 or 2024.

He explained that the extant permission granted LA06/2019/0433/F was for a new build which would have required a drainage plan acceptable to NI Water but the report for the application in front of Members now had stated that there was no requirement to submit a Drainage Plan and yet this application had been based on the previous permission.

Since the Site Location Plan had been produced there had been additional hardstanding added to the site by the applicant along the boundary wall from Cultra Avenue and at the area for the extension. The lawn had been reduced by approximately one third and he had now been experiencing flooding of his garden next to the boundary wall. Given the more extreme weather conditions that were forecast he thought that the Planning Service should give that greater consideration.

Members were invited to ask questions and Councillor Morgan asked Mr Philips to indicate his property on the Google map displayed in relation to the site of the application.

Councillor Martin asked the Planning Officer about her opinion of the Juliet Balcony and whether or not it provided views to Mr Philip's private amenity space. In response it was explained that few households in any urban area could claim not to be overlooked in some way. This was a built-up area and the view was not considered to be direct, intrusive or uninterrupted. Those three considerations were given weight as a whole. In reference to the extension that was now closer to Mr Philip's boundary the Officer stated that the ridge height of the building was lower in this application than the one made previously.

Alderman Graham referred to the extant application where provision for a storm drainage system was a requirement for the replacement dwelling whereas it was not for an extension and the Planning Officer stressed that what was being considered currently was a stand-alone application for an extension to an existing building and therefore that was not a requirement for planning.

It was true that the extant application was a material consideration for the current application but the hard standing areas were not deemed to be so significant that they would cause harm to the site or indeed the surrounding properties. There were permeable surfaces around the home and she was also mindful that homeowners were free to remove grass around their properties and replace that with hard surfaces or paving.

Proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the planning permission be granted along with the condition that there would be no further permitted development on the site.

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Morgan was aware that such extensions could have a problematic impact on neighbours but that in this instance she did not feel the matters raised were significant enough to refuse planning

permission. She was happy to support the Officers’ recommendation and to include the condition that no further development was permitted without express planning permission.

When put to a vote 5 voted FOR, 2 voted AGAINST, and 1 ABSTAINED and the application was PASSED.

FOR (5)	AGAINST (2)	ABSTAINING (1)
Alderman	Aldermen	Councillor
McDowell	Graham	Martin
Councillors	Councillor	
Harbinson	Creighton	
Kendall		
Morgan		
Wray		

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Creighton, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, that the recommendation be adopted, and that planning permission be granted. It was also agreed that no further development be permitted at that site.

4.2 LA06/2022/1072/F – Erection of new post-primary school with car park, bus drop-off area and playing pitches with floodlighting. Former Redburn Primary School Site, Old Hollywood Road, Hollywood
(Appendices III & IV)

- DEA:** Hollywood & Clandeboye
- Committee Interest:** Major category of development
- Proposal:** Erection of new post-primary school with car park, bus drop-off area and playing pitches with floodlighting
- Site Location:** Former Redburn Primary School Site, Old Hollywood Road, Hollywood
- Recommendation:** Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer (C Blair) explained that this was an application for a new site for Priory Integrated College, which was presently located off My Lady’s Mile, Hollywood. The application before Members fell within the major category of development as the site exceeded 1 Hectare. A Pre-Application Community Consultation was carried out in line with the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

He said that Members should note that the current 600-pupil school fell significantly short of the Education Authority’s minimum design standards and that previous planning permission was granted in 2010 for the redevelopment of this site for a new build Priory College under W/2009/0489/F.

The former education site for the closed Redburn Primary School was deemed to be the preferred option site and agreed in principle with the Department of Education, with the aim of erecting a modest post primary school including Special Educational

Needs accommodation, school meals accommodation, playgrounds, sports fields and associated parking/infrastructure to meet the design standards for the long-term enrolment of a continued 600 pupil school at the site.

The existing site layout and site photos were shown and how the proposal related to its relocation and new build on the former Redburn Primary School site which lay approximately 1km from the existing site. The former school had been demolished and much of the remaining site was overgrown.

The 6.77 Ha site, which was within the Hollywood Settlement Limit, rose gradually from the western boundary along Old Hollywood Road to the eastern boundary adjacent to the Country Park. Hollywood Golf Club was to the north of the site with the Hollywood South Eastern Regional College adjacent and northwest. The access road to Redburn Cemetery ran along the southern boundary with Firmount Crescent beyond that. Redburn Cemetery was adjacent and southeast of the site.

Within the extant North Down and Ards Area Plan, the site was not zoned for any particular use, but within the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan the site was within a proposed Local Landscape Policy Area and also half the site fell inside an area of open space.

In terms of the draft LLPA the proposal included separate rugby and football pitches in the eastern half of the site. The proposal, as a whole, respected the surrounding landscape quality and features of local significance and did not result in any undesirable or damaging development in the former primary school site.

The proposed development was also adjacent to a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance comprising an area of woodland to the southeast within Redburn Country Park. NED was consulted and was content with the proposal offering no objections.

The proposal conformed with Draft BMAP. In terms of the Open Space, Policy OS1 of PPS 8 did allow for the loss of open space where substantial community benefits outweighed the zoning. In this instance, the redevelopment of a closed primary school site and provision of a new post-primary development was considered to result in significant community benefit. Additionally, as highlighted, the eastern portion of the site was to be used for sports pitches and it was therefore concluded that this proposal met the policy exception in this case.

Further slides provided some CGIs of the final development from the main critical viewpoints along Old Hollywood Road and site sections, elevations, ground floor plan and indicative images of the proposed building and footprint.

The design of the school was of an appropriate scale and massing with a two-three storey central spine running from north to south in the western half of the site. There were four No. single-storey off-shoots containing a sports block, technology block, performance arts block and entrance block. The differentiation in ridge height ensured the building was not overly dominant in the streetscape. It would also have a backdrop of the rising Hollywood Hills and Redburn Country Park.

The finishes to the building were to be a mix of masonry with decorative panelling and composite timber / aluminium / polycarbonate cladding with powder coated aluminium fenestration. The roof was to be PPC Metal coping. The design was to be of a high quality, and it respected the surrounding character in this urban area.

In terms of Sustainability and use of green energy, he advised that the proposed development was designed to be as environmentally sustainable as possible to achieve a BREEAM XXXX rating.

The majority of classrooms (which would be mainly located in the central spine) would have an east to west aspect resulting in an even spread of natural light across the building and a reduction in artificial lighting use. Solar panels would be discreetly located out of sight from ground level on the roof of the main spine of the building. The buildings would have a mixed-mode heating strategy with use of low energy heat recovery units placed at high level in each of the key habitable spaces, providing energy efficient heating. Finally, the proposal was designed for a 'pedestrian first' travel method and bicycle use.

In terms of neighbouring residential amenity, the closest properties were located in Firmount Crescent to the south of the site. The closest part of the school building was the proposed Technology Block off-shoot. It had a flat roof with a ridge height of 4.5 metres, was single-storey and was approximately 30m away from the closest dwellings, No's 105 and 107 Firmount Crescent. The road access to Redburn Cemetery also separated the site from the dwellings in Firmount Crescent and landscaping was proposed. The existing dwellings and apartments on Old Holywood Road would not cause any loss of amenity due to the set back of the proposed buildings within the site.

A slide was shown which illustrated the access, internal road layout and parking area. A Transport Assessment was submitted as part of the proposal, which had been accepted by DfI Roads. The proposal involved the relocation of the access 15m south of current position, provision of a right-hand turning lane and a drop-off point inside the site to ensure Roads Safety. That complied with policy AMP 2 of PPS 3.

There were 119 car parking spaces provided, dedicated bus drop-off areas and taxi bays. There would be 20 No. dedicated disabled parking spaces. Parking Standards stated that there must be 1 space per teaching staff, 1 space per two ancillary staff, 1 space per 10 pupils over the age of 17 and one third of total staff provision for visitors. The Parking Standards had been met and the requirements of policy AMP 7 of PPS 3. Finally, there was cycle parking provision within the site.

In terms of parking design, that met the criteria of Policy AMP 9 of PPS 3 in that the parking layout and design was of a high standard with landscaping proposed. Parking was to be fully contained within the grounds of the school and DfI Roads had no objections subject to conditions.

The proposed development met the requirements of policies NH1 and NH2 of PPS 2 Natural Environment in terms of designated sites and species protected by law.

NED was consulted and was content. This was set out in detail in the case officer's report.

In terms of nearby listed buildings at 397 Old Holywood Road and Redburn Lodge, HED was consulted and was content subject to conditions.

A Drainage Assessment and a Flood Risk Assessment had been submitted with DfI Rivers offering no objection subject to conditions.

Environmental Health was content with the proposal in terms of Noise, Floodlighting, Dust, Air Quality and Contaminated Land. Those were detailed in the case officer's report. Conditions were proposed to deal with any issues including time restrictions for Floodlight usage.

The Planning Officer turned to representations made in respect of the planning application and Members would note there were 11 objections from 10 separate addresses. The detail was set out within the Case Officer's Report, however the main thrust related to impact on the character of the area and visual amenity, overlooking and loss of privacy and impact on traffic, parking and road safety concerns, all of which had been outlined in the presentation and were considered in detail in the case officer's report.

On balance it was considered that the proposal would not cause any significant adverse impact on the character of the area, nor would it result in any significant loss of amenity for surrounding residents. The proposal would bring significant community benefit and was a policy exception to the loss of open space land. Accordingly, it was recommended to approve the application, with delegated authority to further rationalise the conditions where appropriate.

The Chair thanked the Planning Officer for his report and clarified that Mr Hanvey was the planning agent and would be available to answer Members' questions on the proposal.

Councillor Martin asked about the comparison of the footprint of the proposal with the former Redburn Primary School and the Committee was informed that while the proposal was slightly larger it was not significantly so. Councillor Martin thought that what was being proposed looked very well designed and he was happy to see all forms of school transport and car parking being considered. It was his opinion that the layout of the driveway within the proposal allowed for the smooth flow of traffic. Referring to Priory school itself he said it was excellent and operated currently in buildings that were far from fit for purpose. It was clear in his mind that Priory College was in urgent need of a new building.

Councillor Kendall asked about the traffic flow within and outside of the site. The agent clarified that traffic within the site would move in a one-way direction and drop-off and collection would be taken off the Old Holywood Road as far as possible and onto school property. The Member also referred to the proposal to have floodlighting on the pitches close to the Country Park which she thought seemed counterproductive in helping to protect the natural habitat of wildlife. The Planning

Officer stated that Environmental Health had carried out the required tests in relation to that matter and raised no concerns or objections.

While the Planning Service detailed species that were protected by law NED was content that it was unlikely that there would be a significant impact on bats and other protected species. It was noted that there were also no badger setts recorded in the area.

In her reading of the legislation Councillor Kendall was doubtful of that explanation and in particular where it was thought that there would be 'no significant impact' especially with the location of the floodlights near the Country Park.

The Planning Officer stressed that a consultee would not have signed off the proposal if it was not content and it was noted that there were measures required with to reduce the duration of artificial lights and reduce light spill into the Country Park.

Mr Hanvey was invited to speak as an agent for the application and he agreed with the Planning Officers and hoped that Members would agree to the application stating that all statutory consultees had given approvals for the proposed development. He stated that this was a much-needed proposal for a new site for Priory College, as a modern school with excellent sports fields and that would open up the site to the local community.

Councillor Creighton welcomed the proposed design, the use of environmental improvement initiatives and hoped that there was sufficient drainage included for the flat roofs.

Councillor Morgan asked the Planning Officer about how cyclists and pedestrian traffic was managed within the site, and it was noted that would be kept separate from motor vehicles on the school site. There would be a crossing point on the Old Hollywood Road at the main entrance to the school. The Member was disappointed to hear that cycle ways would only be provided within the school site and not on the roads close to the school itself.

Following a question from Councillor Kendall discussion took place around the proposal for an artificial grass pitch at the school. It was noted that an EU ban on that surface was being introduced and she thought that considering that an alternative surfacing should be used for improved sustainability. Planning Officers stressed that there was not run into Belfast Lough and DfI Rivers had been consulted. The Director of Prosperity explained that mitigations could be put in place particularly if there was a link to a waterway but that that was the responsibility of the developer.

Proposed by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Creighton that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Martin repeated that this was a very exciting design with clever parking and traffic flow and the proposal would be of benefit to the whole community in that area and that he was thrilled to propose.

Seconding the proposal Councillor Creighton referred to the buildings that Priory College were using currently, and they were at an advanced stage of dilapidation and no longer fit for purpose. There was terrible congestion in the current site at My Lady’s Mile and she welcomed the proposal and the benefits it would bring. She agreed with Councillor Morgan that it was regrettable that cycle lanes could not be better used to encourage sustainable travel but she hoped that that would be encouraged within the school.

Alderman Graham added his support and congratulated the architects and was aware that there was often a tension in a new build but there was a clear environmental and community benefit and that needed to be high on the agenda.

While Councillor Kendall agreed wholeheartedly that Priory absolutely needed a new school building, she could not wholly support the current application and considered that DfI Roads had made its assessment blindly. She foresaw heavy backed up traffic in that area if the development proceeded and believed that the plans should be amended and adapted to allow for that, floodlighting beside the Country Park removed and the surface of the pitches revisited.

When the decision was put to a vote 7 voted FOR and 1 ABSTAINED and the application PASSED.

FOR (7)	ABSTAINED (1)
Alderman	Councillor
Graham	Kendall
McDowell	
Councillors	
Creighton	
Harbinson	
Martin	
Morgan	
Wray	

RESOLVED on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Crieghton, that planning permission be granted.

4.3 LA06/2024/0261/F – Ancillary Storage Shed (includes removal of existing containers). Holywood Cricket Club, Seapark Pavilion, Seapark

Item 4.3 was removed due to an issue in terms of the drawings and would be brought back to the Committee at a later stage.

4.4 LA06/2024/0182/F – Temporary permission for retention of open space – renewal of LA06/2022/0231/F. Land immediately east of 41 Hamilton Road, south of 1 Springfield Avenue, Bangor (site of former Hamilton House and Sea Scout Hall)
(Appendices V & VI)

DEA: LA06/2024/0182/F

Committee Interest: Applicant Ards and North Down Borough Council

Proposal: Temporary permission for retention of open space – renewal of LA06/2022/0231/F

Site Location: Land immediately east of 41 Hamilton Road, south of 1 Springfield Avenue, Bangor (site of former Hamilton House and Sea Scout Hall)

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the application explaining that the application was for the Retention of Open Space for a further Two-year Time Extension to a Temporary Permission issued under LA06/2022/0231/F.

Members would recall the previous application brought before the Committee in June 2022 and this was being brought before Members as it was an application by the Council.

A Google Earth image was shown and it was explained how the site occupied a triangular plot of land opposite the junction of Hamilton Road and Park Avenue. Ward Park lay to the southeast on the opposite side of the road, whilst Springfield Avenue, which housed several private residential properties ran parallel to the rear of the site.

Slides were shown of the site which was situated within the proposed Bangor Central Area of Townscape Character (ATC).

The continuation of the site for temporary use as an area of open space was acceptable in context of the surrounding area as a suitable ‘mean-while’ use until such time as an appropriate replacement proposal was submitted.

Grant of permission was recommended.

Proposed by Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that planning permission be granted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching information about the Appeal decisions.

Appeal Decisions

- 1. The following appeal was dismissed, and the enforcement notice upheld on 20 May 2024.

PAC Ref	2022/E0018
Council Ref	LA06/2021/0110/CA

Appellant	Thompson, Wesley
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised erection of shed and laying of hardstanding laneway
Location	Lands approx. 740m south of the Junction of Cotton Road (A48) and Murdocks Lane, Bangor

An appeal against an Enforcement Notice could be brought on any of the following grounds:

- a) that, in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by the matters stated in the notice, planning permission ought to be granted or, as the case may be, the condition or limitation concerned ought to be discharged;
- b) that those matters have not occurred;
- c) that those matters (if they occurred) do not constitute a breach of planning control;
- d) that, at the date when the notice was issued, no enforcement action could be taken in respect of any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters;
- e) that copies of the enforcement notice were not served as required by the relevant section of the Planning Act;
- f) that the steps required by the notice to be taken, or the activities required by the notice to cease, exceed what is necessary to remedy any breach of planning control which may be constituted by those matters or, as the case may be, to remedy any injury to amenity which has been caused by any such breach;
- g) that any period specified in the notice falls short of what should reasonably be allowed.

The Appeal was brought on Grounds (b) and (c) as set out in Section 143(3) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act).

Ground (b) - Under this ground of appeal, the onus was on the Appellant to demonstrate that the matters alleged in the Enforcement Notice (EN) had not occurred when the EN was served. The EN was dated 26th May 2023. The Council's evidence included Google Earth images dated March and August 2022 showing the shed together with site photographs of the shed taken on 29 September 2022 and site photographs of the hardstanding laneway taken on 19 May 2023. At the hearing the Appellant did not dispute that at the date the EN was served the shed and hardstanding laneway were in place.

The Appellant claimed that the erection of the shed and the laying of a hardstanding laneway was permitted development under the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015 (GPDO) Part 7 Class A (a) and (b). However, that was not a ground (b) argument. The Commissioner was satisfied that the matters as alleged in the EN had occurred and the appeal on ground (b) did not succeed.

Ground (c) was argued in respect of the alleged unauthorised erection of shed and laying of hardstanding laneway. The Appellant considered that the alleged unauthorised erection of shed was permitted under Part 7 Class A (a) of the GPDO,

and that the alleged unauthorised hardstanding was permitted development under Part 7 Class A (b) of the GDPO.

Part 7 Class A permitted the carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of (a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or (b) any excavation or engineering operation; reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit. Development not permitted under Class A was set out at A.1 criterion (a) to (i). For the purposes of Class A, an “agricultural unit” meant land which was occupied as a unit for the purposes of agriculture other than fish farming but includes any dwellinghouse or other building occupied by the same person for the purpose of farming the land by the person who occupied the same unit.

The Council considered that the alleged unauthorised shed was not reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and that it failed to comply with Class A.A.1 criteria (c), (d) and (e).

The Appellant argued that his farm unit encompassed the fields within the Enforcement Notice site, together with fields to its south and southeast. Those had been part of a larger agricultural plot farmed by his uncle and were inherited by him in 2016. The registration of transfer of the land took place in February 2018. The Appellant stated that the land had been continuously farmed by him since 2017 including harvesting, goats and horses, together with continuous maintenance of the holding generally in good agricultural and environmental condition as per Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (as amended).

He stated that he installed drainage between 2016 and 2020 in response to flooding issues on the site. He had retained and maintained hedges, trees, fences and watercourses. He had laid hügelkultur beds to improve soil fertility. In written evidence he referred to approximately £70,000 being spent on the plot to date, but at the hearing he referred to a sum of £100,000 and could provide no documentary evidence to demonstrate that.

The Council included correspondence from DAERA which advised that the Appellant’s land was part of a larger farm holding for which Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) had been claimed by another individual since 2017. The Appellant argued that there was no conacre agreement in place and whilst he received an annual payment from the individual for the grazing of horses on his land, he had been unaware that payment could be claimed for livery, having only found out in recent weeks. He stated that whilst another individual’s horses grazed the land, he still carried out and financed work on the land. He had applied for a farm ID in 2023 prior to the EN. He intended to put sheep on the land which would be split into four paddocks. He stated that he now had a flock number. The ground had to be made good, ploughed, sowed and rested after which the sheep could be introduced.

At the hearing the Appellant stated that a gun club had access to all his land and use of the alleged unauthorised shed and that it tended to use that once a fortnight.

The Commissioner was not persuaded in relation to previous ownership of goats and the horses grazing on site being in the ownership of someone else. Whilst the Appellant stated that he carried out maintenance of the lands for agricultural purposes, no documentary evidence was provided to support that, despite the assertion of significant expenditure and the continued maintenance of hedgerows, trees, fences and watercourses etc. Despite owning the lands since 2017 an application for farm ID was only made in 2023. The shed facilitated storage of items related to agriculture as outlined above however it also accommodated facilities related to the gun shooting club. The term 'reasonably necessary' must relate to the existing needs of the agricultural business or to some tangible plans for the agricultural business. The Commissioner was not persuaded that the alleged unauthorised shed was reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture as required by Part 7 Class A (a) of the GPDO.

The Commissioner stated that even if the Appellant had presented documentary evidence of agricultural activity by them on the land that reasonably required provision of a shed, it failed to comply with criteria (d) and (e) of Class A and was not permitted development.

The Council considered that the alleged unauthorised hardstanding laneway was not permitted development as there was no evidence of ongoing agricultural use at the site by the Appellant and that it exceeded what would be considered reasonably necessary for the purpose of agriculture.

The Commissioner acknowledged that the division of the appellant's uncle's original farm may have resulted in some historical access arrangements to the Appellant's inherited land being severed, but she was not persuaded that the hardstanding laneway was reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that land. In any event the Commissioner considered the agricultural use at the site above and concluded that there was lack of documentary evidence of the Appellant's agricultural activity on the lands.

The Commissioner determined that it had not been demonstrated that the matters described in the EN did not constitute a breach of planning control. Consequently, the appeal on ground (c) failed.

2. New Appeals Lodged

No appeals were lodged since date of last report.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report and attachment.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.22 pm.

TRUTH RECOVERY PROGRAMME



Martin Carey
Director
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SL

27th June 2024

TRUTH RECOVERY - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Dear all,

The Executive Office has launched a 12-week public consultation on proposals to inform the legislation to establish a statutory Inquiry and Redress Scheme for those affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses and their pathways and practices.

The public consultation will run for a period of 12-weeks from **27 June 2024 to 19 September 2024**.

The consultation documents are available at www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/truth-recovery-mother-and-baby-institutions-magdalene-laundries-and-workhouses-public-consultation.

To request a hard copy of the questionnaire please email trpconsultation@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk or phone 02890 520 063.

We have scheduled a number of online and in-person events, details of which can also be found in the link above. We would encourage wide participation in the public consultation.

Yours sincerely

Martin Carey
Programme Director

From: DfE Good Jobs Consultation <goodjobsconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, July 2, 2024 12:30 PM
To: DfE Good Jobs Consultation <goodjobsconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: Public Consultation on The `Good Jobs` Employment Rights Bill

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Consultee

E-mail: goodjobsconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk

2 July 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Public Consultation on The `Good Jobs` Employment Rights Bill

The Department for the Economy launched a public consultation on proposed policy areas for The `Good Jobs` Employment Rights Bill on: 1 July 2024.

The purpose of the consultation is to collect information from the public, stakeholders and interested parties on a range of employment law related matters, with a view to enhancing the employment law framework in Northern Ireland and ensuring that it is fit for purpose.

The consultation document can be viewed, and returns completed and submitted at:

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfegood-jobs-employment-rights-bill>

Alternatively, the consultation document and a response document can be viewed and downloaded from the Department for the Economy's website at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/good-jobs-employment-rights-bill>

That response document may be completed and e-mailed to:

goodjobsconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk

or sent by post to:

Department for the Economy
Employment Relations Policy & Legislation Teams
Fifth Floor
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast

BT2 8FD

The Department would encourage consultees to respond by electronic means, if at all possible. The Department may provide the consultation document, in other formats upon request.

Responses should arrive no later than 5.00p.m. on: **30 September 2024**.

If you no longer wish to receive notification of this Department's public consultations regarding employment relations policy/potential changes to employment law, please let us know and we will remove your organisation's name from the distribution list.

If you wish to remain on our list please keep us informed of any changes to your preferred e-mail address.

Employment Relations Policy & Legislation Teams

E-mail: goodjobsconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk

From: Murray, Andrew <Andrew.Murray@nihe.gov.uk>

Sent: Monday, July 8, 2024 11:29 AM

Subject: Community Safety Strategy 2025 -2030

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Consultee,

Please see below for information on the draft Community Safety Strategy 2025 -2030 which is now open for consultation. The Draft Strategy and Consultation Response Forms are attached to the email.

The public consultation on our draft Community Safety Strategy 2025-2030 is now open.

The consultation will run for **12 weeks, from 8th July 2024 up to 30th September 2024** and we want to hear from you.

Our strategic view of **Building Safer Communities Together**, adopts a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to addressing anti-social behaviour through engaging with residents, fostering collaborative partnerships and utilising evidence-based interventions. The Housing Executive is committed to fostering a culture of mutual respect, responsibility, and pride within its social housing communities.

Our strategic priorities are:

Building community confidence - The Housing Executive will work to build community confidence in the ability of the organisation to tackle ASB effectively.

Ensuring local solutions - The Housing Executive will ensure that all our efforts to tackle ASB are relevant to the needs of local communities.

Working together- The Housing Executive will work closely with other agencies to improve community safety in our estates.

We want to listen to your views and give you the chance to help shape our strategy and services.

Further information can be found in the following link:
<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/partners/consultations>

If you have any queries on any aspect of the consultation, please contact: team.communitysafety@nihe.gov.uk

Regards,

Andrew Murray

Equality Unit

NIHE Extension Number: 82535

Telephone Number: 02895982535

Unclassified

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ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	03 July 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Resolution - Autism waiting times in Northern Ireland
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Response from the Minister for Health Appendix 2 - Response from the Minister of Education

At the Council meeting on 24 April 2024, Council discussed a resolution from Derry City and Strabane and agreed as follows:

“That this Council acknowledges the unacceptable waiting times for autism assessments in Northern Ireland, causing significant hardship and developmental delays.

Council recognises that early intervention is critical for developing key skills in children with autism, yet the backlog hinders timely support, impacting individual potential and straining educational and healthcare services.

Council resolved to formally write to the Minister of Education and the Minister for Health to urgently develop and present a comprehensive business case outlining

Not Applicable

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specific, actionable strategies to address and resolve this backlog. Including a detailed analysis of its impacts, clear reduction targets, proposed measures for ongoing assessments, and the necessary financial and staffing resources. This plan should involve and support families throughout the process.

Council demands immediate action and insists on a collaborative effort among the Minister for Health, Minister for Education, and Minister for Finance, together with key stakeholders to develop a detailed report on the business case and action plan, including a clear implementation timeline, within this mandate period to immediately address and resolve the existing backlog.”

The Chief Executive wrote to the Minister for Health and the Minister of Education on 30 May 2024. The Minister for Health responded on 6 June 2024 and the Minister of Education responded on 13 June 2024, as attached.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Derry City and Strabane District Council

Diane.Martin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk



Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

13 June 2024

CORR 1551-2024

Dear Ms McCullough,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2024 regarding the motion passed by the Council regarding waiting times for autism assessment.

Waiting times for autism assessment are a matter for the Minister of Health.

It is important to note that support in school is not dependent on a medical diagnosis of autism but based on educational need. Parents/carers should be encouraged to speak to the class teacher/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to ensure that their child/young person is being supported within the school with reasonable adjustments.

There is support available from Middletown Centre for Autism <https://www.middletownautism.com> for education staff, parents, children and young people without any requirement for an autism diagnosis.

The Education Authority (EA) provides information, support and useful resources for special educational provision as set out in the EA Plan of Arrangements which can be found at <https://send.eani.org.uk/ea-plan-arrangements>. Within this, there are links to autism support through the Autism Advisory and Intervention Service.

My department and the EA are committed to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN by ensuring they get *'the right support from the right people, delivered at the right time and in the right place'* to enable them to be happy, learning and succeeding. We know this is currently not the case for many children with SEN in Northern Ireland. All too often, investment has not resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people and we recognise that there is an urgent need for improvement.

In order to address these issues, my department and the EA are taking forward an End to End (E2E) Review of SEN which takes an in-depth look at the entire SEN system to enable the changes necessary to improve service delivery and provision.

Alongside this, my department is a key member of the Department of Health's (DoH) Autism Cross-Departmental Forum, providing significant input to the DoH Autism Strategy 2023/28 <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/autism-strategy-2023-2028>.

I trust you find this information useful.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Givan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnistrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

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Susie McCullough
Chief Executive,
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-1697-2024

Date: 6 June 2024

Dear

Susie

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 May 2024 regarding the Council's concerns about Autism waiting lists and the impact this has on the lives and opportunities for those awaiting assessment. Many of the issues raised in your letter are already high priorities for my Department, and I want to assure you that work is actively ongoing to try to address these challenges, despite the very difficult financial position that the Health and Social Care system faces. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is that all Departments work together to address the issues faced by people with autism.

My officials and I are fully committed to the full implementation of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022. Despite a very challenging financial and political context, my Department developed a new cross departmental Autism Strategy which was published in late 2023, aligned to the legislative requirements of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022. It recognises that the issues faced by children and adults with Autism are cross-cutting and therefore require collaboration across government, sectors and with autistic people. The two-year delivery plan outlines a range of actions across Health, Education, Communities, Economy and a range of statutory and independent sector bodies. It clearly sets out the outcomes we seek to achieve and timeframes for delivery.

Waiting lists for autism assessment remain a challenge. Many children or young people wait up to three years for an assessment; and for adults the wait may be longer again. The Department acknowledges that this is not acceptable and can have a profound impact on a person's mental health.

To address this my officials, have in recent months been meeting with all Trusts to determine the existing referral and assessment routes for paediatric autism services. Officials are collaborating with colleagues from Public Health Agency and Community Child Health to establish a standardised pathway across the region that aligns to NICE guidelines and can better identify workforce requirements. Consistent pathways will allow for better planned management of current waiting lists and ongoing demand.

I recognise that improved access and support for adults is also required, and a review of Adult Autism Services was also commissioned by the Department. In response to the

findings, the post of Adult Autism Commissioning Lead has been advertised and is currently being recruited. The post holder will be responsible for developing plans to address waiting lists for adult assessment.

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I hope this information is helpful and provides some clarity to you on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Nesbitt".

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health

Unclassified

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ITEM**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	09 July 2024
File Reference	CX210
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Changes to conducting Committee and Council meetings and changes to the Standing Orders
Attachments	Appendix 1 Letter from Department for Communities 27 June 2024

Background

On 27 June 2024 the Chief Executive received a letter from the Department for Communities advising that the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 had been approved, becoming operational from 25 June 2024. In order to allow remote meetings to take place, the Council must now update Standing Orders to govern remote attendance at Council and Committee meetings.

Changes to Standing Orders

It is proposed to insert the following as Standing Order 29:

29 Remote Attendance**29.1 Definition of remote attendance**

In line with the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024, any reference in these Standing Orders to a Council or Committee meeting is

Not Applicable

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not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations and web addresses.

29.2 Elected Member remote attendance

An Elected Member in remote attendance attends the meeting at any time provided they are able:

- (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard, and where practicable be seen by, the other Members in attendance;
- (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public in attendance in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and
- (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public in attendance.

29.3 Press and public remote attendance

Any reference in these Standing Orders to a member of the public or press being present at a meeting includes such persons attending by remote access, and the reference in Standing Order 8 [1] to every meeting being “open to the public and press” includes through enabling remote access. This also applies to deputations as per Standing Order 12[3].

29.4 Voting when attending remotely

Any vote that would otherwise be taken by a show of hands in line with Standing Order 21.4 will, if any of the Elected Members entitled to vote are in remote attendance, be taken by way of a virtual show of hands from each Member as to whether they are for or against the motion.

29.5 Miscellaneous remote attendance provisions

References in Standing Orders 10 and 28 to excluding the public and press from the Council Chamber or removing them from the meeting room, shall be read as removing their remote access where their attendance is, or would be but for their exclusion, remote attendance.

There is no requirement for an Elected Member in remote attendance to stand when addressing the Presiding Chairperson in line with Standing Order 20.6.

A Presiding Chairperson in remote attendance shall call a meeting to order, rather than rise to do so, in line with Standing Order 20.19.

29.6 Remote meeting etiquette

An Elected Member in remote attendance must adhere to the following meeting protocols:

- Members should situate themselves in an environment which is free from distraction, and similar to the conditions in the Chamber;
- Members should be situated in a location befitting the meeting i.e. a private room with a closed door;
- Members should be alone, with the exception of any other Elected Member who is entitled to attend that meeting.

Not Applicable

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- It is essential that Members attending Council and Committee meetings prevent others from hearing the business of the meeting, especially that which is “in confidence”;
- Members must notify the Chair of the meeting if they are leaving the meeting and again on their return to the meeting;
- Members should conduct themselves in a manner as if they were in attendance in the Chamber;
- Members should attend from a location with a strong internet connection and should endeavour to test the connection and audiovisual prior to the meeting;
- Members must turn their camera on and it must remain on for the duration of the meeting;
- Members must remain on mute unless given the opportunity to speak by the Chair or when exercising their speaking rights in line with the Standing Orders.

The following additional amendments are required to Standing Orders Version 11 April 2024 to facilitate this:

- Renumber Standing order 29 as 30
- Renumber Standing Order 30 as 31
- Renumber Standing Order 31 as 32
- Change Standing Order 17.2 (m) reference to Standing Order 29 to Standing order 30.
- Amend the Glossary of Terms definition of “Remote access” to *“Remote access” means the ability to attend or participate in a meeting by electronic means, including by video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming.*

It is proposed to insert the following at Annex 1:

Remote meetings

Committee Members taking part virtually in a Planning Committee Meeting

92. Members of the Planning Committee can participate via remote access in line with Standing Order 29

Members of the Public taking part virtually in a Planning Committee Meeting

93. Members of the public are welcome to speak about specific applications at Planning Committee meetings virtually in line with the “Public Speaking” section of this Annex. Registered speakers will be required to make their representations to the Committee using the Council’s selected virtual meeting platform.

94. Comments can only be made verbally; however, at the Chairman’s discretion you may be able to highlight something on the presentation by the planning officer if you wish to point out something of importance or clarify an issue.

Not Applicable

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95. If you think you may not be able to participate in the meeting but would like to submit representations, you can do this – it will be covered in the troubleshooting section of this document

96. When taking part virtually:

- Ensure you have the appropriate application installed on your device – you may be able to access via your web browser, but we recommend you download the app if you are able, using the store/site relevant to your device;
- Please ensure your Account Name is set up to reflect your full name, in order that the Host can identify you in the attendee list, and Members will be aware of who is speaking;
- Disconnect any non-essential devices from the internet, disable any applications you are not using on your computer / iPad / mobile device and turn off any streaming services;
- Ensure that your device is fully charged and that you have easy access to a charger to ensure you do not run out of battery;
- Choose a location in your home where you may take part in the meeting without being disturbed
- It is good practice to join 10-15 minutes prior to the meeting commencing, however you will only be able to see proceedings once the meeting has started to be broadcast
- Registered speakers must not activate their camera or microphone unless instructed by the Chair

In addition to the above changes to the Standing Orders to facilitate the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024, the following addition to the Glossary of Terms is required to provide clarity:

Standing Orders Version 11 states:

“Working days” excludes Public or Bank holidays, a Saturday or a Sunday

The deadline in respect of call-in is 5.00 pm

The deadline for Notice of Motions is 11.59 pm

This shall be changed to read:

“Working days” excludes Public or Bank holidays, a Saturday or a Sunday

The deadline is 5.00pm except for in respect of Notice of Motions where the deadline is 11.59 pm

Amendment to Standing Order 17.1 [1] (additional text in red):

Notice of every motion, other than a motion which under Standing Order 17.2 may be moved without notice, shall be given in writing, signed by at least two Members of the Council giving the notice, to the Chief Executive not later than at least five working days before the next meeting of the Council. Each motion must have a proposer and seconder. The motion must be clear in meaning otherwise it shall be rejected until such time as it is resubmitted in clear language. Prior to lodging a notice of motion, Members should take the opportunity to engage with the relevant

Not Applicable

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Director on current action being taken and options available to have the subject matter addressed **including any budgetary implications**. This may assist members in formulating the terms of notice of motion. The motion must be submitted no later than five working days before the meeting.

Making Changes to the Standing Orders

Members should be aware when making these decisions, that under Standing Order 29.2 of Version 11, Any motion to, add to, vary or revoke these Standing Orders will, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned and be referred without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council and any resultant amendment will be ratified at an ordinary meeting of the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees for these Standing Order additions and variations to stand adjourned and be referred, without discussion, to the next Council meeting on 28 August 2024.

To: Council Chief Executives

Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

Telephone: (028) 90582 3346
e-mail: anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref:
Date: 27 June 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings

As you will be aware, over the last few months the Department has been developing regulations to provide councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means.

I am pleased to advise that on 24 June 2024, [the Local Government \(Remote Meetings\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024](#) were approved by the NI Assembly.

The Regulations have now been made and became operational from 25 June 2024. To allow remote meetings to take place, a council must put in place standing orders governing remote attendance at meetings of that council.

The Regulations [S.R. 2024 No. 140] will be published on the legislation.gov.uk website in the next few days.

I would like to thank you for your assistance during the development of these Regulations.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Carleton
Director
Local Government & Housing Regulation

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	11 July 2024
File Reference	PCA104
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Services Order (1986)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not Relevant
Subject	Whitespots Country Park Update and Letter of Offer
Attachments	Appendix 1 Letter of Offer Appendix 2 Updated OBC

Background

In October 2021, Council agreed to proceed to the next stage of the development of Whitespots Country Park, in accordance with the Councils agreed vision for the park, which is:

“To create a unique open landscape, fully accessible Trails Experience of national significance, at the heart of Ards and North Down Borough, bringing the rich heritage of the site to life, through innovative infrastructure and interpretation whilst linking seamlessly for the visitor to the proposed Greenways Network and Cairn Wood and creating a gateway to Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula”.

In October 2021, Council agreed to the following:

Not Applicable

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1. That officers produce an internal revenue Business Case and if approved this was to be used as part of the rate setting process in early 2022.
2. That officers carryout pre internal work associated with the procurement of consultants ahead subject to Business Case approval
3. Council uses the Levelling Up funding of £125,000 towards achieving planning permission for the Whitespots Scheme, (subject to UK Government approval)
4. The Council applies for capital funding in the region of £10 to £17m to the complimentary fund, application of which are due 1st September 2021

Subsequently, McAdam Design were appointed to oversee the detailed designs of the park based on the vision and masterplan that had been approved. A detailed design process is now underway and planning approval will be sought between Q3 of 2024 and Q4 of 2026.

This planning application will seek approval for all of the following development proposals. Council plans to implement these over 3 phases, as summarised in the table below.

Phase	Detail will include
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded paths and trails • Review of access for Trial Bikes • A small Visitor Hub • Minor restoration of mining mine shafts and Windmill Stump • Enhancement of the Woodland • A new playground and car park upgrade
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing tower • Restoration of historic Chimney Stacks • The creation of new Woodland Areas
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zip wires • Adventure Playground and pump track • A high-ropes course • Elevated timber boardwalk

Funding

Capital funding was applied for as per the 2021 Council decision, in order to offset Council investment as much as possible. Applications were made to both the NI Executive City Growth Complementary fund, and the DEARA Environmental Fund. Subsequently, on the 10th July 2024, a signed letter of offer was received by the Mayor from the DEARA Minister, Andrew Muir MLA, to the value of £8,500,926 towards phase 1 of the development proposals. This is a significant contribution towards those works and reduces the Council contribution to 9% of the total estimated cost of phase 1 based on the approved OBC. The offer combines both elements of grant funding applied for, resulting in an investment profile for phase 1 as follows.

Not Applicable

Complimentary Fund:	£7,400,000	(79%)
Environment Fund;	£1,100,926	(12%)
Council	£ 820,000	(9%)
Total	£9,320,926	

DEARA have asked that the letter is signed and returned within 28 days of issue. This offer is based on an updated Outline Business Case which has also been approved by the department. The updated Business Case is attached for members approval.

RECOMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the updated OBC and agrees to the signing of the letter of offer attached, in order to secure £8,500,926 of funding towards phase 1 of the Development of Whitespots Country Park as detailed in this report and Annex 1 of the letter of offer.

DATED 10/07/2024

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Ballykelly
Limavady
BT49 9HP

(2) Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

**Contract for Funding
in respect of
Whitespots Country Park**

This Agreement is dated [10/07/24]

BETWEEN:-

(1) Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs whose principal address is at Jubilee House 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady, BT49 9HP (“the Department”)

(2) Ards and North Down Borough Council, whose principal address is at City Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT (“the Council”)

together the “**Parties**”.

BACKGROUND

(A) The Department has agreed to pay the Grant of £8,500,926 consisting of £7,400,000 from the Complementary Fund and £1,100,926 from the Environment Fund to Ards and North Down Borough Council to fund expenditure incurred by the Council in the delivery of the Project.

(B) This Agreement sets out the terms and conditions on which the Grant is made by the Department to the Council.

(C) These terms and conditions are intended to ensure that the Grant is used for the purpose for which it is awarded.

IT IS AGREED as follows: -

1. DEFINITIONS and INTREPRETATION

In this Agreement the following terms shall have the following meanings:

“**the Grant**” – means the OBC Sum and the Delivery Sum which are made up of the Complementary Fund grant and Environment Fund grant.

“**the OBC Sum**” means a sum up to a maximum amount of £8,500,926.

“**the Delivery Sum**” means a sum up to a maximum amount of £8,500,926.

“**Assets**” means equipment, goods and other assets purchased or constructed using the Grant.

“**the Consents**” includes any necessary approval, authorisation, consent, assent, exemption, licence, permit, permission or registration by or from any governmental or other authority, the local planning authority, landlords, funders, adjoining land owners or any other person in relation to the Project or otherwise required to enable delivery of the Project.

“**the Control Period**” means 25 years¹ from the date of this Agreement.

¹ Note in perpetuity rather than 25 years for land purchase – see Retention of Assets section.

“economic life of the asset” means the period of time during which the asset remains useful to the Council.

“Eligible Expenditure” means the eligible expenditure for each element of the Project as set out within the OBC and detailed at **Annex 3**.

“FBC” means the full business case for the Project, to be approved by the Department.

“Financial Plan” means the financial plan in respect of the Programme, as updated from time to time by agreement of the Council and the Department.

“the Grant Period” – From the date of this agreement and the final project completion date of 31 December 2029, however all of the NIEA Environment Fund budget must be spent by 31 March 2028.

“Law” means any applicable law, statute, by-law, regulation, order, regulatory policy, guidance or industry code, judgment of a relevant court of law, or directives or requirements of any regulatory body, delegated or subordinate legislation.

“NIPPP” means Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy.

“OBC” means the outline business case for the Project which has been approved by the Department and Department of Finance.

“the Project” means the project currently described in the OBC and a summary of which is set out at **Annex 1** of this Agreement.

“Project Plan” means a detailed plan setting out key milestones, detailed tasks, which is updated from time to time by Council and copied to the Department.

“the Property” means all land and buildings which the Council will or may require access to and/or use of and/or to undertake the Works on in order to deliver the Project.

“Works” means the construction works to be undertaken as part of the Project.

2. GRANT OFFER

The Department, in exercise of its powers under the ‘The Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994’, hereby offers to pay to the Council the Grant of £7,400,000 from the Complementary Fund and under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985, a Grant of £1,100,926 from the NIEA Environment Fund for the Project subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

3. GRANT PURPOSE

- 3.1 The Council shall procure that the Grant is used only for the delivery of the Project and in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement. The Grant shall not be used for any other purpose without the prior written agreement of the Department.

- 3.1.1 The Grant cash payment received is used only towards payment of eligible expenditure.
- 3.2 The Council shall procure that no material change is made to the Project without the Department's prior written agreement.
- 3.3 The Grant cannot result in over-financing of the Project. Funding provided by a third party which is for the Project's costs being funded by the Grant ("duplicate funding") is not permitted. Where other sources of funding have or may become available for the Project the Council shall immediately notify the Department in writing to enable it to consider whether an addendum is required to the approved business case for the Project. Where such funding is duplicate funding then on written notice to the Council the Department shall be entitled to cease or suspend further payments of Grant, reduce the amount of Grant payable, or recoup all or any part of the Grant already paid in line with the amount of available duplicate funding. The Council shall take Project underspends into consideration when submitting notification as per the needs of the Project. Without prejudice to the prohibition on duplicate funding under this clause 3.3, the Parties acknowledge that funding provided by a third party to the Council to address Project cost overruns for which the Council is liable pursuant to clause 4.4 is not duplicate funding.

4. PAYMENT OF FUNDING

4.1 Grant Conditions Precedent

- 4.1.1 Payment of the Construction Amount is conditional on satisfaction of the conditions precedent set out at **Annex 5**.

4.2 Drawdown Requests for Grant

The provisions of **Annex 4** shall apply to payments of the Grant.

4.3 Grant Use

- 4.3.1 The Council shall procure that the Grant is used for Eligible Expenditure only, subject to the provisions of clause 3.1.
- 4.3.2 Where the Council has obtained funding from a third party in relation to the delivery of the Project, the amount of such funding shall be included in the funding breakdown at **Annex 3**.
- 4.3.3 The Council shall procure that no part of the Grant is spent on the delivery of the Project after the Grant Period without the prior written agreement of the Department.
- 4.3.4 In discharging its obligations under this Agreement the Council must act at all times with the utmost of good faith and co-operation with the Department with the intent to

deliver the Project and with proper regard to the need for propriety, value for money and efficiency in the use of public money.

4.3.5 The Department shall act with good faith at all times in its dealings with the Council.

4.4 Employment of Staff

4.4.1 The Council is responsible for the legal implications of employing staff associated with delivery of the project, including those on short-term or fixed term contracts. In the event of the project terminating early, for whatever reason, the Council, and not the Department, will be responsible for any redundancy or contractual obligations.

4.5 Cost overruns

The amount of the Grant shall not be increased in the event of any cost overruns or overspend in the delivery of the Project. The Council shall procure that any cost overruns on the Project are underwritten and discharged by the Council.

5. **COUNCIL DELIVERY OBLIGATIONS**

The Council will comply with the obligations set out at **Annex 7**.

6. **MANAGING THE GRANT**

The Council will comply with the obligations set out at **Annex 8**.

7. **WARRANTIES AND REPRESENTATIONS**

The Council warrants, undertakes and agrees that:

- (i) the Council will provide all necessary resources, approvals, powers and expertise to deliver the Project (assuming due receipt of the Grant);
- (ii) it shall at all times comply with all relevant Law and all applicable codes of practice and other similar codes, and shall notify the Department immediately of any significant departure from such Law or codes;
- (iii) it is acting in accordance with its constitution;
- (iv) it has and shall keep in place adequate procedures for dealing with any conflicts of interest;
- (v) it has and shall keep in place systems to deal with the prevention of fraud and/or administrative malfunction;
- (vi) all financial and other information concerning the Project which has been disclosed to the Department is to the best of its knowledge and belief, true and accurate;

- (vii) it is not subject to any contractual or other restriction imposed by its own or any other organisation's rules or regulations or otherwise which may prevent or materially impede it from meeting its obligations in connection with the Grant;
- (viii) it is not aware of anything in its own affairs, which it has not disclosed to the Department or any of the Department's advisers, which might reasonably have influenced the decision of the Department to make the Grant on the terms contained in this Agreement;
- (ix) it is not subject to an outstanding order for the recovery of aid which has been declared by the European Commission to be illegal and incompatible with the common market; and
- (x) since the date of its last accounts there has been no material change in its financial position or prospects.

8. CONTROL PERIOD

- 8.1 The Council shall procure that all Assets funded (see Note 1 regarding land purchase as an exception to this Period) are retained by Council for the Control Period or the economic life of the asset, whichever is shorter² ("the Asset Retention Period") and that no Asset is disposed of in whole or in part by way of sale, assignment, lease, licence, gift, exchange or a change of control within the Asset Retention Period without the prior written consent of the Department, such consent not to be unreasonably withheld and in a timely manner relative to the significance of the asset, which may be subject to such reasonable terms and conditions as the Department may see fit. The Department shall be entitled to recover the proceeds of any disposal during the Asset Retention Period directly from the Council.
- 8.2 The Council shall procure that during the Asset Retention Period the Assets are used only for the purpose intended under the Project as set out in this Agreement and in the approved business case for the Project.
- 8.3 The Council shall procure that an asset register is maintained for all Assets, at a cost exceeding £100,000, wholly or partly using the Grant, for the Asset Retention Period. All such Assets must be managed in accordance with DoF guidance on Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (See link: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni>) and maintained in good condition.

² See note 1

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 9.1 The Council shall procure that appropriate systems are in place to ensure that- if a person is employed to work on the Project, he/she (and any spouse, child, partner or anyone with whom they share a pecuniary interest) shall not enter into any financial or other arrangement to supply or receive goods, facilities or services in connection with the Project for personal payment or gain.
- 9.2 If the Council has any concerns that a conflict of interest has or could arise in any area of work associated with the Project, the Council must notify the Department promptly in writing. The Council must capture conflicts of interest at inception of this Agreement and then on an annual basis for all those involved in the Project and keep these under review. The Council must report to the Department all conflicts of interest and actions identified to mitigate them.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

- 10.1 The Council and Department shall respect the confidentiality of any commercially sensitive information that they have access to as a result of the Project.
- 10.2 Notwithstanding the above, parties may disclose any information as required by law or judicial order and will advise the other of such disclosures at the reasonably earliest opportunity. The Department may also disclose, without advising the Council, all information submitted to it to relevant NICS departments, the NI Executive or UK Government in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and all applicable law relating to the processing of personal data and privacy.
- 10.3 The Council shall ensure that any requests for information relating to the Project are processed in accordance with the provisions of the relevant statute. This includes but may not be limited to The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the General Data Processing Regulations 2018. The Council shall procure that there are express conditions in both the Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) and Integrated Supply Team (IST) contracts, which make it a contract condition for ICT and IST to comply with these conditions. The Council shall procure that the Department is made aware of all such requests for information as soon as possible after their receipt, but in advance of the issue of any reply.

11. PUBLICITY

Publications and Promotions

- 11.1 The following conditions apply in regard to publications and promotions:

- (i) The Council shall, where reasonably practicable, acknowledge the contribution of the NI Executive, DAERA and NIEA to the Project in all publicity material relating to the Project and shall obtain approval of the Department to the form of such acknowledgement prior to its first publication.
- (ii) The Department reserves the right to publish details of the project and financial assistance referred to in this Agreement at any time.
- (iii) The Council must provide the Department with a Marketing Communications Plan within 12 Months from the date of this Agreement.
- (iv) The Department and NIEA's logos must be used on any promotional or interpretative material or signage and are available on request from the DAERA Graphic Design Unit (graphic.design@daera-ni.gov.uk). The Applicant must seek approval and obtain the correct logo(s) and user guidelines by contacting the Department each time the logos are to be used.
- (v) The Council must notify the Department of any significant promotion or celebration of this project at least 2 months in advance of the event and co-ordinate publicity with the Department if requested to do so. The Department and NIEA's support must be recognised when the project is promoted.
- (vi) Drafts of any materials to be printed or published (in paper, signage or web format) must be approved by the Department. Electronic copies, where available, or three complimentary copies of publications should be sent to the Department within 1 month of publication.

12. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL CLAUSES

- 12.1 The Council shall procure that all aspects of the Project which have an impact on the environment are appropriately addressed and with the support of the Department shall use its reasonable endeavours to procure that an appropriate approach in relation to carbon management is adopted and implemented in respect of the Project, with consideration to the OBC and available funding for the Project.
- 12.2 The Council shall procure that social, economic and environmental clauses in accordance with the relevant NIPPP guidance in place at the time of approval of the OBC are included in the tender specification for the Project and the Council shall use reasonable endeavours where appropriate to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits during the tender process. The Council shall not be obligated

to follow the NIPPP guidance where this is not permitted in law, and in such circumstances the Council shall notify the Department as soon as reasonably possible and act in good faith to implement an alternative approach approved by the Department.

13. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Council shall procure that the Grant is not used for any purposes which are party political in intention, use or presentation. Party political activities include, but are not limited to: paid or unpaid advertisements in party political newspapers; use of resources (including staff and offices) for election campaigns, including independent candidates; attendance at party conferences (unless such attendance is included as part of agreed activities in this Agreement); use of offices that are closely associated with the offices of a political party; participation at public demonstrations or rallies of a political nature.

14. ASSIGNMENT

- 14.1 The Council shall not without the prior written consent of the Department assign to, or charge for the benefit of, any other person, body or organisation the right to receive the Grant.
- 14.2 The Council shall not without the prior written consent of the Department transfer any of its obligations under this Agreement.
- 14.3 Notwithstanding clause 14.1, in the event of any reorganisation of Local Government in Northern Ireland, the Council shall be entitled to novate its rights and obligations under this Agreement to any successor body provided that prior notice of such novation is given to the Department.

15. FRAUD

- 15.1 The Department is committed to the prevention of fraud and the promotion of an anti-fraud culture. The Department operates a zero-tolerance attitude to fraud and requires the Council to act honestly and with integrity at all times, and to report all reasonable suspicions of fraud. The Department shall investigate all instances of actual, attempted and suspected fraud and shall seek to recover funds and assets lost through fraud.
- 15.2 The Council shall ensure a fraud policy is in place.
- 15.3 If any information provided by or on behalf of the Council in connection with this Agreement, including but not limited to financial claims and quarterly reports, is found to be false or misleading or there has been a failure to disclose any material fact which may have had a bearing on the Department's consideration of Grant payment(s) the

Council or person acting on its behalf may be liable to prosecution. Furthermore, a false declaration/statement may lead to the loss of future funding and a clawback of any previous Grant paid.

- 15.4 In the event of the Department having reasonable suspicion of suspected fraud, the Department reserves the right to suspend and/or terminate Grant unilaterally and commence legal proceedings to recover any Grant at risk.
- 15.5 The information provided by the Council may be made available to other departments, agencies or public bodies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.

16 IRREGULARITY MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

- 16.1 The Council is responsible for the identification, recording, reporting and clearance of any irregularities identified within the Project.
- 16.2 Irregularities include any administrative or financial mismanagement that comes about either by act or by omission whether or not there is an actual loss of funds. Therefore, any material breach of the conditions of Grant set out in this Agreement must be treated as an irregularity.
- 16.3 If a post payment irregularity is identified it may result in a reduction in the amount of Grant awarded in the next claim request.

17. REGULATORY OBLIGATIONS

17.1 Consents or Assents

The Council will procure that no Works requiring Consents or Assents are commenced and/or continued without all necessary Consents or Assents being in place and the Council will provide such documents or information as the Department requires to demonstrate compliance with this Clause.

17.2 Law

The Council shall procure that all relevant Law applicable to the Project is complied with in all material respects.

17.3 Insurance

- 17.3.1 The Council shall have and maintain in place such policy of insurance as is appropriate to cover all liabilities arising from its role under this Agreement.
- 17.3.2 If required by the Department, the Council shall produce for its inspection documentary evidence of insurances.
- 17.3.2 The Council shall procure that NIPPP rules for insurance purposes in place at the time of approval of the OBC are implemented in the award of all contracts to ensure all contracts/sub-contractors have the appropriate level of insurance.

18. STATE AID /SUBSIDY CONTROL

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, if required as a result of a decision of the Trade Specialised Committee on the Level Playing Field for Open and Fair Competition and Sustainable Development and/or by a UK subsidy control authority and/or a Northern Ireland court and/or UK court, the Department may at any time withhold payment of and/or require repayment of any or all of any assistance deemed to be a subsidy within the scope of the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 or any other international agreement the UK has on subsidy control, together with interest, at such rate as may be set by the UK Government or Northern Ireland Assembly from time to time in respect of UK subsidy control and/or if required by a Northern Ireland or UK Court or UK legislation, from the date on which the assistance was awarded and the Council shall on demand by the Department repay to the Department such assistance and interest in a reasonable amount of time. Records must be kept demonstrating, if required, that the Department's funding has been used for eligible costs and not been used to cross-subsidise the Council's economic activities.

19. RETENTION OF RECORDS

The Council shall procure that all records and information relating to the implementation of the Project and its financing are retained for a period of not less than 7 years following the last payment of Grant under this Agreement and make any such record available to the Department and the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland for inspection upon request by the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland.

20. DURATION

The obligations of the Council under this Agreement shall remain in force until the expiry of the Control Period with the exception of paragraph 19, which shall remain in force for a period of 7 years following the date of the last payment of Grant under this Agreement and land purchase which is in perpetuity.

21. DEFAULT AND GRANT RECOVERY

21.1 The Department shall act in good faith at all times in its dealings with the Council. However, without prejudice to the Department's other rights and remedies, the Department may at its discretion withhold or suspend payment of the Grant and/or require repayment of all or part of the Grant if:

- a) the Grant is used for purposes other than those for which it has been awarded;

- b) the Department considers that the Council has not procured satisfactory progress with the delivery of the Project, including (without limitation) where any NI Gateway review for the Project includes a “red” outcome (and for avoidance of doubt the Council must notify the Department of a red outcome as soon as possible);
 - c) in the reasonable opinion of the Department, the Project is being delivered in a negligent manner;
 - d) the Council provides the Department with any materially misleading or inaccurate information;
 - e) the Council ceases to operate for any reason, or it passes a resolution (or any court of competent jurisdiction makes an order) that it be wound up or dissolved (other than for the purpose of a bona fide and solvent reconstruction or amalgamation);
 - f) the Council becomes insolvent, or it is declared bankrupt, or it is placed into receivership, administration or liquidation, or a petition has been presented for its winding up, or it enters into any arrangement or composition for the benefit of its creditors, or it is unable to pay its debts as they fall due; or
 - g) the Council fails to comply with any of the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement and fails to rectify any such failure within 60 days of receiving written notice detailing the failure or such longer period as agreed by the Department.
- 21.2 The Council shall make any payments due to the Department without any deduction whether by way of set-off, counterclaim, discount, abatement or otherwise.
- 21.3 Should the Council be subject to financial or other difficulties which are capable of having a material impact on its effective delivery of the Project or compliance with this Agreement it will notify the Department as soon as possible so that, if possible, and without creating any legal obligation, the Department will have an opportunity to provide assistance in resolving the problem or to take action to protect the Department and the Grant monies.
- 21.4 Without prejudice to any remedies available to the Department under the terms of this Agreement, if an event under 21.1(e) or (f) occurs then the Department shall act in good faith to facilitate and agree a novation of this Agreement where this would be appropriate, or otherwise engage with the Council (or any appointed receiver, administrator or liquidator, as appropriate) to agree the most appropriate course of action to ensure the continued delivery of the Project in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.

22. TERMINATION

- 22.1 The Department shall act in good faith at all times in its dealings with the Council. However, without prejudice the Department reserves the right to terminate this Agreement at any time by giving 3 months written notice to the Council of termination. Any liabilities for Eligible Expenditure reasonably and properly incurred or irrevocably committed to in good faith in line with this Agreement before the date of service of the Department's notice of termination will be payable by the Department in accordance with the terms of this Agreement subject to the Council demonstrating that they have taken all reasonable steps to mitigate such liabilities.
- 22.2 The Department will not be liable to pay any of the costs related to any transfer or termination of employment of any employees engaged in the delivery of the Project.

23. INDEMNITY AND LIABILITY

- 23.1 The Council will be liable for and will indemnify the Department in full for any expense, liability, loss, claim or proceedings arising under statute, tort (including negligence), contract and/or at common law in respect of personal injury to or death of any person or loss of or damage to property (whether belonging to the Department, or otherwise) or any claim by any third party arising directly or indirectly out of or caused or contributed to by the Project and/or the performance or non-performance or delay in performance by the Council of any of its obligations under this Agreement except to the extent that the same is due to any act or neglect of the Department (other than any act or omission permitted to the Department under this Agreement).
- 23.2 Subject to Clause 23.1, the Department's liability under this Agreement is limited to the payment of the Grant.
- 23.3 If any third party makes a claim, or notifies an intention to make a claim, against the Department which may reasonably be considered likely to give rise to a liability under clause 23.1 (a "Claim"), the Department shall:
- 23.3.1 as soon as reasonably practicable, give written notice of the Claim to the Council, specifying the nature of the Claim in reasonable detail;
- 23.3.2 not make any admission of liability, agreement or compromise in relation to the Claim without the prior written consent of the Council (such consent not to be unreasonably conditioned, withheld or delayed), provided that the Department may settle the Claim (after giving prior written notice of the terms of settlement (to the extent legally possible) to the Council, but without obtaining the Council's consent) if the Department believes that failure to settle the Claim would be prejudicial to it in any material respect;

23.3.3 at the cost of the Council, to take such action as the Council may reasonably request to avoid, dispute, compromise or defend the Claim, provided that the Department shall not be required to take any action which it believes would be prejudicial to it in any material respect.

23.4 Nothing in this clause 23 shall restrict or limit the Department's general obligation at law to mitigate any loss it may suffer or incur as a result of an event that may give rise to a claim under the indemnity provided in this clause 23.

24. NOTICES AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

24.1 Any notice or other communication given to a party under or in connection with this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be delivered by hand or by pre-paid first-class post or sent by email to the following individuals at the following addresses (or to an individual and address substituted in writing by the party to be served):

- (i) The Department: Director of Rural Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP.
- (ii) The Council: Chief Executive office, Ards and North Down Borough Council, City Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT.

24.2 Any notice or other communication shall be deemed to have been received:

- (a) if delivered by hand, at the time the notice is left at the proper address (except that if received on a non-working day or after 5pm on any working day they shall be deemed received on the next working day); or
- (b) if sent by pre-paid first-class post, at 9.00am on the second working day after posting; or
- (c) if sent by email, at the time of transmission (except that if received on a non-working day or after 5pm on any working day they shall be deemed received on the next working day).

25. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

25.1 In the event of any dispute arising between the parties to this Agreement in relation to this Agreement the matter should first be referred for resolution to senior officers of the Parties ("Senior Officers") in order to seek a resolution of the disputed issue. The Senior Officer for the Department will be the Director of Rural Affairs (or such other individual nominated by the Department from time to time). The Senior Officer for the

Council will be the Chief Executive not withstanding para 25.2 (or such other individual nominated by the Council from time to time).

- 25.2 Should the complaint or dispute remain unresolved within 14 days of the matter first being referred to the Senior Officers, the matter should next be referred to the Permanent Secretary of the Department (or such other individual nominated by the Department from time to time) and the Chief Executive of the Council with an instruction to attempt to resolve the dispute by agreement within 14 days, or such other period as may be mutually agreed by the Department and the Council.
- 25.3 In the absence of agreement under Clause 25.2, the parties may seek to resolve the matter through mediation under the CEDR Model Mediation Procedure (or such other appropriate dispute resolution model as is agreed by both parties). Unless otherwise agreed, the parties shall bear the costs and expenses of the mediation equally.
- 25.4 For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this clause 25 shall prevent the Department from taking any action to exercise any of its rights and remedies (including its right to withhold funds or terminate) under this Agreement.

26. RIGHTS OF THIRD PARTIES

Nothing in this Agreement will confer any rights or obligations on any person who has not executed this Agreement nor will the consent of any person who has not so executed this Agreement be needed to make any modification, amendment, variation or release of its terms. The Parties agree for the purposes of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 that they do not intend any person other than a Party to be able to enforce any term of this Agreement.

27. SEVERANCE

If at any time any of the provisions of this Agreement become illegal, invalid or unenforceable in any respect under any law or regulation of any jurisdiction, neither the legality, validity or enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Agreement will be in any way affected or impaired as a result.

28. NO WAIVER

No failure or delay on the part of the Department in exercising any right or power (or part of any right or power) and no course of dealing between the Parties will operate as a waiver of any right or power of the Department. The rights and remedies of the Department are cumulative and not exclusive of any rights or remedies which the Department would otherwise have.

29. GOVERNING LAW

- 29.1 This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Northern Ireland.
- 29.2 Subject to Clause **Error! Reference source not found.** (*Dispute Resolution*) the courts of Northern Ireland have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any dispute arising out of or in connection with this Agreement (including a dispute relating to the existence, validity or termination of this Agreement or any non-contractual obligation arising out of or in connection with this Agreement).

30. NO PARTNERSHIP

This Agreement shall not create any partnership or joint venture between the Department and the Council, nor any relationship of principal and agent, nor authorise any party to make or enter into any commitments for or on behalf of the other party.

IN WITNESS of which this Agreement has been duly executed as a deed on the date written at the beginning of this Agreement.

INDEX TO ANNEXES

1. The Project
2. The Project Outputs
3. Eligible Expenditure
4. Payment of Grant
5. Funding Process for The Department
6. Construction conditions
7. Delivery Obligations
8. Managing the Grant
9. Project Monitoring Arrangements

ANNEX 1

THE PROJECT

Project Summary

1. Phase 1 Development

The OBC proposes the site should be developed in phases, with Option 3 identified as the preferred option for Phase 1 – ‘Interventions’.

The key components will include:

- Upgraded paths and drainage.
- Interpretative signage setting out trail maps and highlighting the heritage.
- A small Visitor Hub to provide toilets, information point, coffee-kiosk, and classroom facilities.
- Restoration of the existing mining features on the site.
- Enhancement of the Woodland around the Whitespots Country Park.
- Adventure Play Area and Pump Track.
- Car Park upgrade and development of a separate motorbike trials access and drop-off area.

ANNEX 2

THE PROJECT OUTPUTS

1. **The anticipated outputs for the project are:**

Key Benefit 1: Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Residents within the Region

Benefit to be measured	Target Value
The number of local residents using the facilities for recreation and active leisure	96,000 local visitors per annum
The length of trail available for the public to utilise for recreation and active leisure	15km
Creation of all-ability facilities	A minimum of 2km of all-ability trail An accessible/Changing Place toilet. Inclusive play area Disabled car parking

Key Benefit 2: Increase Employment opportunities within the Region

Benefit to be measured	Target Value
Number of new jobs created on the site	At least seven created
Number of volunteering opportunities created	At least five created
Establishment of a training programme that can assist with future employment	Training programme recognised by an industry body in place

Key Benefit 3: Increase the number of Visitors to the Region

Benefit to be measured	Target Value
Increase in the number of domestic visitors	2,680 domestic visitors per annum
Increase in the number of visitors from ROI, UK, and Out of State	1,320 out of state visitors per annum

Increase the GVA / visitor spending in the Ards and North Down area	Annual increase in visitor spend in the Borough of £34,300 per annum
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Key Benefit 4: Ensure the environmental sustainability of Whitespots and Clondeboye Estate

Benefit to be measured	Target Value
Local schools, community groups and charities use the site for environmental education related purpose	At least five per annum by the fifth anniversary of Phase 1 completion
Greater understanding of biodiversity on the Whitespots and Clondeboye sites	Completion of geospatial mapping and register of site habitat and species survey. Maintenance of priority habitats and species. Species records submitted to CEDaR.
Increase in the numbers using the greenways compared to the baseline following completion	At least 20% of greenway users visiting the site
Retention of the natural plant and animal species associated with the site	No reduction in the number of natural plant and animal species associated with the site
Maintenance of the condition of the Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)	The ASSI will be maintained in Favourable Condition
Priority habitat managed in favourable condition (Ha)	15 ha
Priority habitat restored/improved (Ha)	15ha
Priority habitat created (Ha)	2 ha
Mixed habitat being managed for nature conservation - OECM (Ha)	70 ha
Land purchase for habitat management (Ha)	15 ha
Recruitment of volunteers to work with Council to manage the site.	Core group of 20-50 people. Establishment of a Friends of Whitespots Group

2. **Project Milestones**

These are set out in a Programme Gantt Chart updated from time to time by Council and copied to the Department.

ANNEX 3 ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

1. Eligible Expenditure means capital expenditure incurred by the Council in delivering the Project in accordance with
 - (a) the Grant breakdown set out in the tables below,
 - (b) the delivery conditions set out at **Annex 7**,
 - (c) all appropriate accounting treatments, and
 - (d) the requirement to achieve value for money.

2. Eligible Expenditure excludes (without limitation) VAT which is recoverable.

3. The amount of Grant that the Project Promoter may spend on any element of expenditure listed in the tables at paragraph 4 below shall not exceed the corresponding sum of money listed in the table for that element of expenditure. Providing it has the prior written agreement of the Department and may be subject to such conditions as required by the Department, such agreement to be confirmed or withheld by the Department in writing within 15 working days of receipt of the request from the Council. Any expenditure not listed in these tables is not Eligible Expenditure unless it is previously approved in writing by the Department.

4. Funding Breakdown

The Grant of £8,500,926 to Ards and North Down Borough Council is part of a wider funding package in respect of the capital cost of Whitespots Country Park.

- (a) Funding sources

The Whitespots Country Park Project Capital Funding is set out below:

<i>Funding Source</i>	<i>Capital / Resource</i>	<i>Total £</i>	<i>%</i>
Complementary Fund	Capital	7,400,000	79
Environment Fund	Capital	1,100,926	12
Council	Capital	820,000	9
Total Funding for Phase 1	Capital	£9,320,926	100

(b) Project Cost

The Whitespots Country Park Project Costs are set out below:

		£
Construction Works		4,716,289
Preliminaries	20.00%	707,443.35
Design Development/Contingency	10.00%	471,628.90
Construction Costs		5,895,361.00
Inflation costs	15.51%	636,699.02
Professional fees	13.00%	766,396.96
Statutory charges	0.60%	35,372.17
CEEQUAL implementation	1.00%	58,953.61
Utility connections/diversions	0.82%	50,000.00
Construction capital costs Subtotal		7,442,783.01
Acquisition of land (incl 10% cont)		286,000.00
Project management costs		300,000.00
		8,842,272.70
Surveys & Specialist reports		140,000.00
Optimism bias	15.48%	1,152,142.81
Overall Capital Costs Total		9,320,925.82

- The Council has flexibility and capacity to vire the Environment Fund and Complementary Fund funding across budget heads, subject to realisation of the stated project benefits.

ANNEX 4

PAYMENT OF GRANT

Part 1 - Payments

1. The Department will pay the Grant to the Council retrospectively on expenditure incurred by the Council.
2. Payment is subject to receipt by the Department of:
 - (a) a completed Claim Form which the Department will provide.
 - (b) Quarterly Performance Reports which are satisfactory to the Department in form and content.
3. Payment of Grant will be in accordance with:
 - (a) the Grant breakdown included in the OBC / as updated by FBC such breakdown to be updated at a minimum annually with the option of updating at key Project milestones, subject to the agreement of the Council and the Department; and
 - (b) the Grant profile required by the Department at each Monitoring Round unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Department.
4. The Council is responsible for making all payments and will be reimbursed by the Department to the terms and conditions of this Agreement.
5. The Council must maintain a full audit trail and all necessary associated accounting records to enable full verification of expenditure on the Project. All expenditure must comply with public sector regulatory and legal requirements.
6. Cash Flow Forecasts
 - 6.1 During the life of the Project, the Council shall submit to the Department an updated cash flow statement on a quarterly basis or following any material change to the completion date or Project budget. A monthly expenditure forecast must be submitted for the current financial year and quarterly for next three years and annually for subsequent years.
 - 6.2 The Council must provide an explanation to the satisfaction of the Department if actual expenditure from the previous quarter varies materially from the previously submitted forecast.

7. Dedicated Bank Account

7.1 The Council may open and maintain a separate bank account for the receipt of the Grant and all funding received for the Project must be lodged in full to this bank account. If a separate bank account is not to be set up, then Council must set up separate cost codes for the project so that there is a clear audit trail for all claims reimbursed.

8. Overpayments

The Council shall promptly notify the Department of any money incorrectly paid to it either as a result of an administrative error or otherwise (“the overpayment”). This includes (without limitation) situations where an incorrect sum of money has been paid or where an amount of Grant was not expended on Eligible Expenditure. In such event the Department shall deduct the overpayment from the next Grant claim request or, if requested by the Department, the Council shall promptly repay the overpayment to the Department.

9. Validation

If requested by the Department, the Council shall permit the Department to carry out checks on the Council’s financial systems and controls and shall provide the Department with all documentation and information reasonably requested by the Department to enable it to verify any expenditure.

10. Grant Drawdown request Template will be provided by the Department.

ANNEX 5

FUNDING PROCESS FOR THE DEPARTMENT

1. Quarterly Reporting

- The Council must submit a quarterly report to the Department. This must begin once the Contract for Funding has been agreed.
- This will be scrutinised by the Department and recorded.
- The quarterly report should include:
 - i. what has actually been spent on a quarterly basis, including variance analysis of funds spent compared to forecast at a project level.
 - ii. what is forecasted to be spent for the remainder of the financial year, broken down by quarter at project level.

2. Monitoring

- The Council should be aware that returns for the last monitoring round of each year for Accountable Department will be required in November and that this will normally be the last opportunity for Departments to surrender money. This is an extremely important stage for NICS budget management. Underspends should be notified to the Department as soon as they are known rather than waiting until a monitoring round.
- The Department, may conduct ad hoc sample checks on the Council's financial systems and controls (e.g. vouching system) as well as validating claims expenditure. Any irregular expenditure will be repaid to the Department by the Council.
- As per **Annex 3** Council should maintain detailed records of expenditure and the Department may ask for this breakdown from time to time.
- The Council should report to the Department any issues related to the Grant highlighted in the annual audit report to Council.
- The Department will require annual statements of assurance from the Council on all governance controls, including financial.
- The Department will attend regular progress meetings with the Council.
- The Council will submit an annual financial statement to the Department by the end of April each year detailing progress against plans for the project and to include breakdown of funds spent on the project; variance analysis between forecast spend and actual spend with explanations.

ANNEX 6

CONSTRUCTION CONDITIONS

1. The Council has fully complied with its obligations at **Annex 7**, Part 1 of this Agreement.
2. The governance structures for the Project have been put in place as set out within the approved OBC / as updated by FBC.
3. The Council is advised to discuss any proposed paths or works within or near the ASSI with the NIEA Earth Science and Heritage Officer prior to submission of the Planning Application and during works.
4. The monitoring arrangements for the Project have been put in place as set out at **Annex 9** to the satisfaction of the Department.
5. The Department has been provided with evidence satisfactory to the Department that a funding package is in place to cover all costs of the Project.
6. All relevant NI Gateway reviews for the Project have been considered and where necessary completed and assessed by COE (Programmes and Projects) DoF and the Department and Accounting Officer has been provided with the outcome of each Assessment.
7. Project Plan has been submitted to the Department
8. The Council has provided representations and warranties to the Department which are satisfactory to the Department in form and content.
 - (a) All procurement for the Project or any part of the Project supported in whole or in part through the payment of the Grant will be completed in accordance with NIPPP guidance in place at the time of approval of the OBC and to the satisfaction of the Department.
 - (b) the Council has full legal control of the Property and will hold either a freehold interest or a leasehold interest with an unexpired term of not less than 25 years³ from the date of this Agreement.
 - (c) the Property is free from any conditions, restrictions or covenants which do or might affect the right to carry out or complete the Works or to deliver the Project.

³ Note that this is in perpetuity for any land purchased through the grant – as per Note 1

- (d) all Consents required for the Works to be commenced will be obtained and not withdrawn.
- (e) all appropriate condition surveys will be obtained in respect of the Works.

ANNEX 7

DELIVERY OBLIGATIONS

Part 1: Development and Design Phase

1. The Council must provide an updated and detailed benefits realisation plan to the Department within 12 months of the date of this Agreement which is satisfactory to the Department in form and content.
2. The Council must provide a RIBA Stage 2 cost assessment for the Project to the Department for validation by CPD. Should the cost assessment be in excess of the estimate provided in the OBC the Council must procure that the Council provides the Department with proposed solutions to address the cost increase within 3 months of being requested by the Department to do so, such solutions to be satisfactory to the Department and the Council.

Part 2: Delivering a Full Business Case

1. The Council must provide
 - (i) a Full Business Case, which is compliant with Better Business Cases NI Guidance and is satisfactory to the Department in form and content within 36 months of the signing of this Agreement.
 - (ii) A detailed Project Plan including how, when and by whom a specific project milestone or set of targets is achieved
 - (iii) Further detail within the management case in respect of the strategy and timeline for evaluations during the operational phase
2. A Change Management framework and plan must be provided as part of the FBC and must include details on the structure, reporting lines, approvals required, roles and responsibilities, together with named individuals, any vacancies and plans for any future changes
3. A comprehensive Benefits Management Strategy, Framework and Register must be prepared for the FBC, in line with the requirements of the Better Business Case guidance. In addition, baseline information must be provided, so that benefits resulting from the project can be accurately managed.

4. A satisfactory risk management template must be comprehensively completed at the FBC stage including details of who is responsible for identifying risks, monitoring risks and reporting on same, and details of senior management support and leadership of the risk management policies.

A satisfactory full Risk Register / RAIDD log must be attached to the FBC.

The Risks / Sensitivity analysis must be reviewed and scrutinised as part of the FBC process, with rationale provided to justify the sensitivities applied.

5. A clear value proposition for the Project.

All assumptions in the FBC must be explained in detail with clear rationale and to the satisfaction of the Department. For example, maintenance costs.

Additional information detailing the specificities of the local economy.

The inclusion of a 'break-even' sensitivity analysis.

Comments from the Land and Property Services of the Department of Finance on any Project related site acquisition costs and any feedback.

Any material changes to the OBC present in the FBC must be brought to the attention of the Department.

Part 3: Construction

1. The Council must procure that:
 - (a) the Works are carried and completed in a good and workmanlike manner and in accordance with the FBC, the Project Plan and the terms of this Agreement.
 - (b) the Works are carried out and completed in accordance with all Consents, Assents and Law.
2. Changes to the Project
 - (a) The Council must procure that appropriate processes are put in place so that the Council becomes aware of any material proposed or anticipated changes to the

Project at the earliest possible date and must notify the Department of such changes as soon as possible.

- (b) Grant drawdown requests submitted that differ materially from the approved business case or milestones without the Department's prior approval may result in funding under this Agreement being deemed not to be Eligible Expenditure in which case the Department shall be entitled to recoup all or any part of the amount of Grant already paid.
- (c) A material change must be notified to and approved by the Department. Examples of material changes include:
- (i) a change which would result in the Project no longer representing value for money;
 - (ii) a 10% change to the Project budget or a change to Project implementation end date.
 - (iii) a change to the benefits, scope, delivery, aim or any other aspect of the Project from that set out in the OBC or FBC that would require the Council to submit an addendum to the FBC;
 - changes to the VAT position of the Council;
 - changes in sources(s) and the amounts of funding;
 - (vi) changes to the profiling of budget requirements that would result in significant overspend or underspend within the financial year and which cannot be managed across the Project.
 - (vii) where another funding partner withdraws or fails to renew its support; and
 - (viii) concerns with regard to the management of public monies/funds.
- (d) Other changes which may not be material but which must be notified to and approved by the Department (such approval not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed where there is no material impact on the Project and no requirement to submit an addendum to the FBC) include:
- changes to the Project name, or the name of the Council;
 - changes to the Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Council
 - changes in key personnel employed or engaged on the Project and or the Council;

- changes to the corporate governance arrangements of the Council;

Part 4 : Withholding of Grant

1. Withdrawal of Grant/Withholding Payment / Claw back of payment

The Department reserves the right to suspend, defer or withhold or clawback any or all of the payments and/or require the Applicant to repay part or all of the financial assistance if:

- i. The conditions of this offer are not met; or
- ii. Any information given to the Department or claims for Financial Assistance is found to be false or misleading or there has been a failure to disclose any material fact which would have had a bearing on the Department's consideration of the Business Case; or
- iii. There is a substantial or material change in the nature, scale or timing of the project; if the project is used for purposes other than those specified in the Business Case; or if the project has in any other way not been implemented in accordance with these conditions of offer.
- iv. Any environmental damage is caused as a result of the delivery of the project.
- v. The Applicant shall not, without the prior written consent of the Department, appropriate any land or any part of it for purposes other than nature conservation or passive recreational enjoyment or sell, lease or otherwise dispose of it, or any part of it, but shall if so, required by the Department pay to the Department either:
 - a) a sum equal to the amount of grant paid to the Council; or
 - b) in the case of an appropriation, % of an amount equal to the prevailing market value of the land, such value to be determined by the District Valuer; or
 - c) In the case of the sale, lease or other disposal % of the proceeds of such sale, lease or other disposal; whichever of I and II shall be the greater.
- vi. Any sum repayable to the Department under this condition shall be recoverable from the Council by the Department as a debt due to it.

Part 5 : Procurement

1. Procurement general

All procurement for the Project or any part of the Project supported in whole or in part through the payment of the Grant has been completed in accordance with NIPPP guidance in place at the time of approval of the OBC / as updated by FBC and to the satisfaction of the Department and no contracts for a value above £30,000 (thirty thousand pounds) have been or will be entered into in respect of the Project without the prior written approval of the Department (or where any contracts have already been entered into without the prior written approval of the Department the Council has notified these to the Department prior to this Agreement and the Department has confirmed its approval in writing). Exceptionally and on request, the Department may give approval where it would not be reasonable for council to apply the NIPPP guidance.

2. Procurement and Tendering

- a) The Applicant shall implement the procurement procedures as set out in the table below. The actions related in the table should be implemented by the Applicant based on the estimated value (excl. VAT) of each contract at pre-tender stage. Procurement decisions must demonstrate best value for money and the Applicant must keep records, which support its decisions.

Estimated Value	Tender Action Required
Up to £5,000	2 Oral quotations – with email or hard copy confirmation. Every attempt should be made to obtain more than one quotation.
£5,001 - £30,000	4 Selected Tenders
>£ 30,000	Contact Grant Team for detailed requirements

It may not always be possible to obtain the required number of quotations, although reasonable efforts to do so must be demonstrated. For procurements over £5,000 where only one supplier is available, Departmental approval for the procurement must be obtained in advance.

Quotations and tenders should be representative of the project expenditure profile elements, and not be disaggregated to access the different procurement thresholds individually for linked expenditure.

- b) The Department shall be notified of the outcome of tendering exercises connected with the Project (above a threshold of £5,000). The Applicant shall forward copies of tender appraisal summary sheets relating to the evaluation and selection of tenders if requested. A contract may only be awarded following completion of an appropriate competition. The Applicant shall comply with and, in the letting of any contract, implement the provisions of all enactments, regulations, statutory provisions and working rules related to legislation as it pertains in Northern Ireland, including that related to equal opportunities, fair employment, environmental protection and health and safety.

- c) Organisations that are not financed or supervised by public sector bodies and commercial organisations in the private sector may not be covered by the WTO Government Procurement Agreement but are nonetheless expected to use fair and open practices including competitive tendering when letting contracts.

ANNEX 8

MANAGING THE GRANT

1 Governance and Reporting

The Council must attend any meetings requested by the Department and provide any information, explanations and documentation reasonably requested by the Department.

2 Monitoring and Evaluation

2.1 The Council must closely monitor the delivery and success of the Project throughout the Grant Period to ensure the aims and objectives of the Project are being met.

2.2 The Council must maintain detailed records of all cost components for the Project.

2.3 Any movement of projected spend within the Project must be reported quarterly, detailing reason for variance and impact on expenditure profile. Where such movements are material, the Council shall provide an explanation in conjunction with the quarterly variance reports. The Department shall scrutinise variances and where there are concerns that the Project is accelerating spend beyond planned profiles, the Accountable Department shall require the Council to provide a robust explanation.

2.4 The Council must immediately inform the Department of any issues (a materialised risk) or emerging risks that shall or are likely to materially adversely impact the delivery of the Project and identify all proposed remedial actions.

2.5 The Council must submit an annual assurance statement to the Department' on all governance controls, including financial reconciliation of grant, as agreed between the Department and the Council.

2.6 The Council shall be required to update the financial plan to monitor the budget, update actual against projected spend and to include breakdown of funds spent, with variance analysis between forecast spend and actual spend with explanations. This is similar to information contained in quarterly reports, summarised as an overview of the year.

3. Verification and Review

3.1 Public funding regulations which govern grant awards require that all payments from public funds must be reviewed and independently audited on a regular basis. This is to ensure that payments have been applied for the purpose for which they were approved and that they comply with any legal and eligibility requirement.

- 3.2 An audit review shall usually involve an onsite visit and the verification officer shall have right of access to all original documents and records and to view physical progress where appropriate. The Council shall ensure that project management staff are available to assist the audit officer in his/her work.
- 3.3 Any payment of Grant, which is subsequently deemed to be ineligible following a retrospective verification report, shall be repaid by the Council to the Department immediately on receipt of a written demand from the Department. Failure to comply with this demand may result in legal proceedings to recover Grant deemed ineligible.
- 3.4 Audits may be conducted by the Department staff, the NIAO or any agent acting on their behalf (and in this sub clause these bodies or persons are referred to whether individually or collectively as 'the Auditor'). The Auditor shall be entitled at any time and without notice to gain access to any premises of the Council. The Auditor shall be entitled to inspect, retain and make copies of the original and copies of all documents, files and all other records relating to the Project ('the Records'). The Council shall take all steps necessary to ensure that the Records are supplied or made available to the Auditor without delay and this obligation shall include Records that are in the possession of any agent or employee of the Council. The Auditor's entitlement to inspect, retain and make copies of the Records, and the obligation of the Council to supply or make available the Records shall extend to all Records however stored including hard or soft copy or any other electronic or digital form. The rights of the Auditor under this sub clause to inspect, retain and make copies of the Records shall not be restricted by the fact that the Records are intermixed with documents, files or records relating to a third party. By entering into this Agreement, the Council expressly grants the Auditor exercising rights under this sub clause permission to enter any premises, owned or occupied by it or under its control and shall procure the same rights for the Department in respect of any premises being used to deliver the project and whether owned, occupied or under the control of a Council or any third party.

The purpose of these inspections shall be to establish that the Council:

- i. received Grant in accordance with documented eligible expenditure;
- ii. is implemented with appropriate financial controls; and
- iii. accords with all terms and conditions of this Agreement.

4. Benefits realisation

- 4.1 The Council shall determine a 'Baseline' to support the development of a Benefits Realisation Strategy/Plan for the Project.
- 4.2 The Council must ensure regular assessments are carried out to check whether the Project is still on track to realise benefits noted within the OBC as part of regular project management responsibilities.
- 4.3 The Council must diligently provide responses to any inquiries raised by the Department after these regular assessments and must share any official report or findings with the Department.

ANNEX 9

PROJECT MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

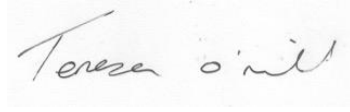
1. The Council will ensure that representatives of the Department will be permitted to attend the Project Board, and will be provided with all documentation relating to the Project requested by it and that individuals at project level in respect of the Project will engage with those representatives when requested
2. The Council must establish baselines for monitoring based on evidence within 6 months of the date of signing of the Letter of Offer. The Council must monitor the Project to ensure an effective deployment of the Grant and delivery of high-quality results. The Council must regularly and systematically review outputs, results and impacts of all Project activities and report these to the Department in accordance with the reporting milestones set out below:
 - a. On a Quarterly basis (or as required) - no later than the end of the 20th working day of the following month the Financial Forecast Table in the form required by the Department should be completed and submitted to the Department. This will include monthly expenditure by the Project, the cumulative spend and profile spend for the remainder of the Financial Year.
 - b. On a Quarterly basis – no later than the end of the 20th working day of the following month, a **Quarterly Performance Report** in the form required by the Department to be submitted to the Department to include following information:
 - i. The Risk/RAG status of the Project;
 - ii. Financial information – the latest information on spend and latest projections of spend for the remainder of the Financial Year, highlighting where underspend or overspend is predicted and to include narrative as to how this will be managed;
 - iii. The Risk/RAG status against the milestones within the Council programme Plan. This should include details of Project milestones met and upcoming (including information where milestones have been altered);
 - iv. All RAG status should be managed on a monthly basis.
 - c. Bi-Annually in Q2 (by 31 August) and Q4 (by 28 February) - a Financial Forecast Table for the remainder of the Project - the Financial Forecast Table in the form required by the Department, to be updated for the remaining term of the Project and submitted to the Department. to include a spending profile for the remainder

of the term by the Project. This should show the annual forecasted expenditure/spending profile over the forthcoming Financial Years. It will inform financial planning, identifying how any slippage / acceleration is intended to be managed.

- d. Annually in Q1 (by 30 June) - an updated Programme Plan to be completed and submitted to the Department. This plan will include: the targeted milestones/activities and outputs for the project for the coming year.
- e. The Council must procure that a Post Project Evaluation (PPE) on the Project is carried out by the Council within 2 years of project completion and provided to the Department.

EXECUTION PAGE

Sealed with the Official Seal of the)
The Department of Agriculture,)
Environment and Rural Affairs)
in the presence of:



Authorised Signatory

Official Seal of)
Ards and North Down Borough Council)
in the presence of:)

Authorised Signatory



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

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Whitespots Country Park

PHASE 1 | OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE | NOVEMBER 2023



Prepared by:

- AECOM
- Jettora
- Tandem Design
- Ards and North Down Borough Council - Whitespots Country Park Project Board

Version approval:

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26.2	14.08.2020	Susie McCullough, Director for Regeneration, Development and Planning	Corporate Leadership Team
27.1	21.08.2020	Susie McCullough, Director for Regeneration, Development and Planning	Internal Review
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29	16.11.2020	Susie McCullough, Director for Regeneration, Development and Planning	Belfast Region City Deal TRAB
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33	26.08.2022	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Update for COMPLEMENTARY FUND following Economist comments
34	21.12.2022	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Update for COMPLEMENTARY FUND following CPD & Economist comments
34a	19.01.2023	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Update for COMPLEMENTARY FUND following CPD & Economist comments (Correction of Typo on page 40)
35	27.02.2023	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Final update to increase job creation figure and clarify construction contract
35a	10.10.2023	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Update on funding and funding profile
36	03.11.2023	Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing	Update following Case Committee meeting. Approved by DoF on 11 th June 2024.



Appointed Consultants for OBC Stage



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1. Introduction

1.1 Preamble

This Outline Business Case (“OBC”) has been prepared to assist the NI Executive City/ Growth Deals Complementary Fund consider the economic value that could be created for Northern Ireland through public investment in the development of Whitespots Country Park, Newtownards, County Down (the “Whitespots Project”). It considers the need for public intervention in order to achieve the objectives of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (“DAERA”) as the lead NI Civil Service Department for the Whitespots Project and appraises a number of different options to determine the investment approach that will represent the greatest value for money for the public purse.

1.2 Background

As well as its stunning coastline, atmospheric towns and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Borough of Ards and North Down has a rich natural, industrial, and cultural heritage. However, falling numbers of visitors to the Borough in recent years demonstrates that these assets are not being utilised to their full potential in the development of economic growth for the Belfast Region. As such, Ards and North Down Borough Council (“ANDBC” or the “Council”) has developed a long-term vision to promote and provide access for visitors to key environmental and cultural heritage assets throughout the area.

The Whitespots Country Park is currently owned and maintained by the Council, and it contains a number of features that make it an ideal asset to the Council’s vision. It is in a central location within the Borough to the north of Newtownards, 14 miles (27 minutes’ drive¹) from the centre of Belfast. It is easily accessible by the public from the main Bangor Road at Conlig from an existing carpark on a main bus-route as shown below:



Whitespots is adjacent (and linked) to the historic Clondeboye Estate, one of the great private estates of Northern Ireland. The Estate was owned by the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava prior to her recent death in October 2020 and is currently controlled by the executors of her estate. The public can access the Estate via the 5-mile long Clondeboye Way which includes Whitespots and the famous Helen’s Tower on its path, amongst other features.

¹ Data provided by AA Routeplanner

Not only does the combined Whitespots Country Park and Clondeboye Estate (the “Site”) provide an attraction with beautiful walks including views across the Borough to Scrabo Tower and the Strangford Lough, but it is critically important in the wider heritage of Northern Ireland in that the Site provides links to two of the most important periods in Northern Ireland’s history, specifically:

- **The World Wars:** The site at the adjacent Clondeboye estate was used as a training camp for soldiers about to embark for France in both WW1 and WW2. The Ulster Tower at Thiepval in France was inspired by Helen’s Tower and many of the soldiers that fought in the famous battle of the Somme travelled directly from the training trenches on the site (which can still be seen today).
- **Mining Industry:** The Whitespots Country Park is the site of a number of former lead mines developed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The heritage of the site is so valuable it has been designated an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) it is recognised as a key site in the history of mining in Ireland. It once produced 40% of the lead ore produced in the entire island of Ireland in the mid-19th century.

However, there are a number of deficiencies in the Site which currently restrict its attractiveness. Investment is required in the Whitespots / Clondeboye site to improve the experience and ensure the site has appeal locally, within NI more widely and out-of-state.

The City Deal Complementary Fund represents a unique opportunity to secure this much-needed investment and release the potential of the Site. As such, ANDBC have engaged AECOM, Jettora and Tandem Design to assist in the development of the Whitespots Project into a coherent and considered business case to demonstrate the potential value of public investment into Whitespots Country Park and the Clondeboye Estate.

1.3 Project Governance and Key Stakeholders

ANDBC has formed a Project Board which has led the development of this OBC. A Leadership Group has also been established to support the Project Board in its analysis and decision making relating to the OBC. This Leadership Group consists of represents from the key stakeholders for the Project which are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clondeboye Estate | <input type="checkbox"/> Clondeboye Golf Club; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somme Museum/Somme Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Trial NI; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANDBC Planning Department | <input type="checkbox"/> Geological Survey NI; Department for the Economy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANDBC Community and Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism NI; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANDBC Regeneration and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> National Museum NI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANDBC Tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> NI War Memorial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department for Communities | <input type="checkbox"/> HED; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland Trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Queen’s University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DAERA | <input type="checkbox"/> Royal British Legion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NIEA | <input type="checkbox"/> LPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NLHF | <input type="checkbox"/> Ulster Wildlife Trust |

In addition to the input from the above parties within the Leadership Group further consultation was undertaken through:

- 1) **An Online Public Survey:** conducted by ANDBC in Q1 2020 to establish the views of the general public. The survey was advertised on the Council’s website and through its social media outlets; and

- 2) Qualitative Tourism Consumer Consultation Exercise: Two independent studies were commissioned by Tourism NI to as part of a wider engagement for all the Tourism based Projects forming part of the Belfast Region City Deal.
 - a. The first, undertaken by Cognisance, is a high-level Consumer Focus Group and Travel Trade Report analysis.
 - b. The second, undertaken by Kantar, is a more in-depth “Deep Dive” into potential visitors’ views on the location as it stands currently.

The results from these consultation exercises underpin the analysis presented throughout this OBC.

1.4 Document structure

The objective of this OBC is to ensure that an informed decision can be taken by both the Council Members and the Complementary Fund Board regarding investment into the Whitespots Project and that any future development is based on a sound qualitative and quantitative analysis of the shortlisted options.

It has been prepared in accordance with the guidance within HM Treasury’s Green Book and so the structure is in accordance with the Five Case Model described in this guidance. The main sections are therefore as follows:

Section	Title	Primary Objective
2	Strategic Case	Confirm the case for change and key objectives
3	Economic Case	Determine the option that represents best value for money
4	Commercial Case	Establish risk allocation between public and private sectors
5	Financial Case	Confirm the preferred option is affordable within budget
6	Management Case	Set out the arrangements for successful delivery

2. Strategic Case

2.1 Purpose

The strategic case determines whether the Whitespots Project as a whole has a robust case for public funding and considers its fit with wider public policy objectives. Therefore, this Strategic Case focuses on how an investment in Whitespots and Clandeboye will address current deficiencies and enable the wider objectives of DAERA and the Complementary Fund to be achieved.

This section specifies the identified problems, how the Project addresses these problems, and how the Project contributes to key policy objectives.

2.2 Policy Fit

The funding from the Project will be sourced from both NI Executive (with DAERA as the sponsoring Department) as well as ANDBC. On this basis, the key strategies to which this proposed project contributes within the existing local and national policy environment are described below.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

2.2.1 DAERA Strategies

[DAERA Forests for our Future Scheme](#)

On 2nd March 2020, the DAERA Minister announced plans to implement the ‘Forests for our Future’ programme. This is an investment scheme that will involve planting 18 million trees over the next 10 years (10 for every person in Northern Ireland).

This is Northern Ireland’s biggest and most ambitious plan to develop our forests and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The ‘Forests for our Future’ programme pledges to:

- Plant 18 million trees (9,000 hectares of new woodland) - 10 trees per person in Northern Ireland.
- Improve the resilience of our forests and woodlands.
- Increase their contribution to a sustainable, healthy environment.
- Increase their contribution to NI’s sustainable economic growth.
- Enable more people to improve their health, wellbeing, and life chances; and
- Contribute to the UK Net Zero by 2050 target.

Investment in the Whitespots Project provides a clear opportunity to contribute to this scheme.

[Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

This strategy supports the long-term objective of halting the loss of biodiversity stated in the Programme for Government and aims to ensure:

“By 2050, our life support system, nature, is protected and restored for its own sake, its essential contribution to our well-being and prosperity, and to avert catastrophic changes likely to arise from its loss.”

The mission of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy is:

“To make progress towards halting overall biodiversity loss, establish an ecosystem approach and help business and society in general have a greater understanding of the benefits that nature can bring to everyday life in Northern Ireland.”

The Whitespots Project will include an enhancement of the existing woodland and so contribute to reversing biodiversity loss.

2.2.2 Key Local Strategies

[ANDBC Growing Better Together the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and The Big Plan 2017 - 2032](#)

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan sets out the Council’s vision that Ards and North Down will be a place to be proud of - which is more prosperous, vibrant, healthy, and sustainable; and where people enjoy an excellent quality of life.

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Prosperity: Growing our local economy.
- Priority 2: Environment Growing a cleaner, greener local and global environment.
- Priority 3: Opportunity: Growing the lifelong potential of our community.
- Priority 4: Pride: Growing empowerment, respect and safety of our community.
- Priority 5: Life: Growing the health and wellbeing of our residents; and
- Priority 6: Excellence: Growing a high-performing Council.

Through these priorities the Plan aims to enable all people in Ards and North Down to:

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

- Fulfil their lifelong potential.
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
- Benefit from a prosperous economy; and
- Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment. Investment in the Whitespots project has the potential to contribute to each of these priorities.

[ANDBC Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development \(“ITRDS”\):](#)

This strategy describes the key investment priorities of ANDBC up to 2030. This includes a detailed “Visitor Proposition”.

Targets within this strategy to which the Whitespots project will contribute include:

- Visitor Targets: Increase ANDBC share of Overnight Trips from 6% in 2016 to 10% in 2030 . Overnight Trips to increase from 283,229 in 2016 to 507,227 in 2030 . Associated Visitor Expenditure to increase from £46m in 2016 to £82m in 2030.
- Jobs Target: Increase job growth by an ambitious 22% resulting in an additional 7,500 jobs by 2030.
- Productivity Target: To increase GVA per head in the Ards and North Down area to at least the NI average by the end of the strategy period (2030). The 2015 AND baseline was £11.7k against a 2015 NI baseline of £18.6k.

Investment in the Whitespots has the potential to contribute each of the above targets.

[ANDBC Roadmap to Sustainability – 2021 - 2028](#)

This strategy commitment to achieve net zero carbon emission, creating new woodland and establishing infrastructure for walking and cycling, leading to a model shift from less sustainable modes of transport. It also includes a commitment to develop a Tree and Woodland Strategy for the Borough – which includes increasing accessibility for the local population and tree planting.

[ANDBC Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy](#)

The three main priorities which are relevant for the strategic context are as follows:

Priority 1:

- Investment in our heritage assets by Council and other agencies: Develop a heritage programme to animate, support and build capacity within the heritage sector and safeguard and develop heritage assets of Ards and North Down including buildings and monuments.
- Expand the heritage offer: Develop the heritage offer to ensure its collection is representative of the whole borough.

Priority 2:

- Collaborating to make the most of national resources.
- Work with national cultural organisations to make the most of resources and the opportunities they offer to engage visitors and residents.

Priority 3:

- Promote Pride of Place.
- Support and create a sense of local pride of place.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

The proposed Whitespots Project represents an opportunity to contribute to each of the above priorities.

2.2.3 National Policies

[Draft NI Executive Programme for Government 2016-21](#)

The Whitespots Project can contribute to a number of Draft Programme for Government Framework priorities and outcomes including:

- OUTCOME 1: We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy.
- OUTCOME 2: We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.
- OUTCOME 4: We enjoy long, healthy, active lives.
- OUTCOME 6: We have more people working in better jobs.
- OUTCOME 10: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.
- OUTCOME 12: We give our children and young people the best start in life.

In addition, the draft Programme for Government Framework sets out the indicators of success in meeting the Programme for Government targets. One of the key indicators within this framework is Indicator 30: “Improve our attractiveness as a destination: As one of our key service sectors and economic pillars, the tourism and hospitality industry offers one of the best opportunities for Northern Ireland to strengthen its economy. There is huge growth potential in our tourism and hospitality industry”.

Investment in the tourism offering within the Whitespots and Clandeboye area has the potential to contribute to improving the attractiveness of the Borough nationally and internationally, in turn contributing to both tourism and health/well-being outcomes initially through a growth in domestic visitors pursuing more active lifestyles through the range of activities that could be provided within Whitespots and the Clandeboye Estate.

DAERA has an obligation along with the other NI Executive Departments to assist in delivering the Programme for Government.

[A New Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

This strategy is currently being developed by DfC and builds upon the previous NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation for which the targets and objectives relevant to this project are:

- Promote increased participation in sport and physical recreation among under-represented groups; Deliver increased participation rates in sport and physical recreation among people with a disability.
- Ensure the population have quality-accredited, multi-sport facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand.
- The realisation of the Vision will require the provision of increased opportunities for children and adults to participate in sport and physical recreation throughout their life.

The strategy requires a range of modern, fit-for-purpose organisations to develop and deliver increased opportunities for a healthier lifestyle.

[Health Survey for Northern Ireland 2020/21](#)

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

This survey was undertaken by the Department of Health and included questions relating to general health, mental health and wellbeing and, obesity. The survey highlighted that only a third (36%) of respondents reported doing 30 minutes of physical activity (enough to make them out of breath) on five or more days per week. Over a quarter of adults (27%) were obese with a further 43% classed as overweight. The proportion of adults classed as overweight or obese (65%) has increased from 60% ten years ago.

These issues can be partially addressed through increased exercise and so provision of opportunities for walking and physical recreation within the local area is an important catalyst to improving the health and well-being of the community.

[A Fitter Future for All – Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland \(DHSSPS\) 2012-2022](#)

‘A Fitter Future for All’ has a main aim of reducing the number of people in Northern Ireland who are overweight and obese.

Three relevant aims to achieve this were as follows:

- Encouraging participation in physical activity.
- Promoting walking and cycling.
- Making sure how we live and where we live encourages and supports healthy eating and physical activity.

The Whitespots project would directly help reach these goals through providing a space available for walking and cycling. More specifically, the delivery of the project, given the significant surrounding population, will also enable a considerable number of people to participate in physical activity by providing a safe, easily accessible and free to use facility.

[Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework](#)

One of the key objectives within this framework is: “to secure an improvement in children and young people’s health, well-being and life opportunities thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems”.

The Whitespots Project provides an opportunity for children in deprived areas with access to an outdoor space through which benefits in health and well-being through exercise can be achieved as well as access to opportunities for education, volunteering, and future employment.

[Tourism NI Strategy](#)

Whilst Tourism NI has developed a draft Strategy for Northern Ireland, it has not yet been approved or published.

However, TNI’s quoted Vision and Mission Statement is as follows:

- Mission: "to build the value of tourism to the local economy"
- Vision: "to confidently and passionately champion the development and promotion of the Northern Ireland experience".

Consultation with Tourism NI regarding this strategy revealed the following key points:

- TNI have identified a strong need for supporting attractions that will mean that out-of-state visitors who come for the primary NI Attractions (Giants Causeway, Titanic Belfast etc) stay for the all-important EXTRA NIGHT.
- If visitors decide to stay in NI for an extra night there is a significant boost for the economy, not only for the attractions themselves but the ancillary services that will benefit including hotels, restaurants, retailers, cafes, transport/taxi services etc.
- It is necessary for there to be an appropriate Critical Mass of attractions to achieve this Extra Night from visitors.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

The development of the Whitespots has the potential to represent a secondary/supporting attraction for tourists. This means that it is unlikely to be the sole reason out-of-state visitors come to Northern Ireland but could be a strong draw for them to stay an additional night.

The development of Whitespots into an enhanced visitor experience would contribute significantly to creating the sought-after critical mass for the Belfast Region.

In addition, the Council is a local authority partner with Visit Belfast and the development of this site further aligns with its Belfast regional offering and its active gateway marketing role (one of only two members LCCC and ANDBC).

[Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 199820](#)

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a statutory obligation on the Council to undertake their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in respect of a number of issues including gender, disability, age, etc. The Whitespots Redevelopment Project is intended to ensure the Site can be a shared space for use by all.

2.2.4 Summary of Policy Fit

The analysis above demonstrates that the Whitespots Country Park and the Clandeboye Estate represent public assets within Northern Ireland which government (both central and local) can use to assist in achieving a wide range of important strategies. In particular those relating to:

Environmental Sustainability

Health and Well-Being

Employability and Skills; and

Tourism and economic development

2.3 Case for Change

This section describes the key reasons why public investment in the Whitespots Project is needed to bring important benefits to the Region:

2.3.1 Reason 1 – Opportunity to Protect and Enhance Natural Environment

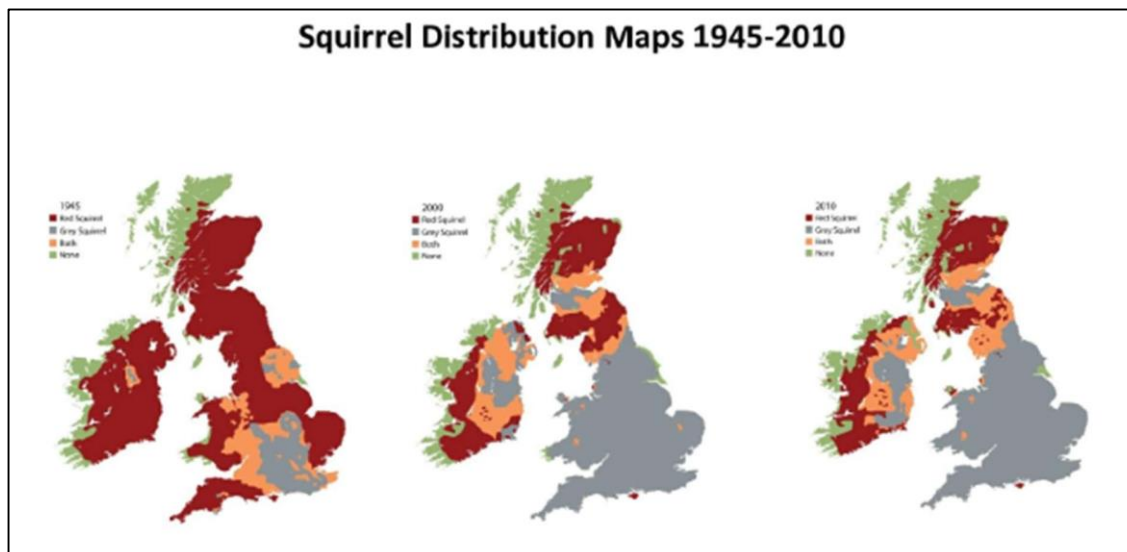
A survey undertaken by Forest Service in 2014 found that 96% of people confirmed the most important aspects of forest policy are to provide places for wildlife to live, and for public recreation. At present, Forest Service data confirms the average density of woodland and forest in the Council area is only 5.1%. However, this is considerably higher in North Down with the Clandeboye Estate / Whitespots and Cairn Wood providing a significant proportion of the woodland in the Council area. The forest retains many mature and maturing trees, a variety of native and introduced species, and has potential for improvement to increase biodiversity and tourism appeal.

The Clandeboye Estate has been designated as a “Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance” (“SLNCI”) under the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 which would be subject to Planning Policy PPS2 (Natural Heritage) if there were proposals to develop the area².

² PlanningNI - Map No. 3d - Clandeboye Estate Site of Local Nature. Conservation Importance

In addition, the Site is designated as a Forest Nature Reserve within the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2017 (which is currently being renewed). On this basis the Site can be considered a priority habitat for a number of priority species.

An example is Red Squirrels, which occupy an area of the Site currently. Red squirrels are considered to be a Priority Species within DAERA's Northern Ireland Species Action Plan. This Action Plan has been published to assist delivery of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy, for the protection and enhancement of Northern Ireland Priority Species. Red squirrels favour coniferous woodland as a habitat, but their numbers are declining significantly in the UK. The drawing below illustrates this decline:



Therefore, the Site provides an ideal location from which to:

- 1) Deliver education and training into local plant and animal species and the methods necessary to maintain this biodiversity; and
- 2) Contribute to DAERAs Forest for the Future scheme by developing additional woodland in the area.

2.3.2 Reason 2 - Opportunity to Enhance Sustainability

An investment in the Whitespots Project has the potential to contribute to the sustainability targets for the province set out within the NI Executives Programme for Government. In particular:

Environmental sustainability – In addition to the biodiversity benefits highlighted above, DAERA Forest Service has confirmed that the Site has a role in mitigating the effects of climate change by storing 870 tonnes CO₂ each year. The forest retains many mature and maturing trees, a variety of native and introduced species and so is a key asset in the area's contribution to environmental sustainability.

Sustainable Transportation – Investment in the Whitespots will create a focal point for the Greenway Network in Ards and North Down and so increase the number of users that opt for walking / cycling as the preferred mode of transport rather than using the car. ANDBC expect a total of 201,000 users of the Greenway Network (prior to adjustment resulting from the Whitespots investment).

2.3.3 Reason 3: Potential to Encourage Greater Participation in Outdoor Recreation

The development of Whitespots represents an opportunity to address the increasing levels of obesity highlighted by the NI Health Survey 2020/21. There are two key activities for which the site is currently used that can act as a foundation for growth in participation:

- a) **Walking / orienteering:** Walking is generally considered to be the most accessible and cost-effective way of exercising to improve health. However, numerous studies undertaken by health authorities in the UK indicate that we are becoming more sedentary. Whilst initiatives exist in NI to encourage walking in residential areas, as demonstrated by a recent study of East Belfast, a survey undertaken by DAERA in 2014 has shown that there is a continuing demand for walking opportunities in forests to the extent that people will drive long distances specifically for this purpose.

This study suggests that comparatively few people discover the forest but, when they do, they then become very regular users of it. Therefore, in order to encourage the health and well-being of citizens in the Ards and North Down Area, it is important that local authorities support the retention and development of woodlands to allow opportunities for walking.

In this context it is worth noting that the area from Whitespots through the Clandeboye Way to the North Down Coastal Path that falls within this project's footprint has been identified as a key section of a proposed long distance trail development linked to the heritage of St Columbanus. The scoped trail runs through a number of counties in ROI before crossing north. In NI, the trail crosses through a total of four council areas and begins (or completes depending on direction of travel) in Bangor. It is also intended to be incorporated as part of a larger international route traversing six European countries as part of a European Columban Way. An initial feasibility study of the NI trail has suggested it could attract up to 7,000 walkers by Year 6 and potentially double that with active promotion and support of on-trail tourism trade.

The latest Visitor Attraction Survey undertaken by the Tourism Statistics Branch of NISRA in 2019 highlights that country parks/parks/forests are the most visited attraction by any category (accounting for 42% of all visitors reported in 2018). In fact, these sites attract double the number of visitors of the second highest category of Heritage Centres) and that 26% of these visitors are external to NI (70% for heritage sites).

Specific examples demonstrating the demand for forests/country parks include the following: -

- i. The Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) (1,700ha): The Northern Ireland visitor Survey 2018 undertaken by NISRA confirmed that LVRP received 1.3 million visitors in 2018 (an average of 1.4 million per annum over the last three years). This is the most popular destination for walkers in Northern Ireland and represents an example of the ANDBC's vision for the Ards and North Down Regional Park.
- ii. Crawfordsburn Country Park (8.5ha) The same survey confirmed that Crawfordsburn Country Park received 643k visits in 2018 (an average of 623k per annum over the last three years). This is the most visited site in Ards and North Down and its popularity confirms what is possible at Whitespots.
- iii. The "Stairway to Heaven" - Culcagh Mountain in County Fermanagh: Visitors increased by 2,000% when a wooden boardwalk was built in 2015. The boardwalk was installed primarily to prevent erosion of the environmentally important bog. However, Visitor numbers increased from 3,000 a year prior to opening to 70,000 in 2017³
- iv. Cave Hill Country Park (97.5ha): Featuring archaeological sites, a visitor centre plus eco-trails, walking and orienteering routes, this park attracts 155,000 visitors annually.

³ Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-49074453>

- v. Seskinore Forest Park (135ha) This is a lowland forest park in County Tyrone but is a good comparator for Whitespots (Phase 1) as it has no specialised recreation facilities but rather attracts visitors – 25,000 annually – who simply want to enjoy the woodland and biodiversity.
- vi. Padarn Country Park, Snowdonia (320ha): With elements including walking, wildlife, industrial heritage, woodlands and inspiring mountain view, this park draws 105,000 visitors based on car parking tickets sold alone (i.e., excluding visitors on foot and cycling).

It is also important to note that demand from the public for attractive spaces to walk has increased significantly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Northern Ireland and the “lockdown” restrictions introduced by the Government in response to the pandemic. Consumer sentiment data gathered by TourismNI for NI and ROI indicates walking/hiking in nature reserves / national parks remain very high in visitor interest and comfort levels. This is discussed in more detail (paragraph 9) below.

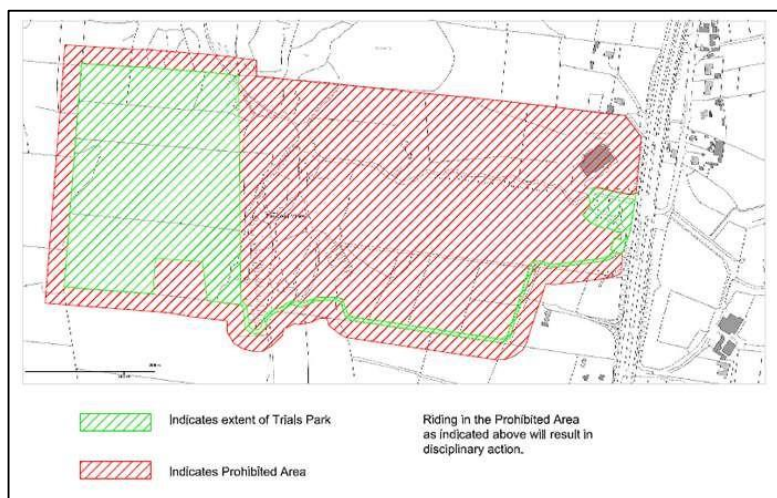
b) Motorcycle Trials: The Whitespots area has been an important location for motorcycle trials activities for a number of decades. The Moto Trial NI club currently have a licence agreement with the Council to operate on the site (or the “Leadmines” as it is widely known throughout the sport) at certain agreed times during the week for a total of 68 days a year. This club have confirmed that the site has a long and very illustrious history within the sport of Trials and the wider motorcycling community in general. Key links of the site to the sports history include:

- During WW2 it was used by the Army to train motorcycle dispatch riders the art of off-road motorcycling (Linking into the history of the Clandeboye Estate referenced above)
- In the 1960’s it was used as a venue for the fledgling European Trials Championship
- In the mid 1970’s the site was used as the venue for the first ever World Championship Trial.



Each event brings 100 – 160 out of state visitors - riders and spectators - into the area and raises the profile of Whitespots within the sport. Adam Raga (a former world champion motorcycle trialist from Spain) visited the site in 2017 which served to enhance the reputation of the area to fans of the sport further into the area (see picture).

Source: YouTube



The Moto Trial NI club currently has approximately 160 members and the club have indicated that demand for membership has been growing over recent years.

In the past there have been a number of conflicts between walkers/hikers and the Trials Club. As a result, the clubs licence restricts the areas of the site which can be used by the Trials4.

Consultation with a representative of the club confirmed that the club ensures that every member of the Trials bike club is made aware of the restrictions on site and the times the club is permitted to use it. Anyone acting outside those rules will be removed from the club immediately.

2.3.4 Reason 4 – Need to Address Declining Visitors to Ards and North Down

Research undertaken for the purposes of the ITRDS has shown that visitor numbers to the Ards and North Down Borough are falling. The table below illustrates the rate of decline:

Visitors and Spending in the Borough	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change between 2014 and 2018
Trips to AND ('000)	443	378 (8% of NI)	283 (6% of NI)	282 (6% of NI)	257 (5% of NI)	-42%
Visitor Spend (£'m)	63	55 (7% of NI)	46 (5% of NI)	46 (5% of NI)	46 (5% of NI)	-27%
Holiday Visitors (000) ⁵	172	174 (45% of NI)	157 (42% of NI)	96 (30% of NI)	90 (33% of NI)	-48%

Source: NISRA

This shows the number of trips to the Borough fell by 42% over the five years to 2018 and the visitor spend by 27%. This occurred when the total number of overnight trips across the rest of NI increased over the same period.

In addition, Ards and North Down productivity (GVA per head) is significantly lower than the NI average. The 2015 Gross Value Added per head in the Borough was £11,678 compared to an NI average of £18,584. The business profile of the Borough is dominated by sectors that typically produce low levels of productivity (specifically retail/wholesale, public sector service provision and accommodation/food services).

This demonstrates a clear need for public intervention to address the decline in visitor numbers and the associated reduction in employment this is creating.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

⁴ It should be noted that the picture above does not show that a section of the site agreed for use by Moto Trial NI exists on private land adjacent to the Council owned land at Whitespots.

⁵ 3 year rolling average (2012-2014 / 2013 – 2015 / 2014-2016) for Holiday, Pleasure, Leisure Trips

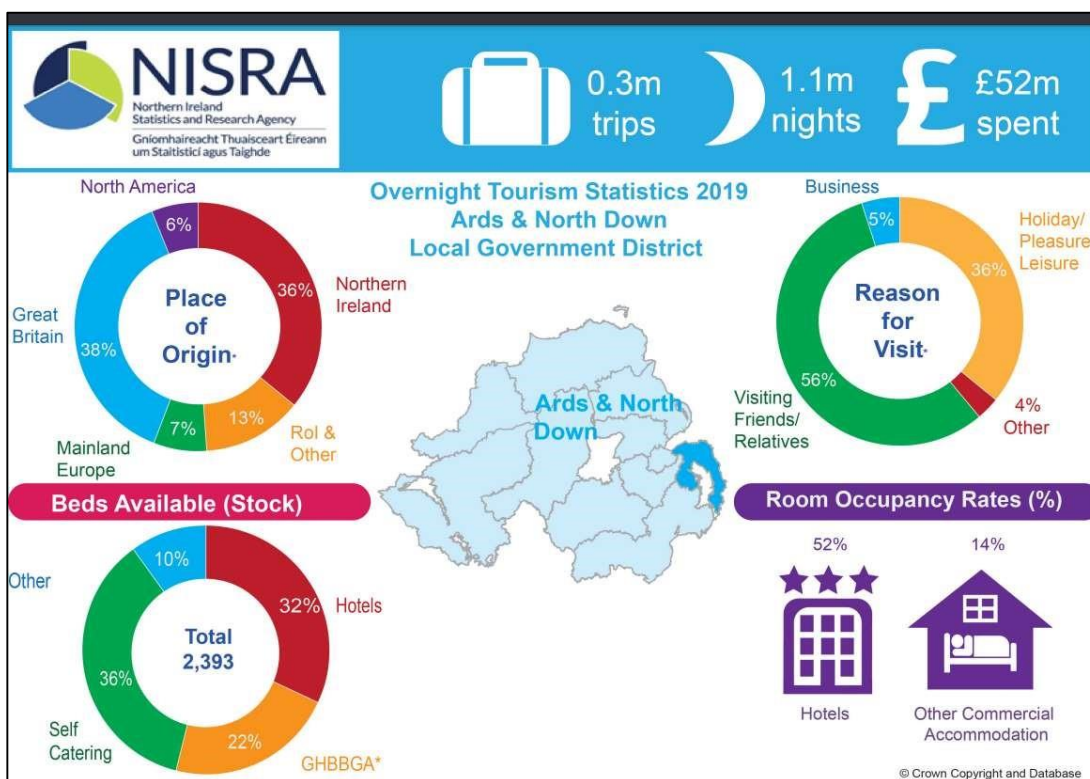
Analysis undertaken by Tourism NI has highlighted the strengths of the Borough which provide the basis for the investment needed to arrest this decline. A Visitor Attitude Survey undertaken in 2018 highlighted the following important points relating to the tourism sector in Ards and North Down:

- The Borough attracts a higher proportion of local leisure visitors than most other areas, particularly day trippers.
- The area welcomes a greater proportion of frequent visitors than the NI average.
- Great Britain is the second largest source market - 29% of all visitors originated in GB.
- The existing attractions are a key motivation for visiting Ards & North Down, as well as the beautiful scenery. Leisure visitors to this area were more likely to visit historic buildings and forest parks/gardens (they were very positive about the friendliness/professionalism of staff at these attractions but less happy about the cleanliness of the beaches and the area in general).
- The most popular attractions were as follows:

Attraction	Percentage of Visitors that confirmed a trip
Mount Stewart House and Gardens	63%
Ulster Folk and Transport Museums	43%
Crawfordsburn Country Park	16%
Pickie Fun Park	14%
Scrabo Country Park	11%

It should be noted that four out of the top five attractions relate to heritage and /or forest locations. The Whitespots Country Park and the Clandeboye Estate boast both these features.

The latest information on the visitors to the Borough collected by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (“NISRA”) in 2019 is shown below:



This shows that Ards and North Down remains a popular location for visitors from outside Northern Ireland (particularly from people visiting friends and relatives). Therefore, a firm base exists from which future economic benefits can be derived from investment in local infrastructure.

2.3.5 Reason 5 - Potential to Address Deprivation and Enhance Employment Opportunities

The redevelopment of Whitespots has the potential to attract important inward investment in terms of services that complement the attraction and provide employment for people in the surrounding area. Therefore, it is important to establish the impact that this could have.

Whitespots Country Park is situated in the Glen ward of the Ards and North Down Borough. The Glen ward is surrounded by the Ballygrainey, Cronstown, West Winds, Movilla, Gregstown and Conway square wards which make up Newtownards.

The table below provides an overview of each of these wards in terms of their rankings under the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Ward	Conway Square	West Winds	Bally-grainey	Movilla	Gregstown	Glen	Cronstown
Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank	32	34	176	180	265	349	428
Income Domain Rank	31	34	160	162	209	293	371
Employment Domain Rank	49	51	212	169	208	339	420
Health Deprivation and Disability Domain Rank	62	69	96	172	211	335	381

Education, Skills and Training Domain Rank	48	26	103	73	158	219	380
Access to Services Domain Rank	435	230	211	285	413	272	312
Living Environment Domain Rank	153	443	449	456	408	370	243
Crime and Disorder Domain Rank	24	125	140	189	257	167	437

Source: NISRA

The table above demonstrates that the Gregstown, Glen and Cronston wards are not considered deprived as they fall outside the top 50% most deprived wards within Northern Ireland (total number of Wards is 462) under the Multiple Deprivation Measure ranking.

However, Conway Square, West Winds, Ballygrainey and Movilla all fall into the top half of the most deprived areas within NI. In particular, both Conway Square (32nd) and West Winds (34th) fall within the top 8% of the most deprived wards in NI.

Two other key measures to note are also:

- 1) Health deprivation and Disability Measure: The Conway Square, West Winds and Ballygrainey wards all fall within the top 25% of the most deprived wards in NI relating to health. Access to attractive walking and active leisure facilities at Whitespots could assist in addressing this issue.
- 2) Education, Skills, and Training Measure: All four wards of Conway Square, West Winds, Ballygrainey and Movilla fall within the top 25% of the wards with the least access to education, skills and training. There is a range of opportunities to develop opportunities for education and training within Whitespots and Clandeboye areas. Indeed, Lady Dufferin has confirmed public education is a key priority for her and the Clandeboye Estate.

Whilst it is recognised that enhancement of a local forest park and Education hub can only have a limited impact on these measures, the overall vision of ANDBC is to create a park/facility that can be accessed from Newtownards (and specifically these deprived areas) and link to the wider North Down Greenway Network. This will both bring visitors into Newtownards via the extensive Greenways (which will link other planned attractions within the area such as the redevelopment of Bangor Waterfront) as well as create benefits for local residents in terms of both the health and well-being of the community and access to education, skills training, and employment opportunities.

This conclusion is supported by research commissioned by DAERA Forest Service in 2015. Independent Research Agency TNS undertook a detailed survey of the visitors to NI Forests and Country Parks in 2015. The data collected as part of this research included the following:

An estimated 4.7m visits were taken to forests on the Forest Service Estate during the research year.

The estimated total annual spend during trips that involve visiting a publicly accessible Forest Service location (including any amounts spent on accommodation) is £76.1m. The forest with the highest average expenditure was Glenariff at £49 per visit (including accommodation) and £37 per visit excluding accommodation with the highest non-accommodation spend category being food and drink.

The majority of visitors (60%) incur expenditure in the vicinity outside the forest during the visit.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

The report concluded with an estimate that an average of £21.2m per year is spent within a local authority area due to the presence of a forest park and its facilities. This expenditure is made during the day of the forest visit and included over-night accommodation, food and drink, transport, and non-routine shopping.

2.3.6 Reason 6 – Opportunity to Bring Underutilised Heritage Attractions to Greater Prominence

The Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye area already contains a number of key features that have proved very popular with both local and out-of-state visitors across the UK and Ireland in recent years. A relatively small investment from the Complementary Fund could unlock a highly valuable asset for Northern Ireland.

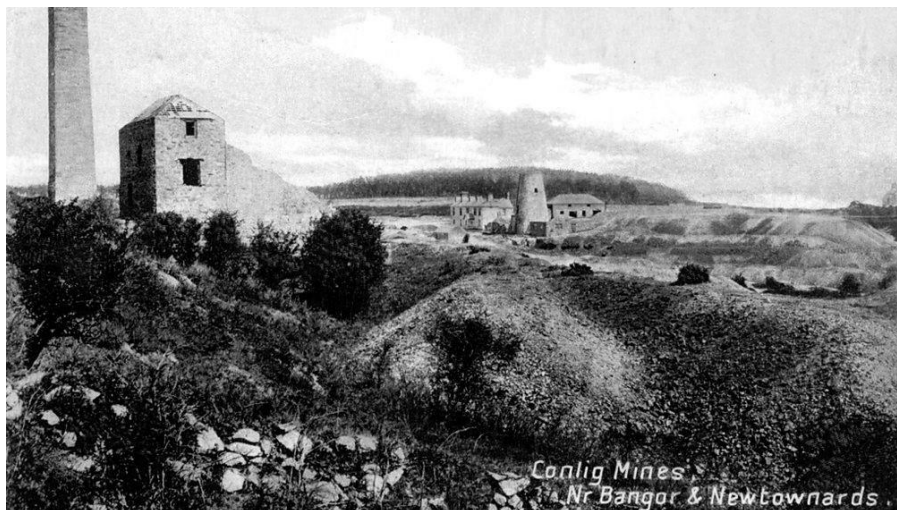
The four key features that are expected to attract visitors to the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites are:

1) Mining Heritage

As discussed above, the Whitespots Country Park is designated an Area of Special Scientific Interest and the lead mines are recognised as a major site for mining heritage in Ireland, having at one stage in the 19th Century produced 40% of the lead ore produced in Ireland.

The lead mines were first sunk in the early 18th Century after lead-ore was turned up following the ploughing of local fields.

A total of 13 mines at Whitespots produced more than 13.9 thousand tonnes of lead⁴. This made them the most important



group of ore mines in Ireland. At one stage Whitespots produced 40% of all the lead in Ireland. The lead was mined from veins intruded into the Silurian country rocks.

Mining started to decline after 1854 and the mines had closed by 1900. However, there are a significant number of scheduled monuments of the former mine workings on the Whitespots site and the underground mine systems.

⁴ <https://www.geograph.org.uk/snippet/16913>



can still be seen. A full history of the site's mining past has been developed by the Northern Mine Research Society which provides a fascinating insight into the life of those that worked in and around the site at its peak in the 18th and 19th Centuries. This provides a good basis to bring the story of Whitespots to life. A copy of the History of the Conlig and Whitespots Mines is provided in Appendix B.

The Windmill Stump above was recently used in a scene for the globally popular HBO television series Game of Thrones. Scenes from this series have proved as popular tourist destinations in their own right (further details below).

From an education perspective, since 1994, the site has been used regularly for field visits by students undertaking project work in connection with the MSc course in Applied Environmental Sciences at Queen's University Belfast. The Mining Heritage Society of Ireland lead a field visit to the Lead Mines and support action to conserve features of the site (including the building remains) and to promote interest in the significance of these features to a wider public⁵.

The growing appeal of sites relating to mining heritage has been identified. Research undertaken by ANDBC has identified a total of 44 separate mining attractions across the UK and Ireland at which guided tours are provided (both underground and overground). The average annual number of visitors to these attractions is 57,000, with the greatest being the Llechwedd Slate Caverns in Wales which attracts 215,000 visitors per annum.

An overview of some of the key examples of similar sites is provided in Appendix C. However, there is clear evidence that an investment to promote the mining heritage of Whitespots has the potential to boost its tourism appeal.

2) World War Heritage

The Clondeboye Estate is unique in its links to both world wars with direct connections to the Ulster Tower at Thiepval in France (discussed further below) and the Battle of the Somme primarily due to the use of the site for training camps in both world wars.

The Clondeboye Estate is where the 36th (Ulster) Division trained prior to leaving for the Somme and the remains of the camp, including the training trenches, can still be seen there.

⁵ <http://www.habitas.org.uk/escr/site.asp?item=529>

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

The Somme Museum is situated at the entrance to the Whitespots Country Park. Opened in 1994 this is a tourist attraction and education centre preserving and interpreting a comprehensive collection of artefacts on Ireland's role in the First World War.



Source: Somme Museum

The global interest in this period of history is driving significant demand from international tourists to visit locations with these background “stories”. An overview of similar attractions that have been developed around the UK and Ireland is provided in Appendix D.

However, a lack of resource funding for the museum means the centre is not heavily marketed and is open only for guided tours during pre-specified times during the weekend. The organisation that runs the Somme Museum is the Somme Association, a registered charity which is represented on the Leadership Group. The Somme Association are currently preparing an OBC to secure their own funding to upgrade their current education and outreach programme and facilities, strengthen knowledge of a shared heritage and develop exhibition areas. This OBC will consider its vision, objectives, sustainability, etc. The aspiration is that this will provide a newly invigorated Somme Museum which will be a key asset and gateway into the new Whitespots Country Park. The Whitespots Masterplan has taken this into consideration, and hence it is envisaged the upgrade to the Whitespots Country Park will complement the anticipated growth in visitors to the Somme Museum.

The Site represents an exciting opportunity to highlight Ulster’s involvement in the conflict to this global audience, focussed on the World Wars and in particular the Battle of the Somme. It is important that any investment in the Whitespots Project align with the investment in the services proposed by the Somme Museum in the future.

3) Helen’s Tower

Built in 1848 by Frederick Lord Dufferin, 5th Baron of Dufferin and Ava in honour of his mother Helen Selina Blackwood. Helen’s Tower is situated at the highest point within the Clondeboye Estate and so can be seen from miles around. Indeed, one can often see to Scotland on clear days from the top of Helen's Tower. It is a three-storey tower which acts as a destination point for walkers in the Estate but is also available to the public to rent as accommodation.

Its facilities include a double bedroom, shower room, separate bathroom, kitchen, living room, dining room and rooftop reading room. The interiors and fittings of this building were unique to this period. An octagonal room on the third floor with its panelling throughout with poems engraved on metal plates are set into the walls. Tourism NI have graded it as 3*



Ulster Tower - Thiepval



Helens Tower - Clondeboye



Designed by architect William Burn and constructed in 1848-1850 as a famine relief project, Helen's Tower helped relieve unemployment at this time. It was subsequently immortalized by Tennyson in the poem of the same name.

Helen's Tower was the inspiration for the design of the Ulster Memorial Tower, dedicated in 1921 at Thiepval in France. This is because the Towers situation in the Clondeboye Estate where the soldiers of the 36th Ulster Division trained for the Battle of the Somme.

For many of the men of the 36th Ulster) Division, the distinctive sight of Helen's Tower rising above the surrounding countryside was one of their last abiding memories of home before their departure for England and, subsequently, the Western Front As an illustration of the regard in which Helen's Tower is held in France, it was mentioned within the Match Programme prepared by Clermont Auvergne Rugby Club for their European Cup match versus Ulster in January 2020. This demonstrates the potential international appeal of Helen's Tower – particularly in the context of WW1.

The Irish Landmark Trust runs the accommodation provision within the Tower and have confirmed that a total of 201 guest nights were spent in the tower in 2019 and it has received many positive reviews on trip advisor. This demonstrates the potential appeal of the Tower and how it could act as a key catalyst driving tourism to the region.

4) Game of Thrones Association

The Whitespots Country Park was used as the location for a key scene in two episodes in series 3 of the HBO Series Game of Thrones. The remains of the windmill stump at the Site played an important role in these scenes.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

Tourism NI have identified the global popularity of Game of Thrones as a key asset in promoting Northern Ireland to a global audience. The opening in February 2022 of the world's first and only Game of Thrones Studio tour at Linen Mill Studios, Banbridge is evidence as to how NI is successfully tapping into this niche market. However, at present, there is no clear identification within Whitespots highlighting that is a location in the series. Also, whilst the site is advertised on the website movieworldmap.com, it is not advertised on the Visit Belfast Discover NI websites.

The feedback from the Qualitative Consumer Research exercise commissioned by Tourism NI indicated that Game of Thrones fans would include the Site on a visit to NI specifically to view scenes from the services (further details on this exercise are set out in Section 2.3.4 below). Therefore, a potential opportunity to attract out-of-state visitors exists through a small investment in marketing to advertise the location's role in the popular show. Furthermore, the fact that Whitespots was chosen as a location of Game of Thrones presents an opportunity for the rugged terrain and interesting heritage structures on the Site to be promoted as a backdrop in future television programmes and films.

Full details of the relevance of the site to Game of Thrones and the recommendations for highlighting this to prospective visitors (as provided by Tourism NI) is set out at Appendix N.

2.3.7 Reason 7 – Opportunity to Link Other Local Outdoor Recreation Schemes

As highlighted above, the Site can be viewed as the missing link of a wider network of trails routes linking the Borough to the rest of NI and it is adjacent to the location of two key projects currently being developed by the Council. These are:

- Greenways Network Scheme: This is a proposed upgrade to the extensive network of walking / cycling routes throughout the Borough is currently in the planning phase. This will link Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Bangor via the scheme.
- Cairn Wood Outdoor Recreation Scheme: Improvements to the infrastructure at Cairn Wood and Ballysallagh Upper Reservoir in the hills between Holywood and Newtownards is currently in implementation. This will include new walking trails, a multi-use family cycle trail and new way-markers throughout the site, all adding to its tourism appeal.



The map shows that the Whitespots Country Park and Clondeboye Estate area is at the centre of the Greenway Network as well as being the key link from the network to Cairn Wood. As such, the enhancement of Whitespots would create an ideal access point for visitors to the region to explore all the key attractions within the Ards and North Down Borough.

The Council anticipate approximately 75,000⁶ visitors to Cairn Wood once the current upgrade is complete and the Greenways Scheme expects additional annual visitors to exceed 200,000⁷ per annum once the infrastructure upgrade has been completed.

2.3.8 Reason 8 – Need to Address Changing Public Needs following COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in the demand for open air / leisure walking over recent months. A recent survey undertaken by Sport England highlighted a surge in appreciation of exercise and activity during lockdown⁸. The survey was commissioned to track the public’s activity levels and attitudes towards exercise during the initial six weeks of lockdown and has shown that new exercise habits have formed as a result of the restrictions on movement.

The survey found that walking and cycling have proved to be the most popular forms of outdoor activity during the initial lockdown phase, with people walking for exercise up from 59% in week one to 63% in week six, and cycling increasing from 8% to 13%.

In May 2020 the UK’s Transport Secretary, pledged £250m for improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure, on the basis there had been unprecedented levels of walking and cycling during the pandemic⁹.

⁶ Target set out for initial phase development within Cairn Wood OBC

⁷ AECOM estimate confirmed within Greenways OBC

⁸ <https://www.sportengland.org/news/surge-appreciation-exercise-and-activity-during-lockdown>

⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52590110>

The above provides evidence that the demand for walking and cycling is likely to be higher after the pandemic has receded and so more space is likely to be required. The Whitespots Country Park represents an attractive, underutilised asset that can provide additional capacity in NI to meet this demand.

Furthermore, as the potential demand for foreign holidays may fall as a result of the pandemic, the wider Ards and North Down Regional Park (with Whitespots and Clandeboye Estate at its heart) represents a potential attraction to encourage domestic holidaymakers to remain within NI rather than go out-of-state.

2.3.9 Deficiencies with Current Infrastructure

Overview of Consultation

The above sections have demonstrated the opportunity for delivering economic benefits represented by Whitespots. The reason these are not currently being achieved is due to a number of deficiencies in the facilities being provided that mean the site significantly under-utilised in terms of the benefits that could be achieved for the public.

The Online Public Survey seeking public views as to the current benefits and deficiencies of the Whitespots Country Park was undertaken by ANDBC in January and February 2020. The detailed findings from this survey are provided in Appendix A but some of the key finding from the survey include:

- 1) The majority of the current users of the Site (53%) are aged between 31 and 50 – only 0.88% of users are under 18.
- 2) 86% of the current users are from the Ards and North Down Borough meaning with 13% coming from elsewhere in NI and only 1% from out of state.
- 3) The majority of arrivals to the site are by car (53%) and access via the Somme Museum entrance.
- 4) 60% of visitors claimed the most attractive feature of the site was the views at the top with over 20% stating they were unaware of the Site's mining heritage (despite the majority of consultees being from the local area).

The key conclusion drawn from the survey (and supported by consultation feedback from Stakeholders) is that Whitespots is significantly under-utilised as a public asset at present. Whilst visitor numbers are not currently recorded at either Whitespots Country Park or the Clandeboye Estate, results from the Survey indicated that few outside of the immediate vicinity of Whitespots are even aware it exists as a public asset.

This conclusion has been verified by:

- Council employees active on the site for maintenance and facilities management purposes (and so are aware of the numbers typically using it compared to other locations in the area) confirming low usage, albeit it is acknowledged this is not formally recorded.
- The Leadership Group representatives from nearby facilities (including Clandeboye Estate and the Somme Museum).
- A number of comments made by respondees to the survey that had not visited the site commented specifically that they were either (a) not aware such place existed or (b) were uncertain of whether they were allowed to access the site.
- Finally, the Strategic Investment Board SIB undertook a study in 2016 which recognised the potential of the site to attract a significantly greater number of visitors.

The potential value that could be derived from the facilities is highlighted starkly when compared to other public woodlands in the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Hillsborough and Belvoir Park have similar characteristics, but DAERA data records that

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Hillsborough and Belvoir receive over 200,000 visits annually. Whilst no baseline data is available for Whitespots, anecdotal information provided by Council employees that operate from the Site indicates these numbers are significantly greater than for Whitespots.

Key Deficiencies

The key reasons for the relatively lower visitor numbers are deemed to be as follows:

a) **Quality of Existing Infrastructure:** AECOM have undertaken a detailed review of current infrastructure, access arrangements and car parking. This review has highlighted both:

- **Poor quality trails:** The lack of drainage results in uneven trails with standing water in a number of places making routes difficult to access at certain times; and
- **Poor signposting:** very limited signage is currently available interpreting and signposting the length of various routes or their destination:

AECOM's full report on the current condition of the Site is provided at Appendix L.

b) **Conflict between Walkers and Motorcyclists:** A number of the survey responders noted that they were reluctant to visit the site due to the presence of motorcyclists on the paths and the associated noise / disturbance. As stated above, the Moto Trial NI club have a licence to use a specific area of the site at set times for only 68 days of the year. However, the consultation with the Club representative confirmed that nonclub members often use the site as it is not monitored. These can often be "scrambler" type motorcycles which are not part of the club, are often louder and use the site illegally.

In order to ensure the Site can continue to be used by the Trail Bikes whilst attracting additional pedestrians / cyclists' investment is required to:

- i) Provide separate access routes for the Trail Bikes and pedestrians.
- ii) Provide regular monitoring of the site to ensure that illegal use of the Site is minimised.

c) **Other Opportunities not Utilised:** Other potential uses for the Site that were raised during the consultation process were as follows:

- **Mountain Biking:** Whilst the site is used to a limited extent for mountain biking currently, if a separate trail could be developed to ensure walkers and bikers can be separated, the site represents an excellent facility for an increase in mountain biking pump/dirt track use.
- **Education in Nature:** Improved access and facilities would enhance the opportunity to use the Site for education purposes. For example, Forest School charitable organisations use the woods and forests to build independence and self-esteem in children and young adults. Topics are cross-curriculum (broad in subject) including the natural environment, for example the role of trees in society, the complex ecosystem supported by a wilderness, and recognition of specific plants and animals.

These groups liaise with the Council's Biodiversity officer who has confirmed that there would be greater use from these bodies if some form of indoor educational space could be provided.

- **Adventure Facilities:** The site represents an excellent opportunity for other outdoor pursuits such as zip wires or high-ropes courses. It is envisaged these facilities would be popular with youth groups such as the scouts or guides.

There is significant potential for further development for sports and other recreational activities. The opportunities for investment to enhance the Site to achieve the above are considered in detail in Section 5 (Options Identification) below.

d) Absence of links to other attractions: As stated above, the Clondeboye Way connects with the coastal path from Holywood to Bangor and the proposed Greenway network. There is the potential to link to Cairn Wood when complete. At this stage users will have access to approximately 57km of walking and cycling trails allowing residents and visitors to explore an extensive and diverse area of NI and enjoy the wildlife, biodiversity, and beautiful views.

However, at present there is little information setting out the key attractions along this route, nor is there a natural start / end point to these trails.

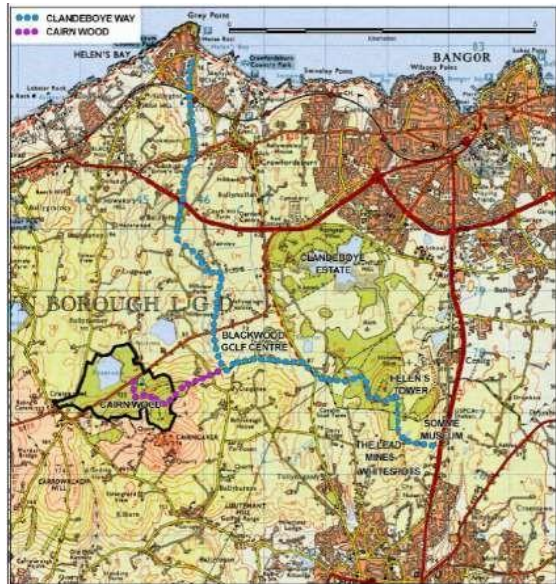
The development of the Whitespots Country Park will enable the development of a new “Regional Park” for Ards and North Down. The Council’s vision is that this Regional Park will be viewed as a standalone attraction with the “nucleus” of the park at Whitespots from which a wide range of attractions can be accessed by walking and cycling.

The marketing for this Regional Park should ensure that the commercial facilities available for tourists along the route are made clear within advertising and branding strategies. These attractions include:

- Ark Farm (adjacent to Whitespots)
- Somme Museum at Whitespots
- Clondeboye Lodge Hotel (adjacent to Whitespots)
- Blackwood Golf Centre
- Luxe Day Spa
- Bangor Town Centre and Waterfront (including Pickie Fun Park, Marina and the Ballyholme Yacht Club)
- Culloden Hotel
- Ulster Folk Museum and Ulster Transport Museum (note NMNI are progressing plans to develop these museums - particularly the Folk Museum)
- Carnalea, Helen's Bay, Scrabo, and Royal Belfast Golf Clubs
- Holywood, Groomsport and Donaghadee town centres.
- Scrabo Tower and Country Park,
- Newtownards Town Centre (including independent retail and Arts Centre, Town Hall),
- The Strangford Arms Hotel
- The Priory and Movilla Abbey Newtownards

Clear benefits in relation to both the health and well-being of local residents and the wider economy of NI through increased numbers of visitors are available through the development of such a concept. Both the independent consumer research exercises commissioned by Tourism NI confirmed this analysis:

a) The Cognisance Qualitative Consumer Focus Group & Travel Trade analysis found that:



- o With some investment in infrastructure and services (such as a café/restaurant) the Site could be considered an “outdoor-museum” and an attractive place for walking for domestic and out-of-state visitors with a free 1-2 hours in their schedule.
- o Those interested in mining, military heritage and Game of Thrones would make the journey specifically to NI to visit the Site.
- o However, further investment in tourism facilities would be required for the Site to be the specific reason to make the journey to NI for other potential visitors.

(The full feedback from this exercise is provided at Appendix K).

- b) The Kantar Concept Deep Dive analysis reported that there were a number of interesting “points of magnetism” in relation to the Site as it exists. These include the ability to connect history to nature, the beautiful scenery / landscape, the heritage site, and the Game of thrones infrastructure. However, as it stands enjoyment of the Site might be focused on a “niche” Tourism market and that, given there is no indoor facilities and the distance from Belfast, enjoyment is likely to be weather dependant (full details of the analysis provided at Appendix O).

These deficiencies can be addressed through investment in infrastructure to ensure the Site can appeal to a wider audience.

2.3.10 Summary of the Case for Investment

A summary of the key points setting out the case for investment into the Whitespots Project is as follows:

- The Whitespots Project contributes to a range of different local and national strategies and policies relating to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, health and well-being, employability, and environmental sustainability.
- The site currently has a number of attractive facilities. including a rich, under-exploited heritage as well as providing attractive access to walking trails. It has the potential to encourage greater participation in outdoor recreation.
- The increased number of visitors to the area has to the potential to contribute towards the reduction in deprivation in the local Newtownards areas and enhance employment opportunities for local residents.
- Within a wider vision, Whitespots is just one asset in a network of greenways, trails and visitor attractions which could underpin an expansive and impressive Regional Park within Ards and North Down.
- At present, it is clearly not delivering its full potential due to a number of key deficiencies. In particular, poor-quality trails, lack of facilities, conflict between users and a failure to ensure the public are aware of the heritage. There is clear evidence of market failure and a need for public intervention.
- The Complementary Fund represents a unique opportunity to provide the catalyst investment necessary to start unlocking the potential of the Site.

2.4 Objectives and Benefits

The table below sets out the four key strategic principles to which the Whitespots Project can contribute (based on the Policy Fit analysis above) as well as the suggested objectives that align to all these principals. In addition, the outcomes anticipated if the Project is successful are described. The SMART targets against which these outcomes should be measured are specific to the options considered in the Economic Case. Therefore, these targets are set out in detail within Section 6 – the Management Case

Key Principle	Objective	Outcomes (SMART Targets set out in Management Case)
Environmental Sustainability	Ensure the environmental sustainability of Whitespots and Clandeboye estate by protecting the biodiversity of the site and promoting understanding of environmental issues and the use of sustainable transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure local schools, community groups and charities have visited the site for environmental education related purpose. • Implement an annual biodiversity audit (habitat and species surveys) on the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites. • Achieve an increase in the numbers using the greenways compared to the baseline following completion. • Ensure the natural plant and animal species associated with the site in Year 0 are retained on the Site.
Health and WellBeing	Encourage healthy lifestyles in the Ards and North Down Area by increasing the number of people becoming involved in sport and active leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increase the number of local residents using the facilities for recreation and active leisure above the numbers using the facilities as at year 0.
Employability and Skills	Increase employability for the communities near Whitespots Park by strengthening and developing skills and promoting education in the environmental sustainability and leisure sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new full-time equivalent jobs within the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites directly because of the Complementary Fund financed capital development. • Provide volunteering opportunities (to assist employability) • Provide training to employees and volunteers to improve skills and employability
Tourism and economic development	Drive regeneration and economic development of the Ards and North Down Area through the provision of distinctive and attractive leisure facilities that promote the area to a national and international audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record an overall increase in the number of domestic visitors when compared to in the year ending March 2019¹⁰. • Record an overall increase in the number of visitors from ROI, UK and Out-of-State when compared to in the year ending March 2020. • Ensure Whitespots Park and Clandeboye Estate is recognised as providing a positive economic impact within reports from ANDBC Tourism team and Tourism NI (or equivalent organisations).

The Economic Case below identifies a range of different options for the Site that have the potential to achieve the above objectives and targets and provides an appraisal over each.

2.5 Risks, Constraints and Dependencies

A detailed risk register for the Project has been provided in Appendix E. However, an overview of the key risks and constraints which will need to be addressed for the above objectives to be achieved are summarised in the table below along with mitigating factors in relation to each:

¹⁰ There will be no statistics collected form 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Key Risk / Constraint	Mitigating Factor
<p>Latent Demand insufficient to justify investment: This is the risk that the forecast demand for tourism attractions at ANDRP has been over-estimated and, as such the benefits that the project aims to achieve will not be sufficient to justify the public expenditure.</p>	<p>The Online Public Survey has confirmed there is strong latent demand for the activities proposed for the site if minor improvements can be made (e.g., improved trails and signage). Also, primary analysis including consultation with stakeholders working in the area and benchmarking analysis of similar sites across ROI and UK has been undertaken which demonstrates the potential demand for the proposals. This will then be verified through consultation with the public prior to implementation.</p>
<p>Potential conflict between user Groups: Risk that demand is restricted from one group of users because of the existence of another group. For, example walkers are put off by Trial Bikes the using the site.</p>	<p>Analysis of the site by AECOM has demonstrated that it is of sufficient size to ensure it will be possible to separate walkers from motorbikes and this has been factored into the proposals as a priority. ANDBC are also committed to providing resources to implement and enforce by-laws governing how motorbikes use the site.</p>
<p>Land Unavailable for Acquisition: In order to ensure that Trial Bike users can be adequately separated from other users on the site, AECOM have indicated that it may be necessary to acquire additional land. There is a risk that the private landowners will not allow the necessary land to be acquired.</p>	<p>The Council have asked LPS to value the site and engagement with the landowner has been planned within the land acquisition strategy detailed in section 4.7.</p>
<p>Negative Environmental Impact: Risk that an increased numbers will have an adverse or detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.</p>	<p>Any proposed development will have the environmental considerations as a key priority and must adhere to statutory requirements. NIEA have confirmed that the Site is a Priority Habitat for Woodland and Local Wildlife, and they will have an input into any planning proposals.</p>
<p>Contamination: The site is adjacent to a former illegal landfill and Japanese knotweed has been identified on the site. There is a risk that these factors add to the cost of developing the site and render the project unaffordable.</p>	<p>The objective of the Whitespots Project is to ensure it remains an attractive location for enjoyment of the natural environment. Therefore, the Council does not envisage a significant level of building development on the site. In addition, data is held on the level of Japanese knotweed on the site and the Council are experienced in managing this invasive species.</p>
<p>Potential for Displacement: The risk that any new visitors to the Site will be drawn from other attractions within the Belfast region.</p>	<p>NISRA data indicates that Country Parks and Heritage Centres represent the most visited attractions by out-of-state visitors in NI which are all additional. In addition, displacement is taken into account in future forecasts measuring performance against the critical success factors.</p>

<p>Funding Availability: A key dependency of the proposals is that capital funding will be made available through the Complementary Fund.</p>	<p>There are a range of options for development to ensure that the Programme as a whole can be delivered on a phased basis when the appropriate funding is available. However, it should be recognised that any delay to the implementation of the programme will result in a continued economic stagnation in the Borough.</p>
<p>Ongoing financial sustainability: It is important that the ongoing cost of the facilities remains affordable also</p>	<p>The forecasts set out in the economic and financial cases below have considered the financial sustainability of the proposals – both from the Council’s perspective as well as that of any operators engaged by the Council to deliver services.</p>
<p>Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic: The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant Government restrictions means that we are faced with an unprecedented set of circumstances on which to base judgement. This pandemic has introduced significant uncertainty regarding the future economic activity across the world. Indeed, it is likely that the aftermath of the restrictions will result in societal behaviour in a number of different ways which may not be foreseeable within this OBC.</p>	<p>This is included as a risk within the Projects Risk Register and is updated regularly as the situation progresses and more information becomes available on any changes in the public behaviour. Whilst it is recognised the aftermath of the pandemic creates uncertainty, there is potential for a greater demand for spaces such as Whitespots than before the pandemic. This is considered throughout this report.</p>

These risks are assessed in detail as part of the appraisal of options for the Project set out in the Economic Case below.

3. Economic case

3.1 Overview

This Economic Case sets out the critical success factors necessary for the Project to achieve the objectives set out in the Strategic Case above and identifies the options that can meet these factors. A long list of potential interventions has been identified from which a short-list of feasible options has been derived and this case sets out the economic appraisal of these options. The appraisal determines which option represents the greatest Value for Money to the public through a consideration of three key criteria:

- 1) Monetary Costs and Benefits: The financial impact of each option (based on its Net Present Cost / Value);
- 2) Non-Monetary costs and benefits: The qualitative / social impact of each option; and
- 3) Risk: The extent to which each option exposes the public to the key risks associated with the Project

3.2 Critical Success Factors (CSFs)

The Critical Success Factors (“CSFs”) are the key attributes essential for the successful delivery of the Project. These are the criteria against which interventions proposed for the Whitespots Project have been measured to determine whether they will be shortlisted for detailed appraisal. The five CSFs are as follows:

Critical Success Factor	Application of CSF to Whitespots Project Option Identification
Strategic fit and business needs	Can the proposed intervention feasibly achieve the objectives for the project and address the deficiencies associated with the Site (as described in Section 2.3)? Also, will the intervention align with the policies and strategies highlighted in Section 2.2?
Potential Value for Money	Does the proposed intervention optimise the value of the Site to the public in terms of the potential costs, benefits, and risks?
Supplier capacity and capability	Can the intervention be delivered by potential suppliers to the required standard and is the proposal likely to be attractive to the supply side.
Potential affordability	Can the proposed intervention be funded from the available finance i.e., either from the Complementary Fund, Council or private investment?
Potential achievability	Does the Council or the envisaged suppliers have the necessary skills required to manage the implementation and future operation of the proposed intervention?

These CSFs have been used in the shortlisting of the long list of possible interventions for the Site into the most viable options.

3.3 Identification of Options

3.3.1 Long list / Development Framework

The potential options for delivery have been identified by AECOM through a rigorous process of engagement and consultation with key stakeholders. This process commenced with the identification of the vision for Whitespots Country Park based on the strategic context highlighted above.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

The vision identified is:

“to create a unique open landscape, fully accessible Trails Experience of national significance, at the heart of Ards and North Down Borough, bringing the rich heritage of the site to life, through innovative infrastructure and interpretation whilst linking seamlessly for the visitor to the proposed Greenways Network and Cairn Wood and creating a gateway to Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula”.

The next step was to establish an initial Development Framework within which the feasibility and design of potential ideas and interventions that would achieve this vision could be considered. In order to ensure this process was robust and well informed, the Council established a Leadership Group to advise and provide feedback. This group consists of representatives of the key stakeholders in the future of the Whitespots Project. The Leadership Group was made up of stakeholders and stakeholder bodies including:

- Councillors sitting on the key committees relevant to the Project.
- Newtownards Town Steering Group
- Council’s Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service, Service Unit Managers and staff within relevant Council Services
- Local MPs and MLAs
- Clandeboye Estate
- Somme Association
- Landmark Trust
- Department for the Economy
- Department for Communities
- NI Forest Service
- Clandeboye Golf Club
- Geological Survey Northern Ireland (“GSNI”)
- National Museums NI
- National Heritage Lottery Fund
- Tourism NI
- Other potential funders and advisory bodies

AECOM engaged with all relevant internal and external stakeholders through both:

- a) One-on-one consultations (for example with adjacent landowners in order to get a full understanding of constraints); and
- b) Workshops, presentations, and information sessions to identify, develop and refine specific opportunities and inform potential interventions and development plans which achieve the Project Objectives.

Once this initial phase of stakeholder consultation was complete a draft Development Framework was developed taking on board all comments and discussions as well as the results of the Online Public Survey conducted by ANDBC in Q1 of 2020.

Tandem Design provided input into this process to ensure the Development Framework set out a clear and compelling vision for the public. It included an overall site layout plan, implementation plan and prioritised potential projects to achieve this vision with robust costs. The Council’s Planning Team were also consulted to provide assurance that proposed interventions were feasible. These proposals were then presented to the Leadership Group for comment before being considered by the Project Board for inclusion within the Development Framework.

The latest version of the draft Development Framework is provided at Appendix F

This process has identified a long list of possible interventions on the Site. An overview of each of these interventions and confirmation as to whether each has been carried forward for inclusion in the shortlist of options is set out in the table below:

Intervention	Overview	Carried forward for Appraisal
Interactive Mining Museum	As described in the SOC the initial proposal was to develop two unique facilities providing interactive experiences highlighting the heritage of the Site – specifically the periods of mining and World War preparation.	No – Exceeds affordability CSF
Interactive World War Museum	However, these proposals were subsequently discounted as the indicative funding allocated to the Complementary Fund rendered them unaffordable	No – Exceeds affordability CSF
Upgrade Existing Paths and Drainage	Resurface and improve paths throughout Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate with drainage improvements to maintain quality and enhance walking experience	Yes
Separate walkers from motorcycles	Create separate areas for trial bikes to use on a part-time basis including a separate access (introduce monitoring of site to enforce separation)	Yes
New Walking Trails	Create new attractive trails within the Clandeboye Estate and the Whitespots Country Park including: - A trail around Tower Lake near Helen's Tower - A new "Eco-Trail" to assist in education on biodiversity	Yes
New Cycle trails	Potential New Cycle Pump/Dirt Trails within the Whitespots area aimed at younger generations and families (again separate from walking)	Yes
Boardwalk	Elevated Timber Boardwalk from the heart of Whitespots to summit (similar to Stairway to Heaven)	Yes
Woodland Enhancement	Develop the woodland across both Whitespots and Clandeboye sites including: Creation of new Woodland Areas in Helen's Tower Wood and land adjoining Whitespots Country Park (tree felling, site clearance and replanting) <input type="checkbox"/> Scrub Clearance and Supplementary Tree Planting - in particular the corridor From Main Car Park to Visitor Centre	Yes
Interpretative Signage	Introduce features that describe the history of both sites as well as trail maps providing recommended loops with distances etc.	Yes
Visitor Centre / Education Hub	New facility to include toilets, Information Point, coffee/refreshments, Classroom Facilities and host interactive experiences showcasing Whitespots/Clandeboye and its Mining and WW1 Heritage	Yes
Zip-Wires	Potential location for zip-wire attractions to run from the top of the Whitespots to the proposed visitor centre or carpark	Yes
Upgrade to Carpark	Upgrade to main carpark on Bangor Road to highlight the attractiveness of the park - Including new feature lighting, amenity planting and furniture	Yes
Adventure Play Area	Adventure play park containing facilities to enabling in activities such as climbing exercises, obstacle courses, bouldering, rock climbing, target oriented activities etc.	Yes
Pump Track	Development of a new recreation track for cyclists (smaller circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden by BMX and mountain bikes)	Yes

Intervention	Overview	Carried forward for Appraisal
High-Ropes Course	Development of a ropes-course with a separate Vehicle Carpark.	Yes
Viewing Tower	New attraction / feature at top of Site (approximately 10m tall) - a reward for reaching the top of the site with enhanced views over to Scrabo Tower and Strangford Lough.	Yes
Upgrade to Key Heritage Features	Upgrades will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Mine Shafts: Fencing, Vegetation and Shaft Structure to be Cleared of Debris. Mix of Interpretative Panels and Glass Panels to Be Placed onto the Shafts to allow for Pedestrian Loading (allowing a view down shafts). Feature lighting to be included. Historic Chimney: Existing Brickwork to be cleaned back and repointed as Required. In Ground Feature lighting to be included Existing Windmill Stump. Existing Brickwork to be cleaned back and Re-Pointed as Required. In Ground Feature Lighting to be included 	Yes
Cable-Car	New Cable Car to connect the Viewing Tower at the top of the site to Main Carpark on the Bangor Road	No – Exceeds affordability and potential Value for Money CSFs

The table shows that the two major interactive experiences that were envisaged within the SOC and the Cable-Car concept have not been taken forward for detailed appraisal. These have been excluded largely on the grounds of:

- a) Affordability – each represents significant investments that exceed the funding available to the Project from the City/Growth Deals / Complementary Fund; and
- b) The demand risk associated with these interventions meaning they are unlikely to represent Value for Money within the first phase of Development at the Site.

Whilst private funding could contribute to these projects, the consultation exercise has indicated that the low number of existing visitors to the Site means this would represent too great a risk for private investors. However, these projects may be reconsidered in the future under separate business cases if the success of Phase 1 indicates value for money could be achieved.

3.3.2 Shortlisted Options

The Green Book guidance recommends considering a number of different factors when shortlisting options from the long list. The key factors are considered in the table below:

Dimension	Initial Appraisal
Scope	This is the key consideration at this early stage of the development. The grouping of potential interventions has defined the shortlisted options. Given the number of potential interventions that have been identified in the long list, the key focus of the analysis within the Economic Case has been the identification of the combination of interventions that represent the greatest value for money to the Belfast Region.

Service solution, delivery, implementation, and funding.	The majority of the proposed interventions involve upgrading public infrastructure (i.e., resurfacing paths, provision of signage, upgrading of heritage features etc.). The most viable option for the implementation and management of this infrastructure is through the established Council procedures. However, the Council does not have the expertise to implement commercial interventions such as the zip-lines, Adventure Park and café. As such the only feasible option for these interventions is to outsource these elements. Where possible private investment will be sought towards the cost of the infrastructure.
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In order to group each of the interventions that have been carried forward from the long list into a coherent set of shortlisted options for detailed appraisal, a workshop was held with the Leadership Group representatives.

After a number of iterations, five shortlisted options were agreed. Designs were prepared for each of these options by AECOM with input from Tandem to ensure that the visitor experience and interpretation of the Heritage of the site were enhanced to the fullest extent possible.

A description of each of the five shortlisted options along with the proposed plans for each is as follows: -

Option 1: Status Quo (Business as Usual)

This option requires no additional investment in the Clandeboye or Whitespots site. Trails remain undeveloped and are maintained only to the extent of the current status quo.

Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience (Do Minimum)

This option focuses simply on enhancing the experience for visitors seeking to walk within the Site. It includes the following limited interventions:

- Resurface and improve paths throughout Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate with drainage improvements to maintain quality and enhance walking experience (including enhancing the landscape corridor from the carpark into Whitespots Country Park)
- Limited interpretative signage setting out trail maps providing recommended loops with distances etc.



The site layout drawings illustrating the above changes is provided in Appendix G1

Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development (Lower Intermediate Option)

Option 3 builds on Option 2 with a focus on highlighting the heritage of the Site (particularly its mining and World War related heritage) as well as ensuring the Site can be used as a location for education on environmental and bio-diversity subjects. The interventions envisaged under Option 3 include all those described for Option 2 with the following in addition.

- A new Visitor Hub to provide toilets, information point, coffee-kiosk, and classroom facilities for education purposes.
- Restoration of the existing mining features on the Site including the mines themselves, chimney stacks and Windmill Stump on the site with signage to provide historical information.
- Identify the Windmill Stump as a location for one of the episodes of Game of Thrones in line with the recommendations provided by Tourism NI – See Appendix N.
- Upgrade to the main carpark on the Bangor Road (including new feature lighting/amenity planting and street furniture) as well as the development of a separate trial bike access and drop-off area.
- An adventure playpark to act as an additional attraction for children and young people attending the Country Park.
- Enhancement of the Woodland between the carpark and the heritage centres – including scrub-clearance, re-planting, and maintenance.
- Additional interpretative signage and features highlighting the heritage of the site – including information on the mines as well as the WWI history.



A detailed illustration of the proposed location of these features is provided in Appendix G2

Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development (Higher Intermediate Option)

This option would include the same interventions as described in Option 3 above but, in addition, would provide several additional features to enhance the attractiveness of the Site to potential Tourists. These additional features include:

- An "iconic" viewing tower structure approximately 10m tall (see examples in the presentation at Appendix F) that would provide a key focal point for the Site and enhance the stunning views to Helen's Tower, Scrabo Tower and Strangford Lough
- An elevated timber boardwalk across the Whitespots Site enabling easier access to the key attractions (500m in length)
- Restoration of additional Chimney Stacks to further highlight the mining heritage of the site; and
- Further enhancement of woodland areas and paths throughout the Whitespots Country Park



A detailed illustration of the proposed location of these features is provided in Appendix G3

Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination (Do Maximum)

This option envisages all the development described in Option 4 above with additional infrastructure to convert the Site into an ""adventure-tourism"" destination with appeal to those seeking more than walking trails and education on the heritage of the site. The additional features envisaged include:

- Two zip wires taking "passengers" from the top of the Whitespots Site (at the new viewing tower) down to an enhanced Visitor Hub
- A high-ropes course towards the end of the Site adjacent to Newtownards
- An extended boardwalk to 1,275m in length and an extended visitor hub with additional features including café and Trails Hub.



The location of each of these proposed features is shown in the plans provided in Appendix G4

The economic appraisal of each of the five options is set out in the sections that follow.

3.4 Monetary Cost/Benefit Appraisal

3.4.1 Overview

In this section, the economic costs, and benefits of each of the shortlisted options are examined in detail. The basis for the comparison is the Net Present Cost (“NPC”) or Net Present Value (“NPV”) in accordance with Green Book guidelines. This is defined as the difference between a stream of future costs set against projected monetary benefits that have been discounted using the anticipated cost of capital and summed.

The projections that underpin the NPC/V estimates have been prepared within a separate Financial Model which forecasts the economic costs and benefits relating to each of the five shortlisted options that have been identified for the project. These forecasts are based on assumptions derived from information provided by:

- AECOM QS team (capex and lifecycle costs) and
- Council (running costs, income and forecast visitor numbers)
- Consultations with the key Stakeholders

The detailed output from the Financial Model are the annual cashflows and the NPV calculations which are provided in Appendix J. The assumptions underpinning the monetary forecasts are described within this Section 3.4.

3.4.2 General economic assumptions

The general economic assumptions applicable to all five shortlisted options are as follows:

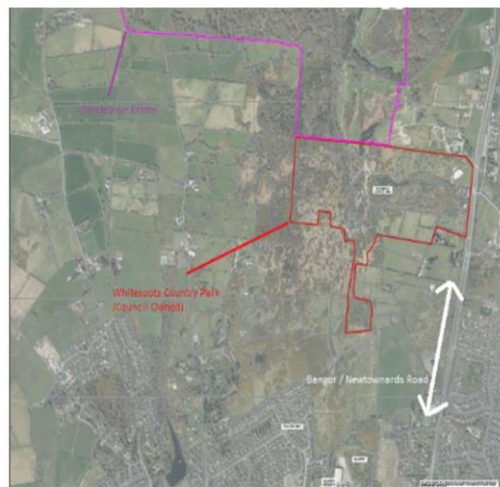
- **Project Timings:** The financial projections for each option have been forecast over a period of 30 years. This is the period considered necessary to realise the full economic benefit from the long-term infrastructure that is being proposed under each of the short-listed options.

The first period for the financial projections is the year ending 31st March 2023. This is the year in which the procurement and implementation of the new facilities is anticipated to commence. This will involve the development of plans and the public surveys required for planning permission which is expected to take 2 years. Therefore, the works for each option are then anticipated to commence in the financial year 2024/25.

It should be noted the assumed timescales at this stage are indicative only; the implementation timescales and potential for further phasing of the works can be determined accurately when the availability of NI Executive funding has been confirmed and only after detailed designs and analysis of ground conditions etc. have been undertaken.

- **Baseline Position:** The monetary cost and revenue forecasts have been derived using a typical baseline position which reflects the “Do-Nothing” scenario. The financial forecasts relating to each new element have then been layered onto this baseline in order to establish the monetary forecasts for each option.
- **Opportunity costs / Residual Values:** Green Book guidance stipulates that the opportunity cost and residual value of the site on which the economic activities are being undertaken is recognised in the monetary forecasts of an OBC.

The Clandeboye Estate is currently controlled by the executors of the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava’s estate. The public can only access the Estate via the path that is designated as the Clandeboye Way under a Public Path Creation Agreement (further details of this agreement are provided in the Commercial Case below). The Council own the Whitespots Country Park, the boundary of which is shown opposite in red.



No alternative uses for the Whitespots site have been identified as planning policies restrict development on the site. Therefore, no opportunity costs have been included within the monetary forecasts in relation to the existing site.

However, the plans for Options 3, 4 and 5 require additional land to be acquired for the full development proposals of Whitespots Country Park. This land is privately owned at present. Therefore, the Council have engaged Land and Property Services (“LPS”) to provide a valuation for this Site which has been included within the cost forecasts and its residual value at the end of the 30-year appraisal period has been included also. This is discussed further in Section 3.4.3 below.

-Price Base Date and inflation: All revenue and capital costs are stated in real terms assuming 2020 prices. No general inflation has been assumed within the forecasts and so all projections are forecast based on their real 2020/21 values.

-VAT: All cost and revenue forecasts are stated exclusive of VAT as it has been assumed that the Council will be VAT registered throughout the evaluation period and that all VAT paid is fully recoverable.

3.4.3 Expenditure Forecasts

Upfront Implementation Costs

An estimate as to the implementation cost for the separate interventions included within each of the shortlisted Options has been provided by AECOM. The detailed breakdown and assumptions underpinning these costs have been provided in Appendix H.

The cost estimates have been reviewed and agreed by CPD who have agreed the application of the following ancillary costs to the core cost estimates provided by AECOM:

- Preliminaries - 15% of core costs
- Design Development/Contingency - 10% of core costs
- Base Cost Estimate
- Professional Fees @ 13% of core costs plus preliminaries and design / contingency
- Statutory charges - 0.6% of core costs plus preliminaries and design / contingency
- CEEQUAL implementation - 1% of core costs plus preliminaries and design / contingency
- Utility connections/diversions - 0.82% of core costs plus preliminaries and design / contingency

In addition, an optimism bias uplift of 15.48% has been applied to the estimates to reflect the demonstrated systematic tendency for project appraisers to be overly optimistic within an appraisal in accordance with Green Book guidance. The Optimism Bias calculation using the template recommended by DoF has been provided in Appendix I which includes the rationale for each of the mitigating factors used in the calculation.

A full breakdown of the implementation cost estimates for each option is provided below. Note the cost estimates are stated in current prices (2022) and so do not include inflation for the purposes of calculating the Net Present Cost):

Cost Category	Upfront Implementation Costs (Stated in Real Terms) £'000				
	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
Enhance landscape and creation of new woodland	-	330,485	330,485	768,393	1,017,791
Investment in Trial Bike infrastructure	-	-	120,000	120,000	120,000
Upgrade Paths in Clandeboye Estate & cycle dismount point	-	888,660	888,660	1,020,480	1,020,480
New elevated timber boardwalk	-	-	-	1,190,850	4,096,375
Upgrade Paths through Whitespots	-	746,422	746,422	1,286,172	1,286,172
New Cable Car	-	-	-	-	-
Two new zip wires	-	-	-	-	400,000
Trial bike access and drop-off area	-	-	202,945	202,945	202,945
Upgrade to main car-park	-	-	481,017	481,017	481,017
Adventure Play Area on Whitespots site	-	-	200,000	200,000	440,250
New Pump Track to the South of Whitespots	-	-	200,000	200,000	200,000
New High Ropes Course & Car Park at Quarry Heights	-	-	-	-	685,000
New Visitor Centre/Educational Hub & Trails Shelter	-	-	790,250	790,250	1,700,000
New Viewing Tower at top of Site (Approximately 10M Tall)	-	-	-	1,625,000	1,625,000
Upgrade to historic features (mines, windmill stump etc)	-	-	400,000	500,000	600,000
Interpretive Signage	-	325,000	325,000	575,000	825,000
Accommodating Works for new land	-	-	31,510	31,510	31,510
Construction of car park (c 60 spaces) in the field beside the Ulster / Clandeboye Way	-	-	-	399,688	399,688
Existing pump house to be screened with tree and hedge planting	-	-	-	-	14,720
Total Core Costs	-	2,290,567	4,716,289	9,391,304	15,145,946
Preliminaries @ 15% - AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	343,585	707,443	1,408,696	2,271,892
Design Development/Contingency - 10% AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	229,057	471,629	939,130	1,514,595
Base Cost Estimate	-	2,863,209	5,895,361	11,739,129	18,932,433
Professional Fees @ 13% - AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	372,217	766,397	1,526,087	2,461,216
Statutory charges - 0.6% AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	17,179	35,372	70,435	113,595
CEEQUAL implementation - 1% AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	28,632	58,954	117,391	189,324
Utility connections/diversions - 0.82% AS AGREED WITH CPD	-	23,350	50,000	95,733	154,395
Development cost estimate excluding Optimism Bias	-	3,304,587	6,806,084	13,548,775	21,850,963
Optimism Bias @ 15.48%	-	511,550	1,053,582	2,097,350	3,382,529
Estimate as to Council implementation costs	-	200,000	300,000	400,000	500,000
Environmental Assessment and surveys	-	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
Acquisition of Land to the South of Whitespots	-	-	286,000	375,000	375,000
TOTAL UPFRONT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	-	4,156,137	8,585,665	16,561,126	26,248,492

The table shows that the expenditure required for implementation increases with each option from £4.2m under the "Do Minimum" Option 2 to the £26.2m under the "Do Maximum" Option 5. The total cost of Option 3 is £8.6m (stated in real 2022 prices).

These costs reflect the upfront funding that will be required for the Project. The envisaged sources of funding are discussed in the Financial Case below.

Site Acquisition Costs

The estimated expenditure required to acquire the area adjoining the Whitespots Country Park is based on a valuation provided by LPS in June 2020. There are a number of plots required to be acquired to develop the full masterplan – in particular to ensure that a separate access for the Moto Trial Club can be created to allow separation from pedestrians. These areas will all be required for Options 3, 4 and 5.

These areas have been valued by LPS within a report dated 21st May 2020. A copy of this Valuation Report is provided at Appendix M. A summary of the valuation is set out in the table below:

Item	Option 3	Option 4 and 5
Area Required	46	60
Net land value	£245,000	£322,000
Agents and Solicitors fees estimated @ £3,000 per Folio	£15,000	£18,000
Business case tolerance (10%)	£26,000	£35,000
Total expenditure required	£286,000	£375,000

Further details of the area to be acquired are discussed within Section 4.7 below.

Ongoing Facilities Management Costs

As discussed above, the infrastructure interventions proposed within the shortlisted options will be included within the Council's current asset schedules when implemented. Whilst these assets will be maintained by existing teams within the Council, additional resources will be required to cover this increase in scope.

A workshop was held on 6th March 2020 to determine the future resource requirements that will be necessary to manage the interventions within each of the shortlisted options. Representatives of the key Council Departments that are responsible for outdoor facilities management attended this workshop:

The assumptions underpinning the resources and costs arising from this meeting have been used for the purpose of the monetary forecasts and are described below:

Council dept / FM Activity	Full Time Equivalent ("FTE") Resource					Average Annual Staff Cost (salary and on-costs) £
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	
Parks						
Weed maintenance	0.10	0.19	1.00	1.00	1.00	30,590
Bin collection	0.10	0.19	0.48	0.50	0.50	30,590
Management of invasive species	0.10	0.19	1.00	1.00	1.00	30,590
Properties						
Maintenance to paths / facilities	0.10	0.29	0.50	0.50	1.00	30,590
Maintenance to visitor hub	0.05	0.14	0.25	0.25	0.25	30,590
Maintenance to viewing tower	-	-	-	0.25	0.25	30,590
Regulatory						
Enforcement officers	-	0.50	1.00	1.00	2.00	38,000
Outdoor Recreation						
Maintenance of play parks	-	-	-	-	0.50	30,590
Biodiversity / Education officers	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	38,000
Management of adventure tourism contracts	-	-	-	-	0.50	38,000
Non Staff Costs						
	£	£	£	£	£	
Equipment & vehicle costs	-	7,500	15,000	30,000	30,000	n/a
Total Annual Ongoing Costs	13,236	57,384	189,829	205,418	293,008	

Overview of Benefits

The main benefits expected to be delivered through the Project to which a monetary economic value can be attributed are deemed to be:

- Health and Wellbeing benefits to local active leisure users of the Site
- GVA generated from domestic visitor spending.
- GVA generated from out-of-state visitor spending.
- GVA generated from the creation of employment.
- Direct income received from commercial enterprises on the Site.

The estimated monetary value expected from each of the above benefits has been forecast on an annual basis and the Net Present Value calculated over the 30-year appraisal period. Each of the benefits are a factor of the number of visitors that each option is expected to attract to the Site and, importantly, the origin of these visitors (i.e., whether domestic or out-of-state).

The assumptions underpinning the visitor number forecasts for each option and key metrics used to forecast the value from each of the above benefits are described below:

Forecast Visitor Numbers

No annual visitor numbers have been formally recorded for either Clandeboye Estate or Whitespots Country Park before February 2023. Whilst the process of establishing counters began in early 2020, this has been interrupted by the Coronavirus restrictions in the intervening period and so actual full year baseline visitor numbers has not yet been established for inclusion within this OBC.

However, existing visitor numbers can be estimated using a local comparator site. Visitors to Cairn Wood on the opposite site of the Clandeboye Estate have been recorded at approximately 50,000 per annum. Council officers who regularly visit each site estimate that the numbers to Whitespots Country Park are likely to be approximately 20% less than Cairn Wood. Therefore, the baseline visitor number used for the purpose of this appraisal is assumed to be 40,000 per annum.

Currently, the majority of users of the site typically visit either to (1) participate in the formal trial bike events (during the 68 days per year allocated) or (2) to walk through the Site. The two groups are separate and so have been considered separately within the forecasts.

In February 2023, Council installed two counters at Whitespots Country Park. The counters are calibrated so that the figure that is read is automatically divided by 2 to account for people entering and leaving by the same point. This is the case on all Council's counters. The two counters are located at two separate paths. Visitors use either one or the other. Up to 8 October 2023, 16,599 visited the park. Council will continue monitoring to provide a robust baseline figure by March 2024.

With regards to establishing Domestic and Out of State visitors baseline figures, Council is pursuing several channels. Council officers, to date, have been in contact with NISRA and Tourism NI to find out how they track origin of visitor (at the moment). Specifically, if Tourism NI collate Google data? or securing data via credit cards? Etc?

NISRA advised us that the information that they collate for the Visitor attraction survey is from a self-reporting survey. Therefore, how these figures are estimated for each attraction is decided by the attraction itself. They get breakdown by origin of visitor and type of establishment which is probably the best benchmark in terms of origin of visitors that they can provide. However, please note the visitor attraction surveys are costly as they require a dedicated resource on site.

Below are notes from the meeting with Tourism NI:

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- Transport for London (TFL) uses WIFI pilot to track visitors. Council will need to pay for this service.
- HUQ company: some Councils used to purchase data from them but HUQ would not give Tourism NI a sample of the data. So they have not progressed with HUQ: <https://www.ubdc.ac.uk/data-services/data-catalogue/transport-and-mobility-data/huq-data/#:~:text=Huq%20provides%20mobile%20phone%20data.%20Huq%27s%20event-level%20geo-data,move%20and%20interact%20with%20the%20places%20around%20them.>
- Access the Urban Big Data Centre's data services | Urban Big Data Centre (ubdc.ac.uk). Council will need to pay for this service.
- Google Data is available in the US. They don't provide mobility data in the UK due to GDPR although they used to through covid.
- Tourism NI can give ANDBC access to Credit card location when used (from neighbouring or on site businesses). TNI use it for trends. Whilst this will be useful to collate the figures after implementation (at RIBA stage 7- in use) it will not be useful to establish baseline figures.
- Physical surveys for baseline figures. Council will need to pay for this service.
- GHD company gives country and origin figures. They are doing work with mobile networks Digital Intelligence | Digital | GHD. Council will need to pay for this service.

The annual visitor number forecast for each of the shortlisted options is described within the detailed annual forecasts and NPV calculation at Appendix J. The maximum annual visitors expected under each option and the assumptions driving the forecasts are described in the table below:

Reason for Visit	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Description of assumptions
Total Visitors						
Walking / recreation	40,000	69,000	100,000	250,000	260,000	Maximum visitors to the Site for walking purposes assumed to be 260,000 p.a. for Option 5. This is considered prudent based on benchmarks cited in Strategic Case e.g. local country park visitors including Crawfordsburn (643k), Lagan Valley Regional Park (1.3m), Scrabo (215k) added to potential for visitors attracted by Mining and WW1 heritage (key UK benchmarks include Llechwedd Slate Caverns Snowdonia (215K) and Honister Slate Mine - Lake District (125k)). In particular, the viewing tower and boardwalk proposed under Option 4 is considered to be a considerable draw to walking visitors (as demonstrated by the Stairway to Heaven which achieved a 67,000 increase in visitors following the development of the Boardwalk). Benchmarks for Option 2 is based on latest NISRA data for Gosford Park - a site of similar size and proposed infrastructure (69k), Option 3 reflects the data collected for Cairn Wood following the investment in infrastructure and signage (average of 10,000/month over the last 8 months so assumed 100,000 per annum to account for expected reduction following loss of first year "uniqueness" factor
Trial bikes members	1,820	1,820	2,002	2,002	2,002	Currently 160 members of the Moto Trial NI Club that use site (allowed 68 times a year). Consultation with club indicates c 50% of membership use the site regularly and uplift of 10% for options 3, 4 and 5 (that provide separate area for club).
Trial bikes visitors for events	1,550	1,550	2,325	2,325	2,325	Moto Trial NI have confirmed that currently 6 events per year held at Whitespots with an average of 100 visitors per event. The club would expect this to increase to 10 events if a segregated area and new access are created. Therefore, the trial bike visitors assumed to increase by 50% of current visitors for options 3, 4 and 5 due to the segregation of area.
Adventure Tourism	-	-	-	-	20,000	Benchmarked against the demand within Colin Glen for its Adventure Tourism facilities. The current SkyTrek high-ropes course attracts 15,000 per annum (additional to walkers) alone. When zip-line and adventure park are included this is expected to increase to a minimum of 20,000 per annum.
Total Visitors (before adjustment for displacement)	43,370	72,370	104,327	254,327	284,327	

In order to attribute a monetary value to the benefits that may be created from these numbers, it is necessary to consider the origin of the visitors. As such, the forecasts described above have been allocated into:

- 1) Local: Visitors that live in the vicinity of the Site
- 2) Domestic: Visitors from further afield in NI visiting the Site as part of a daytrip
- 3) Out of State: Visitors from outside NI (typically ROI or GB)
- 4)

It is also important to consider the displacement that the investment in the Site will create. This is the extent to which the benefits created by an investment is offset by reductions in benefits elsewhere in the Belfast Region i.e., the numbers of visitors that will be drawn from other similar attractions in NI such as heritage sites and country / forest parks.

The table below provides the breakdown of the visitors into the above origin categories forecast for each option and the displacement assumptions applied to each category:

Origin of Visitors	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Description of assumptions
Local visitors						
Walking / recreation	39,200	67,620	96,000	240,000	249,600	98% of current visitors assumed to be local (reflects the assumption used for the Greenways OBC). This is assumed to reduce to 96% under Options 3, 4 and 5 (due to increased marketing and improved infrastructure attracting a greater proportion of visitors from further afield)
Trial bikes members	1,820	1,820	2,002	2,002	2,002	100% of Moto Trial NI members assumed to be local (so 10% uplift as explained in table above)
Trial bikes visitors for events	310	310	465	465	465	20% of visitors to events assumed to be local - based on consultation with Moto Trial NI
Adventure Tourism	-	-	-	-	10,000	50% of visitors to the Site to use the Adventure Tourism facilities assumed to be local (based on benchmarks for zip-lines proposed for Colin Glen in West Belfast)
Displacement	-	(21,315)	(42,853)	(150,853)	(165,553)	75% Displacement assumed for local visitors. Displacement considered to impact Crawfordsburn Country park and Scrabo Country Park as the nearest similar amenities (Cairn Wood considered to be part of the wider ANDRP). Combined, these amenities attracted almost 900,000 visitors in 2018 so growth in visitors forecast for Whitespots is a small proportion in comparison. Also, ANDBC intend to target deprived Newtownards Wards from which low current use.
Additional Local Visitors (post displacement)	41,330	48,435	55,614	91,614	96,514	
Domestic Visitors						
Walking / recreation	400	690	2,680	6,700	6,968	1% of total visitors under Options 1 & 2 (being half the non-local visitors) are assumed to be domestic in accordance with the Greenway assumptions Options 3, 4 and 5 assume 67% of non-local visitors will be domestic as opposed to originating from out-of-state. Based on analysis of NISRA visitor data.
Trial bikes members	-	-	-	-	-	No domestic members of Trials Club Assumed
Trial bikes visitors for events	1,225	1,225	1,837	1,837	1,837	79% of visitors to events assumed to be domestic - based on discussion with Moto Trial NI
Adventure Tourism	-	-	-	-	5,000	25% of visitors to the Site to use the Adventure Tourism facilities assumed to be domestic (based on benchmarks for zip-lines proposed for Colin Glen in West Belfast)
Displacement	-	(276)	(2,748)	(6,567)	(11,571)	95% displacement assumed as majority of domestic visitors considered likely to be displaced from other amenities. Additional 5% considered to represent interest in the heritage of the site.
Additional Domestic Visitors (post displacement)	1,625	1,639	1,769	1,970	2,234	
Out-of-State Visitors						
Walking / recreation	400	690	1,320	3,300	3,432	1% under Options 1 and 2 (being half the non-local visitors) assumed to be out-of-state in accordance with the Greenway assumptions Options 3, 4 and 5 assume 33% of non-local visitors will be out-of-state (considered prudent given the 2018 NISRA data on origin of visitors indicates this could be as high as 67%)
Trial bikes members	-	-	-	-	-	No domestic members of Trials Club Assumed
Trial bikes visitors for events	16	16	23	23	23	1% of current visitors to events assumed to be out-of state - based on discussion with Moto Trial NI
Adventure Tourism	-	-	-	-	5,000	Benchmarked to research for Colin Glen Zip Line anticipates 25% of visitors out of state.
Displacement	-	(145)	(464)	(1,454)	(4,020)	50% displacement assumed for out of state visitors - significant proportion expected to be visiting for the heritage of the site specifically.
Additional Out of State Visitors (post displacement)	416	561	879	1,869	4,435	

This visitor breakdown is used for the purpose of calculating the monetary benefits as described below.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits to Local Visitors

A wide body of research has been undertaken in the UK to establish the value that exercise, and active leisure pursuits have on the health and well-being of the public. Four recent examples provide data highlighting the benefits of walking specifically in country / forest parks. These are as follows:

Public Body Responsible	Research	Value per Visit Resulting from Research
DEFRA:	Research undertaken for a report entitled “Assessment of the Costs and Benefits of The National Forest” – commissioned by Defra in 2010 found that visitors to the forest placed different values depending on the amenities available.	The average values reported (using travel cost methods and other criteria) were as follows: - High access recreation (i.e., those with toilets, cafes and detailed interpretation of the forest): £12.50/visit Low access recreation (i.e., none of the above): £2.50/visit
TEAGASC (The ROI Agriculture and Food Development Authority)	Study entitled “A contingent valuation assessment of recreational demand for walking on farm commonage in the Republic of Ireland” ¹¹ .	The median willingness to pay for formal access with improved trail infrastructure was €12.22 (equivalent to £10.63 per visit) for the lowlands and €9.08 for the uplands (equivalent to £7.90 per visit)
Irish Rural Economy Research Centre	Study Entitled: “Estimating the amenity value of Irish woodlands”	The valuation of public good provision in Irish forestry showed that the willingness to pay (WTP) for a single day-visit to a forest, varied from €1.02 to €2.73 (1992 prices) equivalent low case
DEFRA	Rural Development Programme metric for forest development	“Willingness to pay” value for healthy exercise is £8.00 per visit ¹² .
DAERA Forest Service	Travel cost method for economic valuation (derived based on the premise that the time and travel cost expenses that people incur to visit a site represent the value they place on the Site)	Estimated value at £2.72 per visit (for low amenity forests)

To ensure prudent assumptions have been applied for the monetary benefit forecasts, the financial forecast model has applied lower bound values derived from the above data set to the forecast visitor numbers as follows:

- Options 1 and 2 (Low amenity options): £1.75 per visit for Option 1 (based on low-bound Irish Rural Economy Research Centre) and £2.50 per visit for Option 2 (DEFRA data being the lowest bound value)
- Options 3, 4 and 5 (options including toilets, interpretation and other features): £7.90 per visit (reflecting the uplands valuation under the TEAGASC research).

¹¹ <https://t-stor.teagasc.ie/bitstream/handle/11019/314/LAndUSepolicyv26%202009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹² Forest Service: Economic Appraisal for securing title to Ballysallagh Forest, Craigantlet

GVA through Visitor Spend (both Domestic and Out-of-State):

The Belfast Region City Deal Programme Management Office (“BRCD PMO”) issued instructions on 18 June 2020 that a standard set of assumptions regarding Visitor Spend should be utilised for all Projects being considered for funding under the Deal. These assumptions have been used in the Financial Model to forecast the Monetary Benefits and are as follows:

Measure	Recommended Figure	Source
Visitor Daily Spend - Out of state	£30.50	TNI
Overnight - out of state	£77.50	TNI
Visitor Daily Spend - domestic	£30.50	TNI
Overnight - domestic	£66.23	TNI

The indirect and induced benefits of this spending within the wider NI region that (as recommended by the BRCD PMO) are as follows:

Measure	Recommended Multiplier	Source
Tourism GVA multiplier – Indirect only	1.59	The Impact of Heritage Tourism for the UK Economy (August 2016) by Oxford Economics https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/research/20160927_-_the_impact_of_heritage_tourism_on_the_uk_economy_-_final_repo.pdf
Tourism GVA multiplier – Indirect + Induced	2.29	
Tourism jobs multiplier – Indirect only	1.48	
Tourism jobs multiplier – Indirect + induced	2.02	

In accordance with the BRCD PMO instructions to ensure consistency with the OBCs being prepared for Tourism and Regeneration Projects, these multipliers have not been applied to the base-case NPV calculations but have been considered as a sensitivity within Section 3.4.6 below.

Adjustment for Additionality:

When calculating the economic benefit of visitor spend a GVA adjustment needs to be applied to the total (additional) visitor spend. This is to reflect the cost of delivering the goods and services consumed and to ensure it is the GVA of tourism that is being included within the NPVs and not the total spend figure. DfC have advised using the NISRA Annual Business Inquiry 2018 as the basis for this - with the ‘Accommodation and food service activities’ used as a proxy for tourism spend. This data confirms GVA (£954m) as a percentage of the ‘Accommodation and food service activities’ turnover (£1,891m) in 2018 was 50.4%. This has been applied to the GVA forecasts for both domestic and out-of-state visitor spending.

GVA through Job Creation

The Project is expected to drive job creation both in the implementation of the various interventions as well as over the longer term in the operation and management. The total number of jobs forecast in the construction / implementation of the facilities as well as the future operation / management of the facilities is set out below:

Construction Jobs Forecast:

The latest NISRA data published in December 2019 confirms the total annual GVA created by the NI specialised construction industry¹³ was £2,774m. The total number of employee jobs within the construction industry in NI in the same year¹⁴ was 31,406. This equates to a total contribution of £88,327 per job. The calculation of the GVA created by the Project over the estimated 2-year implementation period is as follows:

	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
Construction cost	3,613,813	7,442,783	14,816,601	23,895,666
Displacement	(2,710,360)	(5,582,087)	(11,112,451)	(17,921,749)
Estimated GVA per Option	903,453	1,860,696	3,704,150	5,973,916
Estimated Number of Employees Required	10	21	42	68
Proportion project complete - Year 1	100%	80%	70%	50%
Proportion project complete - Year 2	0%	20%	30%	50%
Number of employees forecast for implementation - Year 1	10	17	29	34
Number of employees forecast for implementation - Year 2	-	4	13	34

Operational Jobs forecast:

The number of potential jobs created in the operation and maintenance of the upgraded amenity has been derived from consultation with key stakeholders. The direct jobs created from within the Council are described above in section 3.4.3. In addition, jobs are expected to be created through external partners such as commercial operators of the zip-line and the coffee kiosk as well as within charities / social enterprises such as the Woodland Trust and Forest Schools. These have been benchmarked against other similar enterprises¹⁵ A detailed forecast of the anticipated annual operational employment is provided in Appendix J – the maximum FTEs for each option are summarised in the table below¹⁶:

¹³ Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: all NUTS level regions

¹⁴ Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Bulletin (2018-Q1)

¹⁵ Colin Glen Trust

¹⁶ Displacement has been assumed at 50%. The latest guidance on additionality from Department for Communities and Local Government recommends the use of a "ready reckoner" whereby 50% is considered medium. The operational jobs created are not unique but there are few instances of this type of investment in NI - therefore both the deadweight and displacement associated with the project is considered medium.

Operation Jobs (FTE)	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
Created within Council (see above)	0.3	1.3	5.0	8.1	10.8
Clandeboyne Estate / Woodland Trust / Forestry Service	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Management of Visitor Centre (including coffee kiosk)	-	-	2.0	2.0	2.0
Zip-Line Supervisor	-	-	-	-	1.0
Zip-Line Attendants	-	-	-	-	4.0
HighRopes Supervisor	-	-	-	-	1.0
HighRopes Attendants	-	-	-	-	2.0
Adventure Park Supervisor	-	-	-	-	1.0
Adventure Park Attendants	-	-	-	-	2.0
Total employment before displacement	1.3	3.3	10.0	13.1	26.8
Total employment after displacement at 50%	0.7	1.7	5.0	6.6	13.4
Weighted average GVA per job (based on NISRA data for real estate activities and accommodation/food services) (£)	29,693.4	36,221.6	40,805.7	46,182.1	36,373.9
Total GVA per annum (£)	39,801	120,437	408,057	606,140	973,002

Again, the indirect and induced benefits have not been included in the Base Case forecasts but have been considered as a sensitivity within Section 3.4.6 below.

Direct Income from Commercial Operations

There are a number of interventions that involve commercial enterprises operating from the Site – i.e., services for which users will be charged directly. These are as follows:

- Coffee kiosk with the proposed visitor centre (Options 3, 4 and 5)
- Zip-line (Option 5 only)
- High-Ropes (Option 5 only)
- Adventure Park (Option 5 only)

As discussed above, it is envisaged that these facilities will be outsourced to external third parties via operating leases and a small rental will be charged to these enterprises under this lease agreement. However, in order to encourage interest in taking the risk to develop and run these facilities, it is envisaged the Council will need to provide the site at a peppercorn rent (at least in the early years) to encourage potential operators (if the Council places an obligation to provide a management fee/profit-share or lease payments on the site it is envisaged the appetite for development would be low given there is little evidence of demand currently). Therefore, the direct income to the public from these facilities is deemed to be negligible for the purposes for the economic forecasts.

3.4.5 NPC/V Estimate

The Net Present Cost / Value (“NPC/V”) of each option has been calculated using the monetary cost and benefit projections described above. The NPC/V is stated as at a baseline date of 1 April 2020 under each option and uses a discount rate of 3.5% in accordance with the latest DoF guidance.

The detailed annual cashflow forecasts and NPV calculations are provided in Appendix J and the results are presented below:

Income / Cost Element	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
Monetised Benefit Categories	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m
Health and Well Being Social Benefits	1.2	2.1	7.5	12.4	13.1
GVA from Domestic visitor Spend	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6
GVA from Out-of-State visitor Spend	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.3	3.0
GVA from construction jobs	-	0.9	1.8	3.7	5.9
GVA from operational Jobs	0.0	1.0	2.6	2.6	7.1
Total Monetised Benefits NPC	2.0	4.8	13.0	20.5	29.7
Expenditure / Investment Categories	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m	NPV '£m
Development Costs*	-	3.0	6.1	12.1	21.1
Optimism Bias	-	0.5	0.9	1.9	3.3
Land Acquisition (less residual value)	-	-	0.2	0.2	0.2
Internal Programme Team Costs	-	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6
Operating / Revenue Costs	0.3	1.0	3.2	3.4	4.6
Total Expenditure NPC	0.3	4.7	10.8	18.1	29.9
Net Present Value	1.7	0.1	2.2	2.4	(0.2)
Benefit to Cost Ratio	7.8	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.0
RANKING BASED ON NPV	3	4	2	1	5

The table shows that Option 4 (Education, Heritage and Tourism focused development) represents the greatest NPV to the local region of £2.4m over the 30 years appraisal period. This is £0.2m greater than the second ranked Option 3 due to the greater benefits achieved due to the higher visitor numbers. It is also £2.6m greater than Option 5 indicating that the higher implementation expenditure required for the Adventure Tourism infrastructure will exceed the monetary value of the benefits these facilities are expected to generate.

3.4.6 Sensitivity Analysis

Green Book guidance stipulates that the sensitivity of the results of an appraisal of options must be tested and interpreted with regard to changes in key assumptions. The analysis below has focussed on establishing the sensitivity of the monetary rankings to changes in assumptions that either:

- Have a significant impact on the NPC results; or
- Are based on high-level (and inherently uncertain at this stage) assumptions at this early stage in the appraisal process stage.

The sensitivities undertaken over the NPV analysis have been described below:

Sensitivity 1: Increased Capex: The base case capital cost forecasts for each option are initial estimates provided by AECOM based on indicative rates only. Further detailed investigations will be required to establish a more accurate cost of implementation once a preferred option has been identified and approved. Whilst optimism bias and risk contingency has been incorporated into the costs, design issues may arise following this investigation which led to these costs increasing. Also, the appetite of contractors for jobs can be volatile and depends heavily on the opportunities that exist elsewhere. Therefore, the second sensitivity shows the rankings if the base case tenders increase by 25% above the initial AECOM estimate.

Sensitivity 2: Reduction in Visitors Forecast: A significant portion of the monetary benefits forecast for the base case are based on potential visitors to the Site. Therefore, the sensitivity of the rankings has been tested if the overall number of visitors falls by 20% compared to the base case assumptions.

Sensitivity 3: Private Finance develops Adventure Tourism Facilities in Option 5: The Base Case forecasts assume all capital expenditure is funded from public sources. However, Option 5 includes a range of commercial facilities from which revenue can be generated. Therefore, Sensitivity 3 assesses the impact on the rankings if these facilities are funded by the private sector and not included as a cost within the forecasts.

Sensitivity 4: Include potential indirect and induced benefits: As discussed above, research has indicated that for every job created through tourism there are additional indirect and induced jobs created in other sectors. Every additional £1 spent by a domestic or out-of-state visitor leads to indirect and induced GVA benefits. These indirect and induced benefits have not been included in the base case analysis presented above. Therefore, to demonstrate the impact of these benefits on the rankings, they have been included as Sensitivity 3.

The impact on the NPVs of each of the four options from the above changes is shown in the table below:

Scenario	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
Base Case					
Base Case NPC / (NPV)	1.7	0.1	2.2	2.4	(0.2)
Ranking Based on NPV	3	4	2	1	5
Sensitivity 1: Capex Increased by 25%					
Sensitivity 1 NPC / (NPV)	1.7	(0.6)	0.9	(0.2)	(4.9)
Ranking Based on NPV	1	4	2	3	5
Sensitivity 2: Reduction in Visitors by 20%					
Sensitivity 2 NPC / (NPV)	1.3	(0.5)	0.5	(0.5)	(3.5)
Ranking Based on NPV	1	4	2	3	5
Sensitivity 3: Private sector funds Adventure Tourism Facilities in Option 5					
Sensitivity 3 NPC / (NPV)	1.7	0.1	2.2	2.4	1.0
Ranking Based on NPV	3	5	2	1	4
Sensitivity 4: Include Indirect and Induced Benefits					
Sensitivity 4 NPC / (NPV)	3.9	1.8	4.4	5.5	5.0
Ranking Based on NPV	4	5	3	1	2

An overview of the findings from the above table is as follows:

- **Sensitivity 1:** An increase in the capital expenditure by 25% results in the NPV of each of the “Do-Something” options falling (with Option 3 being the only option that results in a positive NPV) and the rankings changing such that Option

1 would be the preferred option. This indicates that the higher cost of Option 4 means it is more sensitive to proportionate increases in capex. If increased by 4% then Option 3 becomes the preferred option. The breakeven point at which Option 4 or Option 3 remain above Option 1 is a 9% increase in Capex.

- **Sensitivity 2:** Again, if visitor numbers were 20% less than forecast in the base case then the NPVs of all four Do Something options would fall, and Option 1 would again be ranked first. Therefore, Option 4 is also more sensitive to a fall in visitor numbers given the higher investment required. A reduction of 8% is required for either Option 3 or 4 to remain above the do-nothing scenario.
- **Sensitivity 3:** This analysis shows that if the funding for the Adventure Tourism facilities (i.e., the High-ropes Course, adventure play-park and the two zip-lines) is provided by private investors then Option 5 becomes the fourth highest ranked in monetary terms with an increase of £1.2m in the NPV.
- **Sensitivity 4:** The inclusion of the indirect and induced benefits results in the NPV of Option 5 becoming the second preferred option - rising above Option 3 by £0.6m.

The key finding from the sensitivity analysis is that the position of Option 4 as the preferred option is dependent on the forecasts under the base case being accurate. If the costs are underestimated or visitor numbers overestimated, then the less risky Option 3 may become the preferred option.

Conversely, if private investment could be provided for the commercial facilities and indirect / induced benefits are considered valid, then Option 5 is likely to provide the greatest overall benefits due to the number of jobs through domestic and out of state tourism it has the potential to achieve.

3.5 Qualitative Option Appraisal

3.5.1 Overview

Green Book guidance indicates that benefits that cannot be valued in monetary terms should still form part of the options appraisal and an appropriate unit of measurement of these costs and benefits should be identified. This section provides an assessment of the costs and benefits of the short-listed options that cannot be valued in monetary terms.

3.5.2 Scoring Approach

Monetary values have been allocated to the two of the four Project Objectives that relating to (a) Health and Wellbeing and (b) Tourism/Economic development. Therefore, these two objectives have already been evaluated as part of the monetary appraisal above.

As such, the remaining two Project Objectives are the focus of the qualitative appraisal. These are:

- 1) Environmental Sustainability: Enhance the environmental sustainability of Whitespots and Clandeboye Estate by protecting the biodiversity of the site and promoting understanding of environmental issues within the local population.
- 2) Employability and Skills Development: The potential to increase employability within the region - not through direct employment (as this benefit has been assessed on a monetary basis above) but by strengthening and developing skills through education and volunteering opportunities; and

The potential of the five shortlisted options to achieve the above benefits have been assessed using a weighted scoring approach. This involves assigning numerical weights to pre-defined “benefit criteria”, chosen to correspond to the wider qualitative benefits, accumulating in an overall weighted score for each option.

The following sub-sections outline the rationale behind the benefit criteria and the scores awarded to each option.

3.5.3 Criteria Scoring Approach

The Environmental and Employability benefit criteria have been weighted 60%, 40% respectively based on the greater focus on the former within the objectives and policies of DAERA.

Each option has been scored out of 5 for its ability to meet each benefit criterion and this score is converted to a percentage and multiplied by the allocated weighting to produce a “weighted score”. The total weighted score for each option is compared to give a qualitative ranking.

In order to critically assess the options, the evaluation criteria outlined below have been used to score each criterion. Each option has been given a score between 1 and 5 against each criterion with an option scoring 5 having the maximum positive impact.

Score	Definition
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The option demonstrates an exceptional contribution to the non-monetary criterion. • There are excellent links between the project and progress towards the achievement of this benefit. □ • There is an excellent link with the project objectives.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The option can demonstrate a significant impact on this non-monetary criterion. • The project design clearly links activities to the achievement of this benefit. • The link to the project objectives may be less strong than above but nevertheless still very clear.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The option has clear outcomes in terms of contributing to this non-monetary criterion, but these are less significant than above. • The link to the project objectives is still clear.

2	<input type="checkbox"/> The project meets some of the basic criteria but overall, this is below the standard expected by the community. Progress towards the achievement of this non-monetary criterion, where it does happen is incidental to the option rather than being designed into the option.
1	<input type="checkbox"/> The project only just meets the minimum requirements to contribute to this non-monetary criterion. There is little link to the project objectives;
0	<input type="checkbox"/> The project does not meet the minimum requirements to contribute to this non-monetary criterion. There is no link to the project objectives

3.5.4 Qualitative Appraisal

The summary table below illustrates the scores given to each of the five shortlisted options for each of the two qualitative objectives:

Criterion	Weight %	Option 1:		Option 2:		Option 3:		Option 4		Option 5:	
		Score	Weight Score	Score	Weight Score	Score	Weight Score	Score	Weight Score	Score	Weight Score
Environmental Sustainability	60%	2	24%	3	36%	4	48%	5	60%	4	48%
Employability and Skills	40%	1	8%	1	8%	4	32%	4	32%	5	40%
TOTAL	100%		32%		44%		80%		92%		88%
Ranking		5		4		3		1		2	

The rationale for these scores is described in the sections that follow:

Environmental Sustainability

Option 1 has been allocated a score of 2 as, whilst the current low visitor number has meant there is little negative impact on the wildlife within wider Clondeboy Estate, the current use of the Whitespots Country Park site by scramblers has a significant detrimental impact on the area. The educational activity of the Clondeboy Nature Rangers also contributes to this objective.

Option 2 has been awarded a score of 3 as this option includes activities to reduce the contamination on the Site and remove invasive species which inhibit the development of native plants. It also envisages introducing a limited level of regulatory enforcement which is expected to reduce the illegal use of the Site by scramblers. However, no separation of the entrance for use by the Moto Trial Club will mean that this enforcement is unlikely to be 100% effective.

Option 3 has been awarded a score of 4 and Option 4 a score of 5. Whilst both Options represent opportunities to enhance the environmental sustainability of the wider Site. Option 4's impact is much more widespread as it includes the creation of new woodland areas near to Helen's Tower including the felling of diseased trees, and replanting, site clearance and replanting.

Whitespots Country Park: Outline Business Case

Whilst Option 5 also envisages enhancement of the woodland, the increased number of visitors and the introduction of the Adventure Tourism elements (zip lines, elevated boardwalk etc) is expected to reduce the benefits of these interventions and reduce the environmental sustainability of the Site as a whole. Therefore, Option 5 has been awarded a score of 4.

Employability and Skills:

The scores allocated under these criteria have been based on the extent to which each option can provide opportunities for education and volunteering opportunities.

Options 1 and 2 have been allocated a score of 1 as there is currently a small number of educational activities held at the Clandeboye estate for example: Clandeboye Nature Rangers (an outdoor After School club set within the Clandeboye Estate) and the Buzzard Bushcraft events (this group brings groups of children to Cairn Wood for nature trails etc. However, with no such activities occurring at Whitespots and no facilities from which to provide education support, the ability to achieve any material benefits is minimal. Whilst Option 2 proposes some limited infrastructure upgrades, these are intended to provide benefits to walkers as opposed to any significant volunteering opportunities.

A number of the proposed facilities under Options 3, 4 and 5 represent different opportunities for skills development to be facilitated by the Council at Whitespots Country Park as well as Clandeboye Estate. The visitor centre proposed under each of these options will include classroom facilities to provide a centre to deliver education and a base for guided tours of the Site.

Examples of similar facilities include the Crawfordsburn Country Park Education Centre from which a range of education and volunteering opportunities are delivered. This includes the “VIC 2020 Kids Sea Creatures Nature Trail”. This is described as “A beachcombing adventure to uncover the numerous types of sea creatures who live on the shores of the park”.

In addition, the Ecotrail proposed under Option 5 will ensure the Site is included within the list of approved sites by the organisation “Outdoor Recreation NI”. This organisation uses volunteers associated with Eco trails to provide opportunities for young people to develop an awareness, appreciation and understanding of, and responsibility to, their local natural and built environment by taking part in an environmental trail linked to the sport of orienteering.

As such, Options 3 and 4 has been allocated a score of 4 and Option 5 has scored 5.

3.5.5 Qualitative Appraisal Conclusion

This section has determined that Option 4 ranks as the highest option in terms of qualitative benefits achieving a score of 92% followed closely by Option 5 at 88% (the difference being the greater impact on the natural environment of Option 5). Option 3 is slightly behind as it does not include as material an intervention. Options 1 and 2 are significantly lower with scores of 32% and 44% respectively.

3.6 Risk Appraisal

3.6.1 Overview

Uncertainty and risk are inherent in any project, and a systematic approach to the identification, assessment and management of risk is critical to delivering the desired outcomes and benefits. DoF Guidance acknowledges, “no matter how robust the assumptions about risk factors, there will still be risks to consider, and uncertainty over the range of possible outcomes.”

This section aims to identify and analyse key areas of risk surrounding the options for the investment in the Site and show how each risk factor compares under each option.

3.6.2 Risk Identification

The key risks facing the project are deemed to be the following:

- 1) Latent Demand insufficient to justify investment: This is the risk that the forecast demand for tourism attractions at ANDRP has been over-estimated and, as such the benefits that the project aims to achieve will not be sufficient to justify the public expenditure.
- 2) Potential conflict between user Groups: Risk that demand is restricted from one group of users because of the existence of another group. For, example walkers are put off by the use of the site for Trial Bikes.
- 3) Land Unavailable for Acquisition: In order to ensure that Trial Bike users can be adequately separated from other users on the site, AECOM have indicated that it may be necessary to acquire additional land. There is a risk that the private landowners will not allow the necessary land to be acquired.
- 4) Negative Environmental Impact: Risk that an increase in visitors will have an adverse or detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.
- 5) Contamination: The site is adjacent to a former illegal landfill and Japanese knotweed has been identified on the site. There is a risk that these factors add to the cost of developing the site and render the project unaffordable.
- 6) Displacement Under-estimated: The risk that any new visitors to the Site will be drawn from other attractions within the Belfast region.
- 7) Funding Availability: A key dependency of the proposals is that capital funding will be made available from the NI Executive through the Complementary Fund.
- 8) Ongoing financial sustainability: It is important that the facilities can be self-sustaining following development so that the success factors are achieved into the long-term without additional public subvention.
- 9) COVID-19 impact: Risk that the aftermath of the pandemic will have a negative impact on future visitor numbers.

Each of the five evaluated risks have been assessed based on two key factors (1) Probability (Likelihood of the risk occurring) and (2) the potential Impact of each risk on the Council, the combination of which generates an overall rating for each option. The definition of the ratings for each are described below:

	Probability Definition	Impact Definition
Low	Unlikely to occur	Immaterial / minor
Medium	Moderate likelihood of occurrence	Moderate
High	Likely to occur	Severe

3.6.3 Risk Appraisal

The results of this evaluation are set out below:

	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3		Option 4		Option 5	
	Prob	Imp	Prob	Imp	Prob	Imp	Prob	Imp	Prob	Imp

Market demand overestimated	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Med
User Conflict	High	Low	High	Low	Med	Med	Med	Med	Med	High
Land unavailable	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Med	Med	Med	Med	High
Environmental Impact	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Med
Contamination	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Med	Med	Med	High	High
Displacement under-estimated	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med
Availability of funding	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Low	Med	Med	High	High
Financially Unsustainable	Low	Low	Low	Low	Med	Med	Med	Med	High	High
COVID-19 Impact	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Overall	Low		Low		Low-Med		Low-Med		Med-High	
Risk Ranking	1=		1=		3		4		5	

The rationale for arriving at the above conclusions regarding the risk profile of each option is set out in the sections below:

1) Latent Demand insufficient to justify investment

The annual visitor numbers used as the basis for Option 1 (status quo) have been derived from recent DAERA statistical analysis for the nearby Cairn Wood with a 20% reduction. The probability and impact of underestimated demand for Option 1 has been allocated a low-risk rating.

The NISRA data that was used as a benchmark to underpin the financial forecasts shows that visitors to Whitespots Country Park are significantly fewer than in other country parks in NI. The public survey undertaken by ANDBC indicated that this is largely due to the local population being unaware of what the Site has to offer and poor access / infrastructure supporting the Site.

Whilst the infrastructure proposed under Options 2, 3 and 4 is relatively modest (meaning the impact of this risk is low), this investment will bring visitor numbers to a comparable level to those sites used as comparators i.e., Gosford Forest (69k), Tollymore (147k) and Scrabo (215k). Either the population living in the vicinity of these parks, and/or the size of the parks themselves, is smaller than the combined Whitespots and Clandeboye Site meaning the probability and impact of the forecast visitor numbers being over-estimated is also considered low.

The facilities proposed under Option 5 represent a significantly greater investment requirement from the Council than the other options. The evidence of demand for facilities such as zip-wires and high-ropes is less certain also – particularly as the current demand for the Site (in the absence of the other infrastructure investment) is so low.

Therefore, the impact and probability of this risk in relation to Option 5 is considered medium.

2) Potential conflict between user Groups

This risk relates mainly to the potential for visitors seeking to walk and experience the natural beauty of the Site to be put off by motorcyclists. As confirmed above, the Moto Trial NI club can legally use a specific area the Site for two hours a day for 68 days of the year. Any use of the Site by motorcycles beyond this time is not permitted by the Council. In addition, some concern has been raised by individuals about illegal shooting on a nearby land.

Anti-social behaviour can be addressed through regular monitoring of the Site and also through an increase in visitors and volunteers monitoring and reporting such behaviour. The consultation process indicates that appetite for volunteering across amongst user groups is high. Given Options 1 and 2 are not expecting a significant growth in visitors, the probability of misuse is high. However, the impact is low. Whereas for Options 4 and 5, the impact is high but given there will be increased monitoring the probability of this occurring is medium. On this basis, the probability and impact of this risk in relation to Option 3 is considered medium.

3) Land Unavailable for Acquisition

This risk relates specifically to the additional land which is required for access purposes. The risk and impact of this land being unavailable for purchase is low for Options 1 and 2 as additional land not required.

However, a key driver of the benefits forecast for Options 3, 4 and 5 is the separation of the motorcyclists from other visitors. Whilst no direct engagement has yet been held with the current landowners and whilst there are a number of options available to Council to obtain the required land, it is hoped it will be achieved through amicable negotiations with the landowners by LPS acting as ‘honest broker’, always bearing in mind Council’s obligation not to spend public funds needlessly and to ensure project delivery for the good of the community.

However, there is a risk this may not be successful. This can potentially be overcome by creating alternative arrangements on the existing land for options 3 and 4 but key facilities proposed under Option 5 (the high ropes) need access to this land also. Therefore, the probability of this risk is medium for Options 3, 4 and 5, the impact is medium for Option 3 and 5 but high for Option 5.

4) Negative Environmental Impact

Whilst there is expected to be an increase in the number of visitors to the Site under all the “Do-Something” options, the majority of the proposed components for development do not reflect any increased negative environmental impact in use compared to the existing land (additional paths, signage etc.).

The only exception is the Adventure Tourism facilities proposed under Option 5 (the high-ropes, zip-wires and Adventure Park). At present the land on which these are to be operated is natural open lands consistent with the surrounding area. These new facilities represent the potential to have a detrimental impact on the natural environment and will need to be considered carefully in relation to relevant planning policy. The impact and probability of this risk are considered low for Options 1 to 3 but medium for Option 4.

5) Contamination:

A former illegal landfill on a site adjacent to the Whitespots Country Park represents a potential risk to the achievement of the project objectives as the interventions required to address this contamination may impact on the cost and/or duration of developing interventions such as paths, the visitor centre, zip wires etc.

The recognised presence of Japanese knotweed on the Site presents a similar risk, although this can be managed by the Council to a greater extent.

The only material intervention that involves a building on the land is the visitor centre, given this is not proposed for Options 1 and 2 the impact and probability of this risk causing a significant problem is low.

The facility is small for Options 3 and 4 but more significant for Option 5. The provision of further development in terms of the adventure tourism facilities means this risk is high for Option 5 but medium for Options 3 and 4.

6) Displacement under-estimated

The potential for displacement has been factored into the visitor number forecasts that have underpinned the monetary appraisal below. These have been considered in line with benchmark information and are considered to be prudent. Therefore, the probability of the displacement being under-estimated is considered low for all options.

The primary Forest Park attractions in Ards and North Down are Crawfordsburn Country Park, Cairn Wood / Ballysallagh, Scrabo Country Park and Clandeboye Estate. All three will be connected to the Ards and North Down Regional Park through the Greenway Network. Therefore, the impact of any displacement from one site to another is not considered to be significant for Options 2, 3 and 4 given the primary basis for the growth in visitors under these forecasts is the Forest Park element. However, displacement from commercial operating Sites providing Adventure Tourism Facilities in the Belfast Region¹⁷ will have a greater impact on the local economy. Therefore, the impact of this risk for Option 5 is medium.

7) Availability of Funding

External funding will be required to implement all the Do-Something Options under consideration (Options 2, 3, 4 and 5). The Complementary Fund committee's response to the Council's initial application for funding has indicated that £7.4m funding may be available through Complementary Fund¹⁸. This is subject to the expenditure approval process (including this review of this OBC). The Council has committed funding up to £820k towards the project. In addition, the Whitespots project is expected to be eligible for the DAERA Environment Fund under the Outdoor Recreation pillar. Therefore, the Council intend to apply to this fund to cover additional costs of the Project.

¹⁷ These include the Colin Glen Forest Park, Ardnaval Outdoor Activity Centre, Ganaway Activity Centre (Millisle) and East Coast Adventure Centre (Warrenpoint).

¹⁸ Stated within a letter to the Council Chief Executives dated 10 December 2021.

Given the low capital expenditure required for Option 2 (Do minimum), the probability and impact this risk occurring for it and Option 1 is deemed low.

As additional funding will be necessary for Options 3, 4 and 5, the affordability needs to be considered within the context of the Council's Capital Investment Plan and whether this project takes priority over other needs.

The cost of implementing option 3 is marginally above the potential funding available through the complimentary fund but should be affordable when the Council's contribution is included. Therefore, the probability of this risk is medium, but the impact is low.

A significant portion of the additional cost within Option 4 is the creation of new Woodland within Clandeboye Estate. Additional funding from sources such as DAERA Forestry Grants/Forest Expansion Scheme may be available to contribute to this cost. Therefore, the probability and impact of this risk is considered medium for Option 4.

Whilst private investment may be available to contribute to the cost of the Adventure Tourism facilities (zip-wires, high-ropes etc.) proposed for Option 5, the appetite from Private / Developers to invest in the Site is not expected to be high at present – given the low existing footfall. This is discussed in more detail in the Financial Case below but both the probability and impact of insufficient funding being available for Option 5 is considered high at this stage.

8) Ongoing financial sustainability:

As described within the monetary appraisal above, it is envisaged the future management of the Site in terms of facilities management, maintenance, enforcement, security etc. will be the responsibility of the Council for the majority of the interventions proposed for Options 1, 2, 3 and 4. It is anticipated the day-to-day management of Options 3 and 4 will be reinforced through the provision of volunteers, social enterprises and other public bodies such as the Woodland Trust and Forestry Service (this is discussed in more detail in the Management Case below). Whilst these are organisations with a strong financial standing, the annual operating cost of these options has not yet been committed and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic may require resources to be allocated elsewhere. Therefore, the probability and impact of these options failing due to insufficient resources in the future is considered medium.

However, Option 5 presents a greater risk. The Adventure Tourism interventions within these options will be run on a commercial basis. As stated above the appetite for investment into these facilities is uncertain at present given the low footfall. Therefore, the future financial sustainability of these operations is equally so. As such, the probability and impact of this risk is considered high for Option 5.

9) COVID-19 Impact:

The aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic may have a considerable impact on the future demand for all visitor attractions. Behaviours from individuals are likely to change in a wide range of different ways. At the time of writing, the changes that will arise are unknown and are very difficult to predict.

However, as discussed within the Strategic Case above, evidence emerging from surveys undertaken by different Government sources (including Sport England and the Department for Transport) has indicated that demand for walking and cycling activities will, if anything, increase because of the Covid-19 restrictions being lifted. Therefore, the impact and probability of COVID-19 having a negative impact on the Project is considered low.

3.6.4 Conclusion on Risk

The key points from the analysis above are that: -

- As would be expected, the lower intervention Options 1 and 2 represent the lowest risk to the Council.
- Whilst there are a number of key risks relating to Options 3 and 4 that will need to be monitored (particularly relating to contamination, land acquisition and the availability of the necessary funding) none of these risks are considered insurmountable.
- However, there are a number of risks associated with Option 5 that represent both a high probability of occurrence and a high impact on the success of the project. The two risks at the top of this list are the availability and funding and the future financial sustainability of the interventions proposed under Option 5. In particular, the Adventure Tourism facilities (zip-wires, high-ropes, and adventure park). The low existing footfall to the site means that the appetite from private investors is expected to be low. However, if the footfall were to increase because of the interventions proposed within the other options, the proposition may represent less of a risk to both private investors and the Council.

3.7 Selection of Preferred Economic Option

3.7.1 Summary of Economic Appraisal

The results of the monetary cost / benefits appraisal, the qualitative appraisal and the risk assessments presented within this Section have been summarised in the table below:

	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Minor Trails Upgrade to Enhance Walking Experience	Option 3: Education and Heritage Focused Development	Option 4: Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development	Option 5: Develop site into an "Adventure Tourism" Destination
NPC £m	1.7	0.1	2.2	2.4	-0.2
Monetary Rank	3	4	2	1	5
Benefit Score	32%	44%	80%	92%	88%
Qualitative Rank	5	4	3	1	2
Overall Risk Rating	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Risk Ranking	1=	1=	3	4	5

The summary results table indicates that under the base case assumptions Option 4 (Education, Heritage & Tourism Focused Development) is forecast to provide the greatest socio-economic benefits to the Belfast Region and is the option that best meets the Project Objectives. It provides the greatest monetary benefits and the greatest qualitative benefits.

However, it represents a greater risk to the public investors than Option 3 largely because it requires a greater investment from the Council than is currently available from the Complementary Fund. The sensitivity analysis has demonstrated that its position as first ranked option in monetary terms is highly dependent on the forecasts for visitor numbers to the Site being accurate, if the actual numbers achieved are lower than Option 3 would represent the most favourable option.

Conversely, if the potential monetary benefits that could be created by the Project through indirect and induced visitor spending and job creation are factored into the forecasts, then Option 5 becomes the preferred option as it has the highest potential for attracting out-of-state visitors. However, Option 5 represents the greatest risk due to the higher capital expenditure required.

3.7.2 Conclusions

The results above demonstrate that economic value that can be achieved from the Project is inextricably linked to the potential visitor numbers that can be attracted to the Site. These will be maximised through linkage with the other wider projects currently being implemented by the Council. Therefore, whilst the Project has been considered as a stand-alone Project its success is inextricably linked to the Greenways Network, the Cairn Wood upgrade and other initiative such as the Somme Museum. This is the rationale driving the Council’s vision for an Ards and North Down Regional Park. Ultimately, the Whitespots project is the foundation for this vision to become a reality.

It is important to note that the Options considered within this appraisal are not mutually exclusive. Rather, each option represents an incremental development from the option that precedes it. The key risks that differentiate the options are primarily:

- a) A failure to secure the necessary funding for the intervention; and
- b) A failure to achieve the necessary visitor numbers to justify the capital expenditure.

To mitigate both these risks it is recommended that the implementation of the new infrastructure is delivered in three phases as follows:

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Phase 1: Delivery of the infrastructure investment Proposed Under Option 3

Invest in the limited infrastructure proposed under Option 3 initially to encourage growth in existing visitor numbers whilst the Greenways project is under development. This will allow the Council to test the general appetite for visiting an upgraded Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate. Option 3 is an opportunity to open up the Site to ensure visitors are aware of the full opportunities available (including its mining and WW1 heritage). This initial investment would include:

- Upgrade paths and drainage
- Limited interpretative signage setting out trail maps and highlighting the heritage.
- A small Visitor Hub to provide toilets, information point, coffee-kiosk, and classroom facilities.
- Restoration of the existing mining features on the Site
- Enhancement of the Woodland around the Whitespots Country Park.

Phase 2: Delivery of additional investment under Option 4:

As these interventions are being implemented it is recommended the Council pursue other potential funding routes for further investment. Once funding has been secured, Council would deliver the remaining interventions under Option 4. Specifically:

- An iconic viewing towers.
- The creation of new Woodland Areas in Helen's Tower Wood.
- Initial investment in an elevated boardwalk to improve access to the key features of the Site.

There are a number of potential funding sources whose objectives the above interventions would assist in achieving¹⁹. These include:

- DAERA Rural Development Fund (Tourism developments)
- Heritage Lottery Fund (potentially in conjunction with the funding being sought for the upgrade to the Somme Museum)
- DAERA Forestry Grants/ Forest Expansion Scheme
- Levelling-Up Fund
- Peace-Plus Programme

The rationale for identifying these potential funders is set out in the Financial Case below.

Phase 3: Reassessment of additional Interventions

Upon the completion of the above interventions and the Greenway Network, a reassessment of the position in terms of regular visitor numbers should be undertaken. If this demonstrates the Objectives of the Project results in Phases 1 and 2 being deemed a success (i.e., the visitor numbers required to justify the investment costs are achieved), then a clearer opportunity for private investment in Adventure Tourism infrastructure will become apparent. This investment may include:

- Extension of the visitor hub to include a café and other features.
- Zip-wires
- High ropes course.

¹⁹ It is recognised that the economic impact of the Covid-19 may have an impact on the ability of these organisations to provide funding but this will be considered as part of the Commercial and Financing Cases below

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- Any other facilities that the Council would expect to represent value for money and achieve the objectives for the project (for example, the introduction of a campsite / glamping facility, canoeing / kayaking facilities on the lake etc.)

Only when the demand for the Site is realised following the investment in Phases 1 and 2 will the necessary visitor numbers required to create the appetite for private investment be secured.

This approach will mitigate the risk that the forecast demand for the Site has been overestimated prior to the necessary investment being delivered and allow the Council to facilitate the development of the Site in a manner that can consider new information as it becomes available (for example the links to the Clandeboye Way and Somme Museum trail when a preferred option for that project has been developed).

3.7.3 Scalability of the Preferred Option

It is important to highlight that, whilst the upfront capital expenditure anticipated for Phase 1 is £7.4m, there are a wide range of opportunities for value engineering an investment to ensure the funding allocated by the Complementary Fund achieves maximum value for money. The Project is, by its nature, an enhancement to infrastructure spread over a wide area rather than the development of a single facility. The estimated costs provided by AECOM are based on the full Masterplan agreed as the aspiration for the Site. This covers an area of approximately 400 acres including both Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate.

If it were necessary, the areas over which a number of interventions extend could be amended when further analysis has been undertaken to ensure that the key priority areas that will have the maximum impact on visitor experience (and hence numbers attracted to the Site) can be identified and funding focused on these key areas.

3.7.4 Value for Money Statement

Notwithstanding the above conclusions, a Value for Money Statement on the 4E's (**Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Equity**) has been added to the OBC to demonstrate the potential Value for Money of the highest ranked preferred option:

Economy

The preferred option 3 satisfies the Economy criterion of VFM i.e., minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs).

The cost estimates for the project were prepared by a QS team within a professional consultancy firm contracted by the Council and have been assessed and accepted by senior officials within the Council capital development team. The original cost estimate was £8.3m which has increased to £9.3m and an updated Business Case was submitted to DAERA. On Behalf of DAERA, CPD has reviewed the revised construction capital costs and deem these reasonable. It is the Departments view that the full estimated costs are required to deliver phase 1.

The Whitespots Country Park is currently owned and maintained by the Council, and it contains a number of features that make it an ideal asset to the Council's vision to promote and provide access for visitors to key environmental and cultural heritage assets throughout the Council area.

Falling numbers of visitors to the Borough in recent years demonstrates that these assets are not being utilised to their full potential in the development of economic growth for the Belfast Region.

There are a number of deficiencies in the Site which currently restrict its attractiveness, including poor quality trails and a lack of facilities. Investment is required in the Whitespots / Clandeboye site to improve the experience and ensure the site has

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appeal locally, within NI more widely and out-of-state. In October 2023, Council has signed Heads of Terms with its neighbour Clandeboye Estate allowing the Council to access their estate in order, as part of Phase 1 of the scheme, to update and develop new paths through their estate.

As the site already exists with the trails, mining and heritage features this project presents an opportunity to release the potential of the park: Most of the interventions proposed for Phase 1 of the Whitespots Project are upgrades to existing public infrastructure for example:

- Resurface and improve paths throughout Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate with drainage improvements to maintain quality and safety and enhance walking experience.
- There will be minimum work required to existing heritage features. Council will introduce features that describe the history of both sites as well as trail maps providing recommended loops with distances etc.
- Develop the woodland across both Whitespots and Clandeboye sites including creation of new Woodland Areas in Helen's Tower Wood and land adjoining Whitespots Country Park.
- Upgrade to main carpark on Bangor Road to highlight the attractiveness of the park - Including new feature lighting, amenity planting and furniture.

For the works described above, Council has minimised the cost of resources required while having due regard to quality

- A new facility will be constructed to include toilets, Information Point, coffee/refreshments, Classroom Facilities, and host interactive experiences showcasing the Whitespots/Clandeboye and its Mining and WW1 Heritage. Council will manage the hub but the commercial contract for the coffee kiosk within the visitor hub will be procured through an open tender.
- Council owns and maintains Whitespots Country Park and has good knowledge of the inputs required to make the minimum upgrades necessary. Council has the capacity and capability to undertake the ongoing operation and maintenance of the site once developed and has committed to the additional financial resources required. Council has begun a process to produce a detailed Marketing Plan for the Park.

Efficiency

The preferred option 3 satisfies the Efficiency criterion of VFM i.e., the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them. Council will be managing this project and has a strong track record of developing and managing large capital projects and with the assistance of external support for an Integrated Design Team (IDT) and with CPD providing its services to DAERA the project will be managed and monitored in line with Governance and VFM requirements. On behalf of DAERA CPD will ensure that NIPPP best practice is followed for the construction procurement exercises, including sustainable development considerations which will follow policy derived from the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Council will seek planning for the development of all 3 phases of Option 3 and will develop the design and plans under the ICT contract to be procured. This will save on costs and time. The plan to carry out the development of option 3 in a phased approach will minimise the cost of resources.

The visitor numbers estimated within the OBC for local 55,614, domestic 1,769, and out of state 879 appear reasonable and achievable. Following an upgrade to the walking paths, car park and provision of toilet facilities at Cairn Wood which is on the opposite side of the Clandeboye Estate, the numbers of visitors recorded for the period of April 2021 to March 2022 was 80,999 an increase on a baseline of an estimated 50,000. With the Whitespots phase I upgrade to walking paths, and proposed visitor hub as well links to the existing heritage features the projected estimated visitor number for Whitespots are reasonable and achievable.

The Project is expected to drive job creation both in the implementation of the various interventions as well as over the longer term in the operation and management of the site. The total number of jobs forecast in the construction /implementation of the project within the first two years is 14 with an estimated GVA of £1,201,192. With 5 FTE jobs created for the operation and maintenance of the upgraded facility. There are also to be job and training opportunities within the ICT contract under the Social Value requirements for local unemployed and the numbers to be achieved will be determined by those consultants tendering. The project will build the value of tourism to the local economy.

Effectiveness

The preferred option 3 satisfies the Effectiveness criterion of VFM i.e., the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes).

Investment in Whitespots Country Park area has the potential to contribute to improving the attractiveness of the Borough nationally and internationally, in turn contributing regeneration and economic development by achieving tourism and health & well-being outcomes initially through a growth in domestic visitors pursuing more active lifestyles through the range of activities that could be provided within Whitespots and the Clandeboye Estate.

The preferred option is an opportunity to open up the site to ensure visitors are aware of the full opportunities available including the Mining and World War I heritage. The Windmill Stump was used in a scene for the globally popular HBO television series Game of Thrones. Scenes from this series have proved as popular tourist destinations.

Tourism NI has identified the global popularity of Game of Thrones as a key asset in promoting Northern Ireland to a global audience. The opening in February 2022 of the world's first and only Game of Thrones Studio tour at Linen Mill Studios, Banbridge is evidence as to how NI is successfully tapping into this niche market. However, at present, there is no clear identification within Whitespots highlighting that is a location in the series.

The Whitespots Project provides an opportunity for children in deprived areas with access to an outdoor space through which benefits in health and well-being through exercise can be achieved as well as access to opportunities for education, volunteering, and future employment.

One of the benefits expected to be delivered through the Project to which a monetary economic value has been attributed is the Health and Wellbeing benefits to local active leisure users of the Site. A discounted estimated £7.5m of monetised health and wellbeing social benefits is generated over the life of the appraisal and has a significant impact on option 3 producing a Net Present Value as well as the benefits to cost ratio figure.

Equity

The preferred option 3 satisfies the Equity criterion of VFM i.e., the extent to which services are available to and reach all people that they are intended to:

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a statutory obligation on the Council to undertake their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in respect of several issues including gender, disability, age, etc.

The Whitespots Re-development Project will ensure the Site can be a shared space for use by all.

Within the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain Measure (NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017) three of the local wards fall within the top 25% of the most deprived wards in NI relating to health. Access to attractive walking and active leisure facilities at Whitespots could assist in addressing this issue. All 4 wards fall within the top 25% of the wards with the least access to education, skills, and training. There is a range of opportunities to develop opportunities for education and training within Whitespots and Clandeboye areas under Phase I of the Whitespots development.

Whilst it is recognised that enhancement of a local forest park and Education hub can only have a limited impact on deprivation measures, the overall vision of ANDBC is to create a park/facility that can be accessed from Newtownards (and specifically deprived areas) and link to the wider North Down Greenway Network.

A number of the proposed facilities under Options 3 represent different opportunities for skills development to be facilitated by the Council at Whitespots Country Park as well as Clandeboye Estate. The visitor centre proposed under each of these options will include classroom facilities to provide a centre to deliver education and a base for guided tours of the Site.

The Whitespots Redevelopment Project has been developed to ensure the site can be a shared space for use by all.

4. Commercial case

4.1 Overview

This Commercial Case considers the most viable procurement strategy for the preferred option (Option 3) and the deal structure between the Public Sector bodies and their external service providers. It describes how ANDBC envisage each of the different interventions proposed for Phase 1 of the wider programme will be procured and how the key risks relating to the implementation will be allocated between public and private sectors.

4.2 Procurement Strategy Options

The development and management of Forest Parks for the benefit of visitors and the public in Northern Ireland has typically been delivered through one of three main routes. These are described in the table below along with examples of the NI Forest Parks in NI to which each route is relevant:

Organisation Category	Overview	Local Examples
Outsourced to Private/Social Enterprise	A number of Forest Parks are run by Social Enterprises which manage the implementation and future management of the Forest Park in line with a lease / Service Level Agreement with the owner of the land.	The Colin Glen Trust (a social enterprise) manage the Colin Glen Forest Park in West Belfast under a management agreement with Belfast City Council. In recent years this has included implementation of a range of tourist attractions on the site.
Managed by Central Government Agencies	NI Forest Service and the NI Environment Agency ("NIEA"), both executive agencies of the DAERA, are the two main central government bodies responsible for the upgrade and management of a number of Forest Parks in NI at present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NI Forest Service own and manage Castlewellan, Tollymore, Glenariff and Drum Manor Forest Parks NIEA own and manage Crawfordsburn Country Park
Delivered inhouse by Local Authorities	Local Authorities own and manage a number of Forest Parks within their own boroughs – the development of which have been funded using Council Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> ANDBC - responsible for Cairn Wood Forest Park (through a partnership with NI Forest Services) as well as Whitespots currently

NI Forest Service have indicated they do not have the resource capacity to assume responsibility for another Forest Park visitor attraction at present. This is the reason they have partnered with ANDBC for the implementation of the Cairn Wood Forest Park upgrade. Furthermore, NIEA manage the Crawfordsburn Country Park as a legacy asset. Forest Park management is not seen as a core responsibility and so it would not envisage assuming responsibility for any further assets.

On this basis, the second route listed in the above table (managed by a Central Government Agency) is not viable. Therefore, the two shortlisted options regarding the procurement and management of the Whitespots development are either:

- 1) "In-House" Delivery – The implementation of the different interventions is managed by ANDBC's Capital Project Unit directly, with any external services that cannot be undertaken by in-house staff being procured through the Council's team within the Finance and Performance Directorate; or

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- 2) Outsource to External Contractor or Social Enterprise: Responsibility for delivering the upgrade services could be transferred to a third-party through a contract specification defined by the Council and procured through competitive tender.

The in-house approach effectively represents the “Status-Quo” and, given the Council’s involvement in upgrading Cairn Wood represents the approach that the Council has assumed will be utilised throughout the planning phase. However, it is important to validate this assumption through consideration of whether greater value for the ratepayer can be achieved by the Council stepping back from the risks associated with its current role as a developer and operator of these facilities to take on a ‘facilitation/enabling’ role.

Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of the outsourced solution are considered in detail below:

4.3 Appraisal of Outsourced Solution

Whilst there are a number of different forms of outsourcing, the general principle is that the Council is effectively procuring a Design, Build, and Operate (“DBO”) contract. The key features for the procurement of such a contract are as follows:

- ANDBC would publish a Development Brief setting out its requirements for the new facility (being the facilities listed within Option 3 of this OBC) and seeking proposals from prospective developers to undertake:
 - a) The detailed design of the new features.
 - b) The development of the (including the financing of this development); and
 - c) The operation and maintenance of the developed Site.
- A short-term development agreement for lease would be awarded to the Contractor whose design proposals best reflect the Council’s requirements for the Site. This agreement would include a licence to allow the developer to develop the new facilities in accordance with its proposed designs subject to milestone payments from the Council and the Complementary Fund (assumed to be through a grant arrangements).
- On satisfactory completion, the developer would be awarded a long-term operating agreement for the Site. The developer would operate and maintain the facility in accordance with the terms of the operating agreement taking full operational risk for the new facilities (with deductions to payments due from the Council if the required objectives are not achieved).
- At the end of the lease period the site would revert into the ownership of the Council.

The detailed terms of such a contract (including the payment mechanism and risk allocation) would need to be considered through the procurement process. The key benefits and drawbacks of this approach are set out below: Key benefits of Outsourced.

- Risk Transfer: Responsibility for generating demand for Whitespots could be transferred from ANDBC ratepayers to the Developer under this solution i.e., payment by results.
- Potential for Innovation: The development would be informed by a Council vision and development brief for the proposed redevelopment which sets out the desired outcomes that the Council wishes to achieve but which would leave scope for innovation and flexibility from the market in achieving the required outcomes. The Council could then assess market responses and their potential to meet the desired outcomes.

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- **Whole Life Benefits:** If the party developing the facility is also responsible for ongoing maintenance the quality of initial development may be higher than if the contractor had responsibility for only the initial warranty period. The developer would be cognisant of long-term maintenance and utility costs and would seek to reduce these through the upfront design.
- **Potential for no ratepayer funding required for Commercial Operations:** No upfront capital funding would be required by the Council for any commercial / revenue generating facilities. This would free up funds for other Council projects.

Key Drawbacks of Outsourcing Solution

- **Potential Lack of Appetite from Private Sector:** Given there are limited facilities that will generate direct income from customers proposed within the initial Phase (the coffee kiosk being the only commercial facility). There is a high risk that there will be limited appetite from the private/ voluntary sectors for this opportunity. Colin Glen Trust is a social enterprise that was specifically established by parties interested in that Site. There is no such enterprise applicable to Whitespots.
- **Loss of control of Benefits:** Whilst the operating parameters for the Site can be included in the development agreement for lease to be developed by the Contractor, the successful operation of these assets may not be a priority for a private party. This loss of control may mean the maximum social benefits cannot be realised by the Council.
- **Risk of Contractor Failure:** Ultimately, if the Contractor is unprofitable after a period of time it may seek to close the facility / renegotiate the contract rather than incur further losses. Whilst ANDBC could ensure (through the contract) that it would take immediate control of the facility in this instance, the Site may not be in a condition that can deliver on the project objectives by that stage. This will mean additional costs being incurred by the Council and a risk that the Site may be closed for a long period of time which reduces the socio-economic benefits.
- **Potential displacement from other Public Facilities:** Transferring the commercial control of the Whitespots Site to a third party introduces the facility as a potential competitor to the Council's other forest parks such as Cairn Wood.
- **Loss of value delivered from design process to date:** The Council have undertaken a detailed design process to date. The value derived from the expenditure on this process may be lost to the Council if responsibility for the design is transferred to the private sector.

Conclusion

The above analysis demonstrates that, if the preferred option included predominately revenue generating interventions from which a financial return could be generated, there would be a case for considering an outsourcing solution. However, the Phase 1 interventions (included in Option 3) are primarily focused on upgrading infrastructure to ensure the Site is as attractive to visitors seeking to walk and experience the biodiversity of the Site. Given, the revenue generating intervention in Phase 1 is limited to the Visitor Hub and coffee kiosk, the disadvantages associated with the outsourced solution outweigh the expected advantages. Therefore, this approach is unlikely to deliver value for money to the Council for Phase 1.

As such, in-house delivery with the implementation of each intervention being managed by Council officers within a programme of work has been deemed the preferred procurement approach at this stage. It is envisaged the approach will closely follow the current programme of work being undertaken for the upgrade of the nearby Cairn Wood.

Whilst an in-house approach is proposed for the implementation of Phase 1, this will be reviewed for the implementation of future facilities - both within the Whitespots Project Masterplan as well as when partnership projects such as the Somme Museum and Greenways progress and come to fruition.

4.4 External Support Required by Council

The first step in developing the procurement arrangements is to determine what services can be delivered through existing in-house resources, what services are required for implementation of the preferred option and what is realistically achievable from potential suppliers in the delivery of these services. Once this is understood, the risk allocation between public and private sectors that represents the greatest value for money can be considered.

The key services that will be required for the interventions included Phase 1 of the investment programme are set out below and allocated into the services that are regularly undertaken by Council in-house teams and those for which external support will be required:

Option 3 Intervention	Services Required from External Supplier	Services that can be delivered by Council
Enhance landscape and creation of new woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design / Determination of appropriate species and location Decontamination of woodland between Visitor Hub and carpark Tree felling, clearance 	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of new landscape / woodland (management of invasive species etc.)
Upgrade Paths in Clandeboye Estate and Whitespots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed design of new paths (drainage infrastructure, edging, fences etc.) Tree/Scrub Clearance and Supplementary Low-Level Planting) Resurfacing paths with Crushed Stone Suitable for use. Creation of new paths 	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of new paths and boundary fences- Litter picking, weeding etc.
Trial bike access separation and drop-off area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed design and development of new Trial Bike Drop Off Area Development of new Concrete Path to Allow Access for Trial Bikes From Unloading Area To Trials Site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of new areas Regulation of the segregation area (Monitoring for illegal use of scramblers etc.).
Upgrade to main car-park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed design for upgrade Procurement and implementation of new surfacing, feature lighting, amenity planting and street furniture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities Management – (open / closing) Maintenance of carpark and surrounding areas
Development of New Visitor Centre/ Educational Hub & Trails Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed design for new hub <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of new hub to include information point / cafe / classroom facilities and interactive experience showcasing Whitespots /Clandeboye and its mining and World War 1 heritage Operation of the café Development of the trails' hub (shelter incorporated with interpretative signage) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation of the education facilities in the Visitor Hub Facilities Management of the Visitor Hub (cleaning, security, maintenance)
Upgrade to historic features (mines, windmill stump etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearing structures of vegetation and debris. Existing brickwork cleaned back and re-pointed. Design and implementation of interpretative panels feature lighting to be included. Ongoing maintenance to ensure safety. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Light maintenance of the features (weed spraying etc.)
Option 3 Intervention	Services Required from External Supplier	Services that can be delivered by Council

Adventure Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and development of the play park – including ground works and acquisition and implementation of the features of the play park (slides, climbing frames etc). • Repair and major upgrades to facilities 	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing maintenance and facilities management (security, cleaning etc) of playpark
Implement Interpretive Signage	<input type="checkbox"/> Design and implementation of signage throughout the Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of signage

In summary, the Council has the capacity and capability to undertake the majority of the ongoing operation and maintenance of the Site once developed. However, external support will need to be procured for the development and implementation of each of these interventions. Therefore, a series of short term works contracts will need to be procured by the Council to implement the preferred option.

4.5 Contractual Structure

Design and Project Specification

Following approval of funding and the agreement on the profile of funding draw-down from the Complementary Fund, the Council will implement its policy and follow the structures set out in its Project Management Handbook, this defines the stages and procedures to be followed during the life of any of its capital infrastructure projects and is broadly structured on Prince 2 and OCG defining principles. The initial tasks can be broadly summarised as follows:

- 1) Procure using a competitive Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team (“ICT”) using an NEC professional service contract to undertake the following activities:
- 2) Develop the Broad Masterplan that has been prepared for the purposes of the OBC into a detailed technical design and specification.
- 3) Advise and prepare all documentation to achieve planning permission for the development (discussed further below)
- 4) Advise and participate with the Council to establish the most appropriate procurement route and contractual structure through which the development works (discussed further below); and
- 5) Assist Council Procurement Department and Capital Project Unit in the preparation of Invitation to Tender (ITT) procurement documentation to appoint an Integrated Supply Team (IST) contractor.

Once complete, the procurement process for the works contract can commence.

Works Contracts – Procurement Structure

Two key factors that influence the approach to procuring the works required to be delivered as part of the preferred option are::

- **Planning Considerations:** The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 is the legislation that dictates the processes required to secure planning permission for the Project. The Schedule to these Regulations sets out the criteria under which a Project will be considered a “Major Development”. Condition 6 of this Schedule (developments relating to “retailing, community, recreation and culture” for which “the area of the Site is or exceeds 1 hectare outside the town centre”) is one such criterion.

The total area of the proposed upgrade within Whitespots is well in excess of 1 hectare and so it is anticipated that the requirements for a Major Development within this legislation will need to be satisfied before planning permission can be granted. This includes undertaking a Pre-Application Community Consultation which requires the Council to:

- 1) Hold at least one public event in the locality of Whitespots at which members of the public may make comments regarding the proposed development and
- 2) Publish in a local newspaper circulating a notice containing a full description of the local development.

In addition, it is expected that a number of ecological surveys will need to be taken as part of the planning process. These are in the process of being undertaken for the Cairn Wood Project so the Capital Project Unit in the Council has recent experience of these requirements and will factor the requirements into the programme timescales.

- **Market Appetite:** The Council has procured similar external groundwork services to those required on the Whitespots Site in recent years (including the Cairn Wood upgrade). This experience has confirmed that there is a wide range of local businesses that have the capability to undertake these works and so the Council is confident that a strong competition will be available for the works contracts.

It is envisaged that all works will be procured through a single contract with a lead contractor supported by specialist sub-contractors where necessary. The four key elements of the contract for Phase 1 are as follows:

Works Element	Overview of Rationale
Element 1: Car-Park Upgrade	The upgrade to the carparks on its own may not be considered a Major Development. Therefore, it can commence without a detailed stakeholder consultation. This means an early completion to the key “shop-window” of the development can be considered to have been achieved to potentially allow the active marketing of the site to commence.
Element 2: Restoration of Mining Heritage Assets	The upgrade to the Windmill Stump, chimneys and mines is likely to require a specialist service provider acting as a sub-contractor to the main counterparty to the contract.
Element 3: Paths Upgrade and Signage implementation	A full public consultation will be required to achieve planning permission but is also considered desirable by the Council to canvas public opinion for the most appropriate location and type of paths and signage for the implementation of these works. Therefore, it is envisaged this element will take the longest to complete and form the critical path of the programme.
Element 4: Visitor Hub Development	Specific construction works will be required for the development of the Visitor Hub. This will need to be delivered once the ecological surveys and stakeholder consultation has been completed. The contract will also need include services to monitor the scale of contamination on the proposed Site prior to implementation.

Operator Contract – Visitor Hub

As the Council will be undertaking the maintenance of the new Phase 1 infrastructure, the only external contracts required to operate the Phase 1 facilities relates to any commercial elements to be included in the Visitor Hub. It is envisaged that the operation of the Visitor Hub will reflect the approach taken for the Education Centre at Crawfordsburn Country Park as described below:

Case Study: Crawfordsburn Country Park Education Centre (based on consultation with NIEA)

The Education Centre is owned and managed by the NIEA with the exception of the Woodlands Cafe which is leased out to a private operator under an operating agreement in return for a concession fee.

NIEA then hire out the remaining facilities to different users in line with a non-regulatory charging policy. This means that different charges can apply depending on the status of the user. Schools, charities, community groups and Government Departments can use the facilities free of charge. These organisations typically use the facility for environmental training courses, education furtherance etc. NIEA also tend not to charge for organisations partner organisations such as the Ulster Wildlife Trust, but this is monitored to avoid such organisations using the facility to generate funds.

The Crawfordsburn facility is regularly used for commercial filming and, again, NIEA have discretion as to the charges. A student project would be a zero charge, BBC for 1 hour on site would be £100 to £150 whereas a larger enterprise would be thousands (for example a Game of Thrones type activity).

It is envisaged the contract for the coffee kiosk within the Visitor Hub will be procured through an open tender competition through which a small rental premium will be secured from the successful bidder. The form of contract and process for procurement will be similar in nature to the Walled Garden Café in Bangor (adjacent to the Aurora Leisure Centre). This is currently leased to a private operator but the walled garden itself is owned and managed by the Council.

It should be noted that a detailed procurement strategy for securing private investment and operating contracts for the future tourism-based interventions proposed for Phases 2 and 3 will be developed as part of the OBC to be developed at that stage.

Social Clauses

A Social Clause is a requirement within a procurement contract or process which stipulates that the contract should provide added social value. For instance, a contract which will lead to new employment could ensure that the long term unemployed from the local community are employed. The NI Executive has committed to using government procurement to further its social objectives in the PfG.

ANDBC shares these objectives and the Procurement Service Unit intend to liaise with the ICT, once appointed, to develop social clauses further for input into any tendering opportunity depending on the nature / split of the procurement exercises.

4.6 Form of Works Contracts and Risk Allocation

Whilst advice on the specific form of contract for use in the implementation will be sought from the external Integrated Consultancy Team and the Council's own Capital Project Unit, it is envisaged the Works Contracts will be based on the NEC4²⁰ form of contract. This is the current policy of ANDBC and has been used to implement a number of development projects.

²⁰ Whilst NEC3 has been used for the Cairn Wood Project, NEC4 is now out and adopted by CPD so the Council will most likely seek to utilise this form of contract. This is similar to NEC3 but incorporates lessons learnt.

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- The key benefits of using the NEC form of contract are:
- Maximises competition: Contractors are familiar with an understand the NEC contract form and so will have a greater appetite to bid than if a bespoke contract was procured.
- Achieves desired risk allocation (discussed below)
- Minimises procurement timescales: Contractors comfortable with the process so a highly efficient procurement process can be achieved.

HM Treasury guidance confirms that Value for Money is typically achieved by ensuring risks sit with the parties best able to manage it. It is envisaged the contractual structure for Phase 1 of the programme will seek to achieve the following risk allocation matrix through the legal agreements:

Risk Category	Risk Allocation		
	Public	Private	Shared
1. Design risk			✓
2. Construction and development risk			✓
3. Transition and implementation risk	✓		
4. Availability and performance risk	✓		
5. Operating risk	✓		
6. Variability of revenue risks ²¹		✓	
7. Technology and obsolescence risks	✓		
8. Control risks	✓		
9. Residual value risks	✓		
10. Financing risks	✓		
11. Legislative risks	✓		

4.7 Site Agreements

To achieve the Project’s objectives regarding visitor numbers, the public must have unrestricted access to the paths and key facilities proposed for the Site. The Council will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate legal agreements are developed with the relevant landowners to ensure this public access can be provided.

The Council owns the freehold title for the Whitespots Country Park on which most of the interventions will be developed. However, to develop the full Masterplan, it is necessary to provide access to two areas of land adjacent to Whitespots which are not currently owned by the Council:

Clandeboyne Estate

As highlighted above, the executors of the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava’s estate control the freehold title to the Clandeboyne Estate at present. The public is permitted access to the Estate only to the extent of the Clandeboyne Way. This access is permitted through a Public Path Creation Agreement between the Clandeboyne Estate Company Limited and ANDBC dated March 1993. This agreement was entered into under the provisions of the Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. The terms of the agreement allowed the Council to develop and maintain the paths throughout the estate for full and free public use of these paths (for pedestrian use only).

²¹ Revenue risks at Phase 1 relate only to the small commercial operations proposed for the Visitor Hub (e.g. the coffee kiosk)

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However, this agreement does not provide permission to create the new paths that are proposed for the Clandeboye Estate within the Masterplan, nor does it cover the planting of new woodland or the development of infrastructure such as the cycle dismount point proposed at Helens Tower. Therefore, an update to the legal agreement between the Council and the executors of the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava's Estate will be required prior to the implementation of these facilities and the Council has approached the Clandeboye Estate representatives to initiate these discussions, the Clandeboye Estate continue to be a member of the Project's Leadership Group to ensure continuity of the project development with this key stakeholder. The legal agreement will be finalised on the approval of funding availability from the Complementary Fund.

Land adjoining Whitespots

As highlighted in the Economic Case, access through an area of land to adjoining Whitespots Country Park will need to be acquired to fully develop the Masterplan. This land is split over several plots.

A smaller number of plots is aligned to the interventions required for Phase 1. These interventions relate predominantly to the provision of a separate drop-off zone and access for use by the motorcycle Trial Bikes at their allotted times. However, further interventions are proposed for development on the including:

- A new bike pump/dirt track
- Access to a new high ropes course from the main Whitespots Country Park site
- New fencing and hedging.

The Council has engaged LPS to provide an indicative value for these plots (this cost is included in the monetary appraisal within the Economic Case) and the detailed report from LPS is provided in Appendix M. The estimated expenditure required to acquire these plots is derived from this valuation.

Phase 1 (Option 3) only requires 'ribbons' of land to create public access pathways to enable secondary points of ingress to the Whitespots development. Whilst there are several options available to Council to obtain these strips of land, it is hoped it will be achieved through amicable negotiations with the landowners by LPS acting as 'honest broker', always bearing in mind Council's obligation not to spend public funds unnecessarily and to ensure project delivery for the good of the community.

Council agreed at its October 2023 monthly meeting to acquire the land immediately to the South of Council land at Whitespots for the purpose of de-risking any sale by the third-party owner for Whitespots Country Park Phase 1 Scheme. On 3rd November 2023, Council Democratic Services advised that the decision log, in respect of the Council Meeting, was issued following the meeting. The five working day time period has now elapsed and no call-in has been received.

In addition, in October 2023, Council has signed Heads of Terms with Clandeboye Estate allowing them to update and develop new paths through their estate.

Future phases, particular Phase 3 may require significantly more land acquisition and will only be undertaken and discussed with the relevant landowner(s) following positive appraisal of Phase 1 and approval of any future Business Case and planning applications. For all phases of the development, formal negotiations with landowners will not take place until planning is approved for each phase and the relevant financing is in place.

4.8 State Aid

As public authorities within the EU, the NI Executive and the Council have an obligation to adhere to the current EU legislation on State Aid. This legislation exists to avoid public authorities granting an advantage through state resources to organisations that could potentially distort competition. State Aid is present when a public authority makes a transfer of State resources to an organisation engaged in an “economic activity”.

The Department of Finance use ONS guidelines to determine whether an economic activity exists. The ONS website states: “ESA10 therefore institutes a pragmatic rule whereby a unit is judged to be a market producer if, over a sustained period (3 years or more), greater than 50% of its costs of production are recouped through sales revenues – referred to as “the 50% market test”.

Most of the interventions proposed for Phase 1 of the Whitespots Projects are upgrades to existing public infrastructure. The only intervention that is expected to generate sales revenue is the Visitor Centre coffee kiosk. This is significantly below the de-minimis levels under which the State Aid is exempt from the Commission notification requirement.

Therefore, there is not expected to be any requirement to notify the EU of State Aid within Phase 1 of the Project. This may need to be reconsidered for future phases if greater economic activity is implemented.

5. Financial case

5.1 Overview

The Financial Case considers the affordability of the preferred solution and highlights the necessary funding required from sponsoring organisations. It sets out forecast implications on the budgets for each public organisation from which funding is required, profiled over the life of the scheme. This includes both capital budgets and resource budgets.

5.2 Cashflow Forecast

A detailed forecast of the total expenditure required to implement and manage Phase 1 of the proposals over a 25year period is provided in Appendix J. The assumptions underpinning these forecasts are described in detail within the Monetary Appraisal in the Economic Case (Section 3.4) above. The only differences in the financial expenditure forecasts to the Net Present Cost calculations used for Option 3 are:

- 1) The financial forecasts include the cashflows only – indirect economic costs and benefits such as GVA and opportunity/residual costs are not included in the financial forecasts.
- 2) The impact of forecast inflation has been included within the development costs. The costs described within the Economic Case above are stated in 2022 prices. The impact of future inflation has been calculated at 10.80% which assumes a Q3 2026 mid-point of construction. This has been included as an additional contingency based on the BCIS Tender price forecast (this has been reviewed and agreed by CPD).
- 3) Inflation has been included for the resource costs at a rate of 2% per annum (this reflects the current UK Government target for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index) from a base date of 1 April 2020.

An updated summary table of the forecasts for the next 10 years broken down into capital and resource costs is provided below:

Total Cashflow Forecasts

Period end date	Mar-23	Mar-24	Mar-25	Mar-26	Mar-27	Mar-28	Mar-29	Mar-30	Mar-31	Mar-32	Mar-33	TOTAL
Appraisal Year number	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10-Yr
Capital Expenditure (£'k)												
Feasibility / Design Develop. & Statutory charges	19	153	187	371	59	25	-	-	-	-	-	816
Site Works/ Design & Construction	-	-	35	926	4,030	1,635	-	-	-	-	-	6,626
Acquisition of Land	-	-	-	286	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	286
Project Management Costs	-	-	-	100	100	100	-	-	-	-	-	300
Environmental Assessment	-	40	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	140
Optimism bias	-	-	-	246	635	272	-	-	-	-	-	1,152
Total Capital Expenditure	19	193	323	1,929	4,824	2,032	-	-	-	-	-	9,321
Resource Expenditure (£'k)												
Park Operations		9	9	9	9	10	85	87	89	91	93	491
Outdoor recreation (inc biodiversity staff)		-	-	-	-	-	43	44	45	45	46	223
Properties (maintenance of facilities)		4	5	5	5	5	43	44	44	45	46	245
Regulatory (enforcement officers)		-	-	-	-	-	43	44	45	45	46	223
Total Resource Expenditure		13	14	14	14	14	214	218	222	227	231	1,181

This shows that the total capital expenditure required to deliver Phase 1 of the project is expected to be a total of £9.3m. This expenditure is anticipated to be incurred over a period of five years up to and including the financial year 2026/27. The resource expenditure is expected to remain at the current level until the year 25/26 when the new operational services will commence with an increase in expenditure of £187k in the first year.

5.3 Capital Funding Sources

Phase One

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As discussed in the Commercial Case above, Phase 1 of the programme consists primarily of infrastructure works necessary to ensure the Whitespots Site can achieve the minimum standard expected of an attractive walking / leisure destination. As no direct revenue will be generated from the Phase 1 interventions (except for the small coffee kiosk), it is not anticipated that material private investment will be available to contribute to the capital expenditure at this early stage. Whilst there is expected to be funding available from alternative sources for Phase 2 (discussed below) there are no interventions within Phase 1 that are likely to attract external funding.

Therefore, it is expected that the full capital expenditure in the first Phase will be funded entirely by DAERA and ANDBC. However, it is important to note that this expenditure is necessary to enable other sources of funding to be sought in Phases 2 and 3.

It is anticipated that the funding for Phase 1 will be provided from the following three sources:

- 1) ANDBC Capital Contribution:** In addition to covering the increased operational expenditure resulting from the redevelopment of the Site, the Council has committed to contributing **£820k** of capital funding towards the project: It is envisaged that this funding will be utilised to cover the following costs:
 - a) the expenditure required to acquire the additional land to the South of the Whitespots Site deemed necessary for the additional access route.
 - b) The Environmental Assessments and associated surveys necessary to progress planning approval for the proposed developments; and
 - c) the project management costs required to procure and implement the services highlighted in the commercial case above.
- 2) DAERA/ Complementary Fund Budget:** The letter from the Department of Finance to the Council Chief Executives dated 10 December 2021 states indicative funding of **£7.4m** has been allocated to the project (subject to the expenditure approval process). It has been assumed that this funding is fully utilised to fund the development costs necessary for Phase 1.
- 3) Environment Fund:** The total funding that is secured from ANDBC and the Complementary Fund is **£8.2m**. This leaves a requirement of **£1.1m** for the estimated **£9.3m** capital expenditure to fund the project. ANDBC has applied to the DAERA Environment Fund for this contribution. The Environment Fund is administered by DAERA to support projects which will help deliver key environmental outcomes across Northern Ireland. The Fund contributes to 4 Environmental Impact Priority areas – one of which is “Outdoor Recreation actions”. Therefore, the Whitespots project is considered to be eligible for this funding. ANDBC was notified in September 2023 that their bid was successful.

The funding profile from each of the above sources is shown in the table below:

Funding Sources (£) Profile as agreed on 5/10/23	Actual 2023	Forecast 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27	Forecast 2027-28	Total
	RIBA 0	RIBA 1-2	RIBA 3-4	RIBA 4-5	RIBA 5	RIBA 5	
Total Capital Expenditure	£19,442	£193,279	£322,812	£1,929,207	£4,824,090	£2,032,096	£9,320,926
Council Contribution	£19,442	£153,279	£187,440	£374,881	£59,470	£25,488	£820,000
Complementary Fund Contribution	£0	£40,000	£135,372	£1,360,000	£4,130,000	£1,734,628	£7,400,000
Environment Fund Contribution	£0	£0	£0	£194,326	£634,620	£271,980	£1,100,926
Total Sources of Funding for Phase 1	£19,442	£193,279	£322,812	£1,929,207	£4,824,090	£2,032,096	£9,320,926

Future Phases

Once Phase 1 has been initiated and the benefits regarding visitor numbers and employment opportunities can be demonstrated and evidenced, a strong case can be made for additional grant funding to build on these benefits for Phase 2 with increased economic benefits. An overview of the potential sources to whom applications will be made for funding at Phase 2 are set out below:

Potential Funder	“Fundable” Phase 2 Interventions	Rationale
DAERA Rural Development Fund (RDF)	Viewing Tower, Raised Boardwalk	The primary aim of the RDF is to seek to improve the rural tourism infrastructure through investing in natural and built heritage that can act as a key driver for encouraging visitors to Northern Ireland (in particular out-of-state visitors) whilst preserving the built and natural assets of the rural community.
Potential Funder	“Fundable” Phase 2 Interventions	Rationale
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)	Further enhancement of mining and WW2 assets	NLHF seeks to fund projects that connect people and communities to their national, regional, and local heritage. The mining infrastructure and the links to WW1 make the Whitespots / Clondeboye Estate an ideal target for grant funding. The Somme Museum is currently developing an OBC to seek funding for an upgrade to the existing museum which, if approved, could be undertaken in conjunction with the Phase 2 developments.
DAERA Forestry Grants/ Forest Expansion Scheme	New Woodland Planting	DAERA introduced the Forest Expansion Scheme (FES) to facilitate tree planting and public access on previously unplanted land for applications of 3 hectares (approx. 7.4 acres) and larger. Eligible costs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management (Implementation and Monitoring) • Site preparation • Fencing & Gates • Plant supply • Tree guard supply • Planting cost • Vegetation management Successful applicants may receive up to 100% of eligible costs

As highlighted in the conclusion of the Economic Case above, if the Whitespots Site can establish itself as a compelling attraction as part of the wider Ards and North Down Regional Park, the appetite from private investors in the Site will increase.

It is envisaged that the Site could become attractive to developers of adventure tourism facilities as well as providers of hospitality (cafes, glamping pods etc.). At this stage it will be important to reconsider the potential to outsource areas of the Site to private investors to increase the economic benefits generated and transfer operating risk from the Council.

5.4 Operational Funding

The Council recognise that it will need to ensure that the ongoing cost of operating and maintaining the Site will be managed within the future resources of the Council (expected to start at £201k per annum in 2024/25).

5.5 DAERA Budgetary Impact

It is understood both the Complementary Fund and Environment Fund contributions towards the Whitespots Project will be provided through DAERA and so will score against DAERA’s Delegated Expenditure Limit (“DEL”) budgets.

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It assumed the funding provided to the council will be recognised as a Capital Grant to a Local Authority as defined within the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance and so will score against Capita-DEL in accordance with the 2019-20 guidance.

The forecast C-DEL impact arising from the project is shown below.

Annual Capital DEL Charge (£)	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Total
	2023	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	RIBA 0	RIBA 1-2	RIBA 3-4	RIBA 4-5	RIBA 5	RIBA 5	
DoF/DAERA Capital DEL	£0	£40,000	£135,372	£1,554,326	£4,764,620	£2,006,608	£8,500,926

No contribution towards the resource costs is necessary from Central Government under the forecasts above, therefore, there is no R-DEL impact envisaged from the Project²². However, it is noted that DAERA has engaged Construction Procurement Delivery (CPD) within DoF to provide its services at an estimated cost of £195,000. The CPD costs are not included within the overall project costs.

²² It is assumed no depreciation should be charged to the R-DEL resulting from the Capital Grant from DfE/DfC finance required as the Grant will not be capitalised.

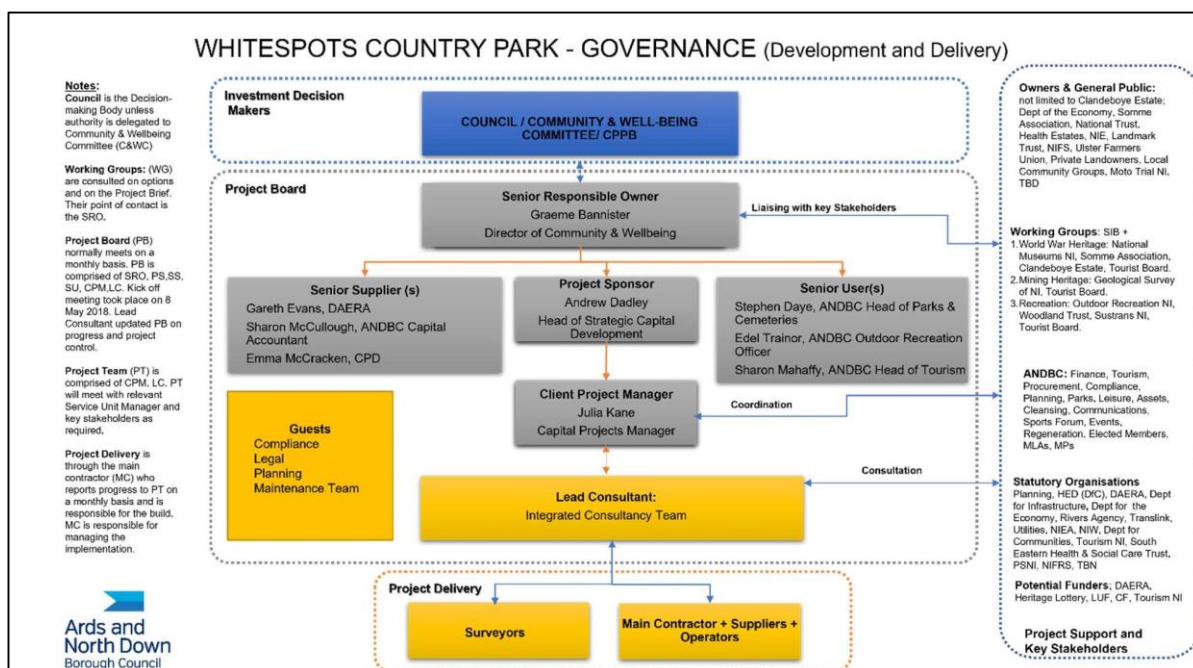
6. Management Case

6.1 Overview

This Management Case outlines the proposed arrangements for the delivery of the Whitespots Project. It sets out the parties responsible for procurement and implementation process as well as the ongoing operation of the Project. It also sets out the proposed risk and performance management arrangements and the internal teams responsible for ensuring the objectives are achieved.

6.2 Phase 1 - Project Management Arrangements

As confirmed within the Commercial Case above, the procurement and implementation of the interventions envisaged for Phase 1 will be managed in-house within ANDBC. An overview of management structure is below:



The Capital Project Unit will take responsibility for the Project Management with support from an external Integrated Consultancy Team. This external team will assist in a range of activities including:

- Undertaking detailed surveys and analysis of ground conditions / contamination of site
- Developing the current masterplan into detailed designs (location of interventions, specifications etc.) from which works contracts can be priced)
- Development of the procurement
- Assistance with the implementation of the contract

The two Council Directorates that will have primary responsibility for the project as “clients” during the implementation will be:

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- 1) Regeneration Development and Planning: Responsible for appropriate marketing²³ to potential visitors to the Borough to ensure maximum domestic and out-of-state demand as well as ensuring employment opportunities are maximised; and
- 2) Communities and Wellbeing Directorate: Responsible for operation and maintenance of the facilities and ensuring maximum use by residents as well as ensuring opportunities for education development are maximised.

6.3 Programme Timescales

A detailed Gantt Chart setting out the current programme for implementation as envisaged by the Council is provided at Appendix P. A summary of the timescales proposed for each of the key stages is set out in the table below:

Step	Overview	Timescale
OBC Review and Approval Process	ANDBC and DAERA review of OBC and determination of funding profile to be allocated to the Project.	May 2022- October 2023
Procure an Integrated Consultancy Team	Process managed by Capital Projects Unit and in-house Procurement Team	Present – September 2023
Detailed Design Process	Development of detailed proposals for the site with support from ICT – RIBA Stages 0-3	Dec 2023 – March 2025
Planning Approval process	Planning permission expected to require full public consultation as well as ecology surveys. a 2-year timeframe was set against this task given the uncertainty of the required surveys or if an Environmental Statement is required. It is envisaged that smaller contracts such as carpark upgrade and the upgrade the heritage assets could be taken forward in parallel with this process.	March 2024 – September 2025
Land Acquisition	Purchase of the land to the South of Whitespots deemed necessary for the access to the new park. The Land Acquisition process i.e. engagement with landowners will commence during planning Stage and will be completed after Planning consent is achieved.	September 2025- March 2026
Procure Main Works Contracts	Following the receipt of planning approval, the construction contracts for the Phase 1 implementation will be procured using NEC4 contracts.	September 2025- September 2026
Implementation of Phase 1 interventions	Works and implementation delivered by contractors - managed by the Councils Capital Projects Unit	September 2026- January 2028- date to be confirmed at planning stage.
Implementation of Phase 2	Viewing tower, boardwalk additional tree planting Integration into the Greenways to create a Regional Park	Financial years 2029/30 – 2030/31
Implementation of Phase 3	Implementation of Adventure Tourism infrastructure	Financial Years 2031/32 – 2032/33

²³ It is envisaged marketing will aligned to the existing Destination Marketing delivered as part of the local offering in relevant campaigns.

Note the implementation of Phases 2 and 3 will commence once the detailed plans for Phase 1 have been developed and planning approval has been granted. The interventions to be developed at these stages will be subject to individual business cases and will be completed only when the necessary external funding has been sought and approved.

6.4 Operating Considerations

6.4.1 Marketing Approach

Marketing of the Site is key to ensure visitor numbers achieve the objectives for the Project. A marketing and communications strategy is being developed by the Tourism and Corporate Communications marketing teams within the Chief Executive Directorate of the Council. This will include a varied programme of marketing and promotion activities that will target both domestic and out-of-state visitors.

It is anticipated that the marketing approach will be delivered as part of a wider plan for the entire area and so will include the Greenways and Cairn Wood projects as well as other major third party-operated attractions in the region including the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and Scrabo and Crawfordsburn Country Parks, and the new development at the Ark Farm. It is also envisaged reciprocal promotional and packaging arrangements will be agreed with local attractions, for example Ark Farm, Blackwood Golf Centre, Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, and other local accommodation providers. This will ensure the facility achieves the widest coverage possible and ensures maximum economic benefit for the region.

The Communication & Marketing Plan structure is being prepared by Council based on the Communication Plans for both Queen's Parade and Ballycopeland Windmill which Council developed in house and which were well received by DfC and DAERA respectively.

The draft will still need to include a section on the branding of the site which will not be completed until after we appoint the ICT/Artist who will specify the branding. which is why it is not yet ready to be shared externally.

The Marketing Strategy will involve utilisation of a range of channels including:

- Social Media
- Newsletters and Ezines
- Personal Selling
- Link Selling (i.e., marketing to tourists using other attractions in the area)
- Meet the Buyer events.
- Media FAM trips
- Online via the "visitardsandnorthdown" and DiscoverNI platforms primarily

Council has no dedicated Communication & Marketing resource for any capital project bar the Bangor Waterfront. The Communication & Marketing for Whitespots is based on the use of existing channels and resources only - with the exception of whatever additional support around brand development is included in the brief we have issued and the expectation that a third-party operator, when appointed, will be responsible for their own marketing (as per the Pickie/Exploris model).

6.4.2 Visitor Hub

It is envisaged that the Visitor Hub will be managed using a similar model to the one utilised by NIEA for the

Education Centre in Crawfordsburn Country Park. Therefore, it will be run internally by the Communities and Wellbeing Directorate with the Coffee Kiosk leased out to a private operator under an operating agreement in return for a concession fee (to be procured through an open competition).

The classrooms will be hired out to different users on a non-regulated basis (to be managed by the Council’s BioDiversity Officer). It is proposed that the Council has discretion over the charges depending on the status of the user – with schools, charities, community groups using the facility for environmental training courses, education furtherance etc. being free of charge to maximise use.

A fixed charge per day will apply to other users seeking to utilise the facility on the basis that the proposed use aligns with the objectives for the project and the policies of the Council.

6.4.3 Maintenance and Regulation

The Community and Wellbeing Directorate will have overall responsibility for the running and will have Environment Directorate’s support for the maintenance of the Site. The table below sets out the key activities and the teams within the Council that will have responsibility for delivery of these activities.

Council Team	Key Maintenance / Operation Activities
Parks and Cemeteries	Day-to-day management of Site including grass cutting, weeding, litter picking, bin emptying, glass tidying, management of invasive species etc.
Regulation	Wardening / monitoring of site and enforcement of appropriate use regulations
Outdoor Recreation	Promotion of the use of the outdoor space to residents (particularly in deprived areas)
Property Operations	Maintenance of Visitor Hub and heritage assets (cleaning of external façade etc.), infrastructure upgrades pothole repair, repairs of fences / railings etc.
Biodiversity Officer	Promotion of the site and the Visitor Hub for education use by local schools, community groups etc.

6.5 Risk Management

A detailed Risk Register has been prepared for the project and has been regularly updated as this OBC has developed. This sets out the key risks to the successful implementation of the project as well as the proposed mitigation factors and a “RAG” rating for each risk depending on its probability and impact to the Project.

A copy of the full risk register is provided at Appendix E. Below is an overview of the key risks currently rated as Red (i.e., highest risk) and the mitigating factors proposed for these risks.

ID	Summary of Risk	Consequence of Risk	Existing controls	Proposed Action
PR06	The development land at Whitespots is contaminated from previous uses	H&S issues, additional professional cost and programme implications, (Excluding capital costs)	Preliminary Risk Assessment was carried out to ensure thorough H&S planning / appointment of suitable resource. Apply CDM regs.	Enabling works and early Site Investigation following approval of OBC
LEG01	Adjacent landowners restricting the development proposals.	Delay to programme, increased costs & Unforeseen Land acquisition costs	Early engagement with key landowners to progress with LPS advice as soon as funding is available. Some key bodies included in working groups. Will be engaged at regular intervals throughout the programme.	Additional consultation meetings required to any landowners not present within the key working group discussions. SRO to make sure LPS are instructed to negotiate possible sale arrangements following approval of OBC.
LEG02	Failure to agree development proposals with Clandeboye Estate	A Public Path Creation Agreement is in place with Clandeboye Estate however, an enhanced legal agreement with the Estate is required to secure required access for proposed Masterplan and options.	Clandeboye Estate representative sits on the Leadership Group and has been consulted on proposals throughout the development of the Masterplan and OBC.	Proposed legal agreement to be drafted and discuss with the Estate through senior management of Council.
OBJ01	Lack of baseline data regarding existing users and benefits being derived from the park means that the future benefits cannot be credibly justified.	OBC for funding does not provide sufficient justification of benefits and so Complementary Fund allocation cannot be justified	In February 2023, Council has installed two counters on site and has since been collating visitors' figures. monitoring of site by Council Officials currently being undertaken. Council is also pursuing methods to collate Domestic and Out of State visitors' figures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring and reporting visitors' numbers to ANDBC and funders. - Engaging with Tourism NI to establish D & OoS baseline figure.

This risk register will be maintained and updated throughout the implementation process to ensure the Project Managers and SRO are aware of the key risks and how these are being addressed.

6.6 Post Project Evaluation and Monitoring Proposals

Post Project Evaluation Approach

The ANDBC Project officer will initiate the Post Project Evaluation (“PPE”) one-year post-construction. Once the PPE is completed it will be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Director, then reported to Corporate Project Portfolio Board for agreement to be removed of the project portfolio register. It will be the responsibility of the Sponsoring Directorate within the Council to report the findings of the PPE at their next relevant Parent Committee. This phase is also used to capture any learnings gained from the project while the memory of any issues encountered are still recent and hence the CPU’s Lessons Learned database will be updated by the Project officer following the evaluation.

An initial PPE will be completed by the Sponsoring Directorate on completion of the project to assess the outcome of the cost, time and quality of the project. Evaluation of certain targets achieved needs a longer lead in time based on the target dates within this

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OBC, for example, the benefits of creating woodland will not be achieved until the woodland has been well established (i.e. within 2-5 years).

An interim evaluation after 12 Months and a full evaluation after 24 Months will be conducted. Council is committed to ongoing monitoring post the completion of a full PPE and annual reports will be provided to DAERA to evidence achievement of targets within the OBC.

The PPE primarily evaluates:

- If the benefits, scope and deliverables of the project, as stated in the Project Brief, have been met.
- The performance of the building/facility
- Lessons to be learned from the experience which may help future projects.

Monitoring:

The following targets will be monitored by the Sponsoring Directorate with the Council:

Project Outcomes and Measurement			
Environmental Impact Priority	Outcomes	Indicator to achieve outcomes	Method of Assessment/Monitoring
Nature and Climate Recovery: Building Ecological and Climate Resilience Landscape, water, habitats, species and earth science condition and extent maintained and improved.	Ensure the environmental sustainability of Whitespots and Clandeboye estate by protecting the biodiversity of the site and promoting understanding of environmental issues and the use of sustainable transport.	Ensure local schools, community groups and charities have visited the site for environmental education related purpose. Implement an annual biodiversity audit (habitat and species surveys) on the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites. Achieve an increase in the numbers using the greenways compared to the baseline following completion. Ensure the natural plant and animal species associated with the site in Year 0 are retained on the Site.	Ongoing Habitat Surveys Earth Science surveys Water quality surveys Engagement can be monitored with schools, volunteers etc in terms of participation rates. Visitor monitoring
Connecting People with the Environment: Connecting with the natural environment, understanding it and taking action to have a positive effect on it.	Encourage healthy lifestyles in the Ards and North Down Area by increasing the number of people becoming involved in sport and active leisure. Increase employability for the communities near Whitespots Park by strengthening and developing skills and promoting education in the environmental sustainability and leisure sectors. Drive regeneration and economic development of the Ards and North Down	Increase the number of local residents using the facilities for recreation and active leisure above the numbers using the facilities as at year 0. Create new full-time equivalent jobs within the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites directly because of the Complementary Fund financed capital development. Provide volunteering opportunities (to assist employability) Provide training to employees and volunteers to improve skills and employability.	Record the visitor numbers at the site via people monitors and user surveys. Engagement can be monitored with schools, volunteers etc in terms of participation rates.

Project Outcomes and Measurement			
Environmental Impact Priority	Outcomes	Indicator to achieve outcomes	Method of Assessment/Monitoring
	Area through the provision of distinctive and attractive leisure facilities that promote the area to a national and international audience.	<p>Record an overall increase in the number of domestic visitors when compared to in the year ending March 2019.</p> <p>Record an overall increase in the number of visitors from ROI, UK and Out-of-State when compared to in the year ending March 2020.</p> <p>Ensure Whitespots Park and Clandeboye Estate is recognised as providing a positive economic impact within reports from ANDBC Tourism team and Tourism NI (or equivalent organisations).</p>	

6.7 Benefit Realisation Plans

Monitoring of the benefits achieved by the project is fundamental to its success as it allows actual progress to be compared with what was originally planned on an ongoing basis and for corrective action to be taken where needed. In addition to ongoing monitoring of the project, a formal post project evaluation, typically 6 months after completion of the programme will be undertaken to assess whether the SMART Targets have been achieved and make recommendations for the future, therefore improving on project appraisal design, management and implementation.

Benefit Realisation Plans for the four primary objectives for the Project are set out below:

Key Benefit 1: Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Residents within the Belfast Region

Benefit		Senior Benefit Owner		Operational Benefit Owner		
1 Increase the number of residents taking regular exercise		ANDBC TBC		Communities and Wellbeing Directorate		
Benefit to be Measured	Method of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value	Measurement Dates	Measurement to be done by	Actual Value
The number of local residents using the facilities for recreation and active leisure.	☐ Surveys of visitor numbers (including origin)	TBC – survey to be undertaken following lifting of COVID-19 restrictions	96,000 local visitors per annum	Every year from completion with target achieved 5 years post completion	ANDBC	TBC
Overall Benefit Ranking	Benefit Category	Dependency on Other Benefits	Benefit Priority (1 very low to 5 very high)	Likelihood of Failure (1 very low to 5 very high)	Overall Risk Rating (Priority x Likelihood of Failure)	
1	Quantitative	None	5	3	15	
Relevant PSA/ Departmental Targets		How does the benefit meet the target?				
N/A		Number of local visitors exceeds above				
Actions Required		Responsibility for action	Expected Outcomes	Start Date	End Date	

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Installation of systems to measure the number of local visitors to the Site		ANDBC	Increase in healthy lifestyles	Jan 2021	Jan 2025
Potential Risks	Likelihood 1 Low – 5 High	Impact on Benefit	Countermeasures	Responsibility for Countermeasures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient marketing to residents Visitors put off by motorcyclists 	3	High	Investment in marketing Monitoring of Site	ANDBC	

Key Benefit 2: Increase Employment opportunities within the Belfast Region

Benefit		Senior Benefit Owner		Operational Benefit Owner		
2 Increase the opportunities for employment within the Newtownards area.		ANDBC TBC		Regeneration, Development & Planning Directorate		
Benefit to be Measured	Method of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value	Measurement Dates	Measurement to be done by	Actual Value
Number of new jobs created on the Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Number of FTEs employed on the Site managing paths, wildlife and infrastructure	0.35	At least seven created by the fifth anniversary of opening	Every anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Number of volunteering opportunities created	<input type="checkbox"/> Number of volunteers used in the maintenance of the woodland	Zero	At least five created by the fifth anniversary of opening	Every anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Establishment of a training programme that can assist with future employment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation of an appropriate training programme in place	Zero	Training programme recognised by an industry body in place	Every anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Overall Benefit Ranking	Benefit Category	Dependency on Other Benefits	Benefit Priority (1 very low to 5 very high)	Likelihood of Failure (1 very low to 5 very high)	Overall Risk Rating (Priority x Likelihood of Failure)	
2	Qualitative	None	4	3	12	
Relevant PSA/ Departmental Targets		How does the benefit meet the target?				
N/A		Increase in number of NI residents in employment.				
Actions Required		Responsibility for action	Expected Outcomes	Start Date	End Date	
Recruitment procedures to be undertaken during implementation phase and training programmes developed.		ANDBC	Increase in numbers in employment in the Belfast Region	Feb 2019	Jan 2024	
Potential Risks	Likelihood 1 Low – 5 High	Impact on Benefit	Countermeasures	Responsibility for Countermeasures		
Training provided to employees does not allow opportunities for future employability	3	High	Ensure training is delivered through a recognised industry body	ANDBC		

Key Benefit 3: Increase the number of Visitors to the Belfast Region

Benefit		Senior Benefit Owner		Operational Benefit Owner		
3 Increase visitors to the Belfast Region through the provision of distinctive and attractive leisure facilities promoting the area to a national and international audience		ANDBC TBC		Regeneration, Development & Planning Directorate		
Benefit to be Measured	Method of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value	Measurement Dates	Measurement to be done by	Actual Value
Increase in the number of domestic visitors	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Surveys	TBC – baseline survey to be undertaken TBC	2,680 domestic visitors per annum	Every year from completion with target achieved 5 years post completion	ANDBC	TBC
Increase in the number of visitors from ROI, UK and Out-of-State.	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Surveys		1,320 out of state visitors per annum		ANDBC	TBC
Increase the GVA / visitor spending in the Ards and North Down Area	<input type="checkbox"/> TNI / NISRA Research	See latest NISRA data	Annual visitors spend in Borough of £34.3k.p. a (in 2022 prices).		ANDBC & NISRA	TBC
Overall Benefit Ranking	Benefit Category	Dependency on Other Benefits	Benefit Priority (1 very low to 5 very high)	Likelihood of Failure (1 very low to 5 very high)	Overall Risk Rating (Priority x Likelihood of Failure)	
3	Quantitative	None	5	4	20	
Relevant PSA/ Departmental Targets		How does the benefit meet the target?				
N/A		Increase in number of domestic and out of state visitors to the Site				
Actions Required		Responsibility for action	Expected Outcomes	Start Date	End Date	
Installation of surveys to measure the number of non-local visitors		ANDBC	Increase in tourism GVA	Jan 2021	Jan 2025	
Potential Risks	Likelihood 1 Low – 5 High	Impact on Benefit	Countermeasures	Responsibility for Countermeasures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient marketing to domestic and out of state visitors Visitors put off by motorcyclists. Volatility in the restrictions placed on international travel due to Covid-19 creating barriers to entrants 	4	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in marketing Monitoring of Site 	ANDBC		

Key Benefit 4: Ensure the environmental sustainability of Whitespots and Clandeboye Estate

Benefit		Senior Benefit Owner		Operational Benefit Owner		
4 Protect the biodiversity of the site and promoting understanding of environmental issues and the use of sustainable transport.		ANDBC TBC		Community and Well-being Directorate		
Benefit to be Measured	Method of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value	Measurement Dates	Measurement to be done by	Actual Value

Local schools, community groups and charities use the site for environmental education related purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Number of visits by schools, community groups and charities	Zero	At least five per annum by the fifth anniversary of Phase 1 completion	Every anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Greater understanding of biodiversity on the Whitespots and Clandeboye sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual biodiversity audit (habitat and species surveys)	Zero	Completion of register of Site habitat and species survey	Every fifth anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Increase in the numbers using the greenways compared to the baseline following completion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys of Greenway users	TBC when greenways open	At least 20% of greenway users including Whitespots as their destination.	Every anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Retention of the natural plant and animal species associated with the site	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual biodiversity audit (habitat and species surveys)	Zero	No reduction in the number of natural plant and animal species associated with the site	Every fifth anniversary of the completion of Phase 1	ANDBC	TBC
Overall Benefit Ranking	Benefit Category	Dependency on Other Benefits	Benefit Priority (1 very low to 5 very high)	Likelihood of Failure (1 very low to 5 very high)	Overall Risk Rating (Priority x Likelihood of Failure)	
4	Qualitative	None	3	3	9	
Relevant PSA/ Departmental Targets		How does the benefit meet the target?				
N/A		Increase in number of NI residents in employment.				
Actions Required		Responsibility for action	Expected Outcomes	Start Date	End Date	
Biodiversity officer to take on responsibility for regular Site surveys		ANDBC	Retention of important native species	Feb 2019	Jan 2024	
Potential Risks	Likelihood 1 Low – 5 High	Impact on Benefit	Countermeasures		Responsibility for Countermeasures	
Development of the proposed Phase 1 infrastructure negatively impacts wildlife	2	Med	Ensure contracts for development require implementation approaches that are sensitive to the natural habitat		ANDBC	

Glossary of Terms

Term / Acronym	Definition
ANDBC / Council	Ards and North Down Borough Council
C-DEL	Capital Budget - Delegated Expenditure Limit
CSF	Critical Success Factors
DBO	Design Build Operate form of Contract

DEL	Delegated Expenditure Limit
EIP	Equal Instalment of Principal (approach to loan repayment)
GSNI	Geological Survey Northern Ireland
ICT	Integrated Consultancy Team
ITRDS	ANDBC Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development
LPS	Land and Property Services
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NPC	Net Present Cost
NPV	Net Present Value
OBC	Outline Business Case
R-DEL	Resource Budget - Delegated Expenditure Limit
RAG	Red, Amber Green approach to rating
The Site	Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate combined
SLNCI	Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
SOC	Strategic Outline Case
TI	Tourism Ireland
TNI	Tourism Northern Ireland
VB	Visit Belfast
Whitespots Project	Proposed upgrade to the Whitespots Country Park and Clandeboye Estate

Appendices

[A: Results of the Online Public Survey](#)

[B: Report “History of the Conlig and Whitespots Mines”](#)

[C: List of Mining-Based Attractions in GB and RoI](#)

- D: List of World-War-Based Attractions in GB and RoI
- E: Risk Register
- F: Development Framework
- G: Detailed Site Layout Illustrations for each Shortlisted Option
- H: AECOM Cost Estimate Report
- I: Optimism Bias Calculation Template
- J: Detailed Financial Forecasts and NPV calculations
- K: Tourism NI Qualitative Consumer Focus Group & Travel Trade Report
- L: AECOM Review of the Current Condition of the Site
- M: LPS Valuation of the Additional Land Required
- N: Tourism NI Analysis of Whitespots as a visitor location for Game of Thrones
- O: Tourism NI – Full Concept Deep Dive Report
- P: Implementation Gantt Chart as at May 2022



Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regulatory Services
Date of Report	16 July 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1985
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Application for indoor Entertainment Licences
Attachments	

Applications have been received for the Grant of an Entertainment Licence as follows:

1. The King's Quay 9-11 King Street, Bangor, BT20 3AH

Applicant: Elizabeth Bonhomme, 10 Upper Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1 NT

Days and Hours: Monday-Sunday, 11 am to 11pm (Licensed premises)

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

There are no objections received from the PSNI or NIFRS.

Not Applicable

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Environmental Health had requested an Acoustic Report which has been provided. They have no objection to the application provided the following Terms and Conditions are applied to the licence (a copy of their report is attached):

As such, the following conditions should be attached if the entertainment licence is to be granted:

1. **All mitigation measures or Noise Control Measures recommended by the acoustic consultant and outlined in the Noise Impact Assessment should be adhered to.**
2. **In the event of a late liquor licence being granted, Entertainment shall be restricted to an end time of midnight.**
3. **Sound levels shall be restricted to 85 dB LAeq (5 minutes), 2 meters from the sound source.**
4. **The music shall only be of an easy listening nature with no heavy bass tones.**
5. **When entertainment is taking place, the ability to talk or to hear what a person is saying should also be used by a competent person to gauge the sound level. If talking or hearing what is said becomes difficult, the sound level is too high.**
6. **Periodically, a competent member of staff should patrol the exterior of the premises and at the nearest dwellings assess the overall sound levels. Specifically, the bass levels shall be considered and if the sound and bass levels are distinctly audible and likely to cause disturbance then they will ensure that the entertainment providers lower the volume.**
7. **If, following monitoring of entertainment by the Council's Environmental Health Service, there appears to be unreasonable disturbance, the noise level stated in Condition 3 above may be reduced and/or the licensee may be required to re-engage their noise consultant to propose what further mitigation measures may be required. Any necessary mitigation measures shall be implemented to the satisfaction of the council officers.**

2. **Londonderry Park Pavilion- Londonderry Park, Newtownards, BT23 5EU**

Applicant: Ally McArthur, Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2 Church Street, Newtownards.

Days and Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9am to 1am

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

There are no objections to this application.

Not Applicable

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3. The Commons Pavilion, Millisle Road, Donaghadee, BT21 OHZ

Applicant: Ally McArthur, Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2 Church Street, Newtownards.

Days and Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9am to 1am

Type of entertainment: Dancing, singing or music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

There are no objections to this application.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council grants the licence in respect of The King's Quay
2. Council grants the licence in respect of the Londonderry Park Pavilion
3. Council grants the licence in respect of The Commons Pavilion

Unclassified

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ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	11 June 2024
File Reference	SD151
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Services Order (1986)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG June 2024)
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Successful Anniversary Report for Approval Appendix 2 - Successful Coach Education Report for Approval Appendix 3 - Successful Coach Education Report for Noting Appendix 4 - Successful Equipment Report for Approval Appendix 5 - Successful Event Report for Approval Appendix 6 - Successful Individual Travel & Accommodation Report for Noting Appendix 7 - Unsuccessful Report

Not Applicable

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Members will be aware that on the 26th August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for this purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still require Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates are reported to members.

During May 2024, the Forum received a total of 21 applications: 1 Anniversary, 3 Coach Education, 2 Equipment, 2 Event, 1 Goldcard and 12 Individual Travel/Accommodation Grants. A summary of the **19** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Anniversary, Successful Coach Education, Successful Equipment, Successful Event and Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories is as follows:

2024/25 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded May 2024	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	*£750	-£749.90
Coach Education	£3,000	*£1,105	£1,638.75
Equipment	£14,000	*£1,466.87	£11,533.13
Events	£6,000	*£1,000	£2,637.89
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£1,818.96	£2,099.54
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£5,000
0 Goldcard Awarded in May (5 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)			

*The proposed remaining budget for Anniversary of **-£749.90** is based on a proposed award this month of **£750**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Coach Education of **£1,638.75** is based on a proposed award this month of **£1,105**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **£11,533.13** is based on a proposed award this month of **£1,466.87**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£2,637.89** is based on a proposed award this month of **£1,000** and a withdrawn amount of **£317.94**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£2,099.54** is based on a proposed award this month of **£1,818.96**, a withdrawn amount of **£200** and a reclaimed amount of **£17.50**

Not Applicable

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The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 is **£23,659.41** (47% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

APPENDIX 1 - SUCCESSFUL ANNIVERSARY REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	SPORT	EVENT	EVENT OUTLINE	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Donaghadee Golf Club	Golf	125th Anniversary. Increase interest in the club and allow the community to see the good work the club are doing for charity and youth in the area.	Celebration day including flag unfurling, golf competition, funfair, buffet and evening function and dinner.	10/08/2024	£750.00	£750.00	All documentation provided. Funding of £750 recommended.
TOTALS						£750.00	

APPENDIX 2 - SUCCESSFUL COACH EDUCATION REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	COURSE	BENEFITS	FACILITATOR	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Newtownards Sailing Club	Sailing	Wingsurf Instructor Course (5 people). Course will be delivered by RYA supplied trainer. The Club will be able to provide lessons on Wingsurfing as part of an RYA accredited training centre.	RYA	17-19/05/2024	£500.00	£500.00	All documentation provided. Funding of £500 recommended, "subject to" the discipline of "Wingsurfing" being recognised by Sport NI.
Greenwell Star Youth	Football	IFA National Coaching Certificate Youth. We keep dues at club costs to the minimum due to the poverty of our children, which does have an effect on the income to support furthering our coaches' education/qualifications. Our coaches will be qualified to be able to train our children and help them develop how they should.	IFA	29/09/24 - 6/10/24	£500.00	£500.00	Funding of £500 recommended, 'subject to' a Greenwell Star Youth Club Constitution, Equity Policy, a Safeguarding Policy and a signed & dated declaration.
TOTALS						£1,000.00	

APPENDIX 3 - SUCCESSFUL COACH EDUCATION REPORT FOR NOTING

NAME	COURSE	BENEFITS	FACILITATOR	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Pro-Star Gymnastics Academy	Makaton Taster Session with Gymnastics Specific signs	Having our staff Members trained in Basic Makaton signs and gymnastics specific signs will mean that we can communicate more effectively with our participants that need that help, which will in turn enhance members experience.	"A Hand to Talk Makaton Training"	01/07/2024. 2 hour course delivered in person in house on Monday 1 July.	£140.00	£105.00	Funding of £105 recommended, Club have asked for £140 but only eligible for 75% of total costs for external specialised coaching.
TOTALS						£105.00	

APPENDIX 4 - SUCCESSFUL EQUIPMENT REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	TYPE	EQUIPMENT NEED	BENEFIT	COSTS	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Greenwell Star Youth	Football	Training Equipment	With the opportunity of nets, this will benefit the children's development by giving the club the benefit to host our own friendlies/ tournaments and give the children real-life training. Each team needs to play with the correct ball size according to year. This would allow the children to achieve proper skills and develop with the correct equipment.	Balls size 3 (4 sets) £100 + Balls size 4 (6 sets) £100 + Balls size 5 (3 sets) £100 = £300 + Forza Nets, per net (7v7 x2) £400 + Bibs £100 + SAQ Equipment £200 = £1,000	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	Funding of £1,000 recommended, 'subject to' a Greenwell Star Youth Club Constitution, Public Liability Insurance, Equity Policy, a Safeguarding Policy and a signed & dated declaration.
Scрабо Striders	Athletics	Training Equipment	This equipment will be used weekly to assist with junior and adult training allowing us to focus on certain areas like the ABCs of athletics.	To be stored in club lock up	£482.29	£466.87	All documentation provided. Funding of £466.87 recommended. Proposed amount reduced as Fundamentals total exceeded £300.
TOTALS						£1,466.87	

APPENDIX 5 - SUCCESSFUL EVENT REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	TYPE	EQUIPMENT NEED	BENEFIT	COSTS	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Peninsula Triathlon Club	Triathlon	Donaghadee Sea Sprint Triathlon 15/09/2024. The Sea Sprint is our signature event for our club. Our 'Coach to Tri' program allows new members to build towards their first triathlon. This creates a pathway for membership growth. PTC host the event for the whole triathlon community in Northern Ireland; it is not a internal club event.	Annual sprint triathlon event hosted by Peninsula Triathlon Club in and around Donaghadee. Swim (750m), Bike (20km) and Run (5km). c250 Participants, 100 Marshals and Family & Friends spectating. The race is part of the Donaghadee summer festival and drives significant footfall in the town on the day.	Traffic Management £1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	All documentation provided, with the exception of an event management plan/risk assessment (which is not yet completed). Recommend funding of £1,000, 'subject to' the Risk Assessment.
TOTAL						£1,000.00	

APPENDIX 6 - SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	LOCATION	REPRESENTING2	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Yasmin Davidson	Gymnastics	Regionals Gymnastics Finals	11-12 May 2024	Southampton	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Yasmin has been selected to represent N Ireland at the Regionals Gymnastics Finals in Southampton on 11-12 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Tori Black	Gymnastics	NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals	25-26 May 2024	Fenton Manor Stoke on Trent	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Tori has been selected to represent N Ireland at the NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals in Stoke-on-Trent on 25-26 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Dan Black	Gymnastics	Acrobatic gymnastics Inter-regional championships	11-12 May 2024	Southampton	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Dan has been selected to represent N Ireland at the Inter Regionals Gymnastics Finals in Southampton on 11-12 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Rosa Hicks	Gymnastics	NDP National finals	25-26/05/2024	Fenton Manor Stoke on Trent	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Rosa has been selected to represent N Ireland at the NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals in Stoke-on-Trent on 25-26 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Levi Kane	Karate	GB Open Championships	29-30 June 2024	Birmingham University of Sport	Northern Ireland	£54.96	£54.96	Levi Kane has been selected to represent Northern Ireland in the GB Open Championships in Birmingham in June 2024. Recommend funding of £54.96.

Rudy Mayne	Mountain running	European Athletics off-road running championships	31 May - 2 June	Annecy, France	Ireland U20	£170.00	£170.00	Rudy has been selected to represent Ireland U20s in the European Athletics Off-Road Championships in Annecy on 31 May - 2 June. Recommend funding of £170.
Rudi Murphy	Gymnastics	NDP National Finals	25&26 May 2024	Fenton Manor Stoke-on-Trent	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Rudi has been selected to represent N Ireland at the NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals in Stoke-on-Trent on 25-26 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Sally Nixon	Sailing	RS Feva British Nationals	25/05/2024	WPNSA, Weymouth	Northern Ireland	£144.00	£144.00	Sally has been selected to represent N Ireland on 25 May 2024 at the RS Feva British Nationals. Recommend funding of £144.
Daniel Flannigan	Powerlifting	IPF Commonwealth Powerlifting Championship	4/10/2024 - 13/10/2024	Sun City, South Africa	Northern Ireland	£200.00	£200.00	A letter from the NI Powerlifting Federation advises Daniel has been selected to represent The Northern Ireland Powerlifting Federation that will be competing at the IPF Commonwealth Championships from 4 to 13 October 2024 in Sun City, South Africa. Recommend funding of £200, "subject to" a British Powerlifting selection letter.

Matthew Flannigan	Powerlifting	IPF Commonwealth Powerlifting Championship	4/10/2024 - 13/10/2024	Sun City, South Africa	Northern Ireland	£200.00	£200.00	A letter from the NI Powerlifting Federation advises Matthew has been selected to represent The Northern Ireland Powerlifting Federation that will be competing at the IPF Commonwealth Championships from 4 to 13 October 2024 in Sun City, South Africa. Recommend funding of £200, "subject to" a British Powerlifting selection letter.
Eliza McGill	Gymnastics	NDP National Finals	25-26 May 2024	Stoke-on-Trent	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Eliza has been selected to represent N Ireland at the NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals in Stoke-on-Trent on 25-26 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Ashten Adair	Gymnastics	NDP National Finals	25-26 May 2024	Stoke-on-Trent	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	Ashten has been selected to represent N Ireland at the NDP Acrobatic Gymnastics finals in Stoke-on-Trent on 25-26 May. Recommend funding of £150.
TOTALS							£1,818.96	

APPENDIX 7 - UNSUCCESSFUL REPORT

APPLICANT	APPLICATION	REQUEST	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	EXPLANATION
Greenwell Star Youth	Event Grant	Requested funding of £980 for Round Robin Tournament during July/August 2024 (Bouncy Castles x4 £280 + Water £500 + Tuck shop £200 = £980).	Applications will be considered in line with our Guidance Notes.	Funding not recommended as our guidelines state under What we Will Not Fund, "Entertainment costs, food and beverages"; bouncy castles, water and tuck shop cannot be funded.
Sarah McMillan	Goldcard	Sarah has been selected as part of the All Ireland team to compete in the World Cup in Innsbruck in July 2025.	Provide a letter from the relevant SNI/Sport Ireland recognised governing body on official governing body paper or official government email statement.	Funding not recommended as Sarah has provided a selection letter from the Irish Roller Derby Association, who are not Recognised as a National Governing Body by Sport Ireland.

Unclassified

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ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Assets and Property Services
Date of Report	03 July 2024
File Reference	62205
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NoM Report Ballywalter Road Car Park, Millisle
Attachments	None

At the June Council meeting the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

“That Council tasks Officers to bring forward urgent proposals for ground maintenance to address the poor and unkept condition of Millisle Beach Park in order to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-kept to welcome visitors to Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further Council bring forward a report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage.”

1. Condition of the Car Park

Whilst the NoM specifically mentions Millisle Beach Park, it is actually referring to the Ballywalter Road Car Park. Members should note that Council undertake an extensive programme of maintenance at this location and the area is generally well maintained given the resources available.

Not Applicable

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The following works take place on a routine basis at Ballywalter Road Car Park:

- Fortnightly litter picks
- Routine mechanical sweeping
- Emptying of bins three times a week
- Regular maintenance and vandalism repairs of the public toilets
- Routine clearing of wind-blown sand from the seaward side (in line with NIEA approval)
- Routine condition inspections of both the car park and public toilets
- £45k was spent resurfacing the busier end of the car park, adjacent to the toilets (in 2021)

2. Sand build-up along the road-side of the Car Park

Whilst the annual NIEA approval covers the removal of sand from the seaward side of the car park, it does not cover the road-side. This sand has built up over many years (even prior to Council ownership in 2015).

Since the car park has approximately 200 spaces still available, and is never full, it was not thought best use of available resources to remove the sand to free up additional spaces.



Google Maps image showing the areas of routinely cleared sand, and the area in which spaces have been lost.

Not Applicable

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3. Repairs to Access ramps to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage

The ramped access to Millisle and Portavogie beaches are not disabled access and have never been designed as such. The ramps have recently suffered from tidal erosion, leaving a drop to the sand at the end where the concrete finishes. Due to the environmental sensitivities and protections in place, advice was sought from NIEA who confirmed that they would not permit additional concrete to be poured to extend the ramps. Furthermore, the end of the ramp at Portavogie Beach is not on Council land, so therefore cannot be extended without approval by the landowner, even if permission was granted by NIEA.

At the Millisle ramp, Officers have been repositioning sand and rock from the beach to build the levels back up to previous levels and remove the drop. Over the winter, periodic storms have washed these away but the last effort to address this, in April, still remains largely in place.

Neither Beach lends itself to accessible access due to the presence of large rocks and soft, uneven sand. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Council is required to make "reasonable adjustments" to improve the accessibility of Council property. Council has tried numerous times to make the beach more accessible, but due to the natural environment with shifting sand and large rocks, these areas will never be truly accessible, thus Officers believe Council's legal obligations have been met.

4. Further Improvements and Associated Costs

Given the imminent Kite festival at Millisle and the anticipated large crowd in attendance, Members may wish to add to the existing c330 spaces (c200 at the car park plus approximately 130 at the adjacent Beach Park).

Since the matter was first raised with Officers, permission has been sought, and granted by NIEA and a price/methodology from the Council's term Contractor has been obtained.

The work would include scraping back the top of the windblown sand to remove weeds and other contaminants. This waste would be transported offsite to an appropriately licensed facility. The remaining sand could then be deposited back onto Millisle beach and used to build up the sand around the ramped access, in the hope of slowing the erosion and subsequent exposure of the end of the ramp.

The estimated cost of this work is approximately £13k but the actual cost will vary depending on the amount of waste to be disposed of off-site and the overall time taken to do the work. However, no budget currently exists for this work, meaning other works would have to be omitted to accommodate it. It should be noted that due to the coastal location of the carpark, the sand will build up again over time and will therefore require yearly removal if Council were minded to do so.

If approved, this work could take place prior to the Kite festival on 26 August 2024.

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council decide if they wish to proceed with the above-mentioned works at a cost of approximately £13k.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regulatory Services
Date of Report	22 July 2024
File Reference	FP/2024/1671/MAST / 91200
Legislation	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Street naming - Castle Lane Mews, Comber
Attachments	None

A small development comprising of thirteen dwellings, being six houses and seven apartments, are currently under construction on lands to the rear of 23-61 Castle Street, Comber.

The entrance to the new development is accessed off Castle Lane. The developer has suggested the name Castle Lane Mews for the new development which is in keeping with the general neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the street name of Castle Lane Mews be adopted for this development.

That the Council accepts the general name and delegates acceptance of suffixes to the Building Control department.

Unclassified

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ITEM 17**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	Click here to enter a date.
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	Nomination to Trustees on Northern Community Leisure Trust
Attachments	

Places on working groups and most outside bodies are filled through nomination at the Council's Annual Meeting and are thus held by individual Members rather than Parties. When a position becomes vacant, it reverts back to Council to nominate a Member to fill the place rather than Party Nominating Officers.

Following the resignation of Councillor Martin a place has now become available on the Northern Community Leisure Trust. The Council is represented by two Trustees, the other Trustee is Councillor W Irvine. A nomination is sought from the Council to fill the above vacancy for the remainder of the four-year term.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council nominate a Member as a Trustee on Northern Community Leisure Trust for the remainder of the term.

Unclassified

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ITEM 20**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 July 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	19 July 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	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Notice of Motion tracker

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of motions. It should be noted that as each motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NoM Ref:	Responsible Committee	Date Received	Submitted by	Notice (Original and any amendment)	Council & Committee Meetings (Date & Item)	Status (Most recent status update at the top followed by detail of what has been accomplished to date)	Final Outcome
11	Community & Wellbeing	31.05.15	Councillor Muir	Rory McIlroy Recognition	Council June 2015 Corporate Services Committee October 2015	Officers are considering and a report will be brought back to Committee	
330	Environment	21.01.19	Councillor Brooks & Councillor Smith	This Council brings back a report on providing a shelter or sheltered area near the slipway in Donaghadee which would provide cover for the growing numbers of open water swimmers that use the area on a daily basis.	Council January 2019 Environment Committee 06.02.19 Item 16.3	Report to be brought back to Committee	
419	Community & Wellbeing	20.10.20	Councillor Brooks	"I would like to task officers to produce a report to consider what could be a more environmentally friendly and benefit the wellbeing of the community for the use of the disused putting green on the Commons and play park at Hunts park in Donaghadee . Following the success of the Dog park in Bangor and the demand for a Dementia garden, both should be considered as options in the report. The process should involve consultation with	Council October 2020 Community & Wellbeing Committee December 2020	Report to follow after consideration of Masterplan and application of play strategy with local consultation when it takes place in Donaghadee	
463	Environment	10.05.21	Councillor Walker & Councillor Egan	That this Council – having acknowledged the challenges and threats of Climate Change – does now commit to developing a Climate Change Action Plan and makes 2022 its year for setting challenging but achievable targets specifically for the operation of all aspects of Council operation and if feasible more widely across the Borough. Officers are tasked to bring back a report on how Council might approach this task perhaps including – but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, A Conference of Ideas, and values -based recommendations for next steps.	Council 23.06.2021 Environment Committee 16.10.2021	Various strands of work taking place across different departments on development of Council Climate Action Plan - led within Corporate Services Directorate	Adaptation Plan approved by Council in April 2024
513	Place & Prosperity	17.05.22	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Kennedy	2028 Centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT races. Asking Council how best to commemorate this important sporting anniversary.	Council May 2022 Community & Wellbeing June 2022 Place & Prosperity November 2023 Place & Prosperity June 2024	26.06.24 - 7 Members agreed at Council 06.06.24 - Agreed to elect 7 Members at Council in June Nov 2023- report brought to P&P Committee	Agreed at June Council that the following Members be appointed to the Ards TT 2028 Event Working Group: Aldermen Graham, McIlveen and Smith and Councillors Douglas, Kennedy, Moore and Smart. The Working Group will report to P&P Committee. Remove from tracker after Council July 24

514	Community & Wellbeing	19.05.22	Councillor Cummings & Councillor Johnson	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Council agreed Comber 3G pitch is ranked 21st in project prioritisation. Stakeholder engagement to commence at the appropriate time	
516	Corporate Services	20.06.24	Councillor Greer & Councillor McKee	Report exploring the possibility of introducing a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone undergoing IVF.	Council June 2022 Corporate Services Committee October 2022	Further report to follow during 2024	
519	Community & Wellbeing	20.06.22	Councillor Kendal, Councillor McRandal & Councillor McClean	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen's Leisure Complex	Council June 2022 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2022 and deferred to October 2022	Community Engagement to take place on 24th September 2024 and report to follow	
522	Corporate Services	05.07.22	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery Amendment received from Councillor Cathcart	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. *** Amendment - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Council July 2022 Environment Committee September 2022 Corporate Services January 2024	April 2023 - Letter requesting permission to use the Royal Name sent to the Cabinet Office and awaiting response January 2024 - Report brought to Corporate Committee September 2022 - Amendment Agreed and advice sought from Cabinet Office July 2024 - Advice still outstanding	
525	Community & Wellbeing	24.08.22	Councillor Cooper, Councillor T Smith & Councillor Irvine	That this council withdraws all funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums or competitions, and tasks officers to bring back a report outlining the specific relevant council policy.	Council August 2022 Corporate Committee October 2022	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	
529	Environment	22.08.22	Councillor Dunlop & Councillor Douglas	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Council September 2022 Environment Committee October 2022	Report to be brought back to Committee	
545	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.22	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local schools when the stones have been returned.	Council November 2022 Community & Wellbeing December 2022 and March 2023 and June 2023	Officers have asked HED to confirm return arrangements and will report to future C&WC when final arrangements for return of the stones is confirmed	

549	Community & Wellbeing	09.12.22	Councillor Douglas & Councillor Walker	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to 'Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.	Council December 2022 Corporate Services Committee January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024	Officers considering further reports. Action plan being developed by PCSP and brought back to C&W Committee. Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee ratified at Council.	
550	Environment	13.12.22	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor MacArthur	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try address the issue of bins left on public footways.	Council 21.12.22 Item 16.4 Environment Committee January 2023 May 2024	12.12.23 Letter sent to DAERA by CEX 08.11.23 Response received from DFI 13.10.23 - Acknowledgement received from PSNI 12.10.23 - letters sent to DFI & PSNI by Cex	
555	Community & Wellbeing	08.12.22	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas	This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport	Council January 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee February 2023 and June 2023	Budget not secured for 2024/25. Further report to future C&WC if budget made available in 2025/2026 including the report to recommend declaration	
562	Environment	18.01.23	Councillor Morgan & Councillor McRandat	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back	Council January 2023 Environment Committee February 2023 October 2023	Supplementary report requested - TBC	
564	Community & Wellbeing	08.02.23	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.	Council February 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Officers awaiting response from EA in order for report to be brought back to future C&W Committee.	

567	Corporate Services	14.02.23	Councillor Adair & Councillor Edmund	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Council February 2023 Corporate Services Committee March 2023	A response has been received from the Cabinet Office and a report went back to Committee 30/5/24 - follow up letter sent to Cabinet Office for update. Letters sent to the Cabinet Office requesting use of the Royal Name July 2024 - Advice now recieved - Report due at August 2024 Council.	
568	Place & Prosperity	06.02.23	Councillor Smart & Councillor Irvine	Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change. As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.	Council March 2023 Place & Prosperity Committee June 2023 13 June 2024	Further report to be brought back to Committee	
575	Community & Wellbeing	31.07.23	Councillor Creighton & Councillor Moore	That this council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 12,431 to 26,310 households between 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2023, an increase of 111.7%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this borough alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services; and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently supported as well as how the Council's community planning function can further support homelessness prevention work in the local area	Council August 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee September 2023	Officers considering report to be brought back to September 2024 C&W Committee	
	Environment		Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	That Council task officers to bring back a report on the costing to install signage identifying the townlands of Ballyblack and Kirkistown and that officers are tasked to bring forward proposals to incorporate townland signage across our Borough.	Council August 2023 Environment Committee September 2023		
585	Community & Wellbeing		Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund & Councillor Kerr	That Council recognise the value of our Beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DEARA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DEARA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.	Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024	Further report requested being considered by officers with a report to future C&W Committee	

588	Environment		Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith	<p>That this council asks officers to include the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter (owned by Council), located in Main Street, Greyabbey in the 2024/25 maintenance budget.</p> <p>Furthermore Council seeks an officer's report on the feasibility of Council painting the decorative Greyabbey lamp posts (in the ownership of DFI). This is a feature of the historic village, and we understand the current shabby condition impacts not only residents of the village, but the wider tourism and regeneration potential of this scenic conservation area.</p> <p>Amendment: That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini</p>	Council October 2023 Environment Committee November 2023	<p>Amendment Agreed at Environment Committee. That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to ask for the decorative lamp posts on Main Street, Greyabbey, to be repainted to ensure they are maintained as a feature of this historic village; and writes to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to seek funding to deliver a mini public realm or streetscape project in Greyabbey.</p>	
586	Corporate Services	16.10.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Martin	<p>That this Council, further to recent positive discussions with landowners, agrees to reexamine the April 2014 decision of North Down Borough Council to accept a gift of open space at Ambleside, Bangor, which was never completed and tasks Council Officers to bring back a report looking at (i) acquiring the land and (ii) options around future uses for the land.</p>	Council October 2023 Corporate Services Committee November 2023	<p>Report to CSC. Agreed to proceed to acquisition subject to terms & discussions with vendor.</p> <p>July 2024 - Letter now sent to vendor. Further report to follow.</p>	
595	Community & Wellbeing	16.11.23	Councillor McCracken & Councillor Blaney	<p>This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The</p>	Council 29.11.2023	<p>Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee</p>	
598	Community & Wellbeing	20.11.23	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	<p>That this Council continues discussions with the Education Authority concerning the redevelopment of the play area fronting Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert (which is a shared facility between the school and public) and tasks officers to source external funding streams to enhance recreation & sports facilities for the village and surrounding area. Further, Council notes the poor condition of Ballyhalbert children's play park and tasks</p>	Council 29.11.23 Community & Wellbeing January 2024	<p>Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee</p>	
599	Community & Wellbeing	21.11.23	Councillor Cathcart & Councillor Gilmour	<p>"That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient,</p>	Council 20.12.23 Community & Wellbeing Committee January 2024 and April 2024 and June 2024	<p>Further updates report to follow. First working group was on 10th May 2024. Grants transformation project already underway.</p>	
607	Corporate Services	13.01.24	Councillor Wray & Alderman Smith	<p>That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.</p> <p>Council further requests that DFI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20ml from the current 50ml in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.</p>	Council 31.01.24 Corporate Services Committee June 2024	<p>Update report to Corporate Services Committee in June 2024. Letter to DfI re 'weighted indicators' used to allocate funds. Further update to committee date TBC.</p>	

610	Community & Wellbeing	19.02.24	Alderman Adair & Councillor Edmund	That Council note the increasing growing population in the village of Ballyhalbert and the current lack of public open spaces in the village and task officers to bring forward a report on options to provide a public green open space to promote health and wellbeing of the local community and further tasks officers to engage with developer to ensure the new play park planned for Saint Andrews is delivered in line with our Council play strategy.	Council 26.03.24 Community & Wellbeing Committee March 2024	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	
613	Community & Wellbeing	04.03.24	Councillors Wray, Kerr, Boyle, Edmund, Aldermen Adair and McAlpine	Rescinding Notice of Motion - Playpark, Parsonage Road, Kircubbin	Council March 2024	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee which will be combined with play strategy future recommendations following Council decision in June 2024.	
616	Environment	19.03.24	Councillor McCollum & Councillor Irwin	That this Council recognises the significant opportunities which the redevelopment of Donaghadee Harbour could bring to the local economy in terms of leisure sailing and tourism and thus instructs officers to work with local groups to scope potential operational facilities which could enhance the offering in the Harbour and further brings back a feasibility report on the various options, including costings and possible funding streams. Further, that this Council recognises the issues associated with high winds and coastal change and reviews the original 2020 Harbour Study conducted by RPS including the necessity for an offshore breakwater and agrees to bring back a report in time to be presented to Council in September 2024, outlining the budget required to undertake this work, any key considerations, next steps and identify which stakeholders	Council 26.03.24 Environment Committee 03.04.24 Item xxxx	April 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.	
619	Community & Wellbeing	30.04.24	Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson	That this Council notes with concern the temporary closure of Groomsport Tennis Courts due to issues around the safety of the playing surface. Further to this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on Tennis Court maintenance throughout the Borough and will commit to ensuring all our Tennis Court facilities are properly maintained and are fully accessible to all. Council will also promote the use of Tennis facilities in the Borough as we approach the spring/summer season.	Council 29.05.24 Community & Wellbeing Committee June 2024	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee.	
620	Community & Wellbeing	05.03.24	Councillor Ashe & Councillor Morgan	That this council recognises the importance of ensuring that our parks and open spaces are inclusive and accessible to those with speech, language, and communication needs and that it recognises the positive role of communication boards in achieving this. That it commits to working with relevant organisations to bring back a report regarding communication boards considering, but not limited to, the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How communication boards would integrate with the required existing signage; •Identifying possible locations for the communication boards, such as a specific Tier of park; and •An indicative budget. 	Council 29.05.24 Community & Wellbeing Committee June 2024	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee	

623	Corporate Services	14.5.24	Councillor Gilmour & Councillor Martin	8th May 2025 will be 80 years since VE Day- the official end of the Second World War in Europe. This council recognises the significance of this occasion and tasks officers to bring forward a report outlining potential ways this historic anniversary can be commemorated. Including any national plans for beacon lighting and with the council working with local people and local community groups to look at holding fitting events to mark this occasion so that a budget can be included in the next rate setting process.	Council 29.05.24 Corporate Services Committee 18.06.24 Item 17.2	June 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.	
624	Corporate Services	20.05.24	Councillor Kendal, Councillor McRandal and Alderman Graham	This Council notes that, subsequent to submission of a Notice of Motion in 2017, Council agreed to provide funding to assist in the building of a new war memorial in Conlig village; and to liaise with, and assist, the Conlig War Memorial Project Group in their efforts to build a monument to the seventeen men who are known to have lost their lives in World War I. This Council also notes that a proposal and draft design is to be submitted by The Conlig War Memorial Group, and that the group have raised funds via donations and fundraising events, to the value of £8,000 towards this project. This Council therefore reiterates its commitment to financial and practical support for the Conlig war memorial project, tasking Officers to bring back a report exploring costs of planning permission, site ownership transfer, and any associated legal fees, that will be required to enable the memorial to be completed and installed.	Council 29.05.24 Corporate Services Committee 18.06.24 Item 17.1	June 2024 - Agreed, officers to bring back a report to Committee.	
625	Environment	21.05.24	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	That Council tasks Officers to bring forward urgent proposals for ground maintenance to address the poor and unkept condition of Millisle Beach Park in order to ensure the area is clean tidy and well kept to welcome visitors to the Kite Festival to be hosted in Millisle by the Ards Peninsula village partnership on August 26th. Further Council bring forward in report on actioning repairs to disability access to Millisle and Portavogie Beaches following recent storm damage.	Council 26.06.24 Item 15.1	Heard and Agreed to adopt Notice of Motion at Council meeting 26.06.24	
626	Corporate Services	13.06.24	Alderman Brooks and Councillor Chambers	That the Council, following the 80th anniversary of D-Day, recognises the service of US regiment(s) stationed in Donaghadee and our Borough prior to D-Day and tasks officers to bring a report back looking at ways in which our Borough could provide a lasting memory to them.	Council 26.06.24 Item 15.2	Referred to Corporate Services Committee for hearing at September 2024 committee.	