

## **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

6th January 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via zoom) of the Community and Wellbeing Committee of Ards and North Down Borough in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom on **Wednesday 15 January 2025 commencing at 7pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough  
Chief Executive  
Ards and North Down Borough Council

### **A G E N D A**

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest

#### **Reports for Approval**

3. Celebration Display Bed Policy Update (Report attached)
4. Ards and North Down In Bloom Grants Policy Update (Report attached)
5. Tennis Court Provision - Response to NoM 619 (Report attached)
6. Clandeboye Park Maintenance and Enhancement - Response to NoM 629 (Report attached)

#### **Reports for Noting**

7. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG December 2024) (Report attached)
8. Play Provision in Ballyhalbert – Response to NoM 598 (Report attached)
9. North Down Coastal Path Working Group (Report attached)
10. Maintaining Beaches and our Coastal Environment - Response to NoM 585 (Report attached)

11. Notice of Motion on Cemetery Maintenance - Six Month Review (Report attached)
12. Bi-Monthly Update on Portavogie 3G, Penninsula 3G and Portaferry Sports Centre Floor (Report attached)
13. Leisure Access Policy Development Report (Report attached)
14. Notices of Motion
- 14.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter

That Council notes the poor condition of the Bowtown children's play park and its poor provision of accessible play equipment and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.

- 14.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Thompson

That this Council recognises the considerable delays and frustration experienced by Donaghadee FC, Donaghadee Rugby Club, Ards and Donaghadee Cricket Club and Donaghadee Ladies Hockey Club in relation to the long-awaited upgrade to their playing surface and facilities.

Further to this Council Officers will bring a report back exploring external funding opportunities, or in the absence of external funding, options for direct funding for upgrades to Donaghadee Sports facilities.

Alongside this officers shall engage meaningfully with all Sports Clubs in Donaghadee around facilities to ensure the development and investment to improve sports provision and facilities.

15. Any other notified business

### **ITEMS \*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

#### **Reports for Approval**

16. Newtownards Citizens Hub, Queens Hall Redevelopment – Appointment of Integrated Consultancy Team (Report attached)
17. Tender for Spin Bike Replacement at Comber Lesiure Centre (Report attached)

**MEMBERSHIP OF COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)**

Alderman Adair	Councillor Douglas
Alderman Brooks (Chair)	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Cummings	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman McRandal	Councillor W Irvine
Councillor Ashe	Councillor Kendall
Councillor Boyle (Vice Chair)	Councillor Naomi McBurney
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McClean
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Moore

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	16 December 2024
File Reference	PCA136
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Celebration Display Bed Policy Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Celebration Display Bed Policy

Members will be aware that in February 2019 Council agreed a policy for the use of Display Beds in the Borough, this policy requires Officers to report to Council any applications received by external organisations.

Officers have reviewed the policy and have made some suggested changes to improve the sustainability of beds and increase the number of beds available to those wishing to celebrate and promote their celebration. In line with the Policy Development Process as agreed by Council these updates are now being brought to Council for approval. The main changes are summarised below.

**Policy Title**

The title and some content have been changed to remove the reference of 'floral display'. This is re-iterating the change and will now be referred to as 'Celebration Display'.

Not Applicable

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## Locations

To date there have been five display bed locations:

1. Adjacent to Bangor Post and Sorting Office
2. At the Bangor Road entrance to Ballymenoch Park, Holywood
3. Court Square, Newtownards
4. East Street, Donaghadee
5. Comber Square, Comber.

This updated Policy proposes an additional 6 locations. These have been selected in areas of good traffic flow/footfall, on Council owned and/or maintained land and to achieve a wider geographical spread across the Borough.

New Locations proposed are:

6. Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry



7. Castlebawn Road/Portaferry Road adjacent to Londonderry Park, Newtownards



Not Applicable

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8. Ballygowan Community Centre



9. Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards



10. Brice Park, Donaghadee Road, Bangor



Not Applicable

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## 11. Corner of Comber Road/Beechvale Road @Balloo



In addition to the above, Officers have considered the council's commitment to sustainability, legal requirements and good practice guidance and reviewed our approach to floral display beds. This frequent turnover of floral beds was not efficient in terms of resources nor was it an environmentally sustainable method of managing our planting and displays.

The change proposed is to move to an annual sign per application and Council Parks staff would continue to plant and maintain the planting in the bed around any signage in line with normal sustainable planting scheduling.

The policy changes will now align with the DfI's guidance document RSPPG E004 on signage sizes to ensure adherence to road safety and good practice.

Applications would be accepted in October and approved by Council in the November of each year. This would allow an applicant a full calendar year for display. The exception would be Bangor Post and Sorting Office as per the Policy – this would be January to November to allow the Nativity Scene to be displayed.

The policy also states that applicants must meet the Council Policy on Single Use Plastics and are asked to ensure that their signage is developed with waste management in mind.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council adopts the attached updated Celebration Display Bed Policy and associated new locations.



**Ards and  
North Down**  
Borough Council

# **Celebration Display Bed Policy**



## Ards and North Down Borough Council

<b>Policy Title</b>	Celebration Display Bed Policy
<b>Version</b>	V2
<b>Summary</b>	This policy aims to provide a consistent and fair approach to the decision-making process on whether or not to approve any request to create a display bed for a significant event.
<b>Source / Author</b>	Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager
<b>Date of Council Approval</b>	Proposed for January 2025
<b>Implementation Date</b>	Proposed for February 2025
<b>Next Review Date</b>	Every 3 years
<b>Officer Responsible for Review</b>	Head of Parks and Cemeteries

### Revision History

<b>Date</b>	<b>Changes Made</b>	<b>Version</b>
February 2019	New Policy Created	V1
January 2024	For discussion at Community & Wellbeing	V2

## 1. Introduction

This policy aims to provide a consistent and fair approach to the decision-making process on whether or not to approve any request to create a display bed within one of the councils allocated beds (See section 3).

This policy has been developed to set out the Council's position regarding requests for celebration displays within Council display beds and to clearly identify the responsibilities of the Council and those making a request (the applicant).

The policy provides an overview of the Council's principles and eligibility criteria with regard to displays, and a framework and criteria applicable to requests made for displays.

## 2. Definitions

A 'significant' event is deemed a centenary or other time-bound celebration which observes the passage of a significant number of years or accepted by the council to be significant – i.e. of interest to the local or wider community.

Other 'significant' celebrations, whilst non-centenary, nevertheless recognise significant events, persons or places, and are accepted by the Council to be significant (as defined above).

A celebration display is any temporary feature which uses signage to represent a centenary or other significant celebration, as described above.

Council Celebration Display Beds are as per approved sites listed below.

## 3. Locations

Council can create a celebratory bed in the following locations in the Borough

Adjacent to Bangor Post and Sorting Office

1. At the Bangor Road entrance to Ballymenoch Park, Holywood
2. Court Square, Newtownards
3. East Street, Donaghadee
4. Comber Square, Comber.
5. Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry
6. Castlebawn Road/Portaferry Road adjacent to Londonderry Park, Newtownards
7. Ballygowan Community Centre
8. Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards
9. Brice Park, Donaghadee Road, Bangor
10. Corner of Comber Road/Beechvale Road @Balloo

## 4. Principles & Eligibility Criteria

Historically displays have been installed on an ad hoc basis as a result of a written request from interested organisations or other groups. In order to improve the sustainability of these requests this policy has been reviewed and only annual requests will be invited for consideration.

A policy on when and how to approve such requests is required, in order to ensure fairness, equity of treatment and compliance with any statutory obligations. This will provide satisfaction that approved requests are within the context of any other approved policies and plans. For example, celebration display areas are open spaces which are accessible and visible to all, and so should reflect the areas community plan with regard to respectful and shared communities, and therefore be quality shared or neutral displays.

The applicant must:

- Be a charitable, community and/or voluntary organisation with a valid constitution, as recognised by the council;
- Be Ards and North Down Borough-based or operate within the Ards and North Down area;
- And if a membership organisation, be open to all sections of the community.

A request will be approved if it meets the following essential criteria

- a. The request is being made by a properly constituted organisation.
- b. All requests must be made by the end of October in the year previous to that proposed for installation using a standard application form to be submitted to [ANDParks@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:ANDParks@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk).
- c. A decision will be made by the C&W Committee each November on the year of the proposed installation.
- d. The display bed is available for all the dates requested 12 months (January – December). **Exception – Celebration bed at Post Office, Bangor will be 11 months January – November to allow for Nativity display)**
- e. The request is for only one of the Councils Celebration Beds
- f. An applicant will not make an application in two subsequent years
- g. The request is deemed to be eligible (See section 4)
- h. Maintenance of the Celebration Bed will be undertaken by the council.
- i. Signage should reflect the Councils Commitment to Sustainability which includes a reduction on single use plastics and promotion of the waste management hierarchy to ensure waste reduction, reuse and recycling is considered (in that order). This should include more sustainable use of materials and/or the appropriate opportunity for reuse or recycle the sign after.
- j. Signage should align with the DFi's guidance document RSPPG E004 on signage sizes to ensure adherence to road safety and good practice.
- k. Approval of a request will not give an applicant the right to determine or influence the means of installation and ongoing management of the display in any way. However, it will place an obligation on the council

to ensure proper installation and maintenance during the life of the display.

- I. The council may refuse to approve any request it reasonably considers to be not in keeping with this policy.

Eligible requests will be as follows:

- To raise awareness of charities
- To highlight events directly organised by the Council
- To highlight events financially supported by the Council by means of a grant
- To promote events which are deemed to be significant to tourism
- To mark a significant sporting event in the Borough.
- To commemorate a significant anniversary of, or an event organised by a charity or community organisation which has a significant connection to the Borough.
- To commemorate a major national event or anniversary.

In addition to failing to meet at least one of the above criteria, a request will be deemed ineligible if it falls into any of the following categories:

- A display which in officers' opinions is only promoting a commercial interest
- The promotion of an ethos, activity or organisation which is not deemed in the context of communities to be shared, neutral or promoting good relations.

See Section 5 for further detail.

## **5. Design of Signage**

The applicant must have at least an outline design for the proposed sign for display at the time of the request (following approval, a full design will be agreed with the council, as required).

The sign will be provided by the applicant.

The proposed design must:

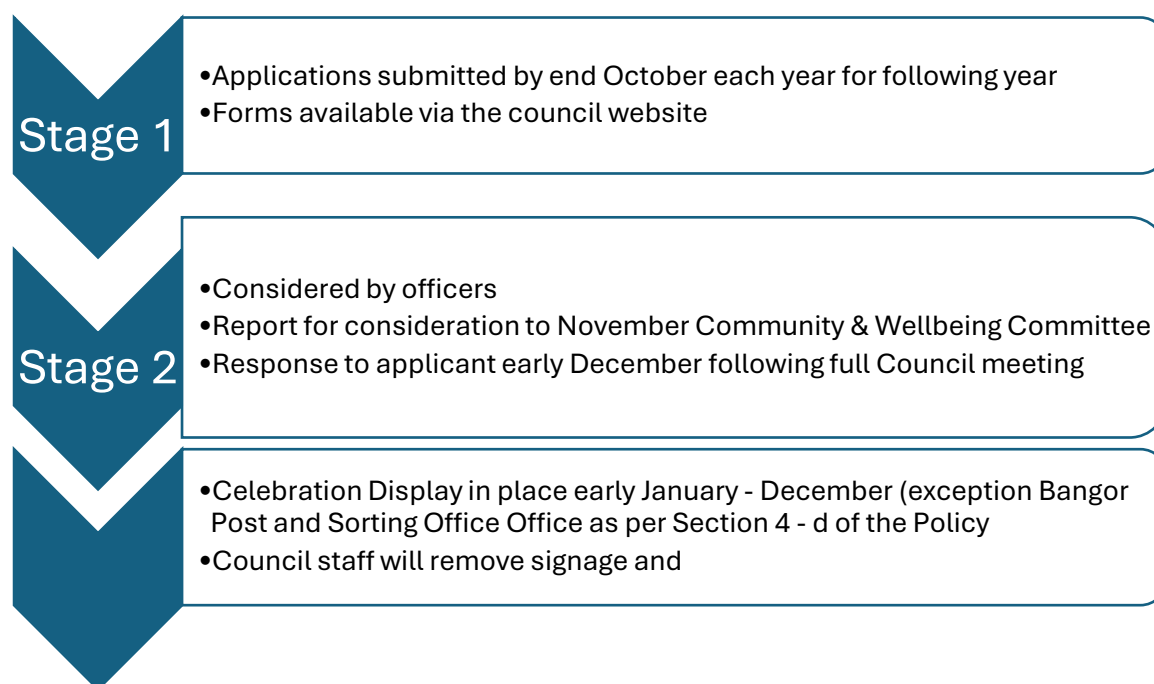
- Be the correct size (this will be confirmed by the Council on application and relevant DFi guidance)
- Manufactured from sustainable materials ( as per Section 4 – J) - should reflect the Councils Commitment to Sustainability which includes a reduction on single use plastics and promotion of the waste management hierarchy to ensure waste reduction, reuse and recycling is considered (in that order). This can include more sustainable use of materials and the appropriate opportunity for reuse or recycling after.

- Reflect the areas community plan with regard to respectful and shared communities, and therefore be quality shared or neutral displays

Must not:

- Cause offence or distress, or otherwise negatively affect any member of the public;
- Incorporate any reference to/symbol of any particular party-political organisation, illegal organisation, or any person(s) likely to be viewed negatively by a significant proportion of the community;
- Conflict with any specific themes promoted by the council at the proposed site (for example health and wellbeing, promotion of biodiversity);
- Be detrimental to the aims of the Council with regard to the promotion of good relations and must not conflict with the Council's statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

Application process



# Ards and North Down Borough Council

## CELEBRATION DISPLAY BED POLICY

### APPLICATION FORM

**Ref No** (for Council use):

Please read guidance criteria before applying

*(all sections must be completed)*

Name of Group	
Name of Contact person	
Postal Address of Contact Person	Postcode
Contact Telephone Numbers	Home  Work  Mobile
Email Address	

**About your proposal**

Which display bed are you requesting the use of? (Only one bed can be used)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Adjacent to Bangor Post and Sorting Office</li> <li><input type="radio"/> At the Bangor Road entrance to Ballymenoch Park, Holywood</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Court Square, Newtownards</li> <li><input type="radio"/> East Street, Donaghadee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Comber Square, Comber.</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Castlebawn Road/Portaferry Road adjacent to Londonderry Park, Newtownards</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Ballygowan Community Centre</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Brice Park, Donaghadee Road, Bangor</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Corner of Comber Road/Beechvale Road @Balloo</li> </ul>
<p>You must (select which apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Be a charitable, community and/or voluntary organisation with a valid constitution, as recognised by the council;</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Be Ards and North Down Borough-based or operate within the Ards and North Down area;</li> <li><input type="radio"/> And if a membership organisation, be open to all sections of the community.</li> </ul>
<p>Which of the eligible criteria does your application relate to? (You may select more than one option)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> To raise awareness of charities</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To highlight events directly organised by the Council</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To highlight events financially supported by the Council by means of a grant</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To promote events which are deemed to be significant to tourism</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To mark a significant sporting event in the Borough.</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To commemorate a significant anniversary of, or an event organised by a charity or community organisation which has a significant connection to the Borough.</li> <li><input type="radio"/> To commemorate a major national event or anniversary.</li> </ul>
<p>In addition to failing to meet at least one of the above criteria, a request will be deemed ineligible if it falls into any of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> A display which in officers' opinions is only promoting a commercial interest</li> <li><input type="radio"/> The promotion of an ethos, activity or organisation which is not deemed in the context of communities to be one of the following: shared, neutral or promoting good relations.</li> </ul> <p>Requests may be subject to Equality Screening to establish the latter.</p>	

## ENCLOSURES CHECKLIST

**Failure to provide all essential documents will result in application not being considered.**

Essential documents required	Attached
Group Constitution (signed and dated)	
Diagram or sketch of proposed sign	

## DECLARATION

I/We declare that all the information given is correct.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position in Group: \_\_\_\_\_

**CLOSING DATE:** The deadline for submitting fully completed applications is: **End of September each year. Applications received after this time will not be considered.**

**NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:** THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DETAIL IN ANY APPLICATION FOR COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION RESTS WITH THE APPLICANT.

**INCOMPLETE APPLICATION FORMS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

Completed application forms should be marked for the attention of:

**Parks and Cemeteries Service  
Ards and North Down Borough Council  
2 Church Street  
Newtownards  
BT23 4AP**

Or via email; [ANDParks@ardsandnorthdwn.gov.uk](mailto:ANDParks@ardsandnorthdwn.gov.uk)

### **SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

If you would like to discuss your proposed project, please contact Parks and Cemeteries Unit on **0300 013 3333 ext 40260.**

**This form is available in other formats on request.**



## **DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT**

Ards and North Down Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. Personal information provided to the Council is processed in order to fulfil its obligations under the Together: Building a United Community Strategy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone unless there is a legal requirement to do so. We comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 / General Data Protection Regulation 2018, ensuring that information is collected fairly and lawfully, is accurate, adequate, secure, up to date and not held any longer than necessary.

For further information our Privacy Statement can be viewed at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/privacy-and-cookies> or contact the Data Protection Officer at [dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION STATEMENT**

Ards and North Down Borough Council is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Any information, which comes into the possession of the Council, will be subject to disclosure under the provisions of that Act, unless an exemption applies. Only the Council can make a decision regarding whether information is disclosable or not. In arriving at a decision, the Council will take account of the nature of the information, exemptions provided for in the legislation, opinions of affected third parties and, where applicable, the public interest. If the information is disclosable, the Council has no discretion to prevent its disclosure.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	16 December 2024
File Reference	PCA85
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down in Bloom Grants Policy Review
Attachments	Ards and North Down in Bloom Grants Policy

The purpose of this report is to align the current In Bloom Funding Policy with the Council's new Grants Policy approved by Council in 2024. Also included is a proposed increase in the grant from £1,000 to £1,250 per annum per group. This is following consideration given to the increase in inflation and feedback from community groups.

**Background**

The Ards and North Down in Bloom initiative has been developed with three overlapping objectives which are: horticultural excellence, community participation and environmentally sustainable practices. These are in line with the objectives of national award schemes such as Britain in Bloom and regional awards such as Translink Ulster in Bloom.

Not Applicable

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### **Key Changes**

- General alignment with the Grants Policy approved in 2024
- Expand the remit of the grants to include wider environmental improvements
- Alignment with the Council's Ards & North Down in Bloom Community Competitions and associated objectives.
- Increase from £1000 to £1250 per annum per group – this reflects inflation, feedback and can be covered within existing budgets.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council adopts the attached updated Ards and North Down in Bloom Grants Policy.



**Ards and  
North Down**  
Borough Council

# **Ards and North Down ‘in Bloom’ Funding Policy**

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

<b>Policy Title</b>	Ards and North Down "In Bloom" Funding Policy
<b>Version</b>	V2
<b>Summary</b>	The purpose of this policy is to set out the guidelines and criteria for In Bloom funding applications and how the funding should be utilised.
<b>Source / Author</b>	Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager
<b>Date of Council Approval</b>	Proposed for January 2025
<b>Implementation Date</b>	Proposed for February 2025
<b>Next Review Date</b>	Every 3 years
<b>Officer Responsible for Review</b>	Head of Parks and Cemeteries

### Revision History

<b>Date</b>	<b>Changes Made</b>	<b>Version</b>
April 2019	New Policy Created	V1
January 2024	For discussion at Community & Wellbeing	V2

## 1. Introduction

Ards and North Down Borough Council currently makes budget provision for the allocation of 'one off' in year funding to community groups in order to assist with floral displays in the towns and villages throughout the borough, to assist with the council's commitment to the Ulster In Bloom competition.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the guidelines and criteria for In Bloom funding applications and how the funding should be utilised.

An advert requesting applications will be published in the local press in the January of each year.

Funding availability will be subject to budget approval on an annual basis.

The policy is applied in line with Ards and North Down Borough Council's Grants Policy.

### Grant Timescales

Scheme Open / Advertisement	January
Closing date for submissions	February
Date of Assessment	March
Award and regret letters issued	April
Letter of acceptance received	April
Completion of grant period	September
Claim to be submitted	By end of September
Monitoring Form to be Submitted	November
Close of Scheme	November

## 2. Guidelines

The allocation for funding is intended to compliment the horticultural displays carried out by the councils Parks and Cemeteries Service. This may be in the form of environmental improvements including, planters, flower displays etc. on council or other statutory properties, or privately owned non-domestic areas in public view.

Once submitted, applications will be assessed using set criteria and be subject to council approval.

The maximum limit for floral funding is £1,250 per annum per group. A further grant may be provided for funding, in whole or in part, appropriate liability insurance covering the floral display work over and above the group's normal insured activities. Funding will be allocated with 80% advance payment, with the further 20% paid upon the receipt of invoices.

Council wishes to encourage a collaborative approach by groups, where there are more than one group applying in a town or village, consideration may only be given to one project. For appeals process, please refer to the Council Grants Policy.

### **3. Insurance**

Organisations must demonstrate that appropriate liability insurance is in place to cover the remit of the funded scheme. Depending upon the required cover, an insurance grant may be available. This should be requested on the application form. Insurance cover allocated shall not be more than 40% of the total grant requested.

In order to facilitate the payment of insurance grant, applicants will be required to demonstrate:

- The need for insurance cover
- The extent of insurance cover
- A valid invoice, or
- A paid invoice.

On receipt of the above, the council will consider the extent of grant which can be paid. All such grants will be subject to the availability of appropriate budgets.

### **4. Criteria for Funding**

Applications will be required to demonstrate how they meet the following criteria:

- Provide a vision as to how the funding will enhance the particular area and how this will be sustained in subsequent years.
- Evidence of approval from relevant landowner where works are to be carried out.
- When appropriate insurance liability cover is in place, copy of certificate and schedule to be submitted.
- How the works are to be carried out, and by whom.
- Detailed breakdown of how funding will be utilised, and receipts submitted accordingly.

In addition, that the application adheres to the Ards and North Down in Bloom four core objectives i.e.

- to increase environmental responsibility
- to strive for horticultural excellence in public, business and residential areas
- to encourage community participation
- to support endeavours to achieve regional and national awards such as Ulster in Bloom

If the grants are oversubscribed, a percentage reduction to all successful applicants may be applied, or allocation of funds to successful applicants until the maximum available funding is reached, i.e. based on ranked scores.

## 5. What the Council will not fund

- Projects, events, activities undertaken, or equipment purchased outside the specified award period
- Projects, events, and activities where the primary benefit is outside the Borough
- Events, projects or activities which conflict with any Council run project, event or activity
- Organisations not legally established in the UK
- Projects, events, activities not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives

## 6. Evaluation of Application

### Application assessment process

- Received applications will be acknowledged in writing (which includes email);
- Fully completed and signed applications received by the closing date and time will be assessed against the criteria detailed in the application pack by an assessment panel;
- Assessment panels will apply a minimum pass mark of 50%; marking criteria will be detailed in the grant criteria and supporting guidance notes; details of a situation where the amount of grant funding exceeds the available grant budget will be outlined in the grant criteria and supporting guidance notes; and
- All applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of the assessment process.

**Grant retention:** 10% of the award may be withheld until the applicant has submitted all financial claims and monitoring information.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Council is required to monitor the progress of all projects, events and activities supported through grant aid. To support this, this grant scheme requests two photographs in addition to receipts during claims process.

**Marketing:** Successful applicants will be required to acknowledge the contribution made by the Council, in proportion to the level of funding awarded. Therefore, Council's branding and messaging must be included in all relevant marketing materials including flyers, programmes, posters, banners, advertisements, press releases and social media posts, with final agreement from the Council's Communications Team. In addition, successful applicants will be required to work with Council in promoting 'Ards & North Down in Bloom' and organising a press photo opportunity to promote the funding



## APPENDIX 1

contribution made by the Council. Where grant recipients do not comply with the Council's publicity requirements, 10% of the total grant awarded may be withheld.

## **7. Issuing of Grant Advances**

Depending on the amount of grant awarded advance payments can be issued by the Council where a specific written request is submitted demonstrating the need for the payment. The need for an advance payment may require a projected cash flow for the life of the project, along with an up-to-date bank statement.

For awards:

- up to £500 the full amount can be paid in advance;
- up to £1000, up to 50% can be paid in advance.

## **8. Additional Support for Applicants**

Council officers will provide support for applicants via online workshops produced to advise potential applicants on the purpose of the grant and the application process.

The policy has been screened by the Council's Equality Working Group. No negative impacts were identified and the policy was screened out for EQIA.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 5

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	13 December 2024
File Reference	LS/LA9
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	Tennis Court Provision- Response to Notice of Motion
Attachments	Appendix 1: Key factors affecting tennis hard court facilities Appendix 2: Overview of potential costs of development

**Background**

In May 2024 the following decision was agreed by Council as a result of a Notice of Motion:

*“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 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.”*

ANDBC has a large number of tennis courts across its estate which are operated by the Council’s Leisure Services section to cater for a wide range of users including

## Not Applicable

individual casual users, families and clubs, across a wide range of abilities from beginners to elite competitors.

The tennis courts, which are situated widely across the Borough, are provided in a number of different formats, with either a tarmac or an astroturf surface and may be either a free to use or bookable/paid for facility. This provision is a key aspect of Leisure's delivery towards meeting core tenets of the Council's Corporate Plan in helping to improve health and wellbeing and aid in the promotion of active lifestyles. This is particularly seen in the smaller towns of the borough where larger leisure venues are not feasible, and the tennis courts provide a measure of equality of opportunity for all residents. The leisure strategy which is currently being compiled will highlight the aspirations of Council to continue to provide leisure facilities and to further develop opportunities in collaboration with key stakeholders including sport clubs where appropriate.

A recent review of public tennis courts in NI carried out by Ulster Tennis demonstrates that Ards and North Down Borough Council is home to significantly more public use tennis courts than any other NI Council areas, accounting for 41 of the 158 public courts in Northern Ireland.

The following table details the locations of the current ANDBC tennis facility portfolio.

Location	Facilities provided
Helens Bay	3 no. painted tarmac courts
Commons, Donaghadee	3 no. floodlit artificial turf courts
Cloughey	3 no. floodlit artificial turf courts
Ward Park	8 no. artificial turf courts (2 floodlit) (Excludes two assigned for playground relocation)
Comber Leisure Centre	4 no. artificial turf courts (2 floodlit, within airdrome)
Portaferry Sports Centre	1 acrylic multi use court
Kingsland, Ballyholme	4 no. painted tarmac courts
Seapark, Holywood	4 no. painted tarmac courts
Ballywalter	2 no. tarmac courts
Groomsport	2 no. tarmac courts
Greyabbey	2 no. tarmac courts
ABMWLC, Newtownards	3 no. artificial turf indoor courts

The Ulster Tennis report also demonstrates that, many of the ANDBC courts are in poor condition. Condition surveys have been undertaken across the Council's tennis portfolio and these have identified that a large portion of the tennis estate in the

Not Applicable

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Borough is approaching the end of useable life. Officers and Elected Members have received numerous complaints about the poor condition of the courts in recent times.

### **Proposed Programme of Works**

As with all aspects of the Council's estates portfolio, it is necessary to consider the lifecycle of our tennis courts, continuing to plan and invest in order to ensure that Council can continue to provide these valuable assets for the Community. By investing in the refurbishment of the tennis estate more people may use the facilities, and contribute to the objectives as detailed in the leisure strategy.

As part of the 2024/25 rate setting process, Leisure Officers submitted an Artificial Sports Pitch (and artificial tennis courts) Replacement Strategy proposing the implementation of a rolling replacement programme covering the next ten-year period. Those courts within the tennis estate which have artificial turf surfaces were considered as part of that strategy, with 4 no. courts at Ward Park and 2no. courts at Comber LC prioritised for replacement in this financial year. These 6 courts have been included in recent tender exercise with a view to completing the works in the coming months. The remaining artificial turf courts will be prioritised in line with this strategy over the next number of financial year(s).

Consequently, there remains 18 hard surface courts across 7 facilities which need to be considered for future renovations/replacement, taking into account several factors including current condition, current usage levels, operating model, future need and cost for renovation/replacement. Appendix 1. Provides an overview of the key factors affecting each facility and these are further developed in the section below. Appendix. 2 provides an overview of costs associated with the proposed renovation for each facility.

An outline of provision at each of these sites and the proposed action to be taken is presented below.

### **Groomsport**

Groomsport tennis facility is comprised of 2 no. tarmacadam, free to use public courts. These courts were closed for renovation (June 2024) due to health and safety concerns raised over the stability of the court surface. During this closure, the tarmacadam surface was re-laid, fencing was repaired and tennis nets/posts were replaced. This refurbishment has been well received by the local population with the facility being well used since it reopened. Given that this work has been completed, it is proposed that Groomsport tennis courts do not need to be considered for further renovation at this time. It is proposed that cleaning and repainting of these courts is considered as part of Leisure's revenue budgets at a cost of circa £7,000 every 3-5 years to ensure that the courts realise their potential 20-year lifespan.

### **Seapark, Holywood**

Currently, there are 2 operational painted tarmacadam tennis courts at Seapark, Holywood, with a further 2 courts which were decommissioned in 2018 due to the poor condition of the surface. The courts are operated by NCLT, are bookable/chargeable on a seasonal basis during the months of April to September (inc.) and free of charge during the months of October to March (inc.) There is no Tennis Club currently associated with this facility and usage is quite low even during

Not Applicable

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the traditionally busy summer periods. In April 2024, Council released an Expression of Interest for Padel Tennis at Seapark, inviting proposals from interested external organisations with appropriate commercial expertise and experience to develop and operate a Padel Tennis (which is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK) facility at the location. Officers are currently progressing this project, with a view to progress a procurement exercise in spring 2025. Given that this work is currently underway, it is proposed that Seapark courts are not considered for major renovation at this time. However the two currently usable courts will be maintained to provide the current level of provision until such times as the Padel Tennis project is developed.

### **Portaferry Sport Centre**

The multiuse court at Portaferry Sport Centre is deemed to be in good condition and does not require significant refurbishment at this time. It is also worth considering that the proposed location of the Peninsula multi sport 3G pitch is adjacent to this site and therefore, similar to Seapark Hollywood it would not be appropriate to invest in this facility until the 3G pitch development is sufficiently progressed to determine future needs.

### **Helens' Bay**

Helens Bay tennis facility is comprised of 3 no. painted tarmac courts which are in relatively poor condition with damage to courts surface and surrounding fencing. The facility is operated by AND Leisure and is extensively utilised by Helens Bay Tennis Club for club training and matches. The courts are also available for hire by the general public through a current agreement with the Club who facilitate this usage.

It is notable that Helens Bay is the only Council operated tennis facility that has a registered tennis club based at it that does not have an artificial turf court surface or flood lights, with Donaghadee Lawn Tennis Club registered at Commons, Donaghadee and Cloughey Tennis Club registered at Cloughey Tennis Courts. In recent years there have been numerous requests made by Helens Bay Tennis Club to Council Officers, requesting that the facilities at Helens Bay are updated and brought in line with those available to the other tennis clubs mentioned above. It is expected that by upgrading of the court surface and adding flood lighting to the facility, Helens Bay Tennis Club could increase the amount of training/coaching available, allow members to play at a higher level, grow, attract new players/members and hence positively benefit the local community. It is proposed to add Helens Bay tennis courts to the facility list on the Artificial Sports Pitch replacement strategy which has already received approval and progress with the upgrade at this location in line with the prioritisation process within that strategy and develop the site in collaboration with the Club with the aim of having a facility similar to the Clubs at Cloughey and Donaghadee. This will then be maintained as part of the artificial pitch/court maintenance strategy already approved. This type of initiative is very much in line with the themes developed as part of the forthcoming leisure strategy.

### **Kingsland, Ballyholme**

Currently, there are 2 operational painted tarmacadam tennis courts at Kingsland, Bangor, with a further 2 courts which have been decommissioned due to poor condition. The courts that remain in use at this location are deemed to be in poor condition, with damage evidenced to the court surfaces and surrounding fencing.

## Not Applicable

The courts are operated by NCLT, on a free to use basis. There is no club currently associated with this facility.

It should be noted that there are a several alternative tennis facilities located in Bangor, with 10 Council owned artificial turf tennis courts located at Ward Park (8 of which are currently operational) and 6 artificial turf courts at the privately operated Bangor Lawn Tennis Club at Farnham Road. It follows that the provision of two free to use tarmac courts at Kingsland are sufficient to meet the demand for tennis in the area.

It is therefore proposed that two courts that are currently in operation at this location are renovated, bringing them up to a safe and acceptable standard, complementing the other free to use sports facilities in the area (footgolf, frisbee golf and childrens' playpark). This would bring this facility into line with free to use recreational facilities at Greyabbey, Groomsport and Ballywalter. The remaining two closed courts could then be considered for potential realisation of other leisure opportunities, linking with the upcoming Bangor waterfront development project.

A business case for the refurbishment of the two courts is to be developed and a cost of circa. £58,750 would be expected. It is proposed that, after replacement, cleaning and repainting of these courts is considered as part of Leisure's revenue budgets at a cost of circa £7,000 every 3-5 years to ensure that the courts realise their potential 20 year lifespan.

**Ballywalter**

Ballywalter tennis facility is comprised of 2 no. tarmac, free to use public courts, operated by AND Leisure. These courts are deemed to be in poor condition currently with evidence of damage to both the courts surface and surrounding fencing. Whilst there is no current usage information for these courts, they are seen to be a valuable asset for the local community, complementing the beach and playpark in a rural town with few alternatives for active leisure activity.

It is therefore proposed that two courts that are currently in operation at this location are renovated, bringing them up to a safe and acceptable standard for continued use. A business case for this work is to be developed and a cost of circa. £48,670 would be expected. It is proposed that, after replacement, cleaning and repainting of these courts is considered as part of Leisure's revenue budgets at a cost of circa £7,000 every 3-5 years to ensure that the courts realise their potential 20 year lifespan.

**Greyabbey**

Greyabbey tennis facility is comprised of 2 no. tarmac, free to use public courts, located beside Greyabbey Community Centre operated by AND Leisure. These courts are deemed to be in poor condition currently with evidence of damage to both the courts surface and surrounding fencing. Whilst there is no current usage figures available for these courts, they are seen to be a valuable asset for the local community in a rural town with few alternatives for active leisure activity.

It is therefore proposed that two courts that are currently in operation at this location are renovated, bringing them up to a safe and acceptable standard for continued

Not Applicable

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use. A business case for this work is to be developed and a cost of circa. £46,540 would be expected. It is proposed that, after replacement, cleaning and repainting of these courts is considered as part of Leisure's revenue budgets at a cost of circa £7,000 every 3-5 years to ensure that the courts realise their potential 20-year lifespan.

In summary ANDBC has the most extensive portfolio of tennis court provision spread throughout the Borough when compared with other Council areas in Northern Ireland. The recently approved artificial surfaces maintenance plan will ensure those courts that currently have this type of surface will continue to be maintained to the highest standard to facilitate Club and recreational use in-line with the aims of both the current Corporate Plan and the forthcoming leisure strategy. This report details the remaining courts across the Borough and proposes a similar refurbishment process with an initial capital expenditure of approximately £280,000 and a further approx. £28,000 every three to five years for repainting/maintenance.

The report also proposes that the Courts at Ballywalter, Greyabbey, Groomsport and Kingsland remain free to use to encourage leisure pursuits whilst the higher standard and more costly courts are located where there is Club and casual demand for a higher standard which will then incur charges comparable with other chargeable leisure facilities.

In regards to the Notice of Motion request to market the tennis facilities, the Council's Leisure team and NCLT/SERCO undertook a campaign of promotion of tennis facilities on social media and through direct contact with Members throughout the Summer and this will be continued in the future.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the update report to the Notice of Motion and approves the proposals for the way forward, subject to the annual rates setting process and approval of the Outline Business Cases as highlighted in the report.



## APPENDIX 1

Location	No. Courts	Surface Type	No. Courts in Use	Current Condition	Floodlights	Operating Model	Operated By	Tennis Club Present	Other facility available nearby
Helens Bay	3	painted tarmac	3	Poor	No	Hire	Leisure AND	Yes	Yes
Portaferry Sports Centre	1	acrylic	1	Fair	Yes	Hire	Leisure AND	No	Yes
Kingsland, Ballyholme	4	painted tarmac	2	Poor (2 closed)	No	Free to Use	NCLT	No	Yes
Seapark, Holywood	4	painted tarmac	2	Poor (2 closed)	No	Hire (summer) Free to Use (remainder of year)	NCLT	No	No
Ballywalter	2	tarmac	2	Poor	No	Free to Use	Leisure AND	No	No
Groomsport	2	tarmac	2	Good	No	Free to Use	Leisure AND	No	No
Greyabbey	2	tarmac	2	Poor	No	Free to Use	Leisure AND	No	No

APPENDIX 2

Location	Bitmac Area m2	Bitmac Cost per m2	Bitmac total	Fencing (m)	Fencing cost per lin m	Fencing total	Number of fence gates	Fence gate single leaf cost	Gate total	Number of courts to paint	Painting cost per court	Total Painting cost	Artificial turf cost per m2	Artificial turf total	Lighting	Total
Helens Bay	1585	£ 20.00	£ 31,700.00	160	£ 110.00	£ 17,600.00	1	£ 900.00	£ 900.00	na	na		£ 20.00	£ 31,700.00	£ 45,000.00	£ 126,900.00
Kingsland, Ballyholme	1330	£ 20.00	£ 26,600.00	185	£ 110.00	£ 20,350.00	2	£ 900.00	£ 1,800.00	2	£ 5,000.00	£ 10,000.00	na	na		£ 58,750.00
Ballywalter	1146	£ 20.00	£ 22,920.00	135	£ 110.00	£ 14,850.00	1	£ 900.00	£ 900.00	2	£ 5,000.00	£ 10,000.00	na	na		£ 48,670.00
Greyabbey	1056	£ 20.00	£ 21,120.00	132	£ 110.00	£ 14,520.00	1	£ 900.00	£ 900.00	2	£ 5,000.00	£ 10,000.00	na	na		£ 46,540.00

£ 280,860.00

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	16 December 2024
File Reference	PCA134
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: n/a
Subject	Clandeboye Park Maintenance and Enhancement - Response to NoM 629
Attachments	None

In September 2024 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council.

*“That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clandeboye road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer-term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed.”*

**Background**

In 2015 a project was completed with the installation of a children’s play park, MUGA, and a recreational grass pitch that met intermediate “adult standard dimensions|” i.e. 90 metres in length and 55 metres wide. The project was delivered on a former grass

## Not Applicable

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open space that included engagement with the local community into the specification of the components of the project.

At the time of its inception, there was no requirement for Leisure Services (or its 3<sup>rd</sup> party service deliverer) to manage any aspect of the facility rental as other intermediate sized pitches within the Borough. Once completed in 2015, the facility was then maintained by the Parks and Cemeteries Service as a free to use pitch with no formal play.

In September 2024, a decision was agreed requesting that the Clandeboye recreation space line marking, and goal posts be reinstated and a report on enhancing site be produced. The purpose of this report is to focus on the recreational grass pitch and will look at options for the future provision of the facility along with projected costings.

From its inception, the pitch has been subjected to significant anti-social activity including dog walkers not picking up after their animals, unattended dogs digging up the surface, commercial dog training operators, golf users and in some cases motorcycle usage. In addition, the pitch was constructed as a sand-based playing surface, this has compounded the anti-social issues and associated damage. This sand-based playing surface is not appropriate for the location or for the intended community use. Sand-based pitches would normally be used with built in watering systems and played within more professional football circles.

These issues have significantly impacted on the quality of the playing surface to the point whereby it was unsafe for play and is currently used as a grass recreational space. Throughout the history of this site the space has seen many periods of no play due to anti-social activity and the vulnerability of the sand-based structure of the pitch. Goal posts were last in place in Spring 2021, but due to the condition of the pitch and for Health and Safety reasons they were removed.

The posts themselves were decommissioned as they did not meet the appropriate British Standards i.e. the Goal Posts did not conform or were tested to BSEN748:2004 and BSEN16579:2018. Although the football pitch was designed for adults, in reality the pitch has mostly been played on by younger children using only one end of the pitch as a kick-about-area.

Upon recent inspection, while there has been a significant improvement in grass cover on some areas of the pitch and drainage no longer appears to be an issue. There are many areas of weakness, and damaging activity including dogs digging holes continues to be a significant issue. At present it is not possible to erect posts as requested at pitch without further investment in the pitch and appropriate agreement from the local community as to their requirements, given the investment required.

To address the issues raised in the Notice of Motion, Officers have developed several options for consideration and will now engage with the local community in this regard in order to deliver a fit for purpose facility that best meets the local needs.

### Proposed Options

- **Option One** - Retain as a recreational grass area with no provision for formal sport through the erecting of football posts. This option would provide

## Not Applicable

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opportunity for further engagement with residents and other key stakeholders as to the use of the area. Some possible examples include provision of community event space, a seating area or community garden and orchard.

- Informal play and sport can continue
  - Opportunity to maximise community use.
  - No additional costs.
  - This does not meet the requirements of the Notice of Motion
- **Option Two** - Reinstate as a recreation grass pitch to intermediate dimensions with full size goal posts. It should be noted that this would be for informal play and would not meet league requirements due to lack of changing facilities. The pitch will also be subject to closure periods to allow for seasonal renovation works. The pitch must be a minimum of 90m in length with a minimum width of 55m to meet this standard. Significant investment would be required to get the pitch into a safe and playable condition with ongoing annual costs. Work required is summarised below.
    - Year 1 costs of approximately £42,000 (subject to procurement exercise) to get the pitch into a playable condition in order to meet full size safety standards. Costs would also include purchase and erection of full-sized goalposts and any necessary ball-stop fences. Due to the nature of the improvements required it is envisaged that work would not be completed until late autumn of 2025.
    - Significant annual maintenance (£27,000 per annum) will be required due to the nature of a sand-based playing surface and a specialist contractor would need to be used. Sand-based pitches are not suitable for community use as they 'dig-up' too quickly in winter and in Summer are too hard to play on without aeration.
    - As existing grass heights would need to be lowered, this would weaken the sand-based pitch if misuse and/or community play is undertaken.
    - Due to the nature of the pitch setup, daily inspections would be required, as staff would be unaware of user play times. Pitches on this type (intermediate dimension) within the Borough would normally have shared inspections with league club referees, but this is not possible due to the non-bookable status of the pitch.
    - If the present anti-social behavior was to continue it may not be possible to continue sustained usage without significant further investment i.e. security fencing around the pitch may be required and period of no play would be inevitable.
    - Due to end of season maintenance requirements a decision on either summer or winter play would need to be made i.e. no continuous play is possible.
    - This pitch size would not be suitable for younger children or informal play.
    - Although this option meets the requirements of the Notice of Motion, it cannot be recommended by Officers as previous attempts to provide an intermediate dimension pitch has failed for reasons identified above. In

## Not Applicable

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addition, this option is a significant Health & Safety risk for the present users i.e. children under 16 years of age and does not meet their recreation or play and sporting needs.

- **Option Three** - Reinstate the recreational grass pitch to create one small-sided games pitch across the site. The site dimensions would allow for a standard 7-aside pitch, using approximately half of the green space. This type of facility is more conducive to community-based facilities like that of Clandeboye Road.

Providing one small-sided games pitch means the post can be moved to the other side of the site during renovation works, allowing for year-round provision.

- Approx. Year One Costs: £7,500. Costs would also include purchase and erection of small-sided games goalposts.
- Due to the limited nature of the improvements required it is envisaged that work could be completed by spring of 2025.
- Limited additional maintenance will be required and can be met within existing revenue budgets.
- As existing grass heights would be maintained, this would protect the sand-based pitch from misuse and community play.
- Due to the nature of 7-aside pitches no or limited lines can be used compared to a full-sized pitch.
- It is envisaged that a ball stop fence is not required.
- The existing surface requires limited additional annual improvements and can be carried out in house and within existing budgets.
- Due to informal nature of the pitch setup and associated risks, weekly inspections would be required.
- All year-round play can be accommodated as posts can be moved to accommodate end of season maintenance.
- This meets most elements of the Notice of Motion

The above options are summarised below.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Additional Costs in Year 1	£0	£42,000	£7,500
Additional Costs per annum	£0	£27,000	£0
Additional Maintenance Work in Year 1	n/a	External	Internal
Additional Maintenance Work per annum	n/a	External	Internal
Maintenance – Low or High?	Low	High	Low
Suitable for Informal / Formal Play?	Informal	Formal	Either
Safety Risk	Low	High	Low
Number of Users per game	n/a	22	Up to 14
All year-round play	Yes	No	Yes
Implementation Date	Immediate	Autumn	Spring

Finally, Officers have met with Elected Members for the area on a number of occasions and discussed these ideas, and it was widely accepted that a formal grass pitch to

Not Applicable

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intermediate dimensions with changing facilities to enable competitive league play was not what was originally envisaged.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the above and agrees to progress option three which reinstates a suitable and realistically manageable community pitch at Clandeboye Park and that community consultation will then be carried out in relation to all of the options and that officers will bring back a further report on the longer term way forward.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	09 December 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 December 2024)
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Successful Coach Education Report for Noting Appendix 2 - Successful Goldcard Report for Noting Appendix 3 - Successful Individual Travel Accommodation Report for Noting Appendix 4 - Successful Schools Sports Club Pathway Report for Noting

Members will be aware that on the 26 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 up to £1,000. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2024/2025 revenue budget for this purpose. In October 2024, Officers advised Members that an additional sum of circa £11,000 could be required above the £45,000 budget agreed for 2024/25 to meet the expected level of applications based on current trends of the grants scheme year to date and subsequently, Council approved the



Not Applicable

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allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year with the surplus being sourced from the ABMWLC surplus income targets.

During November 2024, the Forum received a total of 7 applications: 1 Coach Education, 3 Goldcards, 2 Individual Travel Accommodation Grants and 1 Schools Sports Club Pathway Grant. A summary of the 7 successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Coach Education, Successful Goldcard, Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation and Successful Schools Sports Club Pathway Appendices.

<b>2024/25 Budget £45,000</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Proposed Funding Awarded November 2024</b>	<b>Remaining Budget</b>
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	<b>-£1,999.90</b>
Coach Education	£3,000	*£200	<b>£1,195.00</b>
Equipment	£14,000	£0	<b>*-£5,289.41</b>
Events	£6,000	£0	<b>£869.46</b>
Seeding	£500	£0	<b>£500</b>
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£350	<b>-£5,465.07</b>
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	<b>£1,000</b>
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	*£430	<b>£4,570</b>
<b>3 Goldcards Awarded in October (46 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)</b>			

\*The proposed remaining budget for Coach Education of **£1,195.00** is based on a proposed award this month of **£200** and withdrawn costs of **£500**.

\*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£5,289.41** is based on reclaimed costs of **£328.91**.

\*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£5,465.07** is based on a proposed award this month of **£350** and withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£881.57**.

The proposed remaining budget for Schools Sports Club Pathway of **£4,570** is based on a proposed award this month of **£430**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 is **-£4,619.92** (110% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the November 24 grants that have been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in line with the Councils Grant Policy effective from 5 December 2024.

## APPENDIX 1 - SUCCESSFUL COACH EDUCATION REPORT FOR NOTING

NAME	COURSE	BENEFITS	FACILITATOR	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Comber Rec Ladies (1691)	First Aid Course. Running this course would allow 16 of our volunteers to be fully equipped with the essential skills to respond effectively to emergencies, ensuring the health and well-being of our players. Having qualified first aiders enhances the confidence of parents and players, knowing that their safety is prioritised. This can help with player retention and attract new members, as families see our commitment to creating a secure and supportive environment.	Being able to host the course locally removes barriers to participation, such as travel costs or time constraints. By investing in first aid training, we are fostering a culture of safety, responsibility, and professionalism, strengthening our club's overall infrastructure for the long term.	Paul Berry Group Training. Health & Safety Training Provider of the Year, Northern Ireland Prestige Awards 2022 / 2023.	Monday 13 January, 6- 9pm	£200.00	£200.00	<b>All documentation provided. Recommend funding of £200.</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>						<b>£200.00</b>	

## APPENDIX 2 - SUCCESSFUL GOLDCARD REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	GOLDCARD	REPRESENTING	PROPOSED	NOTES
Brooke Gilmore (1686)	Water Polo	ASA Tournament, Walsall Gala Baths, Tower Street, Walsall	7-8 December 2024	BA - Gym & Pool	Ireland 2011 Team	Yes	<b>Brooke has been selected to represent Ireland, this has been confirmed by an email from Swim Ireland. Brooke will be competing at the ASA Tournament from 7-8 December 2024. Goldcard recommended until 31 March 2025.</b>
Sarah McKillen (1688)	Futsal	UEFA European Championships 2026	May, 2026	ABM and CLC (Gym and Health Suite)	Northern Ireland	Yes	<b>Sarah has been selected to represent Northern Ireland, this has been confirmed by a selection letter from the IFA. Sarah will be competing in friendly matches during 2025, this is preparation for the UEFA European Championships 2026. Goldcard recommended until 15 November 2025.</b>

Erin McConnell (1692)	Triathlon	World Triathlon Championships Finals, Wollongong, Australia	15-19 October 2025	ABM & BA (Gym, Health Suite & Pool)	Ireland	Yes	<b>A letter from Triathlon Ireland confirms Erin is a member of Ireland’s Senior Ladies Triathlon Squad and is working towards various events in 2025 including the World Triathlon Championships Finals. Earning a place to compete in the LA Olympic Games 2028 is a key focus for Erin. Recommend Goldcard until 19 October 2025.</b>
						3	

## APPENDIX 3 - SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	LOCATION	REPRESENTING2	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Brooke Gilmore (1687)	Water Polo	ASA Tournament	7-8 December 2024	Walsall Gala Baths, Tower Street, Walsall	Ireland 2011 Team	£150	£150	Brooke has been selected to represent Ireland, this has been confirmed by an email from Swim Ireland. Brooke will be competing at the ASA tournament from 7-8 December 2024. Recommend funding of £150.
Ellen Robinson (1690)	Hockey	Nkosi Cup 2024	13 - 17 December 2024	Wynberg Military Base, Cape Town, South Africa	Ireland	£200	£200	Ellen is representing Ireland at the Nkosi Cup 2024 in South Africa from 13-17 December 2024. This has been confirmed by a selection letter from Hockey Ireland. Recommend funding of £200.
<b>TOTALS</b>							<b>£350.00</b>	

## APPENDIX 4 - SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS/SPORTS CLUB PATHWAY REPORT FOR NOTING

NAME	SPORT	NEED	OUTCOMES	DETAIL	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Comber Rec Ladies (1689)	Comber Rec Ladies School Club Link with Comber PS. Target Group - Girls aged 6-11 years / 14 pupils in each block, 1 coach. Further Programme Details: 1:45-2:45pm P2-3, 2:45-3:45pm P4-5/6-7, girls only specific target group, 5 week block Finishing with a Club based "Give it a go" event in Dome.	Comber Rec Ladies can provide both participation and performance pathway opportunities for girls in the Comber area to participate in football training and matches, creating a link with this local school will open up a pathway by introducing many girls who may not previously have considered giving football a go. CRLFC provides training and match opportunities for girls aged from 6 plus, the school club link would allow us to develop more 'turn up and play' casual participation opportunities.	10 x school based hours of quality football coaching to 40 primary school age girls, Delivery of a club experience evening hoping to convert minimum 15% into club players. It is hoped that new players will join the club encouraging them to develop a lifelong interest in physical activity, and sharing in the benefits of living a healthy active lifestyle, as well as the social benefits of belonging to a local family oriented community club. For the club, it is hoped that we can add players to our existing squads, and potentially create new teams to add to opportunities.	Coach £300 + Dome Hire £80 + Refreshments £50 = £430	£430.00	£430.00	<b>All documentation provided. Recommend funding of £430.</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>						<b>£430.00</b>	

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	14 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	16 December 2024
File Reference	CW4
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Play Provision in Ballyhalbert – Response to NoM 598
Attachments	None

In November 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council.

*“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 officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children”*

Council Officers have met with the Principal of the Victoria Primary School and a representative from the Education Authority regarding the piece of land at the front of the school, which is currently a grassed area. The Principal and Education Authority Officer confirmed that the school currently use this piece of land for school sports and curriculum activities that can be carried out outdoors, as they have limited useable land around the rest of the school for such activities. They also facilitate community events on this piece of land, such as a family fun day over the summer. They are

## Not Applicable

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currently considering their requirements for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, which may require additional accommodation space and a potential reconfiguration of the site. Given the current and potential future requirements of the school they would not be able to consider any alternative use of this piece of land at present.

In relation to the current play park in front of the school and its potential refurbishment, the timing for this is determined by the annual Independent Inspectors Report, which outlines the worst scoring play parks across the Borough, with those with the lowest scores being prioritised for refurbishment, this approach is outlined in the current Play Strategy. This play park has not yet featured as one of the lowest scoring play parks, therefore it will not be refurbished until it is identified as one of the lowest scoring play parks.

As outlined in the Play Strategy this play park has been identified for a Tier upgrade from its current Tier 2 to a Tier 1 to better serve the population in Ballyhalbert and increase the tourism potential of the area. A separate report will be brought to Council in due course outlining the refurbishment list for 2025/2026 within available budgets.

In relation to the enhancement of recreation and sports facilities for the village and surrounding area, Officers will, subject to the rates setting process regarding the required budget, progress a feasibility study in financial year 2025/2026. If a budget is approved, the study will assess availability of land in the area that could be used for sport and recreation. It will furthermore consider the practicality of any proposals, analysing their viability and potential cost implications. Once the feasibility report is complete, a further report will be brought to Council on the findings.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the above report and that officers will consider the delivery of a Tier 1 play park at the current location in front of the Victoria Primary School when it is identified for refurbishment in the Independent Inspectors Annual Report, subject to the rates setting process in line with available budgets and external funding opportunities as they arise.



Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	13 December 2024
File Reference	CW30
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: N/A
Subject	North Down Coastal Path Working Group
Attachments	Minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 30 September 2024

The meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group was held on 30 September 2024. The minutes of this meeting are attached for members information.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note the attached minutes.

## **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday 30 September 2024 at 6:00 pm.

**PRESENT:**

- Councillor Ray McKimm (Chairman)
- Alderman Alan Graham
- Alderman Martin McRandal
- Councillor Christine Creighton
- Councillor Alex Harbinson
- Councillor Stephen Hollywood
- Councillor Wesley Irvine
- Councillor Carl McClean
- Councillor Gillian McCollum
- Councillor Barry McKee
- Ms Marianne Kennerley (Boom Inc! / Boom Studios)
- Ms Alison McQueen (For Another Path)
- Mr James Hunter (Greenspaces Bangor)
- Mr David Lennon (Friends of Columbanus, Bangor)
- Mr Stephen McCrory (Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign Group)

**Officers:** Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Parks & Cemeteries (S Daye), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

### **1. APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillor McCracken, Councillor Creighton, Councillor Irwin and Councillor Cochrane.

**NOTED.**

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest notified.

**NOTED.**

### **3. MINUTES OF NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH WORKING GROUP MEETING DATED 17 JULY 2024**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group meeting dated 17 July 2024.

**AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the minutes be adopted.**

#### **4. SURVEY REPORT AND PRESENTATION**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailed as follows:

##### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

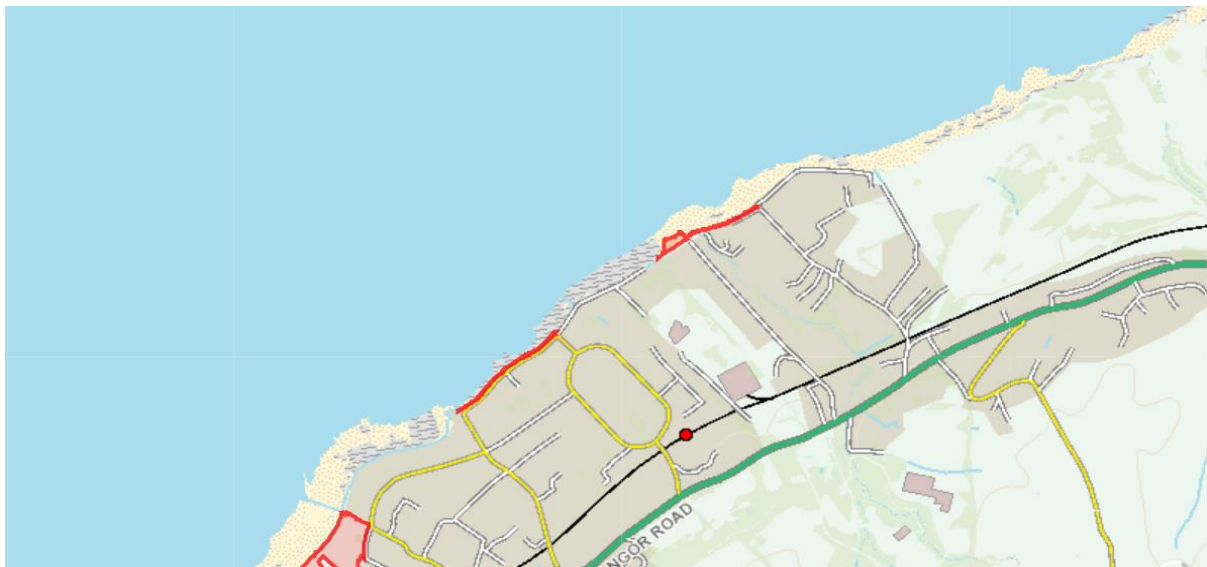
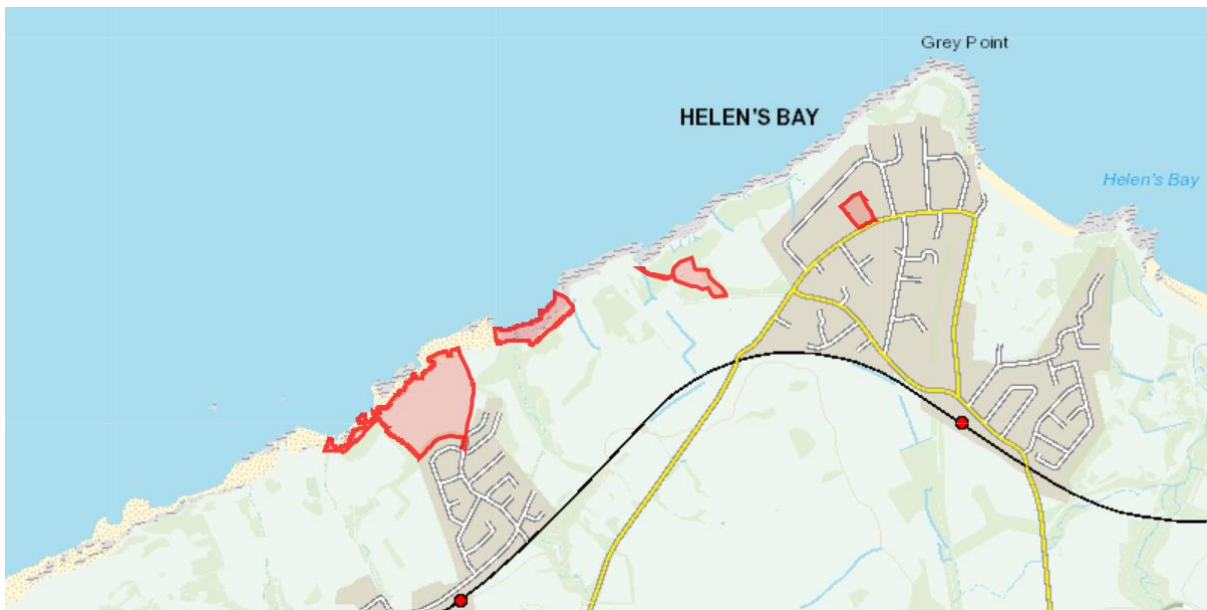
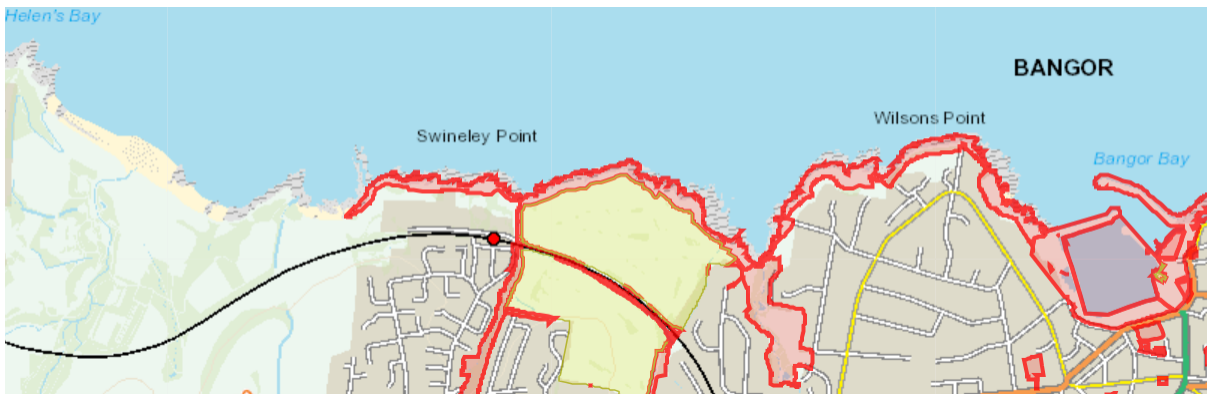
The historical background to the proposed upgrades to the North Down Coastal Path began in 2016 when the Department for Infrastructure published 'A Strategic Plan for Greenways'. Council was developing plans to create a greenway along the path in line with the Strategy until the decision was taken by Members in January 2023 to remove the Greenway project from the North Down Coastal Path and withdraw the planning application which had been submitted.

As part of that decision not to proceed with the planning application and the greenway project (specific to the North Down Coastal Path) Members requested that a Working Group be established to involve Social Partners and Expert Guests. Those represented could include a diverse range of interests in areas such as cycling, walking, environmental and outdoor recreation groups and be made up of people of all backgrounds and ages. It was proposed that the position of Social Partners would be advertised requesting applications from interested parties with up to ten groups being represented. Only one Member would attend from each of those groups to represent its interests.

The Terms of Reference for this Working Group was agreed by Members in September 2023 and the group had now been established with representation from various groups and organisations including For Another Path, Friends of Columbanus, Greenspaces Group, AND Cycle Campaign Group, Bangor Chamber of Commerce Group and Boom Studios Group plus 3 x Town Advisory Groups.

##### **2.0 LAND OWNERSHIP**

It was explained that along the length of the North Down Coastal Path there were 115 plots of land in total of which 78 were registered. The owners included: Ards and North Down Borough Council, Northern Ireland Water, Department for Infrastructure, Ministry of Defence, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Communities, Crown Estate, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and other private landowners some of which were unknown. The land outlined and shaded in red below was that in Council ownership, the images ran from Bangor to Hollywood.





It was highlighted by Members that the issues pertaining to the greenway project included the following:

- Insufficient Revenue Budgets
- Need for better sustained engagement
- Difference between Consultation and Engagement
- Larger survey of users required
- Dedicated Officer for all path networks
- Building a network of support and community champions
- 'One Path Initiative' Workshops / Awareness
- Planning application was too large and complicated
- Need for Non-Technical drawings

Benefits of a well-maintained path resource included:

- Connecting communities
- Providing safe, traffic-free routes
- Safe and easy access to fresh air and exercise
- More people able to journey by foot or bicycle
- Promoting physical/mental health and well-being
- Supporting climate change adoption plans
- Can improve quality of life for everyone
- Can create business opportunities
- Can increase property values

Members at the North Down Coastal Path Working Group in July 2024 agreed a way forward regarding the £150,000 per annum budget, the delivery areas breakdown was as below:

- £80,000 (Path Repairs and Surveys)
- £45,000 (Machinery Maintenance)
- £25,000 (Signage, Promotion and Engagement)

Discussion around the 2025/6 budget would be progressed at the Working Group meeting in September (30<sup>th</sup>) to allow time for the budget setting process in October.

### **3.0 PATH REPAIRS AND SURVEYS**

Many sections of the path needed improvement and repair. Some were minor in nature and others required significant intervention to provide a solution to ensure continued and improved access. In most instances Habitats Regulation Assessment Assent would need to be completed and for most of the rest, planning permission was likely to be required. It would be necessary to submit multiple separate planning applications to address each section that required intervention. Each planning application would require the necessary surveys to accompany them where appropriate such as, but not limited to:

- Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)
- Flora/Habitat Surveys
- Tree Surveys
- Invasive Species Surveys
- Badger Surveys
- Otter Surveys
- Bat preliminary roost assessment Surveys/full bat surveys
- Wintering Bird Surveys
- Fisheries and Aquatic Surveys
- Archaeological surveys
- Geology Surveys
- Topographical Surveys
- Contamination Surveys
- Ground Surveys (stability)
- Flood Risk Assessments
- Drainage Assessments

Each planning application would require the necessary drawings to accompany the application, as well as the required planning fees. Multidisciplinary Consultancy support would be required to advise on what interventions were deemed necessary or possible, to compile the planning applications and undertake the necessary

surveys etc. Therefore, due to budget constraints it was envisaged that potentially only one planning application could be submitted per year and no works could be carried out until a planning decision had been reached, which could take considerable time to achieve. Additional drawings and surveys may be required as part of the planning process if the Statutory Consultees required further information or propose mitigation measures etc. It was also likely that there would be planning conditions attached to the planning decisions that would require to be discharged before any works could take place, such as Construction Environmental Management Plans etc. Multidisciplinary Consultancy support would be required throughout the construction delivery process. It was proposed that due to the number of planning applications that were likely to be required and the number of surveys required, that Council utilised the consultants already procured under the Framework List and also when it came to the construction stages that the already procured contractors are deployed to complete the works (or use their already appointed specialised subcontractors), this would negate the need for multiple and lengthy procurement procedures for the multiple planning applications, surveys and construction works that would be required and allow for efficient delivery of the improvements.

As outlined above in terms of land ownership, if the land was not currently owned by Council, then negotiations and approvals would be required from the respective landowners to submit the planning applications and then carry out the works necessary if approved.

Outlined below was a list of places that could be focused on for improvement initially, this would be periodically reviewed as progress was made.

### 3.1 Smelt Bay



Temporary barriers at the bottom of the path leading down from Downshire Road



### Existing galvanised railings

The temporary fencing could be replaced with galvanised railings, which were in place just to the left of this section. It would provide the necessary barrier to protect people from the drop down beyond and allow for easier maintenance. It was not envisaged that this would require planning permission, but a Habitat Regular Assessment Assent (HRA) may be required. This land was in Council ownership. The rest of the section of this path required maintenance see below in the next section (Machinery and Maintenance)

### **3.2 Swinely Bay**

On the eastern approach to Swinely Bay the tarmac surfacing finished and became gravel and then led down towards a concrete section of path just before the beach at Swinley Bay. The gravel section was owned by Council up to where it became concrete. Potentially this gravel section could be surfaced in tarmac making it more accessible. This was likely to require planning permission or HRA Assent.





Approach from the east looking towards Swinely Bay

Across Swinley Bay there was no path other than a desire line that ran along the vegetation towards the rear of the beach. There was the potential to improve accessibility and connectivity for all users in this section by installing a path. This would require planning permission and landowner approval (the land was privately owned).



Looking west across Swinely Bay/beach

### 3.3 Crawfordsburn Beach

The land around Crawfordsburn Beach was owned by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). On the western edge of the beach the path was narrow, steep and not surfaced. Potentially discussions could have been had with DAERA to improve this by potentially installing a boardwalk to increase the accessibility of this section of the path. Nonslip boards could be used due to the gradient. It was likely that this may require planning permission.



Eastern side of Crawfordsburn Beach

### 3.4 Grey Point Fort

The picture below showed a section of path running from Grey Point Road towards Grey Point Fort approaching from the eastern side.

Where it led down from the road and on towards the Fort it was very steep and narrow.



Towards Grey Point Fort on the Eastern side

This land was owned by the DAERA. Works in this area would require planning permission.

Just past the Fort on the western side the verges of the gravel path had significantly encroached and narrowed the path. Potentially discussions could be entered into with DAERA to see if they could improve these sections of the path. It was likely that HRA Assent may be required for such works.



Beyond Grey Point Fort on the Western side

### **3.5 NI Water Wastewater Treatment Works**

On the eastern approach to the NI Water Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) accessed from Rhanbuoy Park, Seahill, the path was steep, overgrown and narrow.



Eastern approach to the NI Water WWTW



Further towards the NI WWTW towards the door in the wall



Other side of the door

Works could have been undertaken to improve this section of path and make it more accessible. These were likely to require planning permission.



Further to the west of the door

The path along this section could be improved to widen the path to make it more passable and accessible.



Further along across the frontage of the WWTW

The vegetation on the left-hand side could have been removed back to the wall and the gravel topped up to reinstate the path to its original width.

Discussions could be entered into with NI Water to see what improvements could be carried out. It was likely that these improvements may have required planning permission.

### 3.6 Rockport School

There was a section along Rockport school owned by the council and there was no path at present, only a desire line across a grassed area. This could be improved by installing either a gravel path or boardwalk to connect to the tarmac path on the western side and the gravel path on the eastern side. This may have required planning permission and HRA Assent.



Eastern approach towards Rockport School



### 3.7 Royal Belfast Golf Club



Eastern approach to Royal Belfast Golf Club



Directly in front of Royal Belfast Golf Club, Club House

This section of path had narrowed due to vegetation build up along the wall running along the left hand side. If the vegetation was removed it would reinstate the path back to its original width. HRA Assent was likely to be required for this type of work.



Towards the western side of the golf course approaching Station Road



Same section showing damage to the rock armour and the path being undermined.

This section of path needed repaired as it was being undermined by the sea and the rock armour has moved, it is at risk of collapsing. This would require planning permission.

RECOMMENDED that the above works be progressed and worked up as a priority.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries summarised the above report to members through a series of slides and the following points were raised throughout each section of the presentation:

### 3.1 Smelt Bay

Ms McQueen (For Another Path) felt that the temporary barrier installed by NI Water should be replaced with planting rather than a permanent handrail as there was no safety risk. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries would look into that option but advised of a complex process with HRA approval necessary.

### 3.2 Swinley Bay

Mr Hunter (Greenspaces Bangor) asked for clarity on land ownership at Swinley Bay and the Director of Community and Wellbeing explained that only the gravel section on the eastern approach of the footpath was owned by the Council. The Director clarified in response to a further query from Mr Lennon (Friends of Columbanus, Bangor) that the concrete section of the path was unlikely to have been installed by Council and there was no obligation for the Council to maintain it.

Referring to the previous plans for the Greenway, Mr Lennon recalled that a section of path was nine metres in size and that had not included the additional size of the necessary underpinning which he felt would have completely destroyed Swinley Bay. The Director added that it was important to remember those details so there were no

mistakes made in the future. He clarified that most of the land at Swinley Bay was in private ownership.

Councillor McKee queried the extent of the accessibility benefits that the Council was trying to achieve by resurfacing the path on what was a relatively safe incline. He felt that other sections of the path were more extreme and more of a priority. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that this and the other sections identified for improvement works were deemed to be most realistic given Council only owned a small percentage of land on the coastal path. He explained the challenges of Local Government procurement legislation which prevented Council investing financially in privately owned land.

In terms of the gradient, the Chair, as a wheelchair user, felt that unless the Council was able to develop within the guidelines to a maximum incline of 1:12 there was no point as it would not be accessible.

Councillor McClean queried the criteria for ranking the top seven and if it was a preference to build on Council owned land. He also wondered if there was a duty of care for other landowners to maintain their sections of the coastal path to good standards. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries advised that there was a duty of care by other landowners but explained the complexities of improving areas that were privately owned and how that land would need to be procured by Council for it to do anything. He explained that officers hoped to engage with the private landowners and steer them towards available funding streams.

Ms McQueen wondered if there was opportunity to propose other areas outside of the options presented in the report and the Officer explained that the report was just to start an open discussion and the Chair added that the idea was for everyone to contribute.

### **3.3 Crawfordsburn Beach**

Alderman McRandal recognised that the stretch at Crawfordsburn Beach was under DAERA ownership and wondered what the Council could do in terms of development and the officer explained that the intention was to engage with DAERA and work up some proposals.

Mr Lennon understood that DAERA was moving away from investment in permanent structures and was concerned there may be reluctance from the Department here. The officer explained that DAERA did permit planning applications along that path so there were different views though he was unable to comment on DAERA's own spending policy, but in any event it was clear that the boardwalks were coming to the end of their lifespan after 30 years.

### **3.4 Grey Point Fort**

Ms McQueen felt that the word 'improve' was subjective and therefore she was wary about what the suggested improvements would mean for what was a particularly beautiful stretch of the coastal path which she would hate to see tarmacked. Her

concerns had arisen from the previous Greenway plans which she felt would have been a disaster for the area.

The officer emphasised that the report and its content was only to start a discussion at this stage and would only involve doing some basic survey work and costings to bring back options to the Working Group. Before committing tens of thousands of pounds to the work, it was important to get things right and only carry out work that the Working Group was interested in completing. The Chair provided some further reassurance of that process.

Returning to accessibility, Councillor McKee believed that without monumental change, this section of the path could not be improved for disability access but he was aware that there was a very accessible alternative route that circumvented what was a steep incline in this section. He felt that signage could be used here to advise people of the gradient and the alternative route that could be used to avoid it. He hoped officers would keep that in mind and the officer felt that this was an important consideration. He pointed to an example at Cairn Wood that took this approach which could also be applied here.

From a cycling perspective, Mr McCrory highlighted that the stretch of the path was also unsuitable for commuting and he felt that sign posting could be an option to advise cyclist commuters of an alternative more direct route. He felt that this would also help manage the interaction between cyclists and pedestrians in that area.

The Chair appreciated the benefits of having good signage for different types of users but was also mindful of over populating areas with signs. The officer returned to the signage used at Cairn Wood and explained how that had been developed to be subtle. He also pointed to more modern approaches through the use of mobile phone apps for example.

### **3.5 NI Water Wastewater Treatment Works**

Councillor McKee felt this was widely viewed as an area in need of attention but he was wary of environmental concerns due to significant mammal activity at that location. This had been an issue raised in the process that had led to this Working Group being established and the officer recognised the strong feelings in relation to that particular area and given the potential for environmental impacts, felt that it was important to recognise that there were some areas of the coastal path that just could not be made accessible to some people.

### **3.6 Rockport School**

The Chair asked for clarity on the proposals for this section and if it would involve tarmacked paths. The officer advised that the proposal was to make the area more accessible by joining what were known as desire lines to existing tarmac paths.

### **3.7 Royal Belfast Golf Club**

Referring to a section near Royal Belfast Golf Club, Mr Hunter raised concerns about the condition of the path in this area and asked how much of a priority it was. The

Officer explained the huge cost involved in carrying out any improvement works in that area and that it was the roughest part of the coastal path and extremely narrow and impassable in places.

Ms McQueen was aware that Royal Belfast Golf Club was due to undergo works involving some of its land and encouraged officers to have a discussion with the club about those plans.

Alderman McRandal referred to long running sink hole issues at Station Road, Craigavad, but was aware this was privately owned land and questioned whether this would prevent any improvement work being carried out. The officer explained that unless Council purchased the land or acquired a long-term lease it would be unable to invest in the area. Alderman McRandal understood that residents were happy to get the road resurfaced and maintain it but there were bigger longer-term concerns about the gaps in the sea wall and erosion from the sea which was sucking out the contents underneath the road. He wondered if the Council could do anything in terms of acquiring funding for the area from alternative sources as opposed to Council funding it.

The Director advised that the Council had met with residents over the recent months to discuss how it could support them, however paying for the work was not an option. He explained the difficulties and the need to find a balanced solution, recognising that it was a public path that needed to be safe but it also provided vehicular access to residents and that was the main cause of the surface erosion. This was a long-term matter however and he felt that there were less complex 'quick wins' that could be achieved first.

The Director suggested that the Working Group could establish a list of all sections that were at risk of erosion. While some matters would take considerable time before work could be actioned at least those areas would be identified and recorded.

Alderman McRandal felt that it was important to assist landowners in the mitigation of any areas that posed a risk of subsidence.

Returning to Station Road, Alderman Graham recognised that this had been a problem for many years and appreciated the difficulty that residents had in terms of gaining relevant land approvals from various public authorities and he felt that Council should undertake to establish what the challenges were for those residents.

Mr Hunter warned that addressing localised issues often only moved the wider age-old problem of coastal erosion to other locations and warned that it needed to be tackled on a bigger scale, beyond the remit of the Working Group.

Ms McQueen raised a flooding issue at Skippingstone Beach where there was a constant water running from the bin down to the wall. This froze over in the winter and was a safety risk which she asked if it could be addressed. The officer explained that it was raised at a previous meeting and his team were dealing with this.

The Chair thanked the officer for the presentation and asked how Working Group members could add further locations to the list as discussed. It was explained that

these could be brought under Any Other Notified Business before 5pm on the last working day before the day of meeting.

Referring to the information boards, Mr Lennon welcomed that the condition of this signage would be addressed given it was an integral part of the Columban Way.

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

Ms McQueen felt that the recommendation did not fully reflect the discussion and suggested that it include the options for members to add the suggested projects to a list for consideration.

The proposer and seconder were content for that to be included.

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the above works be progressed and worked up as a priority, that the other works suggested be recorded in a list of suggested projects, and the list would remain open for additional suggestions from the group.**

## **5. BUDGET & BUSINESS CASES 2025/6 DISCUSSION**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing outlined as follows:

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Following agreement in July 2024 regarding the allocation of £150,000 for the 2024/25 financial year, several work streams were being progressed.

### **2.0 MACHINERY AND MAINTENANCE**

Of the sections that the Council owned, in most part close to Bangor, there had been minimal maintenance on that section with periodic cutting of the verges. Officers walked the path in from Bangor to Holywood on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and it was evident that further maintenance was required in the sections close to Bangor. In places there was up to 50cm of tarmac path along the verges that was currently under encroaching vegetation. It was felt beneficial that this encroachment was removed over the winter months to restore the path to its original width.

Other sections of the path had vegetation overhanging at a height that would require cutting back to keep the path corridor clear and ensure that people could pass safely without brambles and tree branches at head height etc.

Officers were processing the procurement of a hot foam application machine and mechanical sweepers to ensure the build-up of debris and subsequent encroachment of vegetation did not occur again. The hot foam machine would control vegetation along the edge of the path without the need to use herbicide. This type of verge maintenance was standard along the Comber Greenway for example, which for the most part, was undertaken by volunteers and a similar voluntary task

force could be established along this section of the path. Further procurement was being progressed to purchase enhanced cutting equipment to ensure maintenance was completed accurately, efficiently and complimentary to the surrounding landscape.

In the first picture below, you could see a kerb line with vegetation build up along the front. Others showed where the vegetation had encroached onto the sides of the path narrowing it. The verges were being cut periodically, but if removed back to the edge of the tarmac path underneath, it would restore the path to its original width.



Along Carnalea Golf Course



Further along the seaside edge of Carnalea Golf Course



Towards Killaire Road

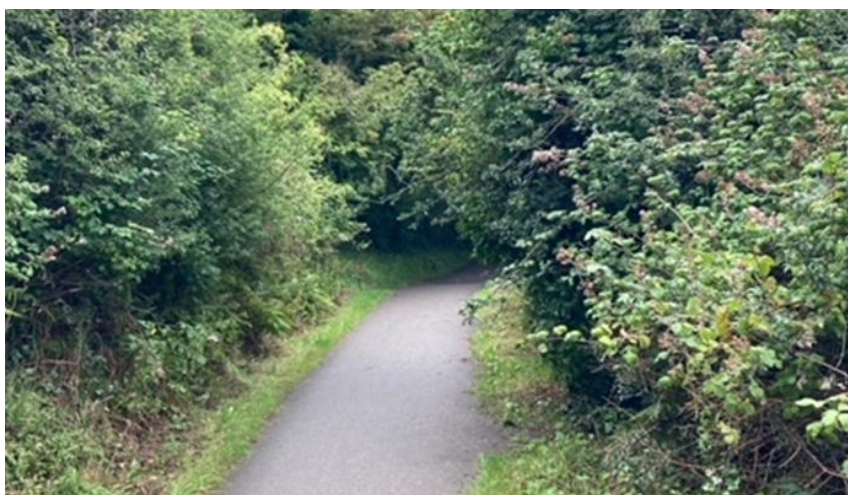


In parallel with Killaire Road





Further along in parallel with Killaire Road



Towards the western end of Killaire Road

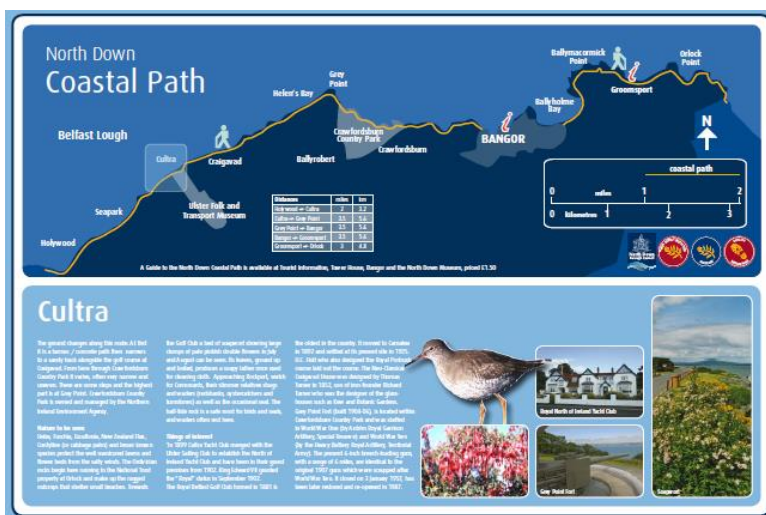
### **3.0 SIGNAGE, PROMOTION AND ENGAGEMENT**

During the Officer visit on 9th August 2024, it was evident that much of the current signage needed to be repaired, updated and/or replaced.

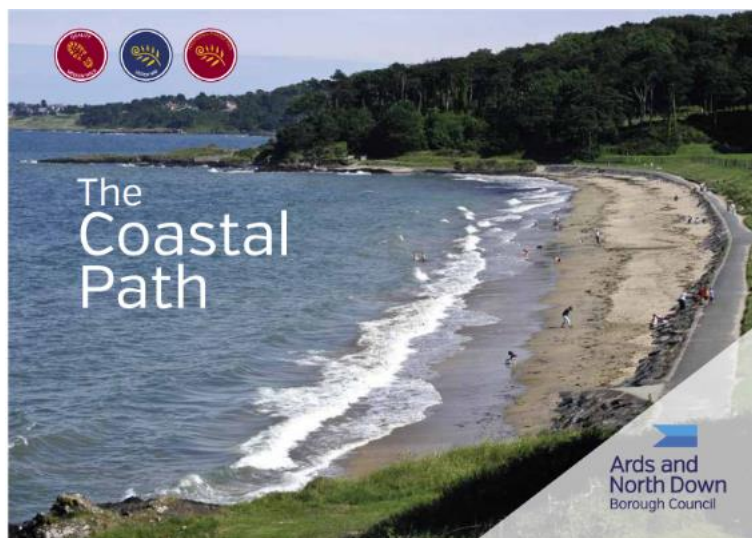
Historically there were several information signs along the North Down Coastal Path, but those had deteriorated over the years such as the one at Cultra below, or they had been removed completely.



It was planned to update the content if necessary and reinstall those signs in the 6 original locations, Seapark, Cultra, Greypoint, Ballymacormick Point and Orlock Point. The image below demonstrated what they originally looked like.



There was also a leaflet related to the North Down Coastal Path which required updating. This leaflet was periodically reprinted and distributed by the Council Tourism Team to outlets such as the Visitor Information Centres, Crawfordsburn Country Park and the Airports etc. It was planned to update the content and continue to distribute it for information.



#### 4.0 CELEBRATING THE PATH

With the new Development Officer (Community Trails and Greenways) in place, a programme of activities along the coastal path was being developed to promote its use. The Officers would also be involved in some of these activities and events that would celebrate the recreation, biodiversity and heritage of this important location.

The above Officer would reach out to various user types such as dog walkers, walkers, cyclists, parents and users with mobility needs, to gauge their requirements and while undertaking the activities, also start to promote the ethos of a shared use path, so that all user groups respected others and be mindful of each other's needs and vulnerabilities. The approach could be codesigned with the Working Group.

The Outdoor Recreation and the North Down Working Group sections of the AND website should also be updated and more content added to make people aware of the progress being made and to promote engagement and respectful use etc, this could also link to the Citizen Space resource, which would allow people to engage easily. Some signage along the path with a QR Code linking back to the website/Citizen Space could be erected, so that users could easily engage with Council

Given the length of the Coastal Path and the challenge to access some areas, video footage was being developed to clearly show the route. This would allow the Working Group to discuss matter in greater detail and aid with future promotion of the path.

Officers were also progressing an Oral History Project of North Down Coastal Path. Oral history was the recording and archiving of people's memories, feelings and attitudes. Everyone, irrespective of their background, had a unique story to tell. Oral history allowed people whose voices might not otherwise be heard to share their experiences. The act of retelling life events could help people understand their lives and often contribute to a sense of wellbeing and identity both for individuals and

communities. At their most powerful, oral histories could explain, enrich understanding and encourage empathy with others. It could play a crucial role in expanding the historic record of the path and go some way to bring local peoples differing views into a shared perspective.

In Spring of 2025 Parks Officers would be hosting a Bio-Blitz at various locations along the coastal path. A Bio-Blitz was an activity at which the public were encouraged to participate in a number of workshops, some tailored for adults and others for families. Workshops include, but were not limited to, moth trapping and identification, bird identification, minibeast/bug hunts, tree identification, pollinator and FIT counts, plant and bryophyte identification and pond dipping. The activities formed part of the public engagement for the coastal path but were equally designed to gain as much biodiversity information as possible, which could significantly improve knowledge of the site and the range of species that inhabit the area.

RECOMMENDED that the content of this report is noted.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries summarised the report to the Working Group and the following discussion ensued, as summarised below.

#### Machinery and Maintenance

Mr Hunter sought clarity around the use of hot foam in terms of weed / vegetation control and wondered if human resource, such as volunteers and residents' groups, would offer a gentler approach. The officer explained that volunteers would be a key part of the maintenance programme, particularly in terms of privately owned land where the Council was not able to maintain it directly. He provided assurances that the hot foam machine that the Council intended to procure used a water-based method and was chemical free. It used boiling water which was whipped up into a foam and once applied it disappeared in a matter of seconds. It could only be used in certain locations however and could not be used on gravel areas as it required a solid surface to operate on. This process was used widely in Europe where there was a glycerine ban and it proved to be an equally effective alternative.

#### Signage, Promotion and Engagement

Councillor McCollum referred to the information sign at Cultra which was pictured in the report and wondered how long it had been there, believing that it had appeared to deteriorate extremely quickly. The officer believed that it had been printed on plastic but it would likely be upgraded with metal which would be more durable.

Councillor McKee noted that DAERA had installed excellent signage on its own section of the coastal path at Crawfordsburn Country Park and it showed what land was owned by DAERA and included points of useful information. He felt that the Council could replicate that approach on its own land.

Mr Lennon felt that it would be useful to replace the signs at regular intervals to prevent them getting in their current state and suggested having a metal or bronze sign to emphasise the significance of St Columbanus.

The Chair asked if the Council would be simply renewing the signage it had before or looking to redesign and the officer explained that his team would be working with Corporate Communications colleagues to look at more creative options. The Head of Communications and Marketing added that the Council had a tender in place for signage which presented various options but she advised that there were mixed feelings in terms of signage with some people appreciating lots of it while others did not want to see a clutter of signage. She felt that it would be more beneficial to start from scratch and look at the entire coastal path rather than addressing bits and pieces. It was about striking the right balance and having a sympathetic, informative and engaging approach for all types of path users.

Mr Hunter asked if the Working Group could be updated on this as he would like to feed back to his own group while Councillor Harbinson described signage as a dark horse in this process and felt that it was an opportunity to take a more strategic approach and link up the coastal path in terms of mobility, history and the natural environment etc and provide some continuity along the path.

Clarifying to the Chair, the Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that it was the intention to install some signage before the end of the current financial year and the Head of Communications and Marketing recognised that there was a larger piece of work to do in the longer term that could not be addressed in the existing year but any new signage this year would consider the bigger picture. She explained that there were further considerations relating to the Council's Tourism policy.

Ms Kennerley (Boom Studios) referred to the Smart technologies element which was an important tool, particularly for the city centre from an accessibility point of view. She also felt that street art was important in the city centre and that could be expanded along the coastal path where appropriate in order to create some narrative whilst also tackling some of the antisocial behaviour issues around graffiti.

Ms McQueen wondered if it would be possible to incorporate accessibility in to the signage plans and be able to state for example, that the path was accessible from Banks Lane to Pickie, though she was aware of accessibility extending much further than that. As a general point, she also noted that the area from Banks Lane to Bangor centre was not included in the reports.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that it was intended to approach the coastal route by creating various levels of accessibility as had been done successfully at Cairn Wood. He added that the survey work to date had not identified anywhere between Banks Lane and the city centre, but that was not to stop anyone wishing to bring a new location in that section, as discussed in the previous item.

Councillor McClean felt that it was not a priority at this stage to install new signage and it would be more useful to take a strategic approach rather than risk creating clutter and clutter. Unless there was any urgent signage required for health and safety matters, he would rather hold off and allow more time to be spent developing a longer-term plan.

The officer clarified that this proposal was only to replace signage in poor condition that needed replacing temporarily until a new strategy was developed. His concern was that poor quality, unreadable signage created an unkempt appearance and that always posed an antisocial behaviour risk. He warned that the longer-term strategy was much further down the line possibly even beyond the next financial year.

Councillor McClean was content with that approach but appreciated there was a strategic approach required, perhaps in respect of branding and creating an identity, to encourage tourists arriving at Belfast City Airport to head eastwards. He emphasised that this approach did not mean clutter or a ton of signage.

The Director gave apologies for the remainder of the meeting due to having another engagement.

(The Director left the meeting – 7.20pm)

Ms Kennerley wondered if instead of replacing signs if it would be better to simply remove them to create a cleaner look, with a view that there would be a longer-term approach and the officer explained that it would be a case of both, some signage would simply need to be removed completely while other signage did need to be replaced.

Councillor McCollum referred to a meeting at Donaghadee Wayfinding and Signage Working Group where it was agreed to tackle an issue of signage clutter in the town by conducting a walking audit of signage there. It would involve walking throughout the town. She suggested it could be an option for this group and wondered if it would be worth breaking it down into smaller areas.

It was four to five hours to cover the path so the officer felt it was sensible to break up the audit into smaller areas and it had always been the intention to have subgroups within the Working Group that would cover specific areas of the coastal path.

Mr Lennon agreed that an audit was necessary, believing that while there were some quick fixes required in terms of Columbanus related signage, it was important to have a strategy with quality branded signage that was durable and lasting.

Councillor McCollum recalled a recent visit to the Wild Atlantic Way and noted that wildlife boards were placed at strategic locations and those provided some direction and education that could perhaps be used on the North Down coastal path.

Members discussed how an audit could work and it was agreed that it could be split in to three areas – Groomsport, Bangor and Hollywood with representation for all of the group's interests. Dates would be organised for this.

Mr Hunter queried the reliability of the data gained from Citizen Space and the Head of Communications and Marketing explained that it did require people to sign up to use the application so did require a good level of thought in their feedback. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries added that it had been extremely useful for projects at Ward Park.

Alderman McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Harbinson, to note the officer's report.

NOTED.

## **6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

## **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 7.37pm.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	16 December 2024
File Reference	PCA102
Legislation	The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regs (NI) 1995 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 Part 4
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: n/a
Subject	Maintaining Beaches and our Coastal Environment - Response to Notice of Motion 585
Attachments	None

In November 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council:

“That Council recognise the value of our beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DAERA 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 DAERA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.”

In January 2024 a further decision was taken in relation to this issue as follows.



Not Applicable

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*“that Council notes the ongoing work to deliver appropriate sustainable management of our beaches and coastal environment including proactive and reactive cleaning in line with all existing regulations and furthermore that this Council tasks officers to bring forward a report on the possible installation of Beach Bio Security Sanitation Units including any potential funding opportunities for them and possible locations. The report should also explore how the equipment in these stations could be used to clean our beaches mechanically to comply with DAERA regulations, ensuring that beaches continue to be clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.”*

Many of the Borough's beaches are incredibly popular places for leisure time. Whether it be for play, walking the dog, water sports, or just to relax, each year thousands flock to beaches bringing economic benefits to coastal communities. As well as having huge benefits for our economy and wellbeing, sandy shores are also ecologically very important habitats, supporting a large amount of life. Sandy shores also sap energy from waves as they break on the shore, providing a natural sea defence for our coastal towns and villages.

Rough seas, higher tides and strong winds can cause large amounts of marine material such as seaweed to get temporarily washed up on beaches regularly around the Borough. Warmer seas can also be a contributory factor, the Marine Conservation Society says UK sea temperatures have risen 2°C in the past 40 years. Research suggests that cold water seaweeds are moving further north where it's cooler, while the range of warm water species is expanding.

Council manages several coastal locations including many beaches throughout the Borough. All maintenance activities on these foreshore's are restricted under legislation and governed by Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The NIEA is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). In addition, The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) places a statutory duty on all public bodies (including Council) to “further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any function.”

Coastal and marine habitats are increasingly understood to have great benefits to humans in a multitude of ways. These ‘ecosystem services’ include improved water quality, sequestration of carbon, provision of seafood and other products, recreation, flood and erosion risk reduction, health and wellbeing benefits, and cultural services. These complex ecosystems, when allowed to function naturally without excessive pollution or physical modification, they will process and remove nutrients and other pollutants from the water.

Biosecurity refers to measures aimed at preventing the introduction or spread of harmful organisms (e.g. viruses, bacteria, plants, animals etc.) intentionally or unintentionally outside their native range or within new environments. Strong biosecurity measures are an essential element of a ecosystems management plan where the seaweed along a coastline is being disturbed through mechanical cleaning. For example, a ‘bio-security sanitation unit,’ is a method for cleaning down large vehicles as they enter and leave coastal environments, to ensure they do not transfer material that would be damaging to the abundance of habitats and species that exists there. No specific ‘Beach Biosecurity Sanitation Unit’ exists in the retail market, moreover, the process of sanitation measures is developed when a management plan

## Not Applicable

is required. No external funding streams have been found to support such management plans outside of existing resources. A 'Beach Biosecurity Sanitation Unit' would need to be built at each beach site and Officers have surveyed our beaches and found that this is not practical or sustainable financially or environmentally.

Council is responsible for cleaning amenity and recreational beaches under their ownership. Managed beaches require to be cleaned of litter and other materials harmful to the environment. Litter is picked regularly by Parks and Cemeteries staff, as well as groups of willing volunteers across the borough. The definition of litter does not apply to seaweed, and the presence of seaweed is beneficial to beach ecology. Mechanical cleaning of beaches carried out near sand dunes or other sensitive beach areas can have significant impacts on the habitats and species supported here. While the implementation of a sanitation unit does allow for the cleaning of large mechanical equipment as outlined above, this process is not required for Council to keep beaches clean.

Seaweed does form an integral part of a beach ecosystem, providing food and stability to the sand structure. As mentioned in criteria for the Blue Flag Award Scheme (section 10): 'Seaweed is a natural component of the littoral (intertidal high-water mark to foreshore) ecosystem. The coastal zone must also be considered as a living and natural environment and not only as a recreational asset to be kept tidy. Thus the management of seaweed on the beach should be sensitive to both visitor needs and littoral biodiversity' (2). In some instances, the strandline is therefore handpicked to remove litter while the seaweed remains.

The Ards and North Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2032 (LBAP) recognises that the biggest threat to biodiversity at a global, regional and local scale is the loss of natural habitats and fragmentation of existing habitat into smaller pockets. Much habitat loss and fragmentation has occurred because of our increasing human population which has required us to replace natural habitats with land that is used for agriculture, housing, leisure activities, commercial units and industrial complexes. Many species require habitats of a certain size to thrive and when this habitat is lost or becomes too small to sustain such species, local extinction of that species can result.

The presence of Seaweed can also play an important role in the development of Sand Dunes, an important feature to slow coastal erosion. The size of the sand particles, direction of winds in the coastal zone, as well as the size and extent of vegetation on the coastline, are fundamental properties that govern the size and shapes of dunes in coastal settings. The development and growth of dunes derive from the beach when the wind is blowing in an onshore direction.

Sand accumulates to create a dune system when the wind carrying the sand encounters an obstacle. Piles of seaweed can provide such an obstacle, causing the velocity of the wind to locally decrease, at which point the transport of the sand ceases, and it is deposited. Most often, the obstacle that creates large continuous sand dunes is salt-water tolerant vegetation, either beach grasses or shrubs and trees depending upon the climate of the region. Vegetation, therefore, promotes the deposition of sand and acts to stabilize the dune system because of rooting.

Not Applicable

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Coastal flooding and erosion are an environmental process that has an impact on people, property and the environment. Management of flood and erosion risk to people and property has, in turn, had a significant impact on the inland and coastal environment. Coastal floods are among the biggest risks Northern Ireland faces. The need to manage these risks often leads to extensive construction of hard defences such as sea walls around the coast. These structures can cause disruptions to natural coastal processes that, in combination with sea level rise and storm surges, threaten coastal habitats such as sand dunes. The formation of natural sand dunes can reduce the need for such hard defences.

Again, the LBAP recognises that increased storm surges are predicted to be one of the impacts of climate change. Fully functioning coastal and wetland ecosystems will help to absorb some of the impact, such as flooding. Nature-based solutions to climate change are urgently required. Nature based solutions to climate change, involve conserving, restoring, or better managing land.

Officers are aware that some beaches may look like they are receiving mechanical cleaning when compared to others, however this is often not the case. Seaweed is found on some beaches but not on others due to factors such as currents, wave action, wind direction, and topography of the beach. Beaches with strong currents and waves are more likely to have seaweed washed up on shore, while sheltered beaches may have less seaweed accumulation. Additionally, the presence of marine life that feeds on seaweed can also impact its abundance on certain beaches.

Almost all coastal beaches within the Borough are within an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA). Over the past number of years significant conditions have been placed on Council when carrying out mechanical cleaning and clearing of marine material such as seaweed. As a result, except in extreme situations, we have a proactive cleaning programme of manual litter collection by our Beach Ranger Service and permitting the tidal flows to disperse deposited seaweed etc. This is in line with current regulations and Blue Flag Award Scheme recommendations. This approach has had significant environmental benefits in reducing the loss of sediment from the foreshore and allowing coastal grasses to colonise to reduce the impact of coastal erosion. Furthermore, by not extensively removing seaweed material, we are encouraging a greater variety of wildlife species to these feeding areas.

The Outer Ards ASSI/SPA is important for a range of bird species, and these will feed on invertebrates amongst the seaweed so removal of significant volumes of seaweed may have an adverse impact on the birds and other wildlife.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the above report in relation to the installation of Beach Biosecurity Sanitation Units and the steps being taken to ensure our beaches are well-managed sustainable coastal environments in line with current regulations.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	13 December 2024
File Reference	PCA123
Legislation	Burial Grounds Regulations 1992 (NI)
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 on Cemetery Maintenance - Six Month Review
Attachments	

**Background**

In September 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council:

*“That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.”*

A response to the Notice of Motion was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing meeting in December 2023 and Members requested a further detailed report to be presented on tangible options to improve the maintenance within Cemeteries. A further report was submitted in June 2024 and it was agreed by council that the recommendation be adopted and that the Council review in six months.

Not Applicable

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### **Service Overview**

The Parks and Cemeteries Service has responsibility for the maintenance and development of approximately 292 hectares of Parks and other open spaces including responsibility for burials in 12 active cemeteries and the maintenance of a total of 19 cemeteries, spread across the Borough. In the management of the 19 cemeteries the operational Parks and Cemeteries team carry out service activities regarding the burial process and overall cemetery grounds maintenance. This is currently delivered by a multidisciplinary skilled team who work to a suite of Standard Operating Procedures.

The burial service is dictated by the Burial Grounds Regulations 1992 (NI) and all service elements are carried out in line with this legislation. All gravedigging is carried out by skilled in-house teams. Working to the Standard Operating procedures, this element of the service includes the opening and subsequent closing of graves along with the interment service.

Following several issues raised at some cemetery locations, the management of the cemeteries has been reviewed and several interventions put in place to avoid further issues.

The basis of this report is to detail current operational practices and highlight how these have been adapted to ensure continuous improvement and respond to the issues which have been raised and the impacts of changing climate patterns over recent seasons.

### **Cemetery Maintenance**

The grass maintenance element of the service comprises of several methods of cutting depending on the cemetery layout and configuration. These methods range from the use of ride on equipment to pedestrian and handheld equipment. The schedules for grass cutting generally align to a weekly day cycle during the growing period and are dependent upon weather conditions, burial demand, and availability of staff. The changing weather patterns have impacted on grass growth over the last number of years with milder winters extending the growing period significantly.

To address these impacts, investments have been made in additional equipment and configuration of staffing. Having staff centralised to fewer locations will allow Council to deploy parks maintenance staff to assist with cemetery maintenance if there are a high number of burials.

The grounds maintenance tender was awarded to provide external support for Parks and Cemeteries ground maintenance using contracted partners. While the use of Council staff is the preferred option, the implementation of this contract will allow for an uplift in workload capacity through challenges periods, ensuring negative impacts on service provision are mitigated.

The arboriculture work tender was also awarded and allowing Council to respond quickly to emergency tree works. For example, during Storm Darragh December 2024, Greyabbey, Whitechurch, Bangor New and Clandeboye had fallen trees on the Saturday. We were able to deploy our awarded contractor the next day to remove these trees and make safe these sites for visitors.

Not Applicable

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### **Infrastructure Developments**

Recently we have just seen the completion of the drainage and re-surfacing works to the Greyabbey Cemetery. We are also due to see some resurfacing take place in Comber Cemetery as part of the electronic gates being installed in 2025.

Council will be introducing the new section in Whitechurch in 2025. With the following criteria in mind to create efficiencies in the maintenance requirements while also improving the appearance of the site.

These include:

- The installation of drainage solutions to avoid flooding.
- The increase in spacing within new sections and installing ground reinforcing pathways to reduce the impact of machinery on the grounds.

### **Cemetery Monitoring**

In response to the community's feedback and Council's internal evaluations, we have increased our monitoring across all cemeteries. This includes a systematic review process which has been established across all twelve cemeteries. This process has been instrumental in identifying, recording, and addressing various site-related issues. Moving forward, the following areas will be prioritized to further enhance the cemetery monitoring and maintenance efforts:

- **Coordination with Assets and Property:** Continued partnership to expedite the resolution of outstanding issues.
- **Enhanced Rotational Maintenance:** Review and refine rotational work schedules, particularly for recurring maintenance areas such as paths, landscaping, and public amenities.

Since August, the monitoring has facilitated a structured approach to site maintenance across all twelve cemeteries, achieving significant progress with issues resolved as quickly as possible. Continued focus on interdepartmental coordination and routine maintenance will aim to bring outstanding issues to resolution as quickly as possible.

### **Implementation of the PSS Ultimate System**

Council is making significant progress toward the implementation of our new online maintenance task system, PSS Ultimate. This system will:

- Centralize and streamline the scheduling, tracking, and management of maintenance tasks across all cemeteries.
- Improve accountability by providing real-time updates on task completion and staff assignments.
- Enable data-driven decision-making by integrating historical and current maintenance records into a single platform.
- The phased rollout of PSS Ultimate has already begun, with pilot testing in select locations. Initial results should indicate improved coordination among maintenance teams and a reduction in response times for urgent tasks.

Not Applicable

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### **Ongoing Initiatives for Improvement**

In addition to monitoring efforts and the PSS Ultimate implementation, we are pursuing other initiatives to enhance maintenance operations:

- Continuous skill development for staff to ensure familiarity with new technologies and adherence to best practices in cemetery care.
- Exploring environmentally friendly waste management practices to align with broader sustainability goals.
- Better engagement with cemetery visitors – providing a new way to feedback on their experience.
- Investing in modern equipment to increase efficiency and ensure consistent maintenance quality.

In conclusion, Council's commitment to continuous improvement in cemetery maintenance is ongoing. Through enhanced monitoring, the adoption of advanced technologies like PSS Ultimate, and ongoing operational enhancements, we aim to provide cemeteries that honour the community and those interred within them. Council appreciates the support and collaboration of all stakeholders as we move forward with these initiatives.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council note this report.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	06 December 2024
File Reference	CW74
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: N/A For information only
Subject	Bi Monthly Update on Portavogie 3G and Peninsula 3G pitches and Portaferry Sport Centre floor
Attachments	12.1 Appendix 1 Portavogie 3G Update December 2024 12.2 Appendix 2 Peninsula 3G Update December 2024 12.3 Appendix 3 Status Update on Portaferry Sports Centre Floor Repair

In February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

“that Council notes the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns, recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks Officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term. As a matter of urgency Council tasks Officers to bring forward a bimonthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry Sports Centre and Portaferry 3G Pitch to this committee.”

This report provides the 3 updates requested on a bi-monthly basis, and for the 2 capital projects, in a ‘RAG’ format as requested by the proposer in May 2024.



Not Applicable

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1. The update report for the Portavogie 3G project is attached at appendix 1.
2. The update report for the Peninsula 3G project is attached at appendix 2.
3. The status update for the defective floor at Portaferry Sports Centre is attached at appendix 3.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes the update reports.

**Portavogie 3G Project. Update 12.**  
**Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 1**

**01**This report has been prepared for information purposes and is issued to interested parties to update them on the most pressing of work streams currently being undertaken.

**Planning application:** LA06/2020/0844/F (submitted on 21 September 2020)  
**Proposal:** Upgrade to existing football ground to include the placement of the existing grass pitch with synthetic surface, fencing and floodlighting along with replacement changing pavilion, additional car parking spaces and associated siteworks  
**Location:** Football ground to the rear of no. 8 and 10 New Harbour Road, Portavogie

**For Information – RAG status**

Green	Amber	Red
Good progress is being made, with no significant issues.	Progress is being made with some issues needing to be worked through.	Issues exist that could put elements or the whole project at risk.

**Background**

A planning application was submitted over 4 years ago in September 2020. All consultation responses were received one year later, in September 2021, except NI Waters (NIW) consultation response.

NIW issued reports and maps that indicated the underinvestment and lack of capacity over significant areas of Northern Ireland, which is stifling, delaying, and preventing a large amount of capital development projects throughout Northern Ireland. Portavogie is one of the areas affected.

With regards to Portavogie, NIW responded to planning in November 2021 objecting to the scheme and started a process that resulted in them requesting additional design works related to their infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. The design was to be carried out and developed to Stage 2 (as outlined in their solutions report) to allow NIW’s sign off on the proposal and issue of their final consultation response to Planning.

In September 2023, the EU Commission adopted the EU REACH restriction on intentionally added microplastics. Once entered into force, the restriction will apply in the EU and Northern Ireland. A sales ban on granular infill materials will apply after eight years so that affected stakeholders have time to develop and switch to alternative materials.

In the interim and in light of the science underpinning the restriction, SES requested robust evidence of appropriate mitigation for artificial surfaces with linkages to designated sites, stating that the most effective control is avoidance of infill materials entering the aquatic environment. ANDBC were re-consulted through the planning process in May 2024 and asked to demonstrate that effective mitigation is in place for the Portavogie 3G Pitch.

**Portavogie 3G Project. Update 12.**  
**Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 1**

In October 2024, DfI Roads withdrew their original consultation response to the proposed redevelopment and reconsulted with PlanningNI, advising that they now consider the proposal unacceptable, as submitted.

**1. Programme**

Green	Amber	Red
	The programme for the delivery of the project cannot be determined until planning is granted.	

The project programme will be updated when we have assurance that Planning approval will be granted and a realistic timeframe for securing same has been provided.

**2. NI Water: Offsetting**

Green	Amber	Red
A solution has been agreed with NIW who have confirmed their conditional approval to the proposed scheme.		

Following re-consultation through the formal planning process, NIW responded in July 2024 to confirm their conditional approval of the submitted drainage offsetting proposal. The proposed solution will free up capacity within the existing, adjacent combined sewer by redirecting drainage from Portavogie Primary School, to facilitate a foul drainage connection from the development site into the adjacent combined public sewer.

It should be noted that legal permission from the Education Authority (EA), is required to carry out the drainage works within the grounds of Portavogie Primary School (PPS). EA approval is conditional to planning approval, therefore it is not required in advance of receiving planning approval but must be required thereafter, to proceed with the development.

The EA has repeatedly advised that they have a number of priority projects which currently require input from their appointed solicitor. The EA will seek Committee approval upon receipt of their solicitor’s opinion. We are continuing to work with the EA and as a proactive step are currently preparing project information for their report to Committee.

**3. NI Water: Requisition**

Green	Amber	Red
NIW has provided a conditional response to the resubmitted requisition application (received on 11.06.24)		

**Portavogie 3G Project. Update 12.**  
**Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 1**

and detailed design development by NIW is underway.		
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The development of the detailed design for the requisition sewer is still in progress, following ANDBC’s payment of a £10K deposit. The proposed requisition/ sewer extension is required to drain surface run off from the proposed site and facilitate a connection for the re-routed PPS storm drainage (subject to receipt of the EA’s legal permission). This aspect of the drainage proposal has received NIW’s conditional approval through the formal planning process, will be constructed by NIW and will be a key consideration in the construction programming for the new facility. NIW will issue the detailed design solution and programme for installation.

**4. Planning: Statutory Consultation – Shared Environmental Services**

Green	Amber	Red
Planning consulted with NIEA Water Management Unit, Marine & Fisheries and SES, following our submission of an updated HRA		

In response to the EU future ban of use of microplastics in artificial pitches, SES reconsulted on all live planning applications affected by this decision, including this proposal in Portavogie. SES requested an updated HRA, to either i) confirm that natural infill will be used and evidence that it is not harmful to the environment or ii) or provide appropriate measures in the design to infiltrate rubber infill crumb before it is discharged out to the storm sewer.

Planning consulted with NIEA Water Management Unit, Marine & Fisheries and SES, following our submission of an updated HRA confirming that ANDBC will use natural infill in the 3G pitch, in accordance with mitigation option i), listed above.

**SES** - A positive consultation response was received from SES who confirmed they have no reason to disagree with the findings of the HRA published on 10/10/2024. SES considers that the Council has fulfilled its obligations under the assessment requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

**DEARA Marine & Fisheries** – a positive consultation response was received from NIEA Marine & Fisheries division on 14/11/2024 advising that they welcome the mitigation measures outlined in the updated HRA.

**DEARA Water Management Unit (WMU)** - responded to the updated HRA submission on 14/11/2024 to advise that they were unable to determine if development would have an adverse impact on the surface water environment. Our consultants liaised directly with WMU to discuss appropriate mitigation within the drainage design. A minor modification was introduced into the drainage design, in line with WMU

**Portavogie 3G Project. Update 12.  
Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 1**

requirements and this has been submitted via the formal planning process for WMU approval and sign off.

**5. Planning: Statutory Consultation – Dfl Roads**

Green	Amber	Red
		Dfl original consultation response withdrawn and additional information requested with significant impact on current access design.

In October 2024, Dfl Roads withdrew their original consultation response to the proposed redevelopment and reconsulted with PlanningNI, advising that they now consider the proposal unacceptable, as submitted because of access to the site.

Council can confirm that Dfl Roads has requested an updated site access design with visibility splays. Council officers are in the process of investigating the potential solutions and will respond to Dfl Roads in due course.

**6. Planning Update: General**

Green	Amber	Red
	All requests from consultees have been addressed with the exception Dfl Roads which is in progress.	

The planning consultation process remains live until engagement with Dfl Roads concludes.

**Peninsula 3G Project**  
**Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 2**

**This report has been prepared for information purposes only and is issued to members to update them on the main workstreams currently being undertaken.**

**Planning application:** Not yet submitted

**Proposal:** A full-size GAA 3G pitch with multi-use design to assist a range of GAA clubs and Soccer clubs in the area, for competitive GAA matches and multi sports training. Set close to St Columba’s College with the intention that the school will make full use of the pitch during school hours.

**Location:** Cloughy Road Portaferry, behind the sports centre

**For Information – RAG status**

Green	Amber	Red
Good progress is being made, with no significant issues.	Progress is being made with some issues needing to be worked through.	Issues exist that could put elements or the whole project at risk.

**Background**

1. Design consultants appointed
2. Establishment of and site surveys in progress.
3. Preferred layout established and agreed with the clubs.
4. Updated Capital Costs by consultant exceed the current Project Budget, Project Board instructed capital team to continue with the full scheme through to the planning process while the cost shortfall will be addressed via an updated Business Case.

**1. Programme**

Green
The programme for the delivery of the project cannot be determined until planning is granted as there are too many variables to accurately predict a date as to when the planning application will be submitted and or determined at this stage.  Currently at RIBA Stage 2 Feasibility and Concept Design

**2. Key Risks**

Amber
There have been several risks identified with particularly relevance to the stage, the top five are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Funding allocated £2.3m within the current project prioritisation current estimated cost is circa £6m, this is currently not included in budget profiles or in the project prioritisation. A report to include an update to the business case for members consideration will be presented at the appropriate time.</li> <li>2. Badger sett on site to be avoided</li> <li>3. Water based habitat system over a large element of the site</li> <li>4. Close out of statutory consultees including NIWater, NIEA through PAD process</li> <li>5. Entrance required to be confirmed with DfI Roads</li> </ol>

### 3. Costs

#### Red

**The estimated cost has risen since the OBC from c£2.2m in 2017 to c£6m this is due to:**

- The original OBC was produced 2016/17 and at this stage the costs were established at 2017 rates. We have now predicted the cost at the potential midpoint of construction, that is more likely to be 2027. Therefore 10 years increase of costs.
- Construction inflation has risen significantly in recent years and although has settled it has not reduced.

In the original OBC:

- The pavilion was smaller
- New electrical supply to the site was not taken for
- Preliminaries were a far lower percentage, a more realistic percentage based on recent experience has now been used
- A smaller car park was proposed
- No optimism bias allowance
- No allowance for earth works
- No allowance for fencing
- No allowance for drainage
- No allowance for new organic infill

As the design team have progressed surveys and conversations with statutory consultees ahead of a PAN notice a number of items have been established as being required, including. Replacement water habitat and NI Water upgrade, these are yet to be costed.

### 4. Environmental Issues

#### Amber

- A full set of surveys instructed are ongoing and engagement with relevant statutory consultees including NIWater has taken place.
- A water-based habitat system that NIEA will require protection continues to be investigated and surveys undertaken. The current initial idea is to investigate relocating this habitat, if it was left in place the 3G pitch will not fit on the site. The proposed new location is between the new 3G pitch and the councils soccer grass pitch, this would require some re-routing of the water course that exists in the area to ensure a wet area is maintained. There is even the potential in increasing the wet land so providing added environmental and ecological benefits. The earth works and cost of these works is currently not known at this stage and no allowance has been made in the estimated costs.
- A site investigation is to be carried out to assess soil/ground conditions, aid with drainage and water management designs, identify any potential environmental hazards and to support the planning application.

### 5. Lands

#### Green

**Peninsula 3G Project**  
**Information up to date as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**APPENDIX 2**

Discussion with the Education Authority and Diocese regarding a lease are going well with good dialogue established. The Education Authority and Diocese confirmed that the rent of the land required for the project will be at peppercorn rate rent rate.



## APPENDIX 3

**Status update on the Portaferry Sports Centre Sports Hall Floor repairs**

The hall remains only partly usable, with no funding yet confirmed forthcoming from the responsible organisation to carrying out the remaining repairs.

A meeting took place with the Diocesan Trustees, St MacNissi's Educational Trust, the Department of Education, the school, elected members and senior Community and Wellbeing Officers on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November in an attempt to progress the issue. It was confirmed at that meeting that the Trust were responsible for the upkeep of the building and as such that the school principal would forward an application for works to be carried out on the floor to the Department of Education. It was explained by the Department representative that this would then be the responsibility of the Education Authority to scope out and that any works to be carried out would be subject to budgetary approvals.

The application was submitted by the school principal on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and the Minister for Education has responded as follows.

*I can confirm that the unavoidable minor works application submitted by the school on 11 November 2024 has been issued to the Education Authority (EA) for scoping and assessment. Subject to the necessary approvals, the project will be considered in line with available budget and against competing priorities. Officials from the Department's Estate Operations Team will ensure you are kept informed on progress of your application.*

*You will appreciate that the Department is currently having to make very difficult decisions about how best to target investment and any available capital budget has been directed to provide education access to the most vulnerable and to those inescapable emergency works that, if not completed, would force the closure of schools.*

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	27 December 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: For noting only
Subject	Lesiure Facility Access policy
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Policy Approval Process Appendix 2 - Council Policy Register

At Council in December 2024, the following decision was taken:

*Council receives a report to the relevant committee in January outlining a clear action plan, detailing how this specific policy investigation is being progressed and also a full list of council policies and whether that have been approved by members of this council or not and a framework is put in place to ensure that policy development is carried out in accordance with the Councils scheme of delegation to avoid any future repeat of what happened.*

### **1. Background to the Leisure Access policy**

Council Leisure facility admissions rules and guidance have been in place from when Ards Leisure Centre at William Street was in operation. At that time, the document was not described as a policy, but a collection of operational procedures. Originally each leisure centre had individual admission procedures; i.e. for Ards, Portaferry and Comber. Londonderry Park Pavilion was added when this new facility opened in 2016.

Not Applicable

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The admissions procedures largely focused on Health and Safety guidelines and rules, as well as terms and conditions of leisure centre membership and use, in order that users would have a positive experience while using the Council leisure facilities.

These procedures were amalgamated into one admissions procedure in 2018 for the opening of Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC) in early 2019. Around the same time as a result of a query, HR, Leisure and Equality together considered how access should be managed in relation to transgender persons, and the document was amended as a result.

The document title was also changed from 'procedures' to 'policy' and so should have been subject to the policy approval process at that point. Initial investigation as to why this happened has suggested that this may have been simply overlooked by the officers involved. It isn't clear why this is the case but given that the document had already been in place for a number of years, with changes carried out from time to time already over that period, it may have been a genuine oversight.

What is clear is that the omission in relation to the approval of leisure access 'policy' was not deliberate. It is certain that approval should have been sought, but was not, for which all officers involved apologise. As a result of further investigation into why this didn't happen, it appears that there may have been a breakdown in internal communications between Leisure and Equality, with Leisure believing the Policy was being taken through corporately. This breakdown in communications may have been further exasperated due to the challenges brought by Covid-19 and the other competing priorities. Unfortunately, as a number of staff involved at the time have since moved on, further details for the reasons for this not being done are difficult to ascertain for certain.

The current Leisure Admissions Policy document has been withdrawn from the Council's website and will be subjected to the Council's normal policy approval process. The instruction to do so was issued to leisure services management team on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December by the Director of Community and Wellbeing. For clarity, the whole Leisure Admissions Policy is to be taken through the policy approval process. This will allow for full consultation and discussion on all aspects, including equality screening, with any agreed amendments to wording being incorporated before approval is granted.

## **2. Corporate Policy Approval Process**

The Council decision in December 2024 requested that a framework for policy development be put in place. The Council already has such a framework by way of a process for approving its policies, which was adopted in practice by Council in 2016, and to which the Leisure Access Policy should have been and now will be subject to.

The policy approval process itself will also be reviewed to ascertain what improvements could be carried out to ensure that policy owners do not implement any policy that requires Council approval before that approval is sought and obtained.

The full Policy Approval Process is included in Appendix 1. For Members information, a summary of the current approval process is outlined below.

Not Applicable

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## 2.1 Definition

A policy is defined as “Any practice, written document or decision of the Council which determines the principles and processes by which the Council carries out its business and functions.”

Therefore, this process does not only apply to documented ‘policies’ but also to the development of key practices and/or decisions of the Council. However, it does not apply to operational procedures. Operational procedures are the methods or steps to be taken to implement a policy.

## 2.2 Key Stages of Policy Development Process

The process is set up around four key stages:

1. Identifying the need for a new policy, for example by officers, changes in legislation or a Council decision to create policy
2. Developing and drafting a policy
3. Signing off and obtaining approval for a policy
4. Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy

Stage 3 of the process includes a significant amount of consultation, both internally and with external groups such as the equality screening panel, before the proposed policy comes before Council for approval. Should equality screening determine the need for an equality impact assessment, this will be reported to Council.

## 2.3 Aims of the Policy Development Process

The policy development process aims to:

1. Ensure greater consistency in the development and drafting of Council policies.
2. Ensure policies are evidence based and developed systematically.
3. Ensure that policies are aligned to stakeholder needs, and that relevant stakeholders are included in the policy development process.
4. Ensure compliance with legislative requirements placed upon the Council including Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 and the provisions of the Northern Ireland Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2006 relating to sustainable development.
5. Ensure that members of staff involved in the policy development process are clear as to their roles and responsibilities.
6. Improve communication and awareness of policies.
7. Ensure greater commitment to monitoring and reviewing policies.

The process should also be used as a point of reference in the development of corporate plans, strategies, processes and procedures as the principles of engagement, consultation, approval, communication and review are applicable. The guidance is designed to assist Council employees tasked with policy development but will be of use to anyone who wishes to understand the Council’s policy development process, including for example for training or induction purposes.

The process requires the investment of time and resources, which needs to be planned for, though will result in better informed policies and decisions along with easier implementation of same.

Not Applicable

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### **3. Council's Policies**

The Council decision in December 2024 further requested a full list of Council Policies and whether these have been approved by Council or not. The Council's Policy Register is included in Appendix 2. This gives details of the policy, including the date of Council approval. Following an exercise carried out in 2024 which collated all policies and looked at review periods, there are 79 policies, 48 of which are currently under review.

### **4. Measures to help ensure an avoidance of future omissions of policy approvals**

Early in 2024, the Head of Administration began to review all policies that are in place across the organisation, in order to develop a complete catalogue of existing policies and the development of the Council's Policy Register (as outlined in Appendix 2). All Heads of Service have been asked to review their individual areas and flag any policies that need to be added to the register.

This exercise provides Council with a detailed list of policies, as well as reviewing if any require formal Council approval and/or review.

To ensure this process is as robust as possible the following additional actions will also be undertaken;

- Policy register regularly reviewed by the Council's Senior Leadership Team - Review of the Policy Register to be included as a standing item on the CLT/HOST Agenda (reviewed twice a year).
- Additional compulsory training to be given on the Policy Approval Process to all managers.
- Review of the Policy Approval Process with any additional learnings taken on board, with update brought to Council.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

# **Policy Development Process**

**V1.0**

**13 December 2016**

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the process to be followed when developing, drafting, implementing and reviewing Council policies.

For the purposes of this document a policy is defined as *“Any practice, written document or decision of the Council which determines the principles and processes by which the Council carries out its business and functions.* Therefore this process does not only apply to documented ‘policies’ but also to the development of key practices and/or decisions of the Council.

This document does not apply to operational procedures. Operational procedures are the methods or steps to be taken to implement a policy.

The guidelines are set up around four key stages:

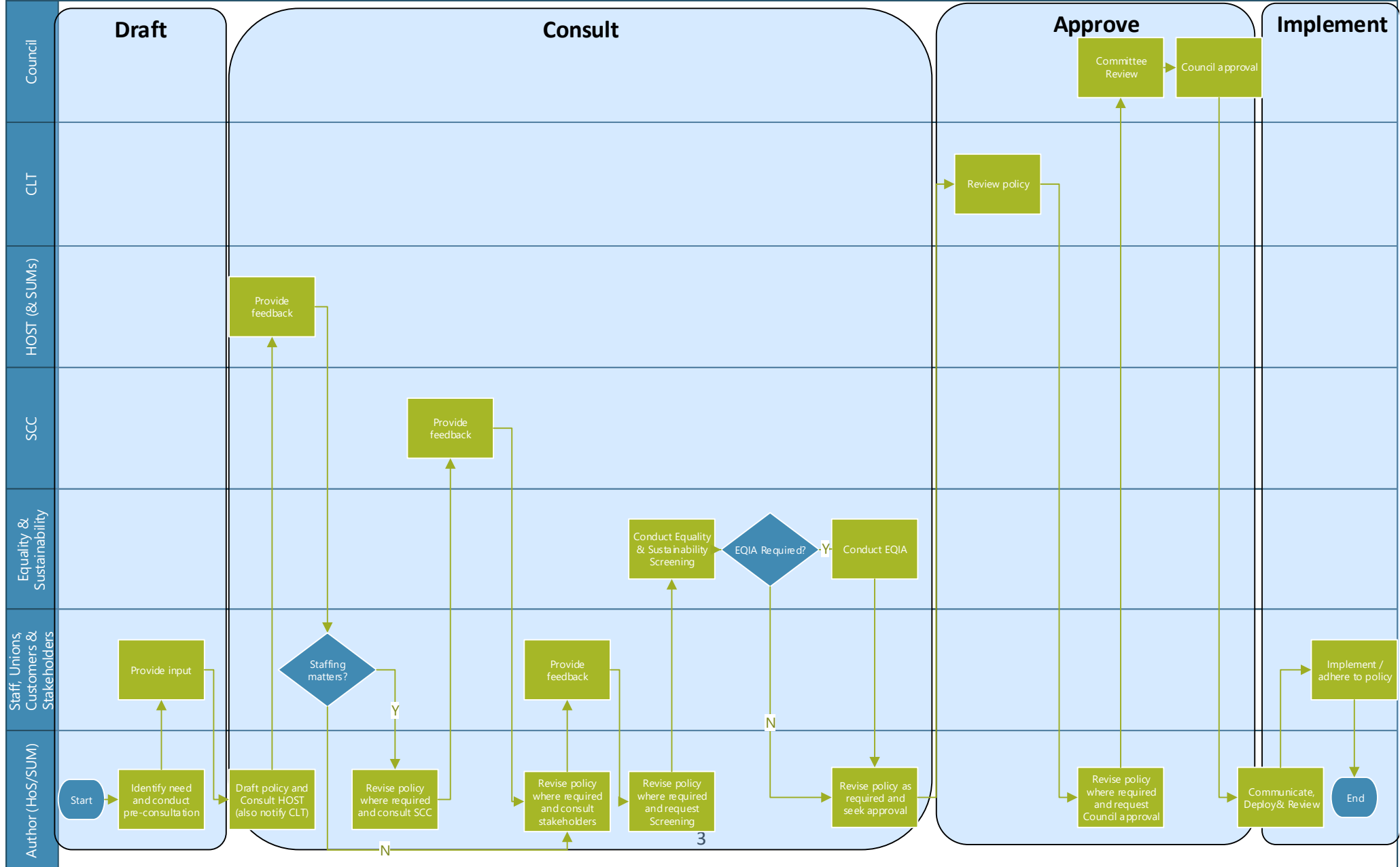
- Identifying the need for a new policy/ Council decision to create policy
- Developing and drafting a policy
- Signing off and obtaining approval for a policy
- Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy

The guidelines aim to:

- Ensure greater consistency in the development and drafting of Council policies
- Ensure policies are evidence based and developed systematically
- Ensure that policies are aligned to stakeholder needs, and that relevant stakeholders are included in the policy development process
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements placed upon the Council including Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 and the provisions of the Northern Ireland Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2006 relating to sustainable development
- Ensure that members of staff involved in the policy development process are clear as to their roles and responsibilities
- Improve communication and awareness of policies
- Ensure greater commitment to monitoring and reviewing policies

The process should also be used as a point of reference in the development of corporate plans, strategies, processes and procedures as the principles of engagement, consultation, approval, communication and review are applicable. The guidance is designed to assist Council employees tasked with policy development, but will be of use to anyone who wishes to understand the Council’s policy development process for example training or induction purposes. The process requires the investment of time and resources, which needs to be planned for, though will result in better informed policies and decisions along with easier implementation of same.

# ANDBC Policy Development Process






ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
1	Identify need and conduct pre-consultation	Author	HOST	Stakeholders (internal and external)	CLT HOST	<p>Need for policy may arise from a number of reasons such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realisation that a policy does not exist</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction with existing policy e.g. due to an incident occurring or justifiable concerns raised by a member of the public</li> <li>• Changes in legislation, updated Government guidance, policies or initiatives</li> <li>• To reflect a new strategy</li> <li>• Desire for service improvement</li> <li>• Audit recommendation</li> <li>• Change in operating/customer practice</li> <li>• Opportunity to harness technology</li> <li>• Council decision</li> <li>• CLT/HOST direction</li> </ul> <p>This is not an exhaustive list.</p> <p>When the need to develop/revise a policy is determined, the author should make CLT and HOST aware and confirm that the need exists. This process applies to the development of new policies and the significant revisions of existing policies. Minor revisions should follow the same principles though are likely to be progressed in a shorter time frame.</p> <p>Prior to drafting, the author should seek input from a range of relevant sources which may be internal and/or external. Stakeholders should be determined based on those affected by the policy and those who can inform the policy i.e. people/groups with expert opinions on the subject. In the case of staffing matters this should include Trade Union engagement. Legal advice may also need to be sought to inform the policy. The length and breadth of this exercise may vary depending on the nature and importance of the policy – for example,</p>

ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
						<p>this may take a matter of minutes on a phone call to a colleague or two - or weeks/months in an external consultation exercise. Relevant stakeholders will vary though may include staff (or relevant sub-sets), customers or other internal/external groups or bodies. The author should, in liaison with their Director/Head of Service, determine who should be consulted, how and when. Timeframes for responses should be reasonable and reflect the nature of the consultation and the time of year e.g. allowing additional time if during traditional holiday periods.</p>
2	Provide input	Stakeholders	Stakeholders		Author	<p>Consulted stakeholders shall provide input/feedback to the author.</p>
3	Draft policy and Consult HOST	Author	Author	HOST		<p>The author should draft the policy (using FS Pro and related guidelines), informed by input from stakeholders and by researching existing local, national and international research, relevant legislation, statistics, evaluations of existing policies, policies and experiences of other public bodies etc. The extent and nature of the research will vary depending on the policy being developed.</p> <p>The resulting draft policy should be taken to HOST seeking feedback. This should be planned to leave sufficient time for revision and the subsequent stages – i.e. well before the policy is required to be in place. Typically, draft policies will be considered at HOST meetings, though it may also be appropriate to circulate an email to HOST seeking feedback, either in addition to or instead of consideration at a meeting – particularly in the case of minor revisions and non-critical policies. If in doubt, consult with the chair of HOST. The author may be required to attend meetings or the relevant Head of Service will lead on the discussion.</p> <p>HOST members are encouraged to seek the views of their Service Unit Managers (SUMs) on policies in advance of consideration by HOST. The Author should provide documentation to HOST sufficiently early to support this.</p>

ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
4	Provide feedback	HOST	HOST	CLT	Author	<p>HOST will consider the draft and provide feedback. Where more major revisions are required the Author should revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p> <p>The Chair of HOST should notify CLT that the policy is under development. By exception, CLT may wish to be consulted early in the development process as a stakeholder – with the Chair of HOST informing the Author if this is the case.</p>
5	Staffing matters?	Author	HOST			<p>Trigger – where the policy has an impact on staff (either directly e.g. an HR policy, or indirectly e.g. a significant change in operating practice) the author shall proceed to step 6. If this does not impact on staff, the author shall proceed to step 8. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p>
6	Revise policy where required and consult SCC	Author	Author	SCC		<p>The resulting draft policy should be taken to Staff Consultative Committee (SCC) seeking feedback. Typically, draft policies will be considered at SCC meetings, though it may also be appropriate to circulate and email to SCC seeking feedback, either in addition to or instead of consideration at a meeting. If in doubt, consult with the chair of SCC. The author may be required to attend meetings.</p>
7	Provide feedback	SCC	SCC		Author	<p>SCC shall review the policy and provide feedback to the author. Where major revisions are required the Author should revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p>
8	Revise policy where required and consult stakeholders	Author	Author	Stakeholders		<p>The author shall update the policy as required and consult with all relevant stakeholders (whose previous engagement would have been at pre-consultation stage i.e. pre-draft policy). The extent of this consultation will vary depending the extent of change from the status quo and the scale and extent of the impact on those affected. In some instances, this may take the form of brief phone calls or emails whereas in others it may require extensive public consultation. In the case of staffing matters this should include Trade Union engagement. Legal advice may also need to be sought to inform the policy.</p>
9	Provide feedback	Stakeholders	Stakeholders		Author	<p>Consulted stakeholders shall review the policy and provide feedback to the author. Where major revisions are required the Author should revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p>

ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
10	Revise policy where required and request Screening	Author	Author	Compliance		The author shall update the policy as required and complete the internal screening form and send to relevant Compliance officers to arrange equality and sustainability screening.
11	Conduct Equality & Sustainability Screening	Compliance	Compliance		Author	Compliance shall facilitate screening exercises, providing feedback where relevant and consider the need for any further action such as a formal Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).
12		Compliance	Compliance			If an EQIA is required proceed to Step 13. If not, proceed to step 14.
13	Conduct EQIA	Compliance	Compliance		Author	Compliance shall facilitate/support the EQIA exercise. Where major revisions are required the Author should revert to Step 3.
14	Revise policy as required and seek approval	Author	Author	CLT		<p>The author shall revise the policy where required based on feedback from screening exercises (and EQIA where relevant). Before seeking CLT approval the author should use the following checklist:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has the policy been informed by all relevant stakeholders?</li> <li>2. Has the policy been through HOST?</li> <li>3. If relating to staffing issues, has the policy been through SCC?</li> <li>4. Has the policy been screened?</li> <li>5. Has feedback from all of the above exercises been addressed?</li> </ol> <p>If so, the author shall liaise with the relevant Director to add the policy to the CLT agenda.</p>
15	Review policy	CLT	CLT		Author	CLT shall consider the draft policy and provide feedback to the author. If approved (subject to Council approval) or only minor revisions are required, proceed to Step 16. Where more major revisions are required revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.
16	Revise policy where required and request Council approval	Author	Author		CLT HOST	The Author (or relevant Director/Head of Service) shall provide a report to the relevant Committee seeking adoption of the policy via Council.
17	Committee Review	Author	Author	Committee		The relevant Committee shall consider the draft policy. If the Committee recommends adoption the policy will be effected following Council approval (unless implementation date otherwise agreed). If the Committee does not

ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
						<p>adopt the policy, the author shall revise the policy where required. For minor updates revert to Step 16. For significant variations in the policy the process should revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p>
18	Council approval	Author	Author	Council		<p>If the Council adopts the minutes of the relevant Committee meeting, the policy is agreed. If the Council does not adopt the policy, the author shall revise the policy where required. For minor updates revert to Step 16. For significant variations in the policy the process should revert to Step 3. Discuss with Director/Head of Service if in doubt.</p>
19	Communicate, Deploy & Review	Author	Author		All Staff	<p>The Author (or other relevant officers) shall communicate the policy and manage the effective deployment of this including ensuring training and/or guidance is available where required, that appropriate compliance and review mechanisms are in place and that any consequential changes to process, procedures and systems are made.</p> <p>The process is likely to be considered by the Equality External Consultative Panel (meet ¾ times per year) who may provide feedback for consideration in the review of the policy.</p> <p>It is important to establish at the outset what information and data will be required to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. It is important that this is established at an early stage to allow operational details around collecting the data to be put into place. The data collected should be based as closely as possible on the outcomes and aims of the policy.</p> <p>A review period should be stated with the future review considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What steps are necessary to determine whether the policy is meeting its aims?</li> <li>• Is a consultation exercise required? If so what method of consultation is appropriate e.g. survey, questionnaire, focus group, public meeting</li> <li>• Has there been any feedback from staff, service users or other external bodies?</li> </ul>

ID	Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any operational issues which have arisen? How can these be addressed?</li> <li>• Has the policy been fully implemented?</li> <li>• What monitoring data has been gathered?</li> <li>• Has the policy achieved its aims?</li> <li>• Assessment of the impact of the policy on the Council</li> <li>• Have there been any legislative/guidance changes that impact the policy?</li> <li>• Is the policy compatible with other Council policies?</li> <li>• Does the policy need to be modified or amended in any way?</li> </ul>
20	Implement / adhere to policy	All staff	HOST			All staff will be required to adhere to (and support implementation where relevant) the new/revised policy.

## Policy Register January 2025

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Document Type	Screening Number	Document Name	Directorate	Current Status	Council approval date	Latest version	Date of review
Policy	357	Advertising Sponsorship Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-24	Oct-24	Nov-25
Policy	306	Agile Working Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Sep-23	Oct-23	Oct-26
Policy	Not Screened *	Animal Welfare	Environment	Under review	Jan-16	Feb-16	Feb-25
Policy	284	Anti Fraud Bribery and Corruption	Corporate Services	Under review	Apr-23	Apr-23	Apr-25
Policy	286	Asset Management Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Mar-23	Apr-23	Apr-25
Policy	90	Behaviour Charter for Employees	Corporate Services	Live	Mar-17	Apr-18	Apr-28
Policy	212	Books of Condolence	Corporate Services	Under review	Jun-21	Jun-21	Jun-25
Policy	311	Budgeting Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-23	Nov-23	Sep-25
Policy	64	Business Continuity Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Apr-24	Nov-23	Mar-25
Policy	13	Capability Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Mar-15	Apr-18	Apr-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Capital Handbook Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Oct-20	Mar-20	Mar-25
Policy	267	CCTV and Surveillance Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Oct-22	May-23	Feb-25
Policy	287	Charging and Income Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Jul-23	Jul-23	Aug-25
Policy	93	Civic Event Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Mar-24	Mar-24	Mar-25
Policy	260	Commemorative Tree Planting	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Feb-22	Feb-22	Nov-24
Policy	304	Complaint Handling Procedure	Corporate Services	Live	Sep-23	Sep-23	Sep-26
Policy	21	Cultural Expressions Policy	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	May-17	Feb-23	Feb-25
Policy	92	Data Protection Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Oct-21	Nov-24	Nov-25
Policy	132	Dealing with alleged and asserted Public Rights of Way	Corporate Services	Under review	May-17	May-17	May-25
Policy	116	Declaration of Interests Policy for Employees	Corporate Services	Under review	Jun-17	Apr-17	Apr-19
Policy	38	Dignity at Work Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Sep-15	Oct-22	Oct-24
Policy	9	Disciplinary Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Mar-15	Oct-21	Oct-24
Policy	10	Dog Control Policy	Environment	Under review	Jan-15	Jan-15	Mar-25
Policy	232	Exhibition selection at Ards Arts centre	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Nov-14	Jul-19	May-24
Policy	60	Family Friendly Leave arrangements	Corporate Services	Under review	May-16	Jun-16	Jun-19
Policy	Not Screened *	Fences and Boundary Walls on Council Property Policy	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Feb-16	Feb-16	Feb-25
Policy	270	Flags Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Nov-24	Jul-21	Jan-25
Policy	29	Freedom of the Borough	Corporate Services	Under review	May-15	May-15	Mar-25
Policy	283	Friends Group Policy	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Dec-22	Jan-23	Nov-24
Policy	50	Gifts and Hospitality for Council Employees Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-15	Nov-15	Nov-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Gifts and Hospitality for Elected Members	Corporate Services	Under review	Dec-16	Dec-16	Dec-24
Policy	46	Graffiti Policy	Environment	Under review	Feb-16	Feb-16	Mar-25
Policy	339	Grants policy	Corporate Services	Live	Sep-24	Sep-24	Oct-26
Policy	86	Honorarium and Acting Up Allowances	Corporate Services	Live	Sep-16	Sep-16	Mar-26
Policy	134	Information Access Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Dec-24	Dec-24	Dec-26
Policy	65	Information, Communications and Technology Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Jun-16	Jun-16	Jun-25
Policy	192	Interpretive Signage Policy (Tourism)	Prosperity	Live	Feb-21	Jan-24	Jan-27

## Policy Register January 2025

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Policy	326	Inventories Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Mar-24	Apr-24	Apr-26
Policy	301	Lands and Property Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Nov-23	Nov-23	Nov-24
Policy	40	LG Pension Scheme - Employer's Discretions	Corporate Services	Under review	Sep-15	Sep-15	Jul-23
Policy	7	Licensing Policy	Environment	Under review	Jul-05	Jul-05	Mar-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Lone working and personal safety Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	N/A	Apr-21	Jun-24
Policy	Not Screened *	Machinery Replacement & Utilisation Strategy (P&C)	Community and Wellbeing	Live	Oct-23	Sep-23	Jan-28
Policy	Not Screened *	Managing absence Policy and Procedure	Corporate Services	Under review	Oct-15	Oct-21	Oct-24
Policy	256	Menopause Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Mar-22	Mar-22	Mar-26
Policy	52	Naming of Council Facilities Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-15	Nov-15	Nov-25
Policy	104	North Down Museum Access Policy Statement	Community and Wellbeing	Live	Feb-21	Sep-20	Sep-25
Policy	115	Overtime, Stand By and Call out Payments Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Aug-17	Aug-17	Mar-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Oct-22	Sep-22	Sep-23
Policy	48	Performance Management Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-24	Nov-24	Oct-26
Policy	281	Person Rescue Equipment	Environment	Live	Dec-22	Nov-22	Nov-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Planning Enforcement Strategy	Prosperity	Live	Nov-22	Jan-23	Mar-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Planning Scheme of Delegation	Prosperity	Live	Apr-20	Jul-20	Mar-25
Policy	178	Policy for the Use of Council Vehicles	Corporate Services	Live	Mar-19	Oct-19	Oct-25
Policy	68	Policy for the Provision of Memorial Benches	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Jan-16	Mar-16	Jul-16
Policy	123	Procurement Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Feb-18	May-22	May-25
Policy	101	Prohibition of access and use of Council facilities	Corporate Services	Under review	Mar-17	Aug-23	Aug-24
Policy	Not Screened *	Provision of Bus Shelters	Environment	Live	Dec-15	Nov-15	Nov-25
Policy	310	Provision of kerbside household waste collection services	Environment	Under review	Feb-23	Feb-23	Jun-25
Policy	325	Purchasing and Payments Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Mar-24	Apr-24	Sep-25
Policy	307	Redundancy Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-23	Oct-23	Oct-25
Policy	8	Regulatory Enforcement Policy	Environment	Under review	Jan-15	Jan-15	Mar-25
Policy	88	Release of Chinese lanterns and balloons	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-16	Nov-16	Nov-16
Policy	159	Removal of burial charges for under 18 year olds	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	May-18	Apr-24	Apr-25
Policy	179	Requests for the Utilisation of a Council Display Bed	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Mar-19	Apr-18	Sep-24
Policy	52	Requests to Name Council Facilities	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-15	Nov-15	Nov-25
Policy	289	Reserves and Funds Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Jul-23	Jan-00	Jun-24
Policy	Not Screened *	Retention and Disposal Schedule	Corporate Services	Under review	Dec-15	Jan-16	Mar-25
Policy	338	Roundabout Sponsorship Policy	Community and Wellbeing	Live	Oct-22	Oct-22	Nov-28
Policy	66	Safeguarding Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	Apr-16	Mar-22	Mar-25
Policy	338	Scheme of Delegation	Corporate Services	Under review	Jun-24	Jun-24	May-25
Policy	Not Screened *	Secondment	Corporate Services	Live	Sep-21	Aug-23	Aug-25
Policy	320	Social Media Policy	Corporate Services	Live	Nov-23	Nov-23	Nov-25
Policy	34	Sports Development Capital Grants Scheme	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Sep-24	Oct-22	Feb-25
Policy	269	Sustainability and Climate Change Policy	Corporate Services	Under review	May-22	Apr-23	Apr-25
Policy	280	The Street Naming and Numbering Policy.	Environment	Under review	Dec-22	Dec-22	Dec-24



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Policy	188	Ulster History Circle Plaques - General	Corporate Services	Under review	Jul-05	Jul-05	Jul-25
Policy	85	Volunteer Policy	Community and Wellbeing	Under review	Jun-17	Jun-17	Mar-25
Policy	200	Whistle-blowing Policy	Corporate Services	Live	May-20	Sep-24	Sep-29

\* Note: To be screened when policy is reviewed