

February 5th, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 12th February 2025** at **7:00 pm** in **Church Street, Newtownards.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

[📄 Agenda C&WC 12 February 2025.pdf](#)

Page 1

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. Dfl Active Travel Consultation

(Attached)

[📄 3. DFI Active Travel Plan Consultation response.pdf](#)

Page 4

[📄 3.1 Appendix 1 - Active Travel Delivery Plan Consultation..pdf](#)

Page 6

[📄 3.2 Appendix 2 - Proposed Response to Active Travel Plan.pdf](#)

Page 21

4. Integrated Advice Partnership Fund

(Attached)

[📄 4. Integrated Advice Partnership Fund.pdf](#)

Page 28

5. Community Festivals Funding

(Attached)

[📄 5. Community Festivals Funding.pdf](#)

Page 30

[📄 5.1 Appendix 1 - Grants Working Group Minutes and Recommendations.pdf](#)

Page 32

[📄 5.2 Appendix 2 - CFF25.26 Application Local & Nhood.pdf](#)

Page 38

[📄 5.3 Appendix 3 - CFF25.26 Guidance Local & Nhood.pdf](#)

Page 49

[📄 5.4 Appendix 4 - CFF25.26 Guidance Medium & Large.pdf](#)

Page 66

[📄 5.5 Appendix 5 - CFF 25.26 Application Med & Large.pdf](#)

Page 84

6. Community Development Grants

(Attached)

- [6. Community Development Grants.pdf](#) Page 96
- [6.1 Appendix 1 Community Development Grants Guidance Criteria.pdf](#) Page 97
- [6.2 Appendix 2 Community Development Grants Application form.pdf](#) Page 109

7. VE Day Grant Scheme 2025

- [7. VE Day Grant Scheme 2025.pdf](#) Page 119
- [7.1 Appendix 1 - VE Day Guidance Notes.pdf](#) Page 121
- [7.2 Appendix 2 - VE Day Application Form.pdf](#) Page 126

8. Social Supermarket Advance Payment

(Attached)

- [8. Social Supermarket Advance Payment.pdf](#) Page 133

9. Multiply Advance Payment

(Attached)

- [9. Multiply Advance Payment.pdf](#) Page 134

10. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Grant Scheme

(Attached)

- [10. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Grant Scheme.pdf](#) Page 136
- [10.1 Appendix 1 EVAWG Application Form.pdf](#) Page 138
- [10.2 Appendix 2 EVAWG Scoring Criteria.pdf](#) Page 144
- [10.3 Appendix 3 EVAWG OBA Report Card.pdf](#) Page 145





11. Arts Project Grants

(Attached)

- [11. Arts Projects Grants.pdf](#) Page 146

12. Update of Museum Policies

(Attached)

-  **12. Update of Museum Policies.pdf** **Page 149**
-  **12.1 Appendix 1 - NDM Documentation Policy Statement 2025-2030.pdf** **Page 151**
-  **12.2 Appendix 2 - North Down Museum Access Policy Statement 2025-2030.pdf** **Page 154**
-  **12.3 Appendix 3 - NDM Conservation and Collections Care Policy 2025-2030.pdf** **Page 156**



13. Clanmil Housing Association - Shared Housing Scheme Savoy, Bangor

(Attached)

-  **13. Clanmil Housing Association - Shared Housing Scheme Savoy, Bangor.pdf** **Page 161**

14. Correspondence - Gender Based Violence Against Women

(Attached)

-  **14. Correspondence. Gender Based Violence Against Women.pdf** **Page 163**
-  **14.1 Appendix 1 - Correspondence. Gender Based Violence Against Women.pdf** **Page 164**




15. Pigeon Control in Conway Square

(Attached)

-  **15. Pigeon Control in Conway Square.pdf** **Page 165**

16. PHA Consultation Response

(Attached)

-  **16. Public Health Agency Corporate Plan Consultation.pdf** **Page 167**
-  **16.1 Appendix 1 - PHA Consultation Response.pdf** **Page 169**
-  **16.2 Appendix 2 - PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030.pdf** **Page 191**

17. Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation January 2025

(Attached)

- [📄 17. Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation.pdf](#) Page 216
- [📄 17.1 Appendix 1 - Response to Fuel Poverty Strategy NI Jan 2025.pdf](#) Page 218
- [📄 17.2 DfC Consultation on Draft Fuel Poverty.pdf](#) Page 244
- [📄 17.3 DfC Consultation on Draft Fuel Poverty Stakeholder Engagement Report.pdf](#) Page 309

18. Funding to Mary Peter's Trust

(Attached)

- [📄 18. Mary Peters' Trust.pdf](#) Page 350
- [📄 18.1 Appendix 1 Letter from Mary Peters Trust for Support 19.12.24.pdf](#) Page 352

19. Public Consultation on Older Children Play Provision in Hollywood

(Attached)

- [📄 19. Public Consultation on Older Children Play Provision in Hollywood.pdf](#) Page 354

20. Cycle Friendly Borough Update

(Attached)

- [📄 20. Cycling Friendly Borough Update.pdf](#) Page 359

Reports for Noting

21. Community Resuscitation Group (CRG) Update

(Attached)

- [📄 21. Community Resuscitation Group \(CRG\) Update.pdf](#) Page 368
- [📄 21.1 Appendix 1 - ANDBC Community Resuscitation Action Plan 2024-2028 October 2024.pdf](#) Page 372

22. Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils

(Attached)

[22. Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils.pdf](#)

Page 385

23. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG January 2025)

(Attached)

[23. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants \(WG January 2025\).pdf](#)

Page 388

[23.1 Appendix 1 - Successful Individual Travel Accommodation Report for Noting.pdf](#)

Page 390

[23.2 Appendix 2 - Unsuccessful Report.pdf](#)

Page 392

[23.3 Appendix 3 - Funding Streams Report 2024-25.pdf](#)

Page 393

24. Future Cemeteries Provision Update

(Attached)

[24. Future Cemeteries Provision Project.pdf](#)

Page 394

25. Tree Asset Valuation

(Attached)

[25. Tree Asset Valuation.pdf](#)

Page 397

[25.1 Appendix 1 - Tree Asset Valuation Report.pdf](#)

Page 401

26. Community and Wellbeing Directorate Budgetary Control December 2024

(Attached)

[26. Community and Wellbeing Directorate Budgetary Control December 2024.pdf](#)

Page 451

27. Hardship Funding 2024-2025

(Attached)

[27. Hardship Funding 2024-2025.pdf](#)

Page 454

[27.1 Appendix 1 DfC Hardship Funding Response.pdf](#)

Page 456

28. Notices of Motion

28.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter (Deferred from January Committee meeting)

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.

28.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Irwin and seconded by Councillor McCracken

That this Council expresses its disappointment at the Education Minister's decision to refuse the development proposals from Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College and Rathmore Primary School to transform to Integrated schools, notes the overwhelming parental support for transformation, further notes the duties in the Integrated Education Act to aim to meet demand for Integrated Education, considers that the Minister has failed to act on this duty, and in doing so has failed to listen to parents from these schools, and resolves to write to the Minister and request he reconsider his decision as a matter of urgency.

29. Any Other Notified Business

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

5 February 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 12 February 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. DfI Active Travel Consultation (Report attached)
4. Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (Report attached)
5. Community Festivals Funding (Report attached)
6. Community Development Grants (Report attached)
7. VE Day Grant Scheme 2025 (Report attached)
8. Social Supermarket Advance Payment (Report attached)
9. Multiply Advance Payment (Report attached)
10. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Grant Scheme (Report attached)
11. Arts Project Grants (Report attached)
12. Update of Museum Policies (Report attached)
13. Clanmil Housing Association - Shared Housing Scheme Savoy, Bangor (Report attached)

14. Correspondence. Gender Based Violence Against Women (Report attached)
15. Pigeon Control in Conway Square (Report attached)
16. PHA Consultation Response (Report attached)
17. Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation January 2025 (Report attached)
18. Funding to Mary Peter's Trust (Report to attached)
19. Public Consultation on Older Children Play Provision in Holywood (Report attached)
20. Cycle Friendly Borough Update (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

21. Community Resuscitation Group (CRG) Update (Report attached)
22. Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils (Report attached)
23. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG January 2025) (Report attached)
24. Future Cemeteries Provision Update (Report attached)
25. Tree Asset Valuation (Report attached)
26. Community and Wellbeing Directorate Budgetary Control December 2024. (Report attached)
27. Hardship Funding 2024-2025 (Report attached)
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29. Any Other Notified Business

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 McBurney
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McClean
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Moore

Unclassified

4

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Date of Report	24 January 2025
File Reference	CW30
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Consultaion reponse to Gvt Department.
Subject	DFI Active Travel Plan Consultation Response
Attachments	Appendix 1. DFI Active Travel Plan Consultation Appendix 2. Proposed response

On 13th November 2024 the Minister for Infrastructure launched a consultation on an Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland, at Craigavon Civic Centre, attached at appendix 1. The launch event was attended by Alderman Adair, Councillor Moore, the Director of Community and Wellbeing, the Head of Strategic Capital Development and the Senior Planning Officer from the Local Development Plan Team.

After the event, the consultation document was circulated for comment and input from those appointed to attend the launch on behalf of Council, and the Councils Heads of Service team, so that corporate approach to the consultation could be drafted for Council to consider as its response to the consultation.

Input has been provided to the attached proposed response from a range of services within Council including Tourism, Planning, Assets and Property, Environmental

Not Applicable

5

Health and Outdoor Recreation. Furthermore, a meeting was held with the Active Travel Unit of DFI on 28th February to allow for further discussion on the proposals.

As a result, the attached is recommended as the Council's views to be provided as the response to the consultation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approves the response in appendix 2, to the Active Travel Plan consultation.



Department for
Infrastructure

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Department fur

Infrastructure

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Active Travel Delivery Plan

Public Consultation

November 2024



Appendix 1

Ministerial Foreword

I am immensely proud to present this Active Travel Delivery Plan for public consultation.

This plan is about delivering a bold transformation for our communities. We are embarking on a journey to create the foundations of a more active, sustainable transport system, tackling the climate crisis, and providing safe and healthy travel options for all our citizens. Active travel will be at the heart of this transformation.

I recognise the many benefits active travel can bring for individuals and for society. Being more physically active improves our physical health and mental wellbeing. And when it comes to issues like improving air quality, reducing the impact of traffic congestion, and tackling climate change, we can all play our part.

Whether it be to work or school, to the local shops and other amenities, to visit family and friends, or just for leisure and exercise, active travel can help to make our lives better and to make the places we live and visit, feel safer and more welcoming for everyone.

Your journey matters, and by making little changes, we can all make a big difference.

This plan is about ensuring everyone, regardless of age or ability, can safely and confidently choose to walk, wheel, or cycle for their shorter everyday journeys.

This Active Travel Delivery Plan will provide a firm basis for the delivery of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure in our villages, towns and cities, over the next ten years and beyond. The benefits will extend beyond transport, creating safer streets, cleaner air, and vibrant spaces where communities come together.

People are at the heart of this plan because active travel is for everyone. It is important that our neighbourhoods towns and villages are designed to meet the needs of those who live there. The input of local people is essential. I encourage everyone to get involved, share your views, and be part of shaping this journey to a more active, sustainable future.

This is your opportunity to give your views on the infrastructure that matters most to you.



John O'Dowd MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

What is Active Travel?

The Department for Infrastructure defines Active Travel as:

“Travelling by physically active means such as walking, wheeling, or cycling”.

- **Walking and wheeling** refers to walking, running, or wheeling unaided, as well as using any kind of mobility aids such as electric wheelchairs, mobility scooters or walking frames. People pushing prams or buggies are also included in this definition, as well as other modes such as scooting, skateboarding, and rollerblading/roller skating.
- **Cycling** refers to users of pedal cycles, but not motorbikes. The definition includes e-cycles and non-standard cycles, such as adapted cycles (cycles or tricycles, specially adapted for use by disabled people), cargo cycles and recumbents.

We are committed to developing and maintaining the infrastructure that helps to make these activities safe and enjoyable.

Active travel infrastructure includes footways, footpaths, cycle tracks, cycle lanes, crossings, junction treatments and bridges. Greenways and shared use paths, lighting in urban areas, cycle parking, signage and wayfinding information are also included.

The Benefits of Active Travel

Active travel offers a wide range of benefits that enhance our health, environment, economy, and society. By incorporating active travel into our daily lives, we can create healthier communities, reduce our environmental impact, and build more vibrant, connected communities.

Health Benefits

Active travel is an easy and effective way to improve physical and mental health. By integrating activities like walking, wheeling or cycling into their daily routines, individuals can maintain a healthy weight, boost cardiovascular fitness, and lower the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Regular physical activity also strengthens muscles and improves joint health.

Beyond physical health, active travel also has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. It can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while improving mood and mental clarity. For students, walking or cycling to school can enhance concentration and focus, which can lead to improved academic performance.

Environmental Benefits

Active travel plays a crucial role in reducing the environmental impact of transport. By prioritising walking, wheeling, and cycling for shorter journeys, and combining these modes with public transport for longer trips, we can cut greenhouse gas emissions and reduce air pollution. Less reliance on cars also reduces the impact of traffic congestion, leading to quieter streets and improved quality of life for residents.

Economic Benefits

Investment in active travel infrastructure can deliver substantial economic returns. Studies have shown that redesigning urban spaces to encourage walking can lead to increased foot traffic, higher sales for local businesses, and an overall boost to the economy. Walkable, bike-friendly environments attract more residents, visitors, and developers, making communities more vibrant and commercially successful.

Employers also gain from promoting active travel among their workforce. Healthier employees are more productive, take fewer sick days, and exhibit higher morale, leading to a more efficient and engaged workplace. By encouraging active travel, companies can foster a healthier and happier work environment while also contributing to sustainability goals.

Social Benefits

Creating public spaces that prioritise human interaction can help transform our streets into safer, more inclusive places where people feel happy to spend time. These spaces encourage outdoor activity and interaction, fostering a stronger sense of community and belonging.

When people feel comfortable spending time in shared places, it promotes social cohesion and makes neighbourhoods feel safer and more welcoming.

Active travel also plays an important role in promoting social equality and inclusivity. By giving accessible travel options to people, especially those who cannot drive or do not have access to a car, we ensure that everyone has the freedom to move around easily and independently.



Why is an Active Travel Delivery Plan Needed?

Over one third of journeys in Northern Ireland are less than two miles long, and two thirds are less than five miles long. These shorter distances offer a tremendous opportunity for active travel to become a practical and attractive option for many people.

By providing attractive travel options, we empower people to make more sustainable choices. With safe, reliable, and accessible active travel infrastructure, individuals are more likely to embrace healthier alternatives to driving. This shift can lead to more vibrant places where traffic congestion and air quality are less of an issue and our streets feel safer and more pleasant for everyone.

While we have the Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan and the Strategic Plan for Greenways, up until now there was no plan for the North for the delivery of active travel infrastructure. Historically, delivery has sometimes leaned towards less technically complex schemes, resulting in a lack of consistency and connectivity. Without a unified plan, many areas remain underserved by active travel options, limiting the overall impact of the investment.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 underscores the crucial role of active travel in addressing climate goals. It mandates the development of sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budgets of 10%. Meeting this commitment will require a significant increase in investment.

A comprehensive plan is essential to maximise the benefits of this increased investment. Our long-term vision is to create a seamless, integrated network that allows more people, regardless of age or ability, to choose active travel. Our vision also focused on consistency in design, ensuring that new infrastructure meets the highest levels of safety and accessibility.

This Active Travel Delivery Plan sets out how we will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure within our urban and rural settlements, over the next 10 years. The plan will be instrumental in ensuring that the infrastructure is consistently designed to be safe, accessible, and interconnected, encouraging more people to walk, wheel, or cycle as part of their daily routine.



The Active Travel Delivery Plan

We recognise that for most people, active travel is likely to be a more attractive option for shorter journeys rather than longer ones. This Active Travel Delivery Plan focuses on those shorter everyday journeys for the benefit of local communities.

We want to ensure that investment in active travel brings the maximum benefit possible to the greatest number of people. Realising these benefits requires people to shift modes of transport, from using private cars to active travel. The greatest potential for this modal shift is in urban areas with higher population numbers. For the purpose of this Plan, we are using the NISRA definition of urban areas as those with a population of over 5000.

Prioritisation

To ensure we prioritise investment effectively, we have developed an assessment framework that will allow us to assess and score potential active travel routes.

User needs were a key factor in the development of this framework. We collected information from a range of sources including available data on things like population densities and local amenities and attractions. We also engaged with regional transport teams who have valuable local knowledge and key stakeholders, such as local councils, Sustrans, the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and Translink.

The framework considers the extent to which a route will connect people to existing places of interest, as well as any potential barriers to delivery such as land ownership and ecological matters. The places of interest considered include such things as schools, leisure facilities, areas of employment and many other local amenities. It also considers the connections that could be prioritised to maximise benefits for individuals, the environment and society. We identified three key connection types which we believe offer the greatest potential to realise these benefits. We have placed a particular emphasis on these in our assessment framework.

Connections to local schools

Many people are concerned about safety and congestion in the vicinity of schools. Improving the active travel infrastructure around schools to encourage parents and children to travel actively for the school run, can improve safety and bring health benefits for pupils and parents alike. By investing in such infrastructure, we empower young people to adopt sustainable habits that can last a lifetime.

Connections to public transport

Combining active travel and public transport is a great way for people to reduce their dependence on the car and reduce their carbon footprint. Reducing the impact of traffic congestion by reducing the number of people who are dependent on the private car for their commute, can help to make our cities more attractive, sustainable and successful.

Connections to town centres

Creating better connections to local centres will make it easier for people to access the amenities they use every day. This can lead to increased footfall, making these local centres more vibrant and commercially attractive.

The assessment framework can be applied to anywhere people have a desire to get from A to B. This will form the basis for how we will prioritise investment in active travel infrastructure.

We are now seeking your views on whether we have prioritised the right things or are there other factors which you think should have more influence on where we focus investment in active travel infrastructure.

Delivering the Network

We have used our assessment framework to identify a network of priority routes for delivery over the next 10 years, and future routes. We have also identified routes where the existing active travel infrastructure could be enhanced.

We have produced detailed active travel network maps for all towns and cities with populations over 5,000 (based on the latest data from the 2021 census). The exception is Belfast, where the primary focus for active travel investment is the Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan (2022).

The active travel network maps show our proposed priority and future routes for each town and city, as well as existing routes with the potential for future enhancement. The maps have been grouped by council area and are provided as appendices to this document. To make it easier to examine these routes, interactive maps are also available on our online consultation page.

It is important to recognise that the average active travel scheme takes a number of years to deliver from inception to completion. It will therefore take some time for us to achieve our aim to have a fully interconnected active travel network.

We are proposing to phase delivery as set out below. We believe this is a reasonable estimate of what we can deliver based on ramping up active travel investment to meet our Climate Change Act obligations by 2030.

- **Priority routes (0-10 Years):** This phase will see the delivery of over 200km of high-quality active travel infrastructure. These are the routes that we have assessed as having the potential to deliver the greatest benefits on completion.
- **Future routes (10+ Years):** This phase will see the delivery of over 1000km of high-quality active travel infrastructure which will deliver a connected network that is accessible and attractive to as wide a range of people as possible.

We recognise that local priorities, travel habits, and infrastructure needs can change over time. We are committed to regularly reviewing the Active Travel Delivery Plan to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the community. As towns and cities grow, and travel patterns shift, we will adjust our prioritisation of routes to make sure they align with these changes, always focusing on what brings the greatest benefit to the community.

We are seeking your views on the ATDP priority routes shown on these maps or if there are other routes that you feel may bring more benefit to the local community and should be prioritised above those identified.

Rural Active Travel Networks

In rural areas and smaller towns and villages, creating safe, accessible routes that connect local residents to key amenities can be transformational. These routes can make it easier for people to move safely within their communities, reducing reliance on cars and fostering a greater sense of connection.

The same connection types that we believe will be most beneficial to people urban areas will also be beneficial to those who live in rural areas. We will therefore be placing particular emphasis on links to schools, public transport and town/villages centres in rural areas. To ensure fairness and consistency, we will use the same guiding principles of the assessment framework that we apply in larger towns to prioritise pedestrian and cycling improvements in smaller settlements.

This approach will help us identify the most beneficial routes and deliver infrastructure that promotes safe, active travel for rural communities as well.

The Bigger Picture

The Active Travel Delivery Plan, with its focus on shorter everyday journeys, is just one part of our overall strategy for the delivery of a connected, active travel network across Northern Ireland.

Greenways and other strategic inter-urban routes will also be an important part of the network. As part of our ramping up strategy we plan to bring forward a rolling programme of major active travel signature projects, which will provide key connections to enhance the overall active travel network.

Once adopted, this plan will complement the Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan, the Strategic Plan for Greenways and our signature projects to provide our teams and delivery partners with a firm basis for the overall delivery of active travel infrastructure for the next ten years and beyond.



Designing the network

The Active Travel Network Plans outline essential connections needed to create a comprehensive walking, wheeling, and cycling network that links communities to key destinations. They do not specify the exact infrastructure required.

We have reviewed our current policies and procedures and developed updated design guidance for active travel based on leading international best practice. As part of this review, we considered a number of elements that are important to the success of active travel investment, such as inclusive design, road safety, school area treatments, wayfinding, asset management, monitoring and evaluation, and behavioural change. This work has informed the development of our updated design guidance.

This marks a step change in our commitment to providing safe, inclusive and attractive active travel infrastructure for all those who choose to walk, wheel or cycle.

Overarching Design Principles

To enhance the streetscape for active travel, we will consider a variety of interventions tailored to meet the unique needs of each area.

Two key principles will guide the design of each scheme:

Design will be people-centred, with the aim of creating places that are welcoming and accessible to all.

Schemes will be designed to be used by as wide a range of people as possible and will consider the needs of some of the most vulnerable road users first.

Drawing on UK and international best practice in the development of our proposals, we will seek the views of the community and key users throughout the design process.

We aim to address the needs of all users as best we can in each situation, but with a focus on those groups that can sometimes be disadvantaged by the actions of others.

Design will focus on the provision of high-quality infrastructure, appropriate to the situation, with safety at its heart

Each scheme will consider the level of provision required to ensure that the infrastructure provided is safe, and feels safe.

There is no one-size-fits-all design, each individual scheme will be tailored to meet local needs. While it is not possible to show what any one scheme will look like, we can provide examples of high-quality infrastructure that can be implemented in different contexts.

TRAFFIC FREE ROUTES

Routes facilitating active travel remote from motor traffic



Appropriate **lighting in urban areas** helps to ensure that routes remain attractive all year round

May be **shared use, or segregated** between different active travel modes depending on volume of users.

Can provide attractive routes for **leisure and recreational use**, as well as shorter **everyday journeys**

MIXED TRAFFIC

Neighbourhood areas including residential streets



Cyclists mixing with **motor traffic** due to **low motor traffic volumes and speeds**

Footways or suitable shared surface generally provided for pedestrians

MANDATORY CYCLE LANES

Mixed use places that serve a variety of functions



Separation between pedestrians and cyclists

Cyclists segregated from motor traffic by road markings. Most **suitable** in environments with **low speeds** and relatively **low traffic flows**

Cycle lanes enforced through legislation. **Careful consideration** to be given to provision of **parking and loading facilities**

SEPARATED ACTIVE TRAVEL FACILITIES

Busy urban routes with high traffic volumes



Controlled crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at **appropriate locations**

Separation between pedestrians and cyclists

Physical separation from motor traffic, to improve safety and perception of safety for pedestrians and cyclists

Rebalancing the Street

To accommodate safe, high-quality active travel infrastructure, we may need to re-balance the space within our streets. This could involve narrowing carriageway widths in areas where the focus has shifted from maximising motor traffic to ensuring safe and efficient movement for everyone. We may also explore options to reduce or relocate parking and review existing bus stop placements to ensure equal and convenient access to local amenities and services for all.

Rethinking Traffic Management

There may be places where we introduce traffic management measures that can help to make walking, wheeling, and cycling more attractive. This could include lowering speed limits or implementing one-way systems to reduce risks associated with motor traffic, especially in areas with high pedestrian and cyclist interaction. We may also restrict motor vehicle access in places where there is a desire to create places that are predominantly people focussed.

We are seeking your views on the key principles and their implications in terms of road space allocation and traffic management.



Have Your Say

We have outlined our plans for the delivery of active travel infrastructure for shorter everyday journeys - we would now like you to give us your views.

By commenting on our proposals, you can help shape the developing active travel network in your area and the Department's overall approach to active travel investment.

Responses to the consultation can be submitted via Citizen Space.

We plan to hold a number of engagement events during the consultation period and would invite you to come along to an event if you would like more information before responding.

Please use the QR Code opposite or visit <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/active-travel-delivery-plan>

to access the online consultation and to find out about the consultation events.

If you require a paper copy of the questionnaire, please contact us at:

activetravel@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

We would like to receive your comments by **28th February 2025**.

After the consultation ends, we will review all the feedback. Following this, a report will be published showing how your comments have influenced the final Active Travel Delivery Plan.

Local engagement on active travel schemes is an integral part of our design process. There will be further opportunities to give your views on specific schemes as these are developed. Statutory consultation will also be carried out at the appropriate time on any schemes that require traffic regulation orders.



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Appendix 1
Ards and North Down Borough Council	Appendix 2
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	Appendix 3
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	Appendix 4
Derry City and Strabane District Council	Appendix 5
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	Appendix 6
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	Appendix 7
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	Appendix 8
Mid Ulster District Council	Appendix 9
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	Appendix 10



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Infrastructure

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Appendix 2

Proposed Active Travel Plan Response from Ards and North Down Borough Council.

1. Have DfI Emphasised the right things?

- 1.1 It seems a set of solid and dotted lines have been put alongside some roads, with very little detail or strategy. Would recommend an excel spreadsheet defining routes, what work is envisaged, value and timescale.
- 1.2 Greenways and associated feasibility studies already collaborated on by DfI and Council are not currently included on the maps, making it difficult to see or plan routes. E.g. Green Road to Donaghadee.
- 1.3 Has consideration been given to implementing temporary measures in urban and rural settings to gather data, such as road closures to encourage pedestrianisation.
- 1.4 What are the plans concerning how people can safely walk, wheel, or cycle at roundabouts, given their complexity.
- 1.5 Concerns about the lack of thought around how private developers could contribute to active travel. It was noted that the design guide and policy is still under development, but DfI, as a statutory consultee, should provide feedback on developers' contributions to active travel lanes at planning consent stage - similar to how they assess road traffic impacts.
- 1.6 A behavioural change plan, similar to that in the Welsh Active Travel Plan, is needed to build confidence in safe travel. This should include leadership, professional development, and a strategy that promotes safety and confidence and addresses long-term behavioural changes. Is there one to go alongside the Delivery Plan and is there funding to implement it?
- 1.7 Local schools: The absence of connections to schools is only part of the problem. Children (and their carers) must possess the skills, knowledge and confidence to utilise these facilities, or else they will be lie empty. DfI need to provide funding for local cycle-based play facilities such as pump tracks and learn to ride areas in order to promote children using their bicycles in a safe, fun environment. Furthermore, funding should be available for educational/coaching sessions on these facilities.
- 1.8 Advisory cycle lanes as currently provided on many urban access routes but these are not suitable provision to enable more people to cycle more short journeys such as for connections to: schools; public transport; town centres.
- 1.9 Council has completed GIS mapping work to record existing cycle paths and tracks within the AND borough, this information has been provided openly to DfI Active Travel unit but license agreements remain outstanding. These routes

some in construction, some in planning are not included in proposed Active Travel Network plans and should be.

- 1.10 Given the connection between areas of socio-economic deprivation, lower levels of physical activity and poor health outcomes that was presented at the ATDP consultation launch, Ards and North Down Borough Council considers it would be of value to see a focus on these geographical areas.
- 1.11 Journeys to medical and community facilities (including libraries, sport and leisure/recreation facilities) should also be a focus for investment in active travel infrastructure.
- 1.12 Consideration should also be given to parks and facilities outside settlements and potential to provide footpaths and key cycle lane segregation to demonstrate a commitment to addressing barriers to uptake. Facilitation of a safe means of active travel will assist with moving beyond token 'encouragement' of active travel.
- 1.13 We feel that connections to schools is very important as it could positively lead to future life decisions on active travel for the younger generations, and this is important to get the message across at a young age to use active travel. However we do feel that its important to educate children on safe cycling and use of the roads. Enforcing legislation to wear cycle helmets and safe cycling courses at schools must be implemented.
- 1.14 The document mentions that many are concerned about safety and congestion in vicinity to schools – the concern goes well beyond the connections to schools. Without safe segregated active travel means there will ultimately remain a barrier to uptake across the region. In the future, it is suggested that more 'hub-and-spoke' type active travel corridors linking larger settlements with outlying rural settlements
- 1.15 With regards to connections to public transport these connections need to be prioritised
- 1.16 Public transport there needs to be more frequent bus services to rural towns and areas if we are to steer the public from using the car as first option. There isn't enough services to provide rural town residents to travel on buses to larger cities and sometimes need to wait another hour or two for the next bus. Ards and North Down Borough Council has lots of small rural areas and the residents from these areas currently need to use their cars as they simply don't have enough public transport, and this is the same in lots of other rural areas throughout NI.
- 1.17 Connections to visitor attractions will increase dwell time within each of the towns/city and therefore increase visitor spend – the expectation that an internation visitor can easily move around and beyond a town is required to compete globally. It is acknowledged that this is mostly considered in future routes

2. Comments on proposals for Bangor

2.1 Why does the plan for Bangor not have any references or linkages to the Greenway already on site, this is fundamental, DfI have to pick these up and then into the town/city centers and connect to main transport hubs as a matter of urgency or all the hard work to construct Greenways will be compromised.

2.2 A more detailed strategy for the city centre is required

2.3 Newtownards to Bangor Greenway not shown on map Proposed Bangor Active Travel Network which is currently under construction.

2.4 There are a number of missed opportunities:

- Not prioritising linking up the train station to the city centre via active travel routes;
- Not prioritising any active travel routes originating from or terminating in the centre; and
- Not prioritising active travel linkages to or from Queens Parade. This is a major regeneration project in the centre of the new city of Bangor that will remove significant areas of car parking.
- There is absence of recognition of other City Region Deal committed proposals such as Bangor Waterfront.
- Debris on cycle lanes, which forces cyclists onto roads, particularly on routes like Comber-Ards, Ards-Bangor, and Bangor-Holywood. Maintenance routines are needed for these. Curbs may be needed to address maintenance issues for both cyclists and walkers. The design should minimise ongoing maintenance needs and clarity should be established on responsibilities between the council and DfI.
- The cycle lane on Abbey Street is often blocked by parked cars, as residents use it for parking outside their homes. This raises questions about its effectiveness and how realistic it is as a main route. What is the legislation to protect the cycle lanes and what authority or enforcement measures will be in place?

2.5 Future routes to considered include the coastline to Groomsport for visitors and general wellbeing.

3. Comments on Proposals for Comber

3.1 Both proposed routes are incomplete. How do cyclists get to these routes if travelling toward the town centre? If leaving the town centre, where do they go once the safe route ends? Both roads are dangerous for cyclists. These routes must link the existing greenway to the proposed one.

3.2 The Existing Comber Greenway is not shown on the Proposed Comber Active Travel Network (Refer to planning application: **LA06/2019/0308/F**)

3.3 Concerns about the limited space in Comber, which poses challenges for implementing an active travel route. The locations indicated on the maps will require thorough on-the-ground investigation to assess their feasibility and realism.

3.4 There is an absence of link to approved greenway schemes e.g. Comber to Newtownards approved under LA06/2019/0308/F. In Dec 2024, permission was given for the new route:

3.5 It is Important to link Comber to Strangford Lough and Greenway for the future

4. Comments on Proposals for Donaghadee

4.1 It makes sense to utilize Northfield road. However the opportunity should be taken to widen this road to accommodate the volume of traffic that uses it.

4.2 The rationale for the proposed route extending up Killaughey road is unclear. The population centres are at the south off Millisle road and the north off High Bangor road. These routes would be more logical and attract greater usage

5. Comments on Proposals for Holywood

5.1 The plan refers to the “Sydenham Greenway” as being one the 6 “Active travel Signature Projects” however the Holywood map’s only reference to this “Link to proposed future greenway network” at the end of route 3. If the Sydenham greenway is one of the signature projects, why is it not detailed on the map?

5.2 Belfast Council plans should be indicated on the maps so connectivity of Dfl, ANDBC and BCC can be achieved. There should be a correlation between the Belfast City Plans, the Harbour Commission, and the proposed coastal path area, as this alignment would be beneficial and supported.

5.3 Link to future routes to Seapark for visitors and wellbeing would be recommended.

6. Comments on Proposals for Newtownards

6.1 The routes should utilize existing greenways already at planning stage, particularly at the A21. (Extension to existing Comber Greenway not shown on: Proposed Newtownards Active Travel Network Refer to planning application: LA06/2019/0308/F)

6.2 From a wellbeing and visitor perspective more links to available lengthy walks is required in Newtownards due to limited open green accessible space. Therefore, consideration of a route for access to Strangford Lough via Floodgates which will link with Greenway. A Route also from Kempstones to Killnether Road to provide a route to Scrabo is suggested.

6.3 Extend Route 1 to Old Shore Road to gain access to Lough and include ABMWLC. Link to Greenway

6.4 There is an absence of prioritisation of these 'priority' routes over the next 10 years, and a means of doing this should be developed.

6.5 A planning application for a new park and ride facility has been received for Newtownards LA062023/2314/F. The proposals do not offer a priority route connecting the development proposal to the current bus station / town centre or to the end of the greenway link currently under construction which will terminate at the South Eastern Regional College in that vicinity. These are missed opportunities to develop better connectivity between active travel developments in the town and should be included.

7. Further General Comments

7.1 The absence of connections to schools is only part of the problem. Children (and their carers) must possess the skills, knowledge and confidence to utilise these facilities, or else they will be lie empty. DfI need to provide funding for local cycle-based play facilities such as pump tracks and learn to ride areas in order to promote children using their bicycles in a safe, fun environment. Furthermore, funding should be available for educational/coaching sessions on these facilities.

7.2 DfI need to get some schemes on the ground in 2025/26 and demonstrate commitment to active travel in the Borough.

7.3 The plans should also include encouraging the use of multi-modal transport. Translink currently do not let bicycles on trains before 09.30. This therefore encourages people to drive to the train station rather than cycle and unless they work within walking distance of their destination train station, they will just drive to work and avoid the train altogether.

7.4 The more links that can be made over time, the better, so that individuals do not decide not to cycle/walk because of dangerous gaps in the infrastructure. Where a cycle path leads to a town but not safety around the town will still deter families and children.

7.5 There is a significant financial investment and disruption to provide the proposed routes – much work will need to be done to promote their use and ensure that they are well used.

It should be compulsory for cyclists to use the tracks/paths/routes provided and an offence to cycle on the roads where cycle paths are available.

7.6 The wearing of cycle helmets should be made compulsory for safety reasons. Even if risk is reduced by cyclists using designated routes, the (hopefully) increased numbers of cyclists should be reason to promote safety.

7.7 Promoting active travel to and from schools is important but also to public buildings, parks, recreational outdoor spaces and leisure centres to support this.

7.8 Children need to be confident riding bikes and the leisure infrastructure is a good way to encourage this and build confidence. Cycling proficiency should be taught in all schools in order to promote safe and confident cycling. Walking routes to and from schools should also be prioritised. Encouraging active travel with the younger age groups will help carry this through their life course.

7.9 It is noted that development in the Ards Peninsula is not included. Whilst it is recognised that priority has been given to more populated areas, there is a need to consider suitable access for schoolchildren in this area in particular, to promote lifelong active travel.

7.10 It is positive to see the ADTP and how we plan to improve active travel in the next 10 years and beyond, and if implemented correctly should increase the use of public transport from rural and urban areas that will reduce the amount of cars and carbon emissions. This in turn should create healthier spaces and green areas for people to meet and actively explore. We think that key to this is ensuring more frequent services to rural areas and then the onward connections to towns and cities have to be implemented. Just looking at cities like Manchester and Amsterdam gives you prime examples of how a good transport network reduces the amount of cars used for personal trips.

7.11 It is considered that the delivery plan could have shown greater ambition. Ards and North Down Borough Council would question:-

7.12 How does the Department consider that Active Travel could be directed for inclusion and supported in all developments where new roads and streets are created? Will the forthcoming design guidance be a useful tool for Council LDPs to reference and direct developers to incorporate?

7.13 How will the Department treat active travel design measures proposed by developers going forward, as proposals with shared surfaces have historically raised issues around adoption.

7.14 How has the Department considered the likely location of future development when Council has not published its draft Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan?

7.15 How will the ATDP sit alongside the ETP? The consultation document makes no cross reference to the future Transport Plan.

7.16 Above comments relate primarily to future routes acknowledging the priorities laid out in this consultation, however consideration to advance future routes more quickly would serve more holistic return for social and economic return whilst addressing climate targets.

7.17 TNI data – latest consumer sentiment research (NI market who took a short or long break) – 54% experienced scenic or interesting walks highlighting the importance of walkable routes within and beyond the Boroughs towns and City.

7.18 There is a lack of clarity on the legal mechanisms for progressing vesting's between the council and the department for land acquisition, whether through vesting, leasing, or other methods. The roles and responsibilities of sponsoring departments also require clarification. Request a formal response from DOS to address the legal process for vesting's and clarify the roles of sponsoring departments for implementation on future Greenway projects.

7.19 ANDBC Council Officer Engagement Meeting has identified an agreed need to for better communication - DFI Southern Division will welcome Monthly meetings to get off the ground, moving to quarterly and council have agreed to initiate meeting to keep up communication and a good forum for assessing progress going forward. Council supports this approach.

8. Road Space Allocation and Traffic Management. Additional comments on principles for designing the network

Whilst in agreement with the principles, it is questionable on the level of ambition. There is opportunity to require active travel be 'designed in' for all forms of development where roads and streets are created fully embedding design solutions and a means to overcome barrier to uptake. Design guidance and principles should be produced with this in mind and DfI Roads should be supportive of measures such as shared surfaces and other traffic calming measures to ensure pedestrian and wheeled users have priority – to the extent that these streets and roads are adopted formally as this has not always been the case in the past experience.

Unclassified

28

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	09 December 2024
File Reference	CDV 28
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Integrated Advice Partnership Fund
Attachments	None

Overview

The Department for Communities has a statutory requirement to provide debt advice to individuals and households in need. The debt advice levy enables the Department to secure funding to deliver free debt advice in NI.

The levy is applied to the financial services industry by the Financial Conduct Authority. The monies collected through the levy are allocated based on the proportion of adults in each of the nations of the UK who are indebted. The amount of funding available varies from year to year based on the 'Need for Debt Advice' survey.

Additional, one-off funding has become available, which will not continue beyond 2025/26.

This has provided the Department with an opportunity to explore and implement additional options that aim to increase debt advice reach through early intervention ensuring that more people facing financial difficulties have access to comprehensive support and guidance tailored to their specific circumstances.

Not Applicable

29

An Integrated Advice Partnership fund has been approved to test proposals which focus on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. This approach is grounded in collaborative advice partnerships; connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach.

Council has received a Memorandum of Understanding from the Department for Communities in relation to the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund for £68,121,68 to deliver one off debt advice in 2024/2025, with an accounts directive to enable the fund to be carried over to 2025/26.

The Integrated Advice Partnership Fund will focus on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. This approach will be grounded in collaborative advice partnerships, connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach, through a range of diverse methods that complement the existing NI Debt Advice services administered by Advice NI.

The important considerations of this fund include:

1. A holistic approach.
2. Collaborative partnership with two or more organisations one of which can supply the free, independent, FCA regulated debt advice - the FCA regulated organisation must be the lead partner.
3. Money awarded for 2024/25 equates to £68,121.68, with a finance directive allowing this money to be carried over to the financial year 2025/26.
4. The funding amount for 2025/26 has not been confirmed but it will be included in the Community Development CSP letter of Offer.
5. This funding will not extend beyond **March 2026**.
6. This funding is for the whole Borough and cannot be split into different grant pots.

Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND) are already contracted by Council to deliver advice services for the Borough and are FCA regulated. The procurement team has confirmed that this element can be added to the existing contract via a variation to contract. CAAND will deliver a partnership model to target areas that require debt advice, but are not currently seeking it, in partnership with GP surgeries.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves a variation of contract to CAAND of £68,121.68 to deliver the Integrated Advice Partnership fund in the Borough in 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.

Unclassified

30

ITEM 5**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	CDV 27
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Community Festivals Funding
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Minutes and recommendation from the community grants working group Appendix 2 - Application form Neighbourhood and Local Appendix 3 - Guidance notes Neighbourhood and local Appendix 4 - Application form Medium/large Appendix 5 - Guidance Medium/Large

At a meeting of the Community Development Elected Members grants working group held on 16 May 2024, Members requested that a sample of local community representatives be consulted with to consider applications forms, guidance etc to make them more user friendly for applicants and to streamline the process.

Following approval of the new Grants Policy in September 2024 elected members on the working group each nominated representatives they wished to see invited to participate in this process.

Not Applicable

31

A meeting of the grants working group was held on 20th November 2024, (minute attached appendix 1), to discuss the grants paperwork for the Events and Festival fund. The Events and Festivals Fund was launched in 2022 as a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund. Council tested the amalgamation of the Tourism Events Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund, but it has been determined that to ensure proportionate and relevant information is requested from applicants, the Fund will now return to being administered as two separate grant schemes.

The community part of this fund will return to its original title of Community Festival Fund.

Following the meeting in November 2024, officers amended the paperwork taking advice from the working group and making changes where possible whilst also meeting Department for Communities requirements as set out in the Letter of Offer. The finalised paperwork was sent to everyone involved in the initial meeting for comment and two responses with minor amendments were received. The team would like to thank all those who attended the meeting and who gave up their time to participate in this process to date.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached Community Festival Fund scheme.

**GRANTS WORKING GROUP MEETING
HELD ON 20th November 2024**

Attendees: Nicola Dorrian, Beverley Skillen, Nicola McClurg, Esther Reid, Cllr Barry McKee, Louise Spence, Ashleigh Hunter, Sarah Aston, Marilyn Toogood, John Caldwell, Cllr Richard Smart, Frances McCormick, Alderman Trevor Cummings, John Dumigan, Katherine Gibson, Rhonda McIlveen, Cllr Douglas, Cllr McCollum.

Apologies: Joan Cowan, Philip Smith, Cathy Polley, Alan Burnside.

INTRODUCTION		Officer comments supporting updated grant paperwork
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS gave background on Grants Policy, its scope and exclusions. Update on Grants Policy review – will move to online eventually. Trying to find balance of following policy and procedures but not making it paper heavy for community groups. Stipulations of DfC. • Sections 1&3 standard across Council Section 2 can be specific. 		
QUESTION 2.1 – AIMS & OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Douglas and others felt that the wording needed to be made simpler to encourage volunteers. Language used could be intimidating to small group especially when they are only applying for £1000. • Nineteen pages of guidance too much. • General principles. Lots of selling and tying into principles – Responsibility would put groups off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to simplify and humanise wording in form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language of both application forms and guidance has been reviewed and softened. • Guidance documents have been reviewed and any unnecessary or repetitive information has been removed, unfortunately this has not reduced the number of pages by a large number as we have to strike a balance by providing the

<p>They are limited in what they can control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JC – Eight weeks put me off – remove and put ‘no significant breaks’. TC – Hard to pin events down to a short window. NMCC – hard to define significant breaks, probably why use of 8 weeks. Clr Smart – How many Aims and Objectives expected to hit. Wording suggests have to meet all. BS – Not weighted. ND – Could we put a line in to say don’t have to meet all. 		<p>information required especially for new groups to try and make the process easier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General principles removed; a section of guidance support has been added which includes some of these for information purposes only. Aims and objectives looked at all groups must explain how they meet S.75 as a funder requirement, local and neighbourhood must meet one other aim and medium/large two aims.
<p>QUESTION 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF FESTIVAL</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JC – 450 words not enough to describe 100 events. FMCC – Most groups will not know all the events beforehand. BS – Description is of the festival only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear in wording that description required is of festival only, not each event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now requesting just, a description of the festival and its theme, and festival timetable will be required closer to the time.
<p>QUESTION 2.3 RISK ASSESSMENT</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FMCC -EMP can be changed up to the last minute. Is draft okay six weeks before. AH - Some groups will not know what it means. NMCC – There is a template available. BS – And guidance Clr Smart – 100 pages though. BS – Make relevant to size. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMP only required for the larger events which is relevant to the larger sums of funding. EMP is a Council designed document that events and risk have put together, CD do not have any control of this. Risk assessment relevant to the size of the festival is still required.
<p>QUESTION 2.4 PROJECTED NUMBERS</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FMCC – 300 words too much. Panic at how to justify projected numbers. LS – Need prompts to support thoughts on explanation. Really just a guessing game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower word count Not scored or justified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word count has been reduced where appropriate. Estimated participants have been requested. Updated explanation.

<p>JC – Why score at all? LS – Does higher numbers get better score?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not scored • No higher numbers do not get higher scores, it's relevant to the event and the amount applied for.
<p>QUESTION 2.5 VOLUNTEERS</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMcC – Hard for inexperienced groups to define. Detail on roles and enhancing skills NMcC – Have to ask for DfC AH – Any pointers? BS – In guidance. LS – If no volunteers, no score? BS – True. JD – Who checks? BS/ND – Visit festivals. Must go and also to show support. Consensus scrutiny should be minimal. Volunteers feel they must prove selves and unappreciated. Will walk away. • KG – Can use volunteers for First Aid or must have St John's Ambulance? BS – Think it's if more than 250 attendances. LS - A table showing essentials for criteria would be good. Cllr Smart – Need streamlined template of advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS to check attendance numbers for First Aid requirement. • Table showing essentials to meet criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated detail on volunteers. As DfC request reporting back on this then we must ask and score it. Application has been simplified and gives explanation to support applicants. • Groups have to satisfy themselves they have appropriate cover, Purple Guide is useful for applicants.
<p>QUESTION 2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JC asked if this needs to be scored. BS – Yes. Scored according to size of event but does need to be considered. Show measures taken and how have thought about. • MT explained that they had asked for more bins and Council told them would have to pay – a lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of 'You are required to' in Letter of Offer re environmental issues, could have 'We hope to' followed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tick box made available for the local/neighbourhood; the larger events will have to consider environmental issues to match the level of funding applied for.

<p>from a small budget. Discussion on ways to work around – separating waste themselves. Whether zero waste event would score zero on this question. Would large events with more bins score higher? BS clarified that it is the <u>measures</u> taken to deal with waste that would be scored on, not size of event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LS asked whether a tick box layout on the form would be helpful. 	<p>tick boxes in form or Letter of Offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tick boxes could apply by tiers according to size of event. 	
QUESTION 2.7 EXPENDITURE	RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMcC – Can groups add more boxes. NMCC - Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add note to say groups are allowed to add boxes to table. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • added
QUESTION 2.8a, b,c VALUE FOR MONEY	RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS – Have to score. Volunteer time, discounts, other funding etc LS – Use minimum wage? Cllr McKee – Different rates? BS – Use adult AH – Ticket sales? NMCC – Yes, some do. Could reflect if we split out application form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce wording 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form split to make it easier to navigate – wording reduced.
QUESTION 2.9 HIRED SERVICES	RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMCC – May not be asking for money to cover all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus is question not needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removed
QUESTION 3.0 LOCAL SPEND	RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMCC – Question always in Cllr Smart – Show value to Borough LS – Could have attendance of 10k experiencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed

<p>poverty JD – Not one of the aims and objectives</p>		
<p>QUESTION 3.1&2 PUBLICITY</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMcC – Table not for small events. NMcC – Historically only for larger events, just a question for smaller. Agreed we do that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question only for smaller events. Table to be used for larger events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table removed from neighbourhood/local festivals
<p>ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LS – Smaller groups need clearer explanation – what is required and how to do it. Scoring needs to be clearer. Warmer language and at a glance understanding. • Cllr Smart – opportunity to direct people for advice? BS – Yes on back of form. Length of guidance might grow to support newer groups • Cllr Smart – Is there a database? NMcC – Yes groups are asked if they want to be added. • LS – Redaction when over word count? BS – Some people will go over. We cannot physical restriction at the moment. We have tried this, and it didn't work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Warmer' language to be used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoring table moved to a more prominent location with guidance • the Language has been considered and update • Email and contact details are already on forms
<p>NEXT STEPS</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND – We will take the changes onboard. Please send any further recommendations to BS. • To Sian for QA • Committee for approval. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further feedback has been received from the group to date 09/01/25. • Will be issued to group for comments week commencing 13/01/25 – feedback due 22.01.25. • Beverley to have report for Feb committee completed by 27th Jan. 25 should all be agreed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then process is Application – Score – Letter of Offer. Quicker, don't have to wait on Council to agree. <p>All Council Grants Roadshow 20 February 2025 – Save the Date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save the Date to be issued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issued save the date
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As there were no other issues the meeting was declared closed at 6:30pm

Signed: *EM Reid*
(Minute Taker)

Date: 25/11/2024

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND 2025/2026

APPLICATION FORM

FOR LOCAL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY FESTIVALS
taking place from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Applications for the Community Festival Fund 2025/26 are welcome from constituted community and voluntary groups in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Festival Type	Recommended attendee/participant guidance	Support available
Local	Attracts up to 500 attendees and participants	Up to £1,000
Neighbourhood	Attracts between 501 – 2,000 attendees and participants	From £1,001 - £4,000

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):

SECTION 1

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name of the Organisation, as it appears on the governing document.

Please indicate the organisation type

Constituted Community Group (Please see Guidelines for a definition)

Limited Company

Charity

Please give Company/Charity Registration No.

Main Contact for the Organisation (this should be the person who can answer questions on the festival application form)

Name	
Position in Organisation	
Contact Address for correspondence	
Telephone Number	
E-mail address	

Are you currently registered on Community Development's Database

Yes

No

If you would like to be registered please follow this link and complete the form: <https://bit.ly/ANDBC-CIR>

FESTIVAL INFORMATION

Community Festival Name and Proposed Dates

What is the name of the festival?	
Proposed start date of festival	
Proposed end date of festival	
Venue and Location of festival (include postcode)	
Estimated number of attendees	

Will the festival require the use of Council Land? Yes No

If yes, please detail where _____

Please note that a separate booking **must** be completed to hire the Council Land via the Compliance Section of Ards and North Down Borough Council. Please see details on page 6 of the Guidance Notes.

Which band of funding are you applying for, please tick to indicate?

Community Festival	Funding available	Please tick
Local	Up to £1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neighbourhood	From £1,001 - £4,000	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is the festival open to the general public (please tick) Yes No

Is this a new festival to Ards and North Down? Yes No

Is the festival free, ticketed or has elements of both? Free Ticketed Both

SECTION 2

41

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – THE DETAILS, FINANCES, ATTENDEES AND MARKETING

The Community Festival Fund (CFF) is jointly provided by the Department for Communities and Ards and North Down Borough Council. Community Festivals must demonstrate their commitment to promoting social cohesion, social inclusion, community participation and targeting poverty.

About the Community Festival -

2.1 How does running the community festival achieve the aims and objectives of the Community Festival Fund (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2) Max word count: 400 words. Please tell us about how you foster Section 75 and Good Relations and additionally at least 1 more of the aims and objectives. (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

2.2 Please provide a description of the community festival and its theme. Please also include the proposed festival programme. (scored 0-5) Max word count 300 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

2.3 Outline the measures you will take regarding the safety and welfare of the festival attendees. (scored 0-5) Max word count 300 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

2.4 Festival organisers can implement sustainable practices and encourage the attendees to do the same. Please confirm by ticking below if you have considered taking these sustainability measures during the festival. *(this question is not scored) (see page 10 of the guidance notes)*

	Yes
Making a commitment to consider green practises from planning stages	
Leave no trace – encouraging people to take their rubbish home with them	
Have you considered how waste will be dealt with?	
Will recyclable waste be separated out?	
Please confirm that you will not be using any hazardous substances?	
How will people travel to and from the festival? Shuttle bus to reduce car use?	
Encourage attendees to carpool, walk or cycle to the festival	
Will you be using bio-degradable plates, cups etc?	
Will you be using any reusable or borrowed equipment?	
Avoiding food waste	
Use vendors with sustainable businesses	
Encourage attendees to bring their own containers and bags	
Not releasing balloons or lanterns – finding an environmentally friendly alternative	
Will not use any glitter or non-biodegradable products	
Can you off set it? Have you been part of a tree planting exercise etc?	

Finance -

The Funding available through this application is :

Festival	Support available
Local	Up to £1,000
Neighbourhood	From £1,001 - £4,000

Festival Budget: Please tell us how much the total cost of the festival is and then complete the 3 tables. Table 2.5 is the grant amount being requested from ANDBC, Table 2.5a is the contribution in kind and Table 2.5b is other funding or income. Question 2.5c is about value money.

Please tell us the total cost of the Community Festival

£

2.5 Please complete the table to show the Grant amount being requested from the Community Festival Fund. In this section only, groups can add more rows if required. *(the table for 2.5 needs to be completed but is not scored) (see pages 11&12 of the guidance notes)*

Itemised Festival Expenditure being applied for	Expenditure amount £
<i>Example: Face Painters</i>	<i>£200.00</i>
<i>Example: Bouncy Castles x2</i>	<i>£300.00</i>

TOTAL CFF GRANT BEING APPLIED FOR	£

2.5a Contribution in kind (please refer to page 11 of guidance notes) (Table 2.5a needs to be completed but is not scored) (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

Benefit in kind	Value £
TOTAL VALUE OF BENEFIT IN KIND	£

2.5b Other funding or Income, grants from other funders or through ticket sales (table 2.5b needs to be completed but is not scored) (please refer to page 12 of guidance notes)

Income type i.e. ticket sales or another funder	Amount £		Is this confirmed? Y/N
TOTAL INCOME	£		

2.5c Please explain how value for money will be achieved and what volunteering opportunities will be available. Max word count 300 words (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2) (see page 12 of the guidance notes)

MARKETING

Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities must be acknowledged on all printed and online material.

2.6 How and where are you planning to publicise/advertise the festival? How will Council/DFC funding be acknowledged? *(scored 0-5) Max word count 250 words (see page 13 of the guidance notes)*

SECTION 3

Government Funding Database, Section 75, Freedom of Information and Data Protection

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)

This is a requirement from the Department for Communities.

If you know the GFD reference (URN) please include it here_____

The GFD requires the following essential documents to be uploaded – Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement.

Council also requires applicants to include with the submission of their application their most recent AGM minutes, Bank Statement, proof of insurance and the Child Protection Policy/ Statement.

If you submitted the documents for CD Running Costs grants in 2025 then we will have previously checked and uploaded these to the GFD. If these are still the most up to date versions then you do not need to submit these again. We will need you to submit the most recent AGM minutes and Bank statement with the application along with the Child Protection policy and proof of Insurance for the Festival.

Please tick whether the document has been submitted with the application or is already on the GFD:

Essential documentation for GFD	On GFD	Submitted already
Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of Office Bearers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Essential documentation required at time of application submission:

Most recent AGM Minutes	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most recent Bank Statement	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Protection Policy/ Statement	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of relevant Insurance relating to the festival	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

- (i) held on the Government Funding Database (GFD) and are the most up to date and fit for purpose for this application period: Yes No
- (ii) We agree these documents may be made available to other public sector funders via the GFD. Yes No

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment and procurement)

Freedom of Information

Ards and North Down Borough Council is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act came into operation on 1st January 2005. Applicants should be aware that the information provided in the completed application document could be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies. No information provided by applicants will be accepted "in confidence" and Ards and North Down Borough Council will not accept liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council does not have a discretion regarding whether or not to disclose information in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Decisions in relation to disclosure will be taken by appropriate individuals in Ards and North Down Borough Council having due regard to the exemptions available and the Public Interest. Applicants should be aware that despite the availability of some exemptions, information may still be disclosed if the Public Interest in its disclosure outweighs the Public Interest in maintaining the exemption. Applicants are required to highlight information included in the application documents which they consider to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, and should state the precise reasons, why that view is taken. In particular, issues concerning trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted. Applicants are advised against recording unnecessary information.

In accordance with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on the discharge of public functions, Ards and North Down Borough Council will **not** accept any contractual term that purports to restrict the disclosure of information held by the Council in respect of the contract or grant process save as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act. The decision whether to disclose information rests solely with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consult with applicants, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information.

Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values the right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), 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>

Please tick the box to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements above

Fundraising Declaration

As per Ards and North Down Grants Policy, provision of funds to organisations to host fundraising / donation-led festivals is not permitted. Therefore, if the festival would not go ahead without the collection of donations intended for retention by the organisation or distribution to third parties, you should not accept any grant offered.

I confirm the festival applied for is not a fundraising event as defined in the guidelines.

We declare that this application is made with the authority and consent of the above organisation and that the information provided is true, accurate and complete.

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: 12.00pm on 00 March 2025. Where possible completed applications should be emailed as a pdf to: communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Please note: Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will be deemed as ineligible.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

48

The responsibility to provide sufficient detail in any application for council's consideration rests with the applicant. The scoring panel can only score what the applicant has provided. Please note that the maximum word count per question will be adhered to, should you go over the word count, an independent officer, who is not part of the scoring panel will redact any words/sentences over the word count prior to the scoring panel seeing the application form. This is to make the process fair to all that apply.

Applications will not be reviewed by the Grants Team until after the closing date and time.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data to keep you and the personal information safe.

Post:

Community Festival Fund 2025/26
Community Development
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Bangor
BT19 7PD

E-mail – communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND 2025/2026**

GUIDANCE NOTES

**FOR LOCAL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY FESTIVALS
taking place from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

Completed Applications are to be submitted by 00 February 2025 at 12 noon

Please note: Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered. Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will unfortunately be deemed as ineligible.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

Please email the completed application in pdf format to communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Eligibility Criteria	Page 4
Background of the Community Festival Fund	Page 5
Definition of a Community Festival	Page 5
Purpose and Objectives of the Funding	Page 5
General Principles of Community Festival Fund	Page 5
The Application Process	Page 7
Section 1 – About the group and festival	Page 7
Section 2 - Assessment questions – Festival details	Pages 8&9
Section 2 – Assessment questions – Finance	Pages 9,10&11
Section 2 – Assessment Questions – Marketing	Page 11
Section 3 – Government Funding Database	Page 12
What Happens Next	Page 13
Annex a – Additional Information	Page 17

Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Festivals Fund 2025-2026

Applications are welcome from constituted community and voluntary groups in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Applications for Community Festival Funding should be completed in line with this guidance and criteria. Awards are subject to budget availability.

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:

We will only accept one application per group/organisation. To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.

The Fund is open for applications from 9am on 0000 2025 and closes at 12 noon on xxx 2025.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):

Eligibility Criteria

Constituted Community and Voluntary groups can only apply for funding through **one** application, for **one** festival.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must meet the following minimum requirements:

- A festival is defined as a one-off festival, or a series of related events that must take place over a maximum of a 12-week period and have a distinctive theme. A theme is defined as topic or subject that runs through the festival such as maritime, music or a specific commemoration.
- Provide appropriate governance, through regular public meetings, annual general meetings and management by a publicly elected committee.
- Demonstrates a fair and equitable ethos through the applicants aim and objectives, in accordance with Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75).
- Demonstrates how the festival will improve the quality and capacity of the community.
- Applicants must deliver a Community Festival in the Borough of Ards and North Down, between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

Ineligible Applications

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions
- Organisations not legally established in the UK
- Christmas Festivals

The following activities are ineligible:

- Ongoing operational costs
- Retrospective activity festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed
- Any festival that does not promote equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group
- Festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the festival organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

Background

The Events and Festivals Fund was launched in 2022 as a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund. Council tested the amalgamation of the Tourism Events Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund, but it has been determined that to ensure proportionate and relevant information is requested from applicants, the Fund will now return to being administered as two separate grant schemes. The community part of this fund will return to its' original title of Community Festival Fund.

The purpose of the Community Festivals Fund

The Community Festivals Fund (CFF) is jointly provided by the Department for Communities (DfC) and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The fund was established in recognition of the positive contribution that festivals can make to communities and to the local economy.

This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.

Guidance to Support the Development of Festival Projects.

- The Council welcomes applications that meet the aims and objectives of the scheme whether they are returning or new festivals.
- Community organisations will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their festival, and that public funding is put to good use and shows a positive and measurable impact primarily on the local community but also on the local economy
- Community organisations if appropriate are encouraged to apply to other sources of funding or maximise income through sponsorship.
- Festivals should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of Northern Ireland and the Borough.
- Organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations. Officers are on hand to support successful applicants with this process.
- Community organisations should try to make every effort to create learning opportunities within their community through skills training and volunteering.
- As funders Council are accountable for public monies. Applicants will be required to provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.
- Community Festival Applicants should be aware that if the festival runs on the same date as a Council delivered event the use of Council equipment/assets

may not be possible. Check the dates and times of Council run events by contacting tourismgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

It is the applicant's responsibility to get permission from the landowner to hold a festival, whether this is council land or owned by a third party. If the festival requires use of Council land, this must be booked at least 3 months in advance of the festival to enable approval by Council. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section at landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333

- Road closures - if a road is to be closed as part of the festival, the appropriate permission must be applied for. To seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333

Aims and Objectives of the Fund

Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social wellbeing of a community. The festival must be community led, with the community developing and delivering the festival.

All community festivals must demonstrate a positive social impact within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships.

Additionally, the festival must meet at least one of the following aims and objectives:-

- a) support the community and voluntary sector in promoting equality.
- b) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting poverty
- c) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting social exclusion
- d) promote social cohesion and enhance community pride and well-being
- e) enable partnership working between the community and voluntary sector and local Councils.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS – GUIDANCE

The Community Development Service Unit administers the Community Festival Fund scheme. This funding scheme is being administered in line with Council's updated Grants Policy. Applications will be assessed by a scoring panel that comprises of at least 3 officers.

Applications to the 2025-2026 Community Festival Fund scheme will open on **00 February 2025. The Closing date is 00 March 2025 at 12 noon.**

Calls for Community Festival Fund applications will be advertised in the local press and on the Council's website and social media. The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register.

[Link to Ards and North Down Council Website - Grants](#)

Application forms, guidance notes and criteria will be made available on the Council's website. Copies can also be requested from Community Development - communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Confirmation of receipt of an application will be sent within 3 working days.

SCORING

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 5 using the matrix detailed in the Table below. NB: weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5c only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix below:

Measure	Score
Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses.	5
A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement.	4
The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	3
A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	2

An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

A pass mark of 60% has been set for the Community Festivals Fund 2025/26.

SECTION 1

This Community Festival Fund application and guidance is to support Local and Neighbourhood festivals: (subject to the availability of funding and the rates setting process)

Festival Type	Guidance attendee numbers	Support available
Local	Attracts up to 500 attendees and participants	Up to £1,000
Neighbourhood	Attracts between 501 and 2,000 attendees and participants	Between £1,001 and £4,000

Organisation details & Festival information

Please answer this section fully and provide accurate details about the festival to include festival title, start and end date venue and location (including any specific dates during the festival period). Section 1 is not scored but must be completed. Please tick the appropriate box on page 3 of the application to indicate whether you are applying for a Local or Neighbourhood festival.

SECTION 2

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – THE DETAILS, FINANCES, ATTENDEES AND MARKETING

Grant Assessment Questions

This section has the assessment questions which includes the provision of details of the festival, the finances, the attendees and the marketing. The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of the application. It is important to be realistic and open in the responses as, if successful, some conditions within the Letter of Offer will be based on information in the application.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL -

2.1 How does running the community festival achieve the aims and objectives of the Community Festival Fund (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2) *Max word count: 400 words*

All festivals must promote community cohesion/social inclusion e.g. equality and target poverty and social exclusion. Outline how the festival will enable communities to celebrate and encourage cultural expression whilst enhancing community relations and provide equality of opportunity and /or good relations. Please see page 6 of this guidance criteria for the aims and objectives of the funding. Tell us about the positive social impact the festival will have within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships. Additionally, please tell us about at least one of the aims and objectives listed a - e on page 6 above.

Weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5c only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix on page 7.

2.2 Please provide a description of the community festival and its theme.

Please also include the proposed festival programme. (scored 0-5) *Max word count 300 words*

What will an attendee see/experience? What is the festival's theme running throughout the duration of the festival e.g. proposed activities, a specific commemoration, music, maritime, art etc. Can attendees get involved in the festival in terms of learning new skills or engaging in arts and crafts or a leisure activity?

Confirmation of the programme will be required 4 weeks before the festival.

2.3 Outline the measures you will take regarding the safety and welfare of the festival attendees. (scored 0-5) *Max word count 300 words*

Please include the facilities at the location, the provision of toilets, seating and standing areas, a selection of food providers, ease and location of car parking and anything else you do at the festival to support the safety and welfare of all. How have you ensured all Section 75 groups are able to attend the festival? If you have any policies in place to ensure the festival is accessible and inclusive to all, please indicate these in this answer. All festivals must submit their Risk Assessment 4 weeks prior to the festival. Please see the Event Toolkit in the link below for more information and templates for risk assessments - [Event Management Toolkit - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

2.4 Please confirm by ticking in the box provided on page 5 if you have considered taking sustainability measures during the festival. (this question is not scored)

Council encourages applicants to consider sustainability measures for funded community festivals, for example: consider waste, recycling, use of bio-degradable products, avoidance of hazardous substances and travel to and from the festival.

FINANCE

The Funding available through this application is :

Festival	Support available
Local	Up to £1,000
Neighbourhood	From £1,001 - £4,000

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive -

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Festival Costs (including entertainment/performer costs, equipment hire, venue hire/ security / Health and Safety/First Aid/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Bank Fees/Bank Charges/ Interest Charges/ Bank Commission / Tax and VAT Payments /Accountancy Fees /Corporation Tax
Marketing– Advertising / PR Activities / Advertising Promotional Material/ Media Monitoring / Promoter fee / Market Research/Festival Evaluation/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Staff salaries / freelance fees / consultancy fees
Judges' Fees/Accommodation/Travel	Hospitality – The cost of alcohol cannot be claimed in any context/circumstance.
Road closures (including licence, stewarding/traffic management costs)	Capital Repayments /Capital Expenditure e.g. equipment such as cameras or computers etc
Prize Awards and Trophies (Not cash prizes)	Hospitality (such as sponsors dinners etc) Alcohol cannot be claimed in any context.
Administration Costs (excluding wages)	Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty Cash
Festival Insurance	Legal Fees
Participants and volunteers catering (No alcohol)	Membership Fees
	Charitable Donations

	Liquor Licences
	Prize Fund - Cash
	Festival Management Fees
	Rates/ Fuel /Electricity/Rent / Phone Bills

The Festival should demonstrate, where possible, the ability to obtain financial support from other sources. This leverage of other funding will support the long-term sustainability of the festival as Ards and North Down Borough Council is not a core funder of festivals.

Firstly please tell us the total cost of the Community Festival in the box provided on page 5 of the application.

Then move onto complete Table 2.5 which is the costs and grant amount being requested from ANDBC, Table 2.5a is the contribution in kind and Table 2.5b is other funding or income. Question 2.5c is about value money.

Please complete the table to show the Grant amount being requested from the Community Festival Fund. In this section only, groups can add more rows if required. *(the table for 2.5 needs to be completed but is not scored)*

This table is for the Itemised Festival Expenditure e.g. Marketing and advertising costs, performers fees, road closure fees etc. The total should be the amount you are applying for from the CFF grant and please be as accurate as possible.

2.5 Value for Money – in this section there are 2 tables to be completed, one for Contribution in kind and a second for other funding or income. There is also a value for money question.

2.5a Contribution in kind - *(table 2.5a needs to be completed but is not scored)*

In-kind support is a non-cash contribution of a good or service, provided instead of cash, that is necessary to deliver the festival. The in-kind support shows value for money.

In-kind contributions can include:

- Volunteer time: You can calculate this by using the minimum wage and multiplying by the number of hours worked.
- Donated equipment/goods: How much the equipment or goods would cost to purchase or hire
- Services donated from other companies or organisations: How much this service would cost if you were to pay for it
- Use of premises or office space for the festival

You will need to calculate the value of the volunteer time as this is benefit in kind and shows value for money. You will need to enter the benefit in kind amounts in to table **2.5a** on page 6 of the application. To calculate volunteer time it is the amount of volunteer hours multiplied by the minimum wage rate per hour – 4 volunteers doing 6 hours each would be 24 volunteer hours so the calculation is 24 hours x £11.44 = £274.56

2.5b Funding income from other sources (*table 2.5b needs to be completed but is not scored*)

Please detail other income for the festival -

- Where is the Income coming from - Please indicate where you intend to secure the income from e.g. your own funds, sponsorship, other grants (N.B. other Council funding cannot be used in conjunction with this application) income from ticket sales. Please do not include benefit in kind in this table, it can be entered into Table 2.5a.
- Offered/Awaiting Confirmation – for each source of income please advise if the funding is secured, awarded or if you are awaiting confirmation and if so when do you to expect confirmation.

2.5c Please explain how value for money will be achieved and what volunteering opportunities will be available. *Max word count 300 words (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2)*

Value for money means getting the best possible benefits or results for the amount of money you spend on the festival. It is about making sure that what you buy or hire is worth the cost while considering both the quality and effectiveness of the product or service.

Tell us about the different ways you try to achieve value for money e.g. volunteer roles, sponsorship, donations etc. You can refer to tables 2.5a and 2.5b.

Weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.5c only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix on page 7.

MARKETING

Please tell us how you intend to market/publicise the festival. Please consider how your marketing materials can be made accessible for everyone.

Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities must be acknowledged on all printed and online material.

2.6 How and where are you planning to publicise/advertise the festival? How will Council/DFC funding be acknowledged? (*scored 0-5*)

Please tell us about any advertising you plan to do to publicise the community festival and to encourage people to attend e.g. flyers, posters in shops, churches, schools etc, social media, emails and so on. Also tell us how you will acknowledge the funders logos.

SECTION 3

Government Funding Database, Section 75, Freedom of Information and Data Protection

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive's Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of the Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same voluntary/community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

The documents that are required for the GFD are the **Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement** and we can upload these to the GFD for you. We also require the following documents even though they are not uploaded to the GFD - Most recent AGM Minutes, Most recent Bank Statement, Child Protection Policy and the insurance document that relate to the festival. Please tick the boxes to indicate which of the documents are already on GFD and which ones are attached with the application. Failure to provide all of the requested documents before the closing date and time will result in the application not being scored. If you need any help with this please contact us on communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations, Freedom of Information, Data Protection and the Funding Declaration are also included in section 3. Applicants are required to tick the statement boxes on page 10 of the application form to confirm that these have been read.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

EVALUATION

Following the closing date, applications will be assessed and scored according to the weighted criteria below.

The application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least 3 officers of which one should be from the service delivering the grant. At least 2 other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.

Oversubscription to the Fund

Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage. PLEASE NOTE: GRANT AWARDS UP TO £1,000 WILL NOT BE REDUCED.

DEADLINE

The Community Festivals Fund will close at on **00th March 2025 at 12noon**. Incomplete applications or those received after this time unfortunately will not be considered.

Return to

Email (preferable) communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to: **ANDBC Community Development
Community Festival Fund Applications 25-26
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PD**

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

GRANT TIMELINE

Scheme advertised	2025 TBC
Scheme open	2025 TBC
Scheme close	2025 TBC
Date of Assessment	2025 TBC
Award and regret letters issued	2025 TBC
Letter of acceptance received	2025 TBC
Completion of grant period	2025 TBC
Claim to be submitted	2025 TBC
Monitoring Form to be Submitted	2025 TBC

If the application is **unsuccessful**, you will be notified via email with the reasons clearly stated. You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure. Feedback on the application can be provided on written request. However, an appeal can only be made where an applicant can evidence that the process of assessment was not followed in accordance with the criteria detailed in the Guidance Notes.

The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications. Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.

If the Application is **successful**, we will:

- send you a Letter of offer (LoO) confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within 4 weeks of the date printed on the LoO.
- Along with the LoO you will receive a claim form and a copy of the evaluation documents (this is in line with the level of the grant) to be completed after the festival has taken place.
- You must provide appropriate insurance and risk assessments **4 weeks** before the start of the festival, or as soon as possible after receiving confirmation of a grant (Council officers can provide a template for the risk assessment if required).

You should expect a visit from a Council officer during the festival who will observe/check that you are compliant with any conditions within the LoO.

When the festival is complete, we will provide templates for monitoring. These include:

- Attendee numbers
- Lessons learned
- Marketing
- Budget
- Section 75 monitoring arrangements

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SAFEGUARDING

Individuals and organisations working with children, young people and/or adults who may be vulnerable must have an existing policy that ensures good practice guidelines are followed.

You can adopt the Council's Safeguarding policy if the organisation does not have a policy in place by signing and returning the **Confirmation of Safeguarding arrangements** form at Appendix 1 of the Council's Safeguarding Policy. This is available to download at: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-Council/safeguarding

The signed form should be returned along with the acceptance of the LoO.

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) aims to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably than people who are not disabled. It covers access to goods, services, facilities, education and transport. This means that you have a duty to anticipate that disabled people will want to use the services and you should make changes accordingly to increase accessibility.

The DDA also requires employers not to discriminate against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments for applications and in the workplace.

We expect all applicants to be familiar with the DDA and have made reasonable adjustments that aim to provide equality of access, dignity and choice.

SECTION 75 CATEGORIES

Section 75 categories are:

Religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependents

TOOLKIT

Ards and North Down Borough Council have developed a Toolkit to assist in organising a safe and successful festival. The toolkit and other relevant templates can be accessed at

[Event Management Toolkit](#)

CONTACTS

Email

communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to:

Community Festival Fund Applications 25/26, Community Development , Signal Centre, 2 Innotec Drive, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PD

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND 2025/2026**

GUIDANCE NOTES

**FOR MEDIUM TO LARGE COMMUNITY FESTIVALS
taking place from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

Completed Applications are to be submitted by 00 February 2025 at 12 noon

Please note: Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered. Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will unfortunately be deemed as ineligible.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

Please email the completed application in pdf format to communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Eligibility Criteria	Page 4
Background of the Community Festival Fund	Page 5
Definition of a Community Festival	Page 5
Purpose and Objectives of the Funding	Page 6
General Principles of Community Festival Fund	Page 6
The Application Process	Page 7
Section 1 – About the group and festival	Page 8
Section 2 - Assessment questions – Festival details	Page 8&9
Section 2 – Assessment Questions – Attendance and festival delivery	Page 8
Section 2 – Assessment questions – Finance	Pages 10-12
Section 2 – Assessment Questions – Marketing	Page 12
What Happens Next	Pages 14-16
Annex a – Additional Information	Page 17

Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Festivals Fund 2025-2026

Applications are welcome from constituted community and voluntary groups in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Applications for Community Festival Funding should be completed in line with this guidance and criteria. Awards are subject to budget availability.

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:

We will only accept one application per group/organisation. To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on the content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.

The Fund is open for applications from 9am on 0000 2025 and closes at 12 noon on xxx 2025.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):

Eligibility Criteria

Constituted Community and Voluntary groups can only apply for funding through **one** application, for **one** festival.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must meet the following minimum requirements

- A festival is defined as a one-off festival, or a series of related events that must take place over a maximum of a 12-week period and have a distinctive theme. A theme is defined as topic or subject that runs through the festival such as a specific commemoration, maritime or music.
- Provide appropriate governance, through regular public meetings, annual general meetings and management by a publicly elected committee.
- Demonstrates a fair and equitable ethos through the applicants aim and objectives, in accordance with Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75).
- Demonstrates how the festival will improve the quality and capacity of the community.
- Applicants must deliver a Community Festival in the Borough of Ards and North Down, between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

Ineligible Applications

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions
- Organisations not legally established in the UK
- Christmas Festivals

The following activities are ineligible:

- Ongoing operational costs
- Retrospective activity festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed
- Any festival that does not promote equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group
- Festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the festival organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

Background

The Events and Festivals Fund was launched in 2022 as a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund. Council tested the amalgamation of the Tourism Events Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund, but it has been determined that to ensure proportionate and relevant information is requested from applicants, the Fund will now return to being administered as two separate grant schemes. The community part of this fund will return to its' original title of Community Festival Fund.

The purpose of the Community Festivals Fund

The Community Festivals Fund (CFF) is jointly provided by the Department for Communities (DfC) and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The fund was established in recognition of the positive contribution that festivals can make to communities and to the local economy.

This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.

Guidance to Support the Development of Festival Projects.

- The Council welcomes applications that meet the aims and objectives of the scheme whether they are returning or new festivals.
- Community organisations will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their festival, and that public funding is put to good use and shows a positive and measurable impact primarily on the local community but also on the local economy
- Community organisations if appropriate are encouraged to apply to other sources of funding or maximise income through sponsorship.
- Festivals should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of Northern Ireland and the Borough.
- Organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations. Officers are on hand to support successful applicants with this process.
- Community organisations should try to make every effort to create learning opportunities within their community through skills training and volunteering.
- As funders Council are accountable for public monies. Applicants will be required to provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.
- Community Festival Applicants should be aware that if the festival runs on the same date as a Council delivered event the use of Council equipment/assets

may not be possible. Check the dates and times of Council run events by contacting tourismgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

- It is the applicant's responsibility to get permission from the landowner to hold a festival, whether this is council land or owned by a third party. If the festival requires use of Council land, this must be booked at least 3 months in advance of the festival to enable approval by Council. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section, landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333
- Road closures - if a road is to be closed as part of the festival, the appropriate permission must be applied for. To seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333

Aims and Objectives of the Fund

Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social wellbeing of a community. The festival must be community led, with the community developing and delivering the festival.

All community festivals must demonstrate a positive social impact within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships.

Additionally, the festival must meet at least two of the following aims and objectives:-

- a) support the community and voluntary sector in promoting equality.
- b) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting poverty
- c) support the community and voluntary sector in targeting social exclusion
- d) promote social cohesion and enhance community pride and well-being
- e) enable partnership working between the community and voluntary sector and local Councils.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS – GUIDANCE

The Community Development Service Unit administers the Community Festival Fund scheme. This funding scheme is being administered in line with Council's updated Grants Policy. Applications will be assessed by a scoring panel that comprises of at least 3 officers.

Applications to the 2025-2026 Community Festival Fund scheme will open on **00 February 2025. The Closing date is 00 March 2025 at 12 noon.**

Calls for Community Festival Fund applications will be advertised in the local press and on the Council's website and social media. The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register.

[Link to Ards and North Down Council Website - Grants](#)

Application forms, guidance notes and criteria will be made available on the Council's website. Copies can also be requested from Community Development - communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Confirmation of receipt of an application will be sent within 3 working days.

SCORING

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 5 using the matrix detailed in the Table below. NB: weighting x2 will be applied to questions 2.1 and 2.6c only. Weighted questions are scored out of 5 but are then multiplied by 2 and this is done to reflect the importance of the question but is still aligned with the scoring matrix below:

Measure	Score
Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses.	5
A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement.	4
The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	3
A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	1

The applicant failed to address the question.	0
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A pass mark of 60% has been set for the Community Festivals Fund 2025/26.

SECTION 1

This Community Festival Fund application and guidance is to support Medium/ Large festivals: (subject to the availability of funding and the rates setting process)

Festival Type	Guidance attendee numbers	Support available
Medium/Large	Attracts over 2000 attendees and participants	Between £4,001 and £15,000

Organisation Details & Festival information

Please answer this section fully and provide accurate details about the festival to include festival title, start and end date venue and location (including any specific dates during the festival period). Section 1 is not scored but must be completed.

SECTION 2

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL – THE DETAILS, FINANCES, ATTENDEES AND MARKETING

Grant Assessment Questions

This section has the assessment questions which includes the provision of details of the festival, the finances, the attendees and the marketing The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of the application. It is important to be realistic and open in the responses as, if successful, some conditions within the Letter of Offer will be based on information in the application.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL -

2.1 How does running the community festival achieve the aims and objectives of the Community Festival Fund (scored 0-5 weighted x2) Max word count: 400 words

All festivals must promote community cohesion/social inclusion e.g. equality and target poverty and social exclusion. Outline how the festival will enable communities to celebrate and encourage cultural expression whilst enhancing community relations and provide equality of opportunity and /or good relations. Please see page

6 of this guidance criteria for the aims and objectives of the funding. Tell us about the positive social impact the festival will have within the borough, fostering Section 75 and Good Relations and enhancing community relationships. Additionally, please tell us about at least two of the aims and objectives listed a - e on page 6 above.

2.2 Please provide a description of the community festival and its theme.

Please also include the proposed festival programme. (scored 0-5) Max word count 300 words

What will an attendee see/experience? What is the festival's theme running throughout the duration of the festival e.g. proposed activities, a specific commemoration, music, maritime, art etc. Can attendees get involved in the festival in terms of learning new skills or engaging in arts and crafts or a leisure activity?

Confirmation of the programme will be required 4 weeks before the festival.

2.3 Outline the measures you will take regarding the safety and welfare of the festival attendees. (scored 0-5) Max word count 300 words

Please include the facilities at the location, the provision of toilets, seating and standing areas, a selection of food providers, ease and location of car parking and anything else you do at the festival to support the safety and welfare of all. How have you ensured all Section 75 groups are able to attend the festival? If you have any policies in place to ensure the festival is accessible and inclusive to all, please indicate these in this answer. All festivals must submit their Risk assessment 4 weeks prior to the festival. Please see the Event Toolkit in the link below for more information and templates for risk assessments - [Event Management Toolkit - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

2.4 What is the estimated number of attendees at your 2025/26 festival and please provide a clear justification on how you arrived at these figures? (scored 0-5)

Tell us how you arrived at these figures for example: referring to previous years' attendance, similar events, previous tickets sold, clicker counts, surveys and so on.

2.5 Please detail any sustainability measures you will take during the festival, for example: consider waste, recycling, hazardous substances, travel to and from the festival. (scored 0-5)

Council encourages applicants to consider sustainability measures for funded community festivals, for example: consider waste, recycling, use of bio-degradable products, hazardous substances and travel to and from the festival.

FINANCE

The Funding available through this application is :

Festival	Support available
Medium/Large	From £4,001 - £15,000

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive -

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Festival Costs (including entertainment/performer costs, equipment hire, venue hire/ security / Health and Safety/First Aid/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Bank Fees/Bank Charges/ Interest Charges/ Bank Commission / Tax and VAT Payments /Accountancy Fees /Corporation Tax
Marketing– Advertising / PR Activities / Advertising Promotional Material/ Media Monitoring / Promoter fee / Market Research/Festival Evaluation/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Staff salaries / freelance fees / consultancy fees
Judges' Fees/Accommodation/Travel	Hospitality – The cost of alcohol cannot be claimed in any context/circumstance.
Road closures (including licence, stewarding/traffic management costs)	Capital Repayments /Capital Expenditure e.g. equipment such as cameras or computers etc
Prize Awards and Trophies (Not cash prizes)	Hospitality (such as sponsors dinners etc) Alcohol cannot be claimed in any context.
Administration Costs (excluding wages)	Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty Cash
Festival Insurance	Legal Fees
Participants and volunteers catering (No alcohol)	Membership Fees
	Charitable Donations
	Liquor Licences
	Prize Fund - Cash
	Festival Management Fees
	Rates/ Fuel /Electricity/Rent / Phone Bills

The festival should demonstrate, where possible, the ability to obtain financial support from other sources. This leverage of other funding will support the long-term sustainability of the festival as Ards and North Down Borough Council is not a core funder of festivals.

Firstly, please tell us the total cost of the community festival in the box provided on page 6 of the application.

Then move onto complete Table 2.6 which is the costs and grant amount being requested from ANDBC.

2.6 Please complete the table to show the Grant amount being requested from the Community Festival Fund. In this section only, groups can add more rows if required. (the table for 2.6 needs to be completed but is not scored)

This table is for the Itemised Festival Expenditure e.g. Marketing and advertising costs, performers fees, road closure fees etc. The total should be the amount you are applying for from the CFF grant and please be as accurate as possible.

Table 2.6a is the contribution in kind and Table 2.6b is other funding or income. Question 2.6c is about value money.

Value for Money – in this section there are 2 tables to be completed, one for Contribution in kind and a second for other funding or income. There is also a value for money question.

2.6a Contribution in kind - (table 2.6a needs to be completed but is not scored)

In-kind support is a non-cash contribution of a good or service, provided instead of cash, that is necessary to deliver the festival. The in-kind support shows value for money.

In-kind contributions can include:

- Volunteer time: You can calculate this by using the minimum wage and multiplying by the number of hours worked.
- Donated equipment/goods: How much the equipment or goods would cost to purchase or hire
- Services donated from other companies or organisations: How much this service would cost if you were to pay for it
- Use of premises or office space for the festival

You will need to calculate the value of the volunteer time as this is benefit in kind and shows value for money. You will need to enter the benefit in kind amounts in to table **2.6a** on page 6 of the application. To calculate volunteer time it is the amount of volunteer hours multiplied by the minimum wage rate per hour – 4 volunteers doing 6 hours each would be 24 volunteer hours so the calculation is 24 hours x £11.44 = £274.56

2.6b Funding income from other sources (*table 2.6b needs to be completed but is not scored*)

Please detail other income for the festival -

- Where is the Income coming from - Please indicate where you intend to secure the income from e.g. own funds, sponsorship, other grants (N.B. other Council funding cannot be used in conjunction with this application) income from ticket sales. Please do not include benefit in kind in this table it can be entered into Table 2.6a.
- Offered/Awaiting Confirmation – for each source of income please advise if the funding is secured, awarded or if you are awaiting confirmation and if so when do you to expect confirmation.

2.6c Please explain how value for money will be achieved and what volunteering opportunities will be available. *Max word count 300 words (scored 0-5, weighted x2)*

Value for money means getting the best possible benefits or results for the amount of money you spend on the festival. It is about making sure that what you buy or hire is worth the cost while considering both the quality and effectiveness of the product or service.

Tell us about the different ways you try to achieve value for money. You can refer to tables 2.6a and 2.6b.

MARKETING

Please tell us how you intend to market/publicise the festival.

Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities must be acknowledged on all printed and online material.

2.7 How and where are you planning to publicise/advertise the festival? How will Council/DFC funding be acknowledged? (*scored 0-5*)

Please tell us about any advertising you plan to do to publicise the community festival and to encourage people to attend e.g. Flyers, posters in shops, churches etc, social media and so on. Also tell us how you will acknowledge the funders logos.

2.8 Please complete the table with any advertising or marketing for the festival. (*scored 0-5*)

For Medium/ Large Festivals we need to see all of the proposed advertising and marketing. This can include free or paid for publicity. The table at question 2.8 on page 7 of the application form needs to be fully completed as if successful this information will be included in the post festival evaluation report.

SECTION 3

Government Funding Database, Section 75, Freedom of Information and Data Protection

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive's Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of the Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same voluntary/community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

The documents that are required for the GFD are the **Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement** and we can upload these to the GFD for you. We also require the following documents even though they are not uploaded to the GFD - Most recent AGM Minutes, Most recent Bank Statement, Child Protection Policy and the insurance document that relate to the festival. Please tick the boxes to indicate which of the documents are already on GFD and which ones are attached with the application. Failure to provide all of the requested documents before the closing date and time will result in the application not being scored. If you need any help with this please contact us on communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations, Freedom of Information, Data Protection and the Funding Declaration are also included in section 3. Applicants are required to tick the statement boxes on page 12 of the application form to confirm that these have been read.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

EVALUATION

Following the closing date, applications will be assessed and scored according to the weighted criteria below.

The application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least 3 officers of which one should be from the service delivering the grant. At least 2 other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.

Oversubscription to the Fund

Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage. PLEASE NOTE: GRANT AWARDS UP TO £1,000 WILL NOT BE REDUCED.

DEADLINE

The Community Festivals Fund will close at on **00th March 2025 at 12noon**. Incomplete applications or those received after this time will NOT be considered.

Return to

Email (preferable) communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to: **ANDBC Community Development
Community Festival Fund Application 25/26
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PD**

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

GRANT TIMELINE

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Scheme close	2025 TBC
Date of Assessment	2025 TBC
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Monitoring Form to be Submitted	2025 TBC

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The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications. Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.

If the Application is successful, we will:

- send you a Letter of offer (LoO) confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within 4 weeks of the date printed on the LoO.
- Along with the LoO you will receive a claim form and a copy of the evaluation documents (this is in line with the level of the grant) to be completed after the festival has taken place.
- You must provide appropriate insurance and risk assessments **4 weeks** before the start of the festival, or as soon as possible after receiving confirmation of a grant (Council officers can provide a template for the risk assessment if required).

You should expect a visit from a Council officer during the festival who will observe/check that you are compliant with any conditions within the LoO.

When the festival is complete, we will provide templates for monitoring. These include:

- Attendee numbers
- Lessons learned
- Marketing

- Budget
- Section 75 monitoring arrangements

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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You can adopt the Council's Safeguarding policy if the organisation does not have a policy in place by signing and returning the **Confirmation of Safeguarding arrangements** form at Appendix 1 of the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

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Religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependents

TOOLKIT

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[Event Management Toolkit](#)

CONTACTS

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By post to: **Community Festival Fund Applications 25/26, Community Development , Signal Centre, 2 Innotec Drive, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PD**

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND 2025/2026

APPLICATION FORM

FOR MEDIUM/LARGE FESTIVALS
taking place from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Applications for the Community Festival Fund 2025/26 are welcome from constituted community and voluntary groups in the Ards and North Down Borough.

Festival Type	Recommended attendee/participant guidance	Support available
Medium/Large	Attracts a minimum of 2,000 attendees and participants	From £4,001 - £15,000

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch):

SECTION ONE

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name of the Organisation, as it appears on the governing document.

Please indicate the organisation type

Constituted Community Group (Please see Guidelines for a definition)

Limited Company

Charity

Please give Company/Charity Registration No.

Main Contact for the Organisation (this should be the person who can answer questions on the festival/application form)

Name	
Position in Organisation	
Contact Address for correspondence	
Telephone Number	
E-mail address	
Website address for the organisation	

Are you currently registered on Community Development's Database

Yes

No

If you would like to be registered please follow this link and complete the form: <https://bit.ly/ANDBC-CIR>

FESTIVAL INFORMATION

Community Festival Name and Proposed Dates

What is the name of the festival?	
Start date of festival	
End date of festival	
Venue and Location of festival (include postcode)	

Will the festival require the use of Council Land? Yes No

If yes, please detail where _____

Please note that a separate booking **must** be completed to hire the Council Land via the Compliance Section of Ards and North Down Borough Council. Please see details on page 6 of Guidance Notes.

Is the festival open to the general public (please tick) Yes No

Is this a new festival to Ards and North Down? Yes No

Is the festival free, ticketed or has elements of both? Free Ticketed Both

SECTION 2 - THE FESTIVAL – THE DETAILS, FINANCES, ATTENDEES AND MARKETING

The Community Festival Fund (CFF) is jointly provided by the Department for Communities and Ards and North Down Borough Council. Community Festivals must demonstrate their commitment to promoting social cohesion, social inclusion, community participation and targeting poverty.

About the Community Festival -

2.1 How does running the community festival achieve the aims and objectives of the Community Festival Fund? (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2) Max word count: 400 words. Please tell us about how you foster Section 75 and Good Relations and additionally at least 2 more of the aims and objectives. (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

[Empty response box for question 2.1]

2.2 Please provide a description of the community festival and its theme. Please also include the proposed festival programme. (scored 0-5) Max word count 500 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

[Empty response box for question 2.2]

2.3 Outline the measures you will take for the safety and welfare of attendees and participants at the festival. (scored 0-5). We will require the completed Risk Assessment and Festival Management Plan to be submitted 6 weeks before the festival. A template plan and guidance is available to help with this. Max word count 500 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)

[Empty response box for question 2.3]

2.4 What is the estimated number of attendees at the 2025/26 festival and please show why you think this many people will attend? (scored 0-5) *Max word count 300 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)*

2.5 Please detail any sustainability measures you will take during the festival, for example: consider waste, recycling, hazardous substances, travel to and from the festival. (scored 0-5) *Max word count 500 words (see page 9 of the guidance notes)*

Finance

The Funding available through this application is :

Festival	Support available
Medium/Large	From £4,001 - £15,000

Festival Budget: Please tell us how much the total cost of the festival is and then complete the 3 tables. Table 2.6 is the grant amount being requested from ANDBC, Table 2.6a is the contribution in kind and Table 2.6b is other funding or income. Question 2.6c is about value money.

Please tell us the total cost of the Community Festival

£

2.6 Please complete the table to show the Grant amount being requested from the Community Festival Fund. In this section only, groups can add more rows to the table if required.

Itemised Festival Expenditure being applied for	Expenditure amount £
<i>Example: Face Painters</i>	<i>£200.00</i>
<i>Example: Bouncy Castles x2</i>	<i>£300.00</i>
TOTAL CFF GRANT BEING APPLIED FOR	£

Value for Money – please complete the 2 tables 2.6a & 2.6b and answer the question 2.6c

2.6a Contribution in kind including volunteer roles (please refer to page 11 of guidance notes) *(Table 2.6a needs to be completed but is not scored)*

Benefit in kind	Value £
TOTAL VALUE OF BENEFIT IN KIND	£

2.6b Other funding or Income, grants from other funders or through ticket sales (table 2.6b needs to be completed but is not scored)

Income type i.e. ticket sales or another funder	Amount £	Is this confirmed? Y/N
TOTAL INCOME	£	

2.6c Please explain how value for money will be achieved and what volunteering opportunities will be available. Max word count 400 words (scored 0-5, weighted answer scored out of 5 then multiplied by 2) (see page 12 of the guidance notes)

Empty text box for response to 2.6c.

MARKETING

Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities must be acknowledged on all printed and online material.

2.7 How and where are you planning to publicise/advertise the festival? How will Council/DFC funding be acknowledged? (scored 0-5) Max word count 350 words (see page 12 of the guidance notes)

Empty text box for response to 2.7.

2.8 Please complete the table with any advertising or marketing for the festival. (scored 0-5) (see page 12 of the guidance notes)

Item/ Activity	Where it will be publicised	Reach (Within the Borough, NI, ROI, GB)	Cost amount
<i>E.g. Festival Facebook page</i>	<i>Six posts on the festival</i>	<i>Borough wide 800 likes/followers</i>	<i>Free</i>
<i>Local Newspaper Advertising</i>	<i>Chronicle and Spectator</i>	<i>Borough</i>	<i>£200.00</i>

SECTION 3

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)

This is a requirement from the Department for Communities.

If you know the GFD reference (URN) please include it here _____

The GFD requires the following essential documents to be uploaded – Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement.

Council also requires applicants to include with the submission of their application their most recent AGM minutes, Bank Statement, proof of insurance and the Child Protection Policy/ Statement.

If you submitted the documents for CD Running Costs grants in 2025 then we will have previously checked and uploaded these to the GFD. If these are still the most up to date versions then you do not need to submit these again. We will need you to submit the most recent AGM minutes and Bank statement with the application along with the Child Protection policy and proof of Insurance for the Festival.

Please tick whether the document has been submitted with the application or is already on the GFD:

Essential documentation for GFD	On GFD	Submitted already
Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of Office Bearers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Essential documentation required at time of application submission:

Most recent AGM Minutes	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most recent Bank Statement	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Protection Policy/ Statement	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of relevant Insurance relating to the festival	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

- (i) held on the Government Funding Database (GFD) and are the most up to date and fit for purpose for this application period: Yes No
- (ii) We agree these documents may be made available to other public sector funders via the GFD. Yes No

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment and procurement)

Freedom of Information

Ards and North Down Borough Council is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act came into operation on 1st January 2005. Applicants should be aware that the information provided in the completed application document could be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies. No information provided by applicants will be accepted "in confidence" and Ards and North Down Borough Council will not accept liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council does not have a discretion regarding whether or not to disclose information in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Decisions in relation to disclosure will be taken by appropriate individuals in Ards and North Down Borough Council having due regard to the exemptions available and the Public Interest. Applicants should be aware that despite the availability of some exemptions, information may still be disclosed if the Public Interest in its disclosure outweighs the Public Interest in maintaining the exemption. Applicants are required to highlight information included in the application documents which they consider to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, and should state the precise reasons, why that view is taken. In particular, issues concerning trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted. Applicants are advised against recording unnecessary information.

In accordance with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on the discharge of public functions, Ards and North Down Borough Council will **not** accept any contractual term that purports to restrict the disclosure of information held by the Council in respect of the contract or grant process save as

permitted by the Freedom of Information Act. The decision whether to disclose information rests solely with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consult with applicants, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information.

Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values the right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), 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>

Please tick the box to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements above

Fundraising Declaration

As per Ards and North Down Grants Policy, provision of funds to organisations to host fundraising / donation-led festivals is not permitted. Therefore, if the festival would not go ahead without the collection of donations intended for retention by the organisation or distribution to third parties, you should not accept any grant offered.

I confirm the festival applied for is not a fundraising event as defined in the guidelines.

We declare that this application is made with the authority and consent of the above organisation and that the information provided is true, accurate and complete.

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: 12.00pm on 00 March 2025. Where possible completed applications should be emailed as a pdf with an electronic signature to: communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Please note: Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will be deemed as ineligible.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are attached.

The responsibility to provide sufficient detail in any application for council's consideration rests with the applicant. The scoring panel can only score what the applicant has provided. Please note that the maximum word count per question will be adhered to, should you go over the word count, an independent officer, who is not part of the scoring panel will redact any words/sentences over the word count prior to the scoring panel seeing the application form. This is to make the process fair to all that apply.

Applications will not be reviewed by the Grants Team until after the closing date and time.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data to keep you and the personal information safe.

Post:

Community Festival Fund 2025/26
Community Development
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Bangor
BT19 7PD

E-mail – communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Unclassified

96

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	CDV28
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Community Development Grants
Attachments	Appendix 1 Community Development Grants Guidance Criteria Appendix 2 Community Development Grants Application Form

The Community Development (CD) Fund is jointly funded by the Community Support Programme from Department for Communities and Council. The annual Grant scheme is open to constituted Community and Voluntary groups in the Borough who meet the eligibility criteria.

The Fund is for available for running costs of up to £2,500. Attached is the 2025-2026 application form and guidance criteria. No changes have been made since the last financial year. Under the new Grants Policy the scheme requires approval from Council prior to launching.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached Community Development Running Costs grant scheme.

An Roinn
PobalDepartment for
CommunitiesAPPENDIX 1**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND 2025-2026****GUIDANCE AND CRITERIA**

Applications for Community Development Funding should be completed in line with this guidance and criteria. Awards are subject to budget availability.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND 2025-2026 IS SOLELY FOR RUNNING COSTS AND PLEASE READ THIS GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch): TBA

The Fund is open for applications from 9am on 00 January 2025 and closes at 12 noon on 00 February 2025

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe.

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DETAIL IN ANY APPLICATION FOR COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION RESTS WITH THE APPLICANT. The scoring panel can only score what the applicant has provided. Please note that the maximum word count per question will be adhered to, should you go over the word count, an independent officer, who is not part of the scoring panel will redact any words/sentences over the word count prior to the scoring panel seeing the application form. This is to make the process fair to all that apply.

The purpose of the Community Development Funding

The Community Development Fund (CD) is jointly provided by Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities, under the Community Support Programme.

The purpose of the Council's Community Development Fund is to support local Community groups who:

- Require running costs for local community bases, and groups (e.g. insurance, utilities, rent/venue hire etc.), which aim to improve the quality of life in our communities.

Objectives of the Fund

The objectives of the Community Development Fund are as follows:

- to strengthen local communities
- to increase community participation
- to promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups
- to encourage and promote community activity

The expected outcomes for the Community Development Fund reflect those of the Community Support Programme:

- an active and organised community
- an influential community
- an informed community
- a sustainable community

What is Community Development?

The aims and objectives which underpin community development practice include:

- Organising and working together
- Identifying community needs and aspirations
- Influence decisions which affect community life
- Improve the quality of life in communities and society in general

Community Development Grant

The scheme will support the following types of Community Development activity subject to the availability of funding:

- **Up to £2,500 - Running Costs** for local community bases/resource centres and groups which aim to improve the quality of life in our communities.

This is a competitive process, and all grant awards will be determined on the basis of merit, using the information provided in the application form. Council reserves the right to reduce the maximum amount of funding available if the programme is oversubscribed and/or budget depending. **Only one application per group is permitted.**

General Principles which apply to the Community Development Grant

- This Funding is specifically for grassroots Community Groups.
- The group must be based and operate within the Ards and North Down Borough area.
- This is a competitive scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.
- Applications to this scheme will be open **to all eligible applicants who can meet the minimum requirements and core criteria of the Community Development Fund.**
- Applicants can apply to other sources of funding to enhance their application. However, applicants must ensure that the funding from the Council is not duplicated from other funding sources.
- Organisations in receipt of a grant must comply with all statutory obligations regarding the delivery of and access to their events, including council procurement/ Health & Safety/Safeguarding and licensing requirements.
- Funding must be spent between the date on the Letter of Offer and 31st March 2026.
- Applicants can apply to other sources of public support, outside of the council, but must declare this in their application form.
- Future funding may be withheld if any required closing documentation is still outstanding for previous grants administered by Ards and North Down Borough Council, including invoices, receipts, accounts, bank statements and evaluation reports.
- It is a prime responsibility of Council to be accountable for public monies. To this end, successful applicants will be required to provide the relevant supporting information when claiming funding e.g., original receipts, original invoices, and bank statements. **All expenditure being claimed must be verified by the relevant receipt/invoice and the corresponding bank statement and where possible we discourage Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty cash payments.**
- The financial support available through this grant may not cover all costs associated with the requirements of the group. Where this is the case, the criteria will require the organisation to cover any shortfall from their existing resources.

Eligibility & Exclusions

The Community Development Fund is open to all Community Groups / organisations based in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area who meet the criteria of the funding.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must meet the following minimum requirements:

- To provide appropriate governance documents and Constitution.
- Must be a grass roots Community group delivering Community Development outcomes in line with the aims and objectives as outlined in the group's Constitution.
- Be democratically accountable, through regular public meetings, annual general meetings and be managed by a publicly elected committee.
- Demonstrates a fair and equitable ethos through the applicants aim and objectives, in accordance with Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75).
- Demonstrates how the funding will improve the quality, capacity, and collective action of the community.
- Applications that are not completed accurately and in full will be deemed as ineligible and not scored. Please ensure the 2025/26 application form is used, applications completed on older versions will be deemed ineligible and not scored.

The Community Development Grant will NOT provide funding for the following:

- Groups whose primary aims and objectives are **not** Community Development, this includes groups who deliver community development outcomes however have a different core focus. i.e., sports, arts, religious, heritage and culture.
- Schools/Nurseries or groups affiliated with schools/nurseries or pre-schools
- Groups who promote a particular religion or political belief cannot be funded
- Individuals
- Community groups / organisations from outside the Ards and North Down Borough
- Groups submitting applications on the behalf of other groups.
- Arts/Crafts Groups (refer to Arts and Heritage)
- Sports clubs/organisations (refer to Sports Development)
- Regional groups/organisations are not eligible to apply
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions
- Awards ceremonies or industry events
- Residential courses and associated events
- Retrospective payments or repayments of loans
- Social events for groups – including lunches/dinners or bus trips

- Organisations who have previously received funding from us that was not managed satisfactorily or was not completed. This includes if you did not send us the monitoring or evaluation forms within the agreed timescale.
- Applications (including all essential documents requested) that are not fully complete or submitted after the grant deadline.

In addition to the above exclusions, examples of eligible and ineligible expenditure are outlined below:

Eligible expenditure	Non-eligible expenditure
Utilities – Electric, Heating, Water & Internet costs	Gratuities, gifts, prizes & awards
Insurance (for the period of Grant – 01/04/2025 - 31/3/2026)	Charitable donations
Rent/Venue Hire	Staff salaries/Professional fees e.g. Consultancy fees, Facilitator fees, travel expenses/fuel costs
Accountancy or Audit Fees – only for year-end audit requirements (capped to £400)	Any related catering costs for social events, this includes the purchase of alcohol
Administration related to the running of the group	Maintenance relating to the inside and outside of the building.
Catering – for EGM/AGM meetings only (capped to £100)	Any costs not detailed in the application form or approved by the assessment panel
Advertising, Marketing, Website and Subscription services e.g. Text Local but these <i>must be specific to the running of the Group (capped to £500)</i>	Purchase of equipment / capital purchases
Stationary, postage & printing costs related to the running of the group (capped to £400)	

Please note, the above list is not exhaustive, and you can consult Community Development Officer, Linda McAllister at Linda.McAllister@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk if you have any queries.

Grant Timeline

Scheme advertised	
Scheme open	
Date of Assessment	
Award and regret letters issued	
Letter of acceptance received	
Completion of grant period	
Claim to be submitted	
Monitoring Form to be submitted	
Close of Scheme	

Application Process

The Community Development Team administers the Community Development Grant scheme.

Applications to the 2025-2026 Community Development Grant scheme will open at **9am on XXth January 2025 and closes at 12 noon on 00th February 2025.**

Calls for Community Development Grant applications will be advertised in the local press and on the Council's website and Facebook page. The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register –

Application forms, guidance notes and criteria will be made available on the Council's website. Copies can also be requested from the Community Development Team. If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Please do not alter the layout/format of the application form in anyway as this may result in your application not being scored. Also please ensure you are completing the 2025/26 application and not an older version.

Applicants must complete all three sections of the application form

Section 1 - About your group / organisation and the eligibility of the application.

This section must be completed but is not scored. Please provide relevant details about your Community group / organisation as outlined in the application. Please note that if you are requesting rental costs in your grant application you must ensure that the information about your community base, hall or venue is completed in the box provided.

Section 2 - Running Costs, Objectives of the fund and Finance

2.1 Applicants must detail what running costs your group is applying for by outlining why they are essential for the group (scored 0-5)

2.2 What location is the main catchment area for your group? **Please include postcode of area.** This question is to determine the 10% of the most deprived wards in the council area. A score of 5 will be awarded only to groups that fall within the top 10% most deprived wards in the Borough. (scored 0-5)

2.3 How does the Community benefit from your group and what do you plan to achieve this year? Tell us about the benefits to the wider community and what the outcomes are that will be achieved. (scored 0-5)

2.4 Please explain what steps your group / organisation will take to be more economically independent in the future. Other than this grant, tell us how you plan to become more economically independent and how will you do that e.g. fundraising, other grants etc. (scored 0-5)

Objectives of the Community Development

2.5 How does your group target poverty and social exclusion? i.e. How does your group encourage people to attend, what activities do you offer and how do these tackle poverty and social exclusion (scored 0-5)

2.6 How does your group promote health and wellbeing? Please tell us about what your group does to promote health and wellbeing and what outcomes you see. (scored 0-5)

2.7 How does your group promote equality and good relations (Section 75 Legislation)? Tell us about the accessibility of your base, hall or venue, how your group complies with Section 75 legislation and how do you encourage everyone regardless of religion, race, gender etc. to be involved (scored 0-5)

Finance

2.8 Please give a detailed breakdown of your projected costs, including details of any other funding you have applied for or secured (costs should incl. VAT where applicable and continue on a separate page if necessary).

Please complete the finance table on page 5 of the application form. Applicants must detail each budget heading and the expected costs to be incurred.

The budget table must add up, cover only essential running costs & be proportionate to the nature & needs of the group. *Please note that the table in 2.8 is not scored but must be correctly completed for context to the questions at 2.9 and 2.10.*

2.9 The contribution / in kind support that your group will be providing (Q13)

2.10 Demonstrate how you will get the most out of the funds available - value for money. *Although Q12 is not scored the table will be referred to for the value for money perspective.* (Q14)

Assessment Criteria and Scoring of Applications

Applications will be considered on the following **core criteria**. Applicants must clearly demonstrate in the application form how they meet these criteria.

Scoring Measure	Score
Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses.	5
A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement.	4
The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	3
A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

A pass mark of **60% tbc** has been set for the CD Running Costs Fund 2025/26.

Oversubscription to the Fund - Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

Section 3 - Government Funding Database Declaration (GFD), Freedom of Information , Data Protection and Section 75

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive’s Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. **We can upload the documents you attach for you if they are not already on the GFD.**

Your GFD profile requires the following essential information to be uploaded:

- Constitution/Memorandum of Association
- List of Office Bearers/Board of Governors
- Annual Accounts/Financial Statement

If you received a Community Development funding in the last 6 months, the above documents would have already been checked and uploaded onto the GFD. **If any of these documents have been updated since they were submitted last, we will need the most recent versions please.**

Please submit any essential documentation not on the GFD with your application. Please tick the boxes to indicate on page 6 which documents are already on the GFD or being submitted with your application. Please ensure the declaration on page 6 has been completed confirming the documents are up to date and fit for purpose.

The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

Please contact the Community Development Team if you need any more information on the Government Funding Database or help with uploading your essential documents.

Council officers **will not** complete application forms on behalf of applicants.

Submitting applications

Completed application forms and any supporting documentation should be submitted to the Community Development Team by the closing date of **12 noon on xx February 2025**. **Emailed applications must be submitted in PDF Format**. We would encourage you to submit your application via e-mail with an electronic signature. If this is not possible, please forward your application to the address below before the deadline.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are included.

**ANDBC Community Development
CD Running Costs Grant 25/26
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PD**

Tel: 0300 013 3333

Email: communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Following submission of applications

- Application forms received will not be reviewed until after the closing date deadline. **It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary documentation is submitted before the closing date.**
- All applications received will be acknowledged by email within 3 working days of receipt.
- Eligible and fully completed applications, received by the closing time/date, will be assessed by a grant assessment panel against the criteria outlined.
- Your application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least 3 officers of which one should be from the service delivering the grant. At least 2 other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.
- Late or incomplete applications will be deemed as ineligible and not scored. Please also ensure the correct application form (**2025/2026**) is submitted. Incorrect versions of the applications will not be scored.
- Oversubscription to the Fund - where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

Procedures for making funding award

Important:

All grants awarded are subject to the allocation of Central Government funding through the Department for Communities (DfC) to Ards and North Down Borough Council. Letters of Offer to successful applicants will be subject to confirmation of DfC funding.

- Each application will be assessed and scored against the information provided in the application form only.
- All applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of the assessment process within three weeks of a decision being approved by Council. Awards are subject to budget availability.
- If your application is **unsuccessful**, you will be notified via email with the reasons clearly stated. You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure. Feedback on your application can be provided on written request. However, an appeal can only be made where an applicant can evidence that the process of assessment was not followed in accordance with the criteria

detailed in the Guidance Notes. The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications. Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.

- A Letter of Offer (LoO) will be issued to all **successful** applicants, outlining the details of the funding and the conditions of the award including adhering to publicity requirement, evaluation and monitoring returns.
- Applicants will be required to sign and accept the LoO within six weeks of the date of the LoO. If the signed LoO is not received in this time, the funding offer may be withdrawn.
- The period of funding award will be from 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026.
- Advance payments of up to 50% may be paid to the applicant, subject to a written request outlining the need of an advance along with the submission of the most recent bank statements and a projected cashflow statement.



APPENDIX 2

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING 2025-2026
GRANT APPLICATION**

Please complete all sections of this Application Form in conjunction with the accompanying Guidance Notes. Only one application per group is permitted. Please complete all sections unless otherwise advised.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND 2025-2026 IS SOLELY FOR RUNNING COSTS AND PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE NOTES CAREFULLY.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are included.

A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here (Ctrl & click to launch): TBA

SECTION 1

ABOUT YOUR GROUP/ORGANISATION

Name of Group/Organisation: _____

Address for Correspondence: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Main Contact Name: _____ Position: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Legal Status:	Constituted Group/Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Company Ltd by Guarantee	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Charitable Group/Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charity Number	_____			

Are you currently registered on Community Development's Database

Yes No

If you would like to be registered please follow this link and complete the form:
<https://bit.ly/ANDBC-CIR>

Main aim(s) and activities of Group/Organisation: (max 400 words)

When was your Group / Organisation formed?

Number of Members on your Committee

Number of Volunteer / Members

How many people does your group / organisation support?

Please complete the next question if you are applying for rent/venue hire costs

If you have a community base, hall, or hire a venue please answer the following –

What is the address of your community base, hall, or venue and in regard to your Community/Voluntary group, what is the approximate footfall for the last 12 months?

SECTION 2

RUNNING COSTS

Questions in this section are to be completed by **ALL APPLICANTS**.

2.1 Please detail what running costs your group / organisation is applying for and why they are essential for the group. (scored 0-5) max 250 words

2.2 What location is the main catchment area for your group? Please include postcode of area. ***(A score of 5 will be awarded only to groups that fall within the top 10% most deprived wards of the Borough)***

2.3 How does the Community benefit from your group and what do you plan to achieve this year? Please include your expected outcomes. *(scored 0-5) max 250 words*

2.4 Please explain what steps your group / organisation will take to be more economically independent in the future. *(scored 0-5) max 250 words*

OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND

2.5 How does your group target poverty and social exclusion? i.e. How does your

group encourage people to attend, what activities do you offer? (scored 0-5) max 250 words

2.6 How does your group promote health and wellbeing? (scored 0-5) max 250 words

2.7 How does your group promote equality and good relations (Section 75 Legislation)? i.e. Accessibility of base, hall or venue, open to everyone regardless of religion, race, gender etc. (scored 0-5) max 250 words

FINANCE

2.8 Please give a detailed breakdown of your projected costs, including details of any other funding you have applied for or secured (costs should incl. VAT where applicable and continue on a separate page if necessary). (Q12 is not scored as per page 7 of guidance)

ITEM / ELEMENT TO BE FUNDED (must be an eligible running cost)	Income from other sources – e.g. grants or fund raising	Amount applied for from ANDBC (£)
<i>e.g. Annual Insurance of £800.00</i>	<i>£400.00</i>	<i>£400.00</i>
TOTAL AMOUNT		

Total amount requested from Ards and North Down Borough Council for Running Costs

2.9 Please describe any contribution your group/organisation is making towards the running costs (financial or in-kind e.g. money, how many people volunteered and how many hours and any materials/services provided in kind)? (scored 0-5) max 250 words

2.10 Please explain how value for money will be achieved. (scored 0-5) max 250

SECTION 3 –

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)

This is a requirement from the Department for Communities.

If you know your GFD reference (URN) please include it here _____

The GFD requires the following essential documents to be uploaded – Constitution, List of current Office Bearers and most recent Annual Accounts/Financial Statement.

Council also requires applicants to include with the submission of their application their most recent AGM minutes and Bank Statement. For Groups that are working with Children please also include your Child Protection Policy/ Statement.

If you have submitted your documents in the last 6 months then we will have previously checked and uploaded these to the GFD. If these are still your most up to date versions then you do not need to submit these again. We will need you to submit your most recent AGM minutes and Bank statement with your application.

Please tick whether the document has been submitted with your application or is already on the GFD (this must be the most recent version):

Essential documentation for GFD	On GFD already	Submitted
Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of Office Bearers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Essential documentation required at time of application submission:		
Most recent AGM Minutes	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most recent Bank Statement	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Child Protection Policy/ Statement

N/A

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

- (i) held on the Government Funding Database (GFD) and are the most up to date and fit for purpose for this application period: Yes No
- (ii) We agree these documents may be made available to other public sector funders via the GFD. Yes No

We declare that this application is made with the authority and consent of the above organisation and that the information provided is true, accurate and complete.

Name (in capitals): _____
 Position held: _____
 Signature (on behalf of the applicant): _____
 Date: _____

Name (in capitals): _____
 Position held: _____
 Signature (on behalf of the applicant): _____
 Date: _____

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DETAIL IN ANY APPLICATION FOR COUNCIL’S CONSIDERATION RESTS WITH THE APPLICANT. The scoring panel can only score what the applicant has provided. Please note that the maximum word count per question will be adhered to, should you go over the word count, an independent officer, who is not part of the scoring panel will redact any words/sentences over the word count prior to the scoring panel seeing the application form. This is to make the process fair to all that apply.

Completed application forms and any supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: **12pm on XXth FEBRUARY 2025. If you are submitting your application via email please ensure it is in PDF format with an electronic signature and you will receive a return email within 3 working days to confirm that your application has been received. Late or Incomplete applications will not be considered.** Please ensure the correct application form (2025/2026) is submitted, incorrect application versions will be deemed as ineligible. **You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions are attached.**

Applicants need to be aware that Applications will not be reviewed by the Grants Team until after the closing date and time.

**ANDBC Community Development
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PD**

Tel no: 0300 013 3333

E-mail – communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Freedom of Information

Ards and North Down Borough Council is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act came into operation on 1st January 2005. Applicants should be aware that the information provided in the completed application document could be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies. No information provided by applicants will be accepted "in confidence" and Ards and North Down Borough Council will not accept liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council does not have a discretion regarding whether or not to disclose information in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Decisions in relation to disclosure will be taken by appropriate individuals in Ards and North Down Borough Council having due regard to the exemptions available and the Public Interest. Applicants should be aware that despite the availability of some exemptions, information may still be disclosed if the Public Interest in its disclosure outweighs the Public Interest in maintaining the exemption. Applicants are required to highlight information included in the application documents which they consider to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, and should state the precise reasons, why that view is taken. In particular, issues concerning trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted. Applicants are advised against recording unnecessary information.

In accordance with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on the discharge of public functions, Ards and North Down Borough Council will **not** accept any contractual term that purports to restrict the disclosure of information held by the Council in respect of the contract or grant process save as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act. The decision whether to disclose information rests solely with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consult with applicants, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information.

Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), 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>

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council (the Council) is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment and procurement)

Please tick the box to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements above

CHECKLIST –

- In regard to the 6 essential documents we request, please ensure you have completed the GFD section on page 5&6 and have ticked to confirm which documents have been included with your application or are already on GFD.
- Please ensure you have completed all sections in the above application.
- Please ensure the declaration on page 6 has been signed by 2 senior committee members.
- Have you ticked the box above to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements?

Unclassified

119

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	20 January 2025
File Reference	CDV 26
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	VE Day Grant Scheme 2025
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Grant Guidance Notes Appendix 2 - Application Form

The 8th May 2025 will mark 80 years since VE Day – the official end of the Second World War in Europe. Council have approved a budget of £60,000 for the provision of a VE grant scheme and agreed that a further report be brought to Community and Wellbeing Committee outlining how the grants would be administered, as detailed in this report and its appendix.

Council approved that grants would be made available to Community groups and organisations up to a maximum of £1,000 with a total budget of £60,000, (subject to the rates process).

Applications would be welcomed from constituted community organisations to hold events between 8th – 12th May 2025.

Draft application form and guidance notes are attached (Appendix 1 and 2)

Not Applicable

120

Timetable for applications –

- Scheme will launch on 10th March 2025 (or sooner, dependent upon call in after February Council meeting)
- Scheme will close for applications on 24th March 2025
- Scoring panels - 25th and 26th March
- Letters of Offer issued 28th March 2025

Under the current grants policy successful applicants will be able to seek an advance of 50% of the total awarded amount, with the outstanding balance paid on submission of receipts and claim form.

It is recommended that awards of up to £1,000 are paid in full, in circumstances where need is shown to be required, with relevant receipts and claim forms to follow after the event has concluded.

The Grants Policy will be reviewed and amended accordingly for use with future grant schemes, as outlined above.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the proposed grant scheme for VE Day commemorations to allow the award of grants to successful applicants of up to £1,000.

VE Day Commemoration 2025

Information for all Applicants

1. Purpose and Eligibility

The 8th May 2025 will mark 80 years since VE Day, the official end of the Second World War in Europe. Applications are invited from constituted community, voluntary and/or resident's groups who wish to apply for funding towards the costs involved in organising local neighbourhood events, within Ards and North Down Borough Council area to commemorate VE Day 2025. Only one application will be accepted per group or organisation.

The VE Day Application form and Guidance can be found on Council's website at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grants>

2. Exclusions and Eligible/Ineligible costs

Exclusions –

- Individuals.
- Political organisations.
- Celebrations taking place outside the Ards and North Down area.
- Celebrations organised to make a profit.
- Celebrations that are primarily fundraising events, are heavily branded with charity branding or deploy potential sources of income from a celebration to a charity.
- Primarily tourism focused events where the organisation cannot demonstrate significant community involvement.
- Retrospective events that have already taken place; and
- Events which conflict with any Council run festival/event

Eligible/Ineligible costs -

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive -

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Festival Costs (including entertainment/performer costs, equipment hire, venue hire/ security / Health and Safety/First Aid/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Bank Fees/Bank Charges/ Interest Charges/ Bank Commission / Tax and VAT Payments /Accountancy Fees /Corporation Tax

Appendix 1

Marketing– Advertising / PR Activities / Advertising Promotional Material/ Media Monitoring / Promoter fee / Market Research/Festival Evaluation/ any reasonable adjustment requests under the DDA 1995	Staff salaries / freelance fees / consultancy fees
Judges' Fees/Accommodation/Travel	Hospitality – The cost of alcohol cannot be claimed in any context/circumstance.
Road closures (including licence, stewarding/traffic management costs)	Capital Repayments /Capital Expenditure e.g. equipment such as cameras or computers etc
Prize Awards and Trophies (Not cash prizes)	Hospitality (such as sponsors dinners etc) Alcohol cannot be claimed in any context.
Administration Costs (excluding wages)	Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty Cash
Festival Insurance	Legal Fees
Participants and volunteers catering (No alcohol)	Membership Fees
	Charitable Donations
	Liquor Licences
	Prize Fund - Cash
	Festival Management Fees
	Rates/ Fuel /Electricity/Rent / Phone Bills

3. Timeframe

VE Day 2025 Grants will be open for application from **xx March 2025 at 9am** and will close **xx March 2025 at 12pm**. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

All VE Day Commemoration events **must** be held over the **VE Day Weekend** dated **Thursday 8th May 2025 through to Monday 12th May 2025**.

4. Council Land

If your application is successful, you should be aware that if the community activity is to be held on Council land, that appropriate permission must be applied for. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section, landsrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333.

5. Road Closures

If your application is successful, you should be aware that if a road is to be closed as part of your community activity, that appropriate permission must be applied for. To

Appendix 1

seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, licensingandregulatoryservicesteam@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or telephone 0300 013 3333.

6. Financial Information

Further information on how to claim funding will be included in Letter of Officer for successful applicants. All applicants will be required to submit original invoices, receipts, and bank statements in order to verify all funding awarded. If this information is incomplete or not provided or the funding is not spent in line with approved costs, the funding must be repaid to council. **The maximum amount available is £1,000.00 per group.**

Please note no other Community Development/Council Grant can be used in conjunction with this fund. 50% advance payment can be requested with a cashflow forecast showing need for spend.

7. Scored Criteria for Funding

Grant awards will be made to applicants that meet the following criteria.

- Event / Activities to commemorate VE Day
- Event / Activities are open and inclusive to wider community
- Benefits to community
- Value for money is demonstrated

Scoring Measure	Score
Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses.	5
A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement.	4
The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	3
A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

Appendix 1

Oversubscription to the Fund - Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

8. Government Funding Database (GFD)

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive's Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database.

Applicants are required to set up a profile and upload the following essential information on to the Government Funding Database:

- Constitution/Memorandum of Association,
- List of Office Bearers/Board of Governors,
- Annual Accounts/Financial Statement

Please submit with your application the supporting documents on the checklist in the application form and the completed declaration confirming the documents are up to date and fit for purpose. **The required supporting documentation must be sent in with the application unless we have already received it in the last 6 months and there have been no amendments to the documents.**

The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same voluntary/community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

Please contact the Community Development Team if you need any more information on the Government Funding Database - communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or stephen.archibald@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

9. Application Process

Following submission of applications:

- Application forms received will not be reviewed until after the closing date deadline.
- All applications received will be acknowledged in writing, within 3 working days of receipt.
- Eligible and fully completed applications, received by the closing time/date, will be assessed by a grant assessment panel against the criteria outlined.

Appendix 1

- Late or incomplete applications will not be scored.
- Please ensure all your essential documents are also included
- Letters of Offer will be distributed directly after the scoring panel has concluded.

Where possible completed applications and supporting documents should be emailed as a pdf with an electronic signature to communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are included.

Completed applications should be returned to:

Community Development – VE Day Grants
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Signal Centre
2 Innotec Drive
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PD

Tel no: 0300 013 3333

E-mail – communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Appendix 2

VE DAY COMMEMORATION 2025

GRANT APPLICATION

SECTION 1 – ABOUT YOUR GROUP/ORGANISATION

1. Name of Group/Organisation: _____

Address for Correspondence: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Main Contact Name: _____ Position: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

2. Is your community/voluntary/residents group constituted? Yes / No (your group must be constituted to apply for this award)

SECTION 2

1. When will your VE Day Commemoration / Event take place? Please provide the date and time.

Please note all commemoration events must be delivered over the VE Day weekend Thursday 8th May 2025 – Monday 12th May 2025

Date: _____ Time: _____ (duration)

2. Where will your VE Day Commemoration take place? (Address and postcode) (not scored)

[Empty box for address and postcode]

3. Please give us a description of your Commemoration event to mark the VE Day. (score 0-5) (maximum 300 words)

NB: tell us what will happen at the Commemoration event, what activities will be there, event details, facilitators, refreshments etc

[Large empty box for event description]

4. How many people do you estimate to attend your VE Day Commemoration event? (not scored)

NB: have you ran similar events that can help you estimate or are you targeting a certain demographic.

5. How and where are you planning to publicise / advertise your VE Day Commemoration event. How will Council be acknowledged? (Council logo should be on all printed or online material associated with your festival) (scored 0-5)

NB: tell us about any advertising and how will you reach your attendees?

VALUE FOR MONEY

6. What is the Total Cost of the VE Day commemorations?

7. Please give a detailed breakdown of the projected cost, including details of any other funding that will be used for this VE Day Commemoration event. **Maximum amount available is £1000.00**

Please note this grant is not to be used in conjunction with any other Community Development / Council funding. Eligible/Ineligible costs are listed on page 1 and 2 of the guidance notes. (scored 0-5)

Please add more boxes if required

COMMEMORATION ELEMENT BEING FUNDED	Income from other sources – e.g., grants or fund raising	Amount applied for from ANDBC (£)
Total Amount		

How much funding are you seeking from Ards and North Down Borough Council?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Not scored)

- 8. Do you have the permission of the property owner or landowner where the VE Day Commemoration event is to take place? **Yes / No** (if on Council land, please see section 4 in the guidance and criteria).
- 9. Do you plan to close any roads during your VE Day Commemoration event? **Yes / No** (if yes please refer to section 5 in the guidance and criteria).
- 10. How do you propose to evaluate your VE Day Commemoration event?

SECTION 3

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE –

This is a requirement from the Department for Communities.

Have you previously uploaded the following on the Funders Passport? If yes, please provide your Unique Reference Number (URN) and ensure your most recent documents have been uploaded to the GFD. _____

However, we do require all applicants to please enclose the following essential documents with your application unless we have already received them in the last 6 months and there have been no changes to them.

Essential documentation

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts

Additional documentation

- Details of relevant Insurance relating to the project (were appropriate)
- Child Protection Policy/ Statement (for those Group/Organisations working with children)

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

- (i) held on the Government Funding Database (GFD) and are the most up to date and fit for purpose for this application period; **Y/N**
- (ii) We agree these documents may be made available to other public sector funders via the GFD. **Y/N**

We declare that this application is made with the authority and consent of the above organisation and that the information provided is true, accurate and complete.

Please note: **Late or Incomplete applications will not be considered**

Name (in capitals): _____

Position held: _____

Signature (on behalf of the applicant): _____

Date: _____

Name (in capitals): _____

Position held: _____
 Signature (on behalf of the applicant): _____
 Date: _____

Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: XX March 2025 at 12 noon.

You are advised to encrypt emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and instructions on how to do this are included.

Applicants need to be aware that Applications will not be reviewed by the Grants Team until after the closing date and time.

Where possible completed applications should be emailed as a pdf with to communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Completed applications should be returned to:

Community Development – VE Day Grants
 Ards and North Down Borough Council
 Signal Centre
 2 Innotec Drive
 Balloo Road
 Bangor
 BT19 7PD

Tel no: 0300 013 3333

Freedom of Information

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The Council will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies. No information provided by applicants will be accepted “in confidence” and Ards and North Down Borough Council will not accept liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council does not have a discretion regarding whether or not to disclose information in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Decisions in relation to disclosure will be taken by appropriate individuals in Ards and North Down Borough Council having due regard to the exemptions available and the Public Interest. Applicants should be aware that despite the availability of some exemptions, information may still be disclosed if the Public Interest in its disclosure outweighs the Public Interest in maintaining the exemption. Applicants are required to highlight information included in the application documents which they consider to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, and should state the precise reasons, why that view is taken. In particular, issues concerning trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted. Applicants are advised against recording unnecessary information.

In accordance with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on the discharge of public functions, Ards and North Down Borough Council will **not** accept any contractual term that purports to restrict the disclosure of information held by the Council in respect of the contract or grant process save as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act. The decision whether to disclose information rests solely with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consult with applicants, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information.

Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), 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>

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council (the Council) is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment, and procurement)

[Please tick the box to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements above](#)

CHECKLIST –

Please ensure you have completed all the relevant sections in the above application.

That you have enclosed the essential documentation requested as well as updating the Government Funding Database where the documents can also be viewed –

- Copy of Constitution/Memorandum of Association
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent annual accounts

Also include if relevant –

- Relevant insurance relating to the project (where appropriate)
- Child protection policy if working with Children

The VE Day Application form and Guidance can be found on Council's website at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grants>

Unclassified

133

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	CW 142
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Social Supermarket Advance Payment
Attachments	None

Members will be aware that Council previously agreed to fund Bangor Food Bank for the provision of a Social Supermarket in Ards, Comber and the Peninsula.

Following receipt of the Letter of Offer the Manager of the social supermarket contacted officers requesting an advance payment of £10,000 to allow the supermarket to begin provision in Portaferry. In accordance with the Councils grant policy, an advance payment of £10,000 has been processed, subject to required financial returns being provided.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council retrospectively approves advance payment of £10,000 to the Bangor Foodbank for the provision of the previously agreed social supermarket for Ards, Comber and the Peninsula area.

Unclassified

134

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	CW170
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Multiply Advance Payment
Attachments	None

Members will be aware that Council approved the award of Multiply funding in January 2025 to the Bangor Social Supermarket (£31,500) to deliver Numeracy Boot Camp – Maths for everyday life and to CAAND (£79,800), to deliver Numeracy Boot Camp – Maths for everyday life.

The new agreed Grants Policy advance payment thresholds are:

Up to £500 – £1000 can be requested in advance
 From £501 to £1000 – 80% can be requested in advance
 From £1001 to £3000 – 30% can be requested in advance

Bangor Social Supermarket requested an advance payment of 50% of the total grant awarded whilst CAAND requested an advance payment to allow delivery to begin.

As the full amount of funding has been received by Council, advance payments, were processed as follows:

Not Applicable

135

CAAND - £15,000
Bangor SSM - £15,750

Further funding will be made available once the necessary financial returns have been completed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council gives retrospective approval for payments to CAAND and Bangor SSM as outlined above.

Unclassified

136

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community & Culture
Date of Report	14 January 2025
File Reference	PCSP209
Legislation	Northern Ireland Justice Act (2011)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Grant Scheme
Attachments	Appendices 1 to 3 - Change fund application pack (Grant Scheme)

The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework 2024-31 was launched by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on the 16th September 2024, following a Ministerial Statement to the Assembly. The Strategy includes a first Delivery Plan (2024-26) which will support those organisations working to prevent and challenge the attitudes, behaviours and culture that can lead to violence against women and girls.

The Council in partnership with The Executive Office (TEO) are delivering a localised Change Fund scheme open to CVS organisations and grassroots groups in the area.

Council has been awarded £60,000 of Momentum funding to raise awareness of the Change fund locally. Momentum funding must be utilised by Council before 31st March 2025 whilst change funding of £120,000 will be distributed via a competitive

Not Applicable

137

grants process administered via by the PCSP during 2025 – 2026. Momentum funding will be used as follows:

- Events to raise awareness of the Executive Office Change fund 2025-2026

DATE/TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Wednesday 29 th January 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (1)	Orange Tree House
Wednesday 4 th February 2025 8am – 10am	Business Breakfast	Clandeboyne Lodge
Thursday 13 th February 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (2)	Culloden hotel
Wednesday 4 th March 2025 10am – 2pm	International Women's Day Panel Discussion	Clandeboyne Lodge
Wednesday 19 th March 2025 1:30pm – 4pm	Workshop (3)	Strangford Arms
Tuesday 25 th March 2025 7pm – 8pm	Workshop (4)	Online via Teams

- Provide training to the local Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) on EVAWG to build their capacity to apply for Change fund,
- Establish a Council EVAWG media campaign before March 2025.
- Training for Council staff on EVAWG.

A letter of offer has been received for £180,000 (including £60,000 momentum) to deliver grants in line with the EVAWG guidance.

A draft Change Fund application pack is attached for approval. The scheme will be launched following the closure of the call in period in February to enable Letters of Offer to be issued for projects to begin from 1st April 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached Change Fund grant scheme.

Change Fund Application Form 2025 - 2026

Name of Group*		
Name of Contact person*		
Postal Address of Contact person*		
Telephone Number*	Postcode:	
Email address*	Home: Work: Mobile:	
Alternative Contact Person*		
Telephone Number*	Home: Work: Mobile:	
Email address*		
What is the name of your project?		
When do you expect your project to happen?	Start Date:	Finish Date:
What Electoral Ward/ Postcode will your project cover?		
<i>Please note projects should be completed by Friday 28th February 2026 with claims and supporting information submitted to Council within 10 days of project closure. This is to allow submission to The Executive Office and EVAWG and meet the end of year financial deadline.</i>		



Appendix 1

Target Age Group (Place an X in at least 1 of the boxes)

Under 18		18-30	
30-60		60+	

How many people will the project benefit? (Place an X in the relevant box)

0-30		31-60	
61-100		100+	

Target Group

Male		Female		Prefer not to say	
-------------	--	---------------	--	--------------------------	--

Are you applying to any other council area for this project?

Yes		No		If Yes - Give Details	
------------	--	-----------	--	------------------------------	--

Details of any partners/collaborations

Name of Partners/ Collaborations	Organisations

Do you have safeguarding requirements in place?

Yes		No		Agree to sign up to ANDBC safeguarding policy?	Yes	No
------------	--	-----------	--	---	------------	-----------

Grant funding up to a maximum of £25,000 may be awarded to successful community groups operating within Ards and North Down Borough Council. The minimum grant awarded will be £1,000. Funding can be applied for within three tiers of support:

- Tier 1: grants between £1,000 and £5,000
- Tier 2: grants between £5,001 and £15,000
- Tier 3: grants between £15,001 and up to £25,000

Please Tick which tier of funding you are applying for. (Organisations can only apply for one tier of funding).

Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3a

All grant applications must address Outcome 1 as a minimum requirement:



Appendix 1

Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours, and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it

Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships - Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships

Outcome 3: Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere - Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere

Organisation/ Group Profile
<i>Please provide a short description of your organisation or group. Explain how the aims, objectives and activities of the organisation / group align with the aims of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and specifically the prevention outcomes, 1.2 &3. Focus should be on outcome 1</i>
(500 word limit – if you need to submit more detail please do so in an Annex)

Please complete the appropriate box depending which Tier you are applying for:

Proposal Description for Tier 1 Funding
<i>Insert a short description of your proposal to explain how it meets the criteria for tier 1 funding. Awards may be for one-off events, projects, workshops or small clusters of activity aimed at awareness raising and aligned with the prevention outcomes in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework 1, 2 and 3. Focus should be on outcome 1. Please detail the impact of your proposal, for example how many participants will you reach/ workshops delivered etc</i>
(500 word limit – if you need to submit more detail please do so in an Annex)

Proposal Description for Tier 2 Funding
<i>Insert a short description of your proposal to explain how it meets the criteria for tier 2 funding. Awards may be for planned programmes of activity, longer running initiatives, educational course aligned with the prevention outcomes in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework 1, 2 and 3. Focus should be on outcome 1. Awards may also be for activities described in tier one. Please detail the impact of your proposal, for example how many participants will you reach</i>
(1000 word limit – if you need to submit more detail please do so in an Annex)

Appendix 1

Tier 3 applicants must complete both boxes below:

Proposal Description for Tier 3 Funding

Insert a short description of your proposal to explain how it meets the criteria for tier 3 funding. Awards may be for planned programmes of activity, longer running initiatives, educational course aligned with the prevention outcomes in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework 1, 2 and 3. Focus should be on outcome 1 Awards may also be for activities described in tier one. Please detail the impact of your proposal, for example how many participants will you reach

(1,500 word limit – if you need to submit more detail please do so in an Annex)

Additional information for Tier 3 Funding

Please demonstrate how your proposal contains aspects of mentoring or collaboration. By 'mentoring' we mean where a more experienced organisation with better developed capacity will assist another less experienced organisation or organisations in developing the skills and knowledge to perform more effectively. This may include sharing resources and networks. This is with a view to building the capacity of the mentored organisation. Collaboration is defined as working with organisation(s) of a similar level/capacity and can include working with both voluntary and statutory organisations.

(1,000 word limit – if you need to submit more detail please do so in an Annex)

Budget Request

Please provide a breakdown of all proposed expenditure in the Total Project Costs table. Break the costs down under suitable budget headings which adequately describe the proposed expenditure. Please specify the VAT status of your organisation.

Total Project Costs

Budget Heading	Requested	
Total		
Total Requested from EVAWG Change Fund		
Vat Registered	Yes	No



Appendix 1

Value for Money

Please demonstrate how your proposal demonstrates value for money. Please reference how this is the minimum amount of funding required to achieve the activities within this proposal and that there are no other sources of funding available.

Have you applied for or are you currently in receipt of funding for your project from any other funders? (Please tick appropriate box)

Yes

No

If yes, please complete the following table:

Duplication of funding

Confirmation that there will NO duplication between this funding and funding from other sources. If you are accepting other funding that is not being used for this proposal but may be relevant please set it out below

Funding contributor	Amount of funding	What funding is supporting

Project Risks

Identify any potential risks to the successful delivery of your project and how you plan or reduce the potential impact of these risks.

Delivery Arrangements

Please include a work plan setting out the whole project approach, and experience of delivering similar programmes

Monitoring and Evaluation

You are best placed to tell us about the difference you think your project will make. Please provide an overview of how you intend to monitor and evaluate the project, including narrative, photos and data gathering using Outcome Based Accountability and questionnaires to gather feedback.

*e.g **How much did you do?** # of individuals engaged. **How well did you do it?** # of participants with increased awareness of topic. **Is anyone better off?** # and % of participants with increased awareness and understanding of the topic.*



Appendix 1

Eligibility

Please include details of how your organisation will meet the standard eligibility checks required within the guidance notes.

Documents to be included in application:

- Copy of Constitution/Memorandum of Association;
- List of Office Bearers or Board of Governors;
- Copy of the most up-to-date Audited Accounts or Financial Statement; and

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information in this application form is true and correct. I understand that you may ask for more information at any stage of the application process.

Signed:

(If submitting electronically, please type name)

Position in organisation:

Please email the completed form to pcsp@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Private & Confidential

Policing and Community Safety Partnership
 Ards and North Down Borough Council
 Signal Centre
 2 Innotec Drive
 Balloo Road
 Bangor
 BT19 7PD



Appendix 2

Scoring Criteria: Alignment to Strategic Outcomes	
5	Excellent Proposal which demonstrates strong alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Excellent description of how the project will contribute to the priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Excellent fit with other PFG indicators.
4	Very Good Proposal which demonstrates very good alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Very good description of how the project will contribute to priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Very good fit with other PFG indicators
3	Good Proposal which demonstrates good alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Good description of how the project will contribute to priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Good fit with other PFG indicators
2	Satisfactory Proposal which demonstrates satisfactory alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Satisfactory description of how the project will contribute to priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Satisfactory fit with other PFG indicators
1	Poor Proposal which demonstrates poor alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Poor description of how the project will contribute to priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Poor fit with other PFG indicators
0	Very Poor Proposal which demonstrates very poor alignment to EVAWG Outcomes . Very poor description of how the project will contribute to priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework for EVAWG. Very poor fit with other PFG indicators



Appendix 3

OBA Report card	
In line with current policy evaluation methods that have been introduced across the NI Executive EVAWG is employing the method known as Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA). On completion of the proposal you will be asked to provide information under the headings below	
EVAWG Change Fund	
How much did we do? (N)	How well did we do it? (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events delivered • Number of training courses delivered • Number of workshops delivered • Number of activities delivered • Number of programmes delivered • Number of participants at: events, and training courses • Number of Event Attendees • Number of partners collaborating on project • Number of social media engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of participants completing project • % of activities delivered in budget • % of activities delivered on time • % of participants reporting being treated well • % of participants reporting they have benefited from their contact with the project
Is anyone better off? (N)	Is anyone better off? (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants with increased knowledge of what VAWG is • Number of participants felt increased confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviours • Number of participants changed Attitude/Opinion • Number of participants changed Behaviour • Number of participants felt increased confidence in their ability to succeed in life • Number of participants felt in greater control of the events that affect their lives • Number of participants felt improved wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of participants with increased knowledge of what VAWG is • % of participants felt increased confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviours • % of participants changed Attitude/Opinion • % of participants changed Behaviour • % of participants felt increased confidence in their ability to succeed in life • % of participants felt in greater control of the events that affect their lives • % of participants felt improved wellbeing

Unclassified

146

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	23 January 2025
File Reference	ART 05/R1 02/25
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Arts Project Grants
Attachments	

The first round of the Arts Project Grants for 2025-2026 opened for application in November 24 with a deadline of Tuesday 21 January 2025. The grants were advertised in the local press, social media and on the Council's website.

An assessment panel met on Thursday 23 January to assess 10 applications received by the closing date. The panel comprised of the following Officers:

- Linda McAllister, CD Officer
- Julia Harkness, CD Officer
- Amy McKelvey, Arts Officer

A maximum of £1,000 was available per application.

The total available budget - £11,000.

Total amount requested - £9,810.

Pass mark was agreed at 60%.

Not Applicable

147

Table 1 below provides a summary of the applications, the scores received and comments.

	Name of Organisation	Requested Amount	Project	Amount awarded	Score	Comments
1	AMH New Horizons	£1000	Pottery Workshop Programme	£1000	94	High quality, good value, person centred project
2	Bangor Speech Festival	£1000	Festival activities	£1000	92	Excellent application, good value for money
3	Kilcooley Women's Centre	£1000	Harp playing workshops	£800	80	Valuable community engagement learning new skill, no match funding so requested amount reduced in line (20%)
4	Kilmood Art Club	£820	Art Masterclasses	0	48	Unclear details about the project and didn't represent good value for money or community engagement
5	Northern Attitudes Dance Company	£1000	Dance workshops	0	Did not meet essential criteria	Majority of project not based in the Borough
6	Peninsula Healthy Living	£1000	Older Peoples Theatre and Storytelling Programme	£1000	90	Interesting and unique idea and great application
7	Portaferry Community Services	£1000	Music and Drama Workshops	£1000	90	Excellent application and project for older people in Portaferry
8	Portico	£1000	Choral workshops and performance	£1000	85	Strong application representing good value for money

Not Applicable

148

9	Remakery Studio	£1000	Upcycling Workshops	0	Did not meet essential criteria	Didn't provide a constitution
10	Valhalla	£990	Workshops and development of Historical walking tour of Comber	£990	81	Good project engaging with the community in Comber
	Total	£9,810		£6,790		

The budget is £11,000 and applications totalled £9,810. The pass mark was 60%.

Kilmoor Art Club's application did not score above the pass mark as the application did not represent good value for money and did not give enough detail about the project or community engagement and need.

The Remakery Studio and Northern Attitudes Dance Company were not scored as they did not meet the essential criteria. Seven organisations scored above the pass mark of 60.

As the scheme was launched under the previous Council grants policy, approval to award Letters of Offer is requested to award the grants as outlined above. An updated scheme will be tabled to Committee for approval, prior to the next round of funding.

A second round of funding will be released in April 2025 for the remaining budget of £4,210.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the 7 successful applications and awards detailed in table 1, totalling £6,790.

Unclassified

149

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	22 January 2025
File Reference	HER12 02/25
Legislation	Youth and Recreational Services (NI) Order
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Update of Museum Policies
Attachments	Appendix 1 - North Down Museum Documentation Policy Statement 2025-2030 Appendix 2 - North Down Museum Access Policy Statement 2025-2030 Appendix 3 - North Down Museum Conservation and Collections Care Policy 2025-2030

The UK Museum Accreditation Scheme requires all accredited museums to hold a variety of policies in order to care for and provide access to their collections to industry standards. North Down Museum last went through the Accreditation process in June 2023. As part of this process the Museum must update the following policies:

- Documentation Policy Statement 2025-2030
- Conservation and Collections Care Policy Statement 2025-2030
- Access Policy Statement 2025-2030

Under the Council's scheme of delegation, minor changes to already approved policies are delegated to a Director to sign off. However, The Museum Council

Not Applicable

150

Accreditation scheme requires evidence that these policies and any changes have been signed off by the Council. All three policies were previously approved by Council in February 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the council adopt the updated Museum policies as appended to this report.



North Down Museum Documentation Policy Statement 2025-2030

Established: September 2013

Reviewed: 2015, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2025

Introduction

Documentation underpins every aspect of museum activity. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, their accessibility, management, research, study and use.

The North Down Museum policy for documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Policy Statement is to ensure that we fulfill our guardianship, stewardship and access responsibilities. Through implementation of this policy, our objective is to:

- Improve accountability for the collections
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information and attain the very highest standards wherever possible
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collections

Accountability

The museum will follow the accountability principles defined by the now defunct Museums and Galleries Commission;

"to enable museums to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (this includes loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located." (MGC 1993)

Levels of Documentation

The museum is committed to record significant information about the objects in our care so that each object we are legally responsible for (including loans as well as long term collections) can be identified and located.

For the majority of our collections, staff will document to individual item level. However, for certain collections, for example bulk archaeological excavation material, it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail, and we will document items at group level. We therefore aim to have a basic 'inventory' record for all identified items and groups within the collection; whilst some items will be documented to a more detailed 'catalogue' level.

We will document our collections to either Inventory or Catalogue level, as described below:

- Inventory level: This includes sufficient key information to allow any object(s) in our care to be individually identified and verified. All accessioned items, loans inward and outward, and any other unaccessioned objects as appropriate are documented at this level.
- Catalogue level: We will identify the collections/objects that merit further, more detailed, documentation, thus raising the standard of information to catalogue level. Such documentation will include the known history of an artifact, and references to any relevant publication etc.

Computerisation of Records

The museum uses the Modes documentation system. Data from the previous online asset management system has been transferred to the new database. This system is backed up every four hours by the main Council ICT system.

All of the accessioned artefacts are computerised, and digital images are available. The museum will focus on cataloguing and digitising the images in the collection. This amounts to approximately 6,000 separate images (including postcards, posters, glass plate negatives and images). Most of the archival and photographic collection information is held on a basic excel database, as well as the Council's AND Images database.

In order to ensure that our current electronic system does not become obsolete, the museum will remain informed of technological advances and ensure the long-term accessibility of the information held.

Controlled Access to Sensitive Information

All requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (1998) and the Environmental Information Regulation (2004). We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information, environmental information, valuations or site details on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

General Data Protection Regulation

For provenance purposes, the museum collects personal details about individuals who donate or loan artefacts to the collection. These records will be kept permanently to allow the museum to verify how, when and from whom it acquired each artefact. North Down Museum will ensure that procedures are in place to ensure these details are kept securely both in electronic and hard copy formats.

Security against Loss of Irreplaceable Collection Information

We have in place measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. We will update all manual and computerised records as appropriate. Regular backups will be made to secure digital data. Where collection information is wholly computerised and managed centrally we will make backup copies of all key files, and where considered appropriate, house them securely off-site. Paper documentation is kept in secure fire-proof cabinets.



North Down Museum Access Policy Statement 2025-2030

Established: September 2013

Reviewed: 2015, 2017, 2020, 2025

This statement provides an overview of the North Down Museum's policies regarding access to the collection and the museum.

Statement of General Principles

The North Down Museum is committed to offer an inclusive service to promote access to our collections and the building they are housed in.

The museum's aim is to make access to the collection as easy as possible for all; to enable everyone as far as possible to have access to scholarship and information about the collection; and to allow everyone to enjoy the collection in a variety of ways.

Types of Access

Physical access

The Museum seeks to provide all visitors with equal access to the building, making alternative provision where necessary, within the constraints of a Grade A Listed Building. It ensures that current and future building projects provide appropriate physical access for all visitors.

The comfort and ease of visitors is addressed, including providing appropriate toilets, nappy changing facilities, access for push chairs and seating in galleries.

The Museum aims to provide adequate signage and navigation tools to suit a range of visitor needs (e.g. in different sensory formats and languages) where possible.

Museum staff also provide talks and tours to groups outside the museum building. A range of physical, sensory, cultural, intellectual and financial access needs are offered.

Sensory

The museum will take into account a variety of means of interpretation which may be required by visitors with limited sight or hearing.

Cultural Access

The museum will take into account the diversity of visitors' backgrounds within the limitations of the existing collections.

Intellectual Access

The museum will endeavour to provide information about our collections, as well as educational materials and resources in different formats in order to appeal to visitors with a range of learning styles and abilities.

The museum encourages and enables the widest possible audience to study the collection. It seeks ways to improve and extend access to information and scholarly research.

Financial Access

The museum provides free admission, in addition to activities, events, publications and commercial facilities to suit a range of incomes.



North Down Museum Conservation and Collections Care Policy 2025-2030

Established: September 2013

Reviewed: 2015, 2017, 2020, 2025

1. Mission and Commitment

North Down Museum's collections are at the heart of the organisation. At present the museum holds approximately 9,000 objects. Of which approximately 3000 are artefacts and 6,000 are images (including postcards, posters, glass plate negatives and images).

The management and care of the collections is central to the strategic priorities which underpin the mission of North Down Museum *to preserve the Boroughs's unique history and heritage for future generations and to record, interpret and promote the 'story' of Ards and North Down through our collections for the benefit of local people and tourists alike.*

The North Down Museum Forward Plan states it will:

- Ensure high quality care of and access to existing collections and to manage future collecting in a sustainable way

It will do this through developing a Collections Management Framework, strategically developing our collections and making our collections accessible in both traditional and innovative ways.

2. Collections Conditions Overview

North Down Museum will survey, benchmark and visually inspect the conditions in which collections are kept to determine priority areas for improvement in line with best practice as defined by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's (MLA's) '*Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives Self-Assessment Checklist*' (*Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0 Published 2011*).

Records will be kept and action plans developed to guide and measure levels of improvement.

3. Preventive Conservation

Preventive conservation is defined as the planned and controlled management of the environment and surroundings of a collection in order to reduce or eliminate, as far as possible, the known aspects of that collection's deterioration. The following measures will be implemented to achieve this:

Provision of suitable building conditions

The Museum Manager will work closely with Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) to ensure that the building conditions are monitored and maintained. Collections are safeguarded through the following systems:

- Risk assessment and management
- Building Maintenance
- Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance
- Building Management Systems
- Environmental Monitoring Systems
- Intruder Alarms
- Fire and Evacuation Systems

All systems are managed by ANDBC and are subject to regular maintenance and inspections.

When capital developments (including new builds and re-developments) are planned, the care of the collections will be taken into account and museum staff will be involved in the planning process to ensure that the collections are displayed or stored in a safe and secure environment, which also allows for the greatest degree of interpretation and visitor access.

Environmental monitoring

North Down Museum will

- Monitor the environment in storage and display areas, as well as rooms in the Town Hall where collections are kept and measure and record relative humidity (RH), temperature, visible light, ultraviolet radiation (UV) and atmospheric pollutants where applicable
- Collect environmental data using fixed continuous monitoring system throughout all galleries and stores in the museum building. Collect data outside of the museum building using handheld devices.
- Collate, utilise and act upon data to provide stable and appropriate collection environments
- Monitor, manage and eradicate pests

Environmental Control

North Down Museum will store and display collections in managed environments that minimise their rates of deterioration, using the following control factors and methods:

Control factors:

Relative humidity (RH): for general mixed media collections, 40-60% RH with less than a 10% fluctuation in any 24 hour period

Temperature: 18 – 25 °C

Visible light: 50 – 250 lux, depending on the light sensitivity of the item

UV radiation: less than 75 mw/lm (micro watts per lumen)

Display case construction: where appropriate, items on display will be cased and the internal case environments tailored to suit the items within.

Storage: stored collections will be housed on shelves. At the moment sensitive objects are wrapped in acid free tissue and boxed. The museum will implement a rolling programme to box all artefacts, images and archives as resources become available.

Handling and reference: there will be appropriate supervision of direct access to archive and museum collections and guidance given on safe handling of collection items.

Control methods to be used:

Relative Humidity (RH): Humidifiers and dehumidifiers when required

Temperature: Localised heating and cooling

Visible light: daylight exclusion, blinds, filtering films and a rolling programme to replace the current lighting system with LED lighting

UV Radiation: filtering films, daylight exclusion

Housekeeping

Cleaning

Housekeeping programmes will be established and followed in-line with benchmarking action plans. Museum staff and volunteers will be trained to clean storage and display areas in a way that is not detrimental to the collections. Chemical-based commercial cleaning products will be avoided in favour of dry cleaning methods.

Quarantine Procedures

New acquisitions and incoming collections will be held in quarantine pending full inspection and freezing (where appropriate) to prevent insect pest infestation of other collections.

High Risk Organic material

Collections that are particularly vulnerable to insect infestation (e.g. the Taxidermy) will be segregated to prevent the rapid spread of an infestation in the event of an outbreak.

Pest monitoring

Areas containing vulnerable collections will be monitored using insect traps that are checked every six weeks. Should pests be detected, the trap contents will be recorded and the area monitored rigorously to locate and eradicate the source.

Handling, moving and transport

Collections are particularly at risk when being moved or handled. North Down Museum will move its collections safely and securely.

The movement of large or awkward items will be planned. Such moves will be risk-assessed and method statements will be produced.

All collections that are transported will be suitably wrapped or crated to give them the most suitable protection.

Disaster planning

Disaster plans will be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

4. Interventive Conservation

Interventive conservation is the active treatment of a collection item to stabilise or enhance its condition, or some aspect of its significance for study and interpretation. North Down Museum will work in accordance with the following principles:

- Conservation work will only be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person, or under the supervision of an appropriately qualified person.

- Conservation work should be underpinned by knowledge and understanding of the collection item. Critical to this is documentation of its condition and treatment, and a long-term plan for the care of the collection item.
- Conservation work should be planned and carried out in consultation with staff with collections management responsibility.
- Work undertaken will conform to the standards set down in the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Conservation (ICON)
- All treatments will be photographed and documented and records will be maintained in accordance with SPECTRUM (version 4.0 2011) standards.

5. Expertise, Advice and Access

- North Down Museum is committed to continuing development of its staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise.
- Caring for the collections is the responsibility of all staff. The Museum Manager is committed to training and to raising awareness of collections care issues. By promoting these to staff, volunteers and researchers the museum will communicate the message that safe handling and use of the collections will preserve them for the future and in doing so allow access to them for longer.
- Guidelines and information relating to collections care practices and procedures will be accessible to all staff.
- The museum will provide digital access to collections and information about collections as appropriate and as resources permit.
- The museum may withdraw collections from public access if they are identified as at serious risk from handling or display. Where possible, access under supervision will be facilitated or substitute copies made if applicable.

Unclassified

161

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	21 November 2024
File Reference	GREL415
Legislation	Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Clanmil Housing Association - Shared Housing scheme Savoy, Bangor
Attachments	None

Background

Clanmil Social Housing Association provide affordable homes for more than 11,500 people across Northern Ireland including families, older people, those with support needs, and shared communities.

Their shared schemes are supported by the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Executive's "Housing for All" Shared Housing Programme. The programme has its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy which reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society where people can choose to live, learn, work and socialise alongside neighbours from many different backgrounds and traditions, free from prejudice.

Clanmil are currently developing a 26 two-bedroom apartment scheme, targeted at the over 55 age category, at The Savoy, Donaghadee Road, Bangor with completion to be in early spring 2025.

Not Applicable

162

To apply for social housing in Northern Ireland, including a home with Clanmil, applicants need to submit an application form to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). All applications for social housing, including homes with Clanmil, are assessed by the NIHE using the Housing Selection Scheme. The Housing Executive has agreed the inclusion of the Savoy scheme on the Social Housing Development Programme and invited the scheme onto the Shared Housing Programme.

Good Relations

Each shared scheme is supported through the development and delivery of a five-year Good Relations Plan. The Good Relations Plan is managed by the Housing Association developing the shared scheme and it includes 'bonding' programmes which are delivered to the new shared neighbourhood residents, and 'bridging' programmes which are delivered between the new shared residents and residents from surrounding communities (within a five-mile radius of the new shared scheme).

The Good Relations Plan identifies and details the following requisite actions to encourage inclusion and integration within the local community:

Action 1 – Promotion

Action 2 – Engagement

Action 3 – Bonding

Action 4 – Bridging

Action 5 – Sustainability

Action 6 - Learning

Funding for this Good Relations revenue programme will be c.£400,000 over a 5 year period and can be used for both the residents and projects within a 5 mile radius of the new scheme.

The programme should increase the confidence and capacity of both residents in the Savoy and residents in neighbouring communities.

Advisory Groups

A key support mechanism to the delivery of the Good Relations Plan is the establishment of an Advisory Group. The Advisory Groups will draw membership from the Housing Executive, local Council Good Relations Officers, Community and Voluntary organisations and other statutory bodies.

Clanmill has met with the Mayor and Council officers to request nominations to the Advisory Group for the Savoy scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council nominates Bangor Central DEA Councillors, together with the Good Relations Officer to the Savoy Advisory Group which will be managed and supported by staff from Clanmil Housing Association.

Unclassified

163

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	28 January 2025
File Reference	PCSP
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Correspondence - Gender Based Violence Against Women
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Letter dated 16 th December 2024 from Newry Mourne and Down DC

A letter dated 16th December 2023 from Newry Mourne and Down District Council requesting support for notice of motion in relation to Gender Based Violence has been received and is attached for members information.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to support the request in the attached correspondence.

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

164

Our ref: C/188/2024

16 December 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Re: Notice of Motion – Gender Based Violence Against Women

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 2 December 2024, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

"That this Council notes the growing concern regarding the epidemic of gender-based violence against women. This concern has been heightened by recent sexual assaults in Derry and the tragic deaths of five women in the past seven weeks in the North.

In response to this, this Council writes to the Justice Minister and the Justice Department, urging them to expand the categories of "significant persons" when applying for a Non-Molestation Order, to include individuals who were in a significant relationship but did not cohabit. This would align with the provisions in the UK, where similar protections are offered, and with the "Safety Order" provisions in the Republic of Ireland.

Additionally, this Council calls on other councils in the North to support this motion, thereby advocating for the extension of similar protections to women in the North, ensuring they are afforded the same legal safeguards as those in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

That Council write to the Lord Chief Justice asking for a review of how male offenders who have offended against women are given bail".

I have been asked to write to each of the Councils requesting support for this motion and would ask that you give this matter serious consideration. I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

Unclassified

165

ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development
Date of Report	29 January 2025
File Reference	EHPD18
Legislation	Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Pigeon Control in Conway Square
Attachments	None

Members will recall that a decision was made in November 2023, that measures be taken by the Council to reduce the pigeon population in Conway Square, Newtownards. Complaints are occasionally received by the Environmental Health Protection and Development Service from residents, and several business owners have also asked Members to try and find a solution to the ongoing issues caused by feral pigeons. Interventions have been made in the past which successfully reduced bird numbers; however, the pigeon population has inevitably risen again.

Tackling the challenging current issue of pigeon numbers has required the input of several Council departments, with work ongoing by the Head of Regulatory Services to introduce a byelaw to address bird feeding in Conway Square. The Environmental Health Protection and Development Service has made recommendations for bird proofing improvements at Newtownards Arts Centre and is carrying out surveillance of bird movements to identify roost sites and put control measures in place. This

Not Applicable

166

approach alone has not been successful in reducing the number of birds and in fact an increase in the bird population has been observed over recent months.

The Environmental Health Protection and Development Service has therefore sought further specialist advice. Several strategies were suggested, including a combination of the trapping and destruction of birds along with the use of falcons to deter pigeon activity in the square.

A request for funding has been made to the Council's Budgetary Panel to invest £25K in pigeon reduction measures in Conway Square. This was subsequently approved by Council at the 29 January 2025 meeting. Due to the sensitive nature of pigeon control, the Environmental Health Protection and Development Service are seeking approval from Council to commence a procurement process to appoint a private pest contractor to carry out pigeon control during 2025/26 using the methods outlined above, rather than continue to try to tackle the issue in house.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves that a procurement process is designed and implemented for pigeon control activities in Conway Square to include trapping and destruction of birds and the use of birds of prey as a deterrent.

Unclassified

167

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development
Date of Report	24 January 2025
File Reference	CW85
Legislation	Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009
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	Public Health Agency Corporate Plan Consultation
Attachments	Appendix 1 - PHA Consultation Response Appendix 2 - PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is consulting on its draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030, the closing is 4pm on, Friday 28 February 2025.

Under the Vision of “A healthier Northern Ireland”, the organisation states its purpose: Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.

It proposes four main themes:

- Protecting Health
- Starting Well
- Living Well
- Ageing Well

Not Applicable

168

There are key priorities and measurement indicators identified alongside each of the themes.

The attached response to PHA was produced after consultation with officers from all Councils through the Environmental Health and Wellbeing subgroup of Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI). Emphasis has been placed on the main work areas with which partnership work with PHA is already in place to achieve results including infectious disease control, tobacco control, home accident prevention, Mind Body Business and Age/Dementia Friendly. Ards and North Down Officers contributed to that process and fully endorse the attached as this Councils response.

The Public Consultation Response is due to be submitted by Friday 28 February 2025. This will be done with the caveat that it is subject to ratification by Council and call-in period.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to the submission of the proposed response to the PHA Corporate Plan 2025 – 30.

Public Health Agency Draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Public Consultation Questionnaire

Welcome to the draft Public Health Agency (PHA) Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Preventing, protecting, improving; Better health for **everyone**. Our new draft plan is open for public consultation.

Overview

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has developed a draft Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2030, setting out the strategic direction for the PHA for the next five years. This draft plan takes account of engagement and discussion with a range of stakeholders, the vision set out by the Minister of Health in Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, Department of Health (DoH) priorities, especially the Making Life Better Public Health Framework and the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2024-2027 within the context of financial constraints and Health and Social Care (HSC) reform and restructuring.

Priorities and Approach

The PHA's objectives apply to everyone in the population, aiming to address health outcomes across all demographics, including diverse backgrounds and needs. Achieving these outcomes will require determination, innovative thinking, and collaborative efforts across HSC, government and the community and voluntary sectors. We must make partnership, involvement and engagement central to our work, explore new and different ways of doing things and make the best use of our combined resources.

We recognise our work cannot be done in isolation and requires a whole system, cross government approach with robust engagement with the public. Cognisant of this, we have now published our draft corporate plan for public consultation from Thursday 28th November 2024 until Friday 28th February 2025.

Respondent Information Form

Please use this questionnaire to share your views on the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030. You can email your response to phacorporateplan@hscni.net or return to us by post to PHA Corporate Plan Consultation, Public Health Agency, 4th Floor South, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS.

Here to Help

Please get in touch via contact details above if you require assistance, an alternative format or have any questions with regards to completing your consultation response. We would be happy to receive any other comments you feel do not fit into the questions set out in this survey.

Details of in-person consultation events taking place in the new year will be announced in due course on the [PHA website](#).

The draft PHA corporate plan 2025-2030 aims to have wide reaching effects. We would welcome views on how delivering this plan may affect any particular groups in society. The draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030, an initial draft equality screening and rural needs impact assessment are available via the [PHA Website - Current Consultations section](#)

Have your say now by completing our consultation survey. Please make sure to share your thoughts before the consultation deadline **4pm, Friday 28 February 2025**.

Thank you for your contribution to this consultation and joining us in building a healthier Northern Ireland for all.

Consultation Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to help you respond to the Draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030 'Preventing, protecting, improving: Better health for everyone. Written responses are welcome either using this questionnaire template, via [online survey](#) or in an alternative format which best suits your response.

Please answer the following questions and note your comments and views in the text boxes provided.

About You

(Please tick the relevant box)

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?
(required)

- Individual – Please complete Section 1, 2 and 4
- On behalf of an organisation – skip to Section 3 'Responding as an Organisation' – please complete section 3 and 4

Section 1 - Responding as an individual

1.1 Please provide your contact details below:

Your name and email address are required for validation purposes.

Name: (required)

Email address: (required)

1.2 Can we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation? This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify.

(required)

Yes

No

1.3 Can we contact you in future about the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030? For example, to provide you with a link to the results of this consultation, to inform you of further consultations or provide update information on the plan. (required)

Yes

No

1.4 To support transparency in our decision-making process, we will publish a summary of the consultation feedback on the PHA website. This will sometimes include the responses themselves and may mention names of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals responding on a personal capacity will only be published where consent has been given. Please note we will not publish contact details.

(required)

Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response

No, please remove my name before publishing my response

[PHA Privacy Notice](#)

Feedback provided may be subject to publication or disclosure under access to information laws like the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If you believe your input should be treated as confidential, please contact us by email, so that this may be considered should we receive a disclosure request.

Email: phacorporateplan@hscni.net

Section 2 – (Monitoring Information for individual responses only)

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is committed to providing equal opportunities for everyone. This makes sure everyone has the chance to participate in our survey groups regardless of gender, marital status, disability, age, religion, political views, ethnic origin, caring responsibilities or sexual orientation.

By answering the following questions, you will help us understand who we are reaching and how we can better serve everyone in our community. Your response to these questions is **optional** and answers will be **anonymised**.

2.1 What is your sex? By sex we are referring to your current sex.

- Male
- Female
- Identify in a different way
- Prefer not to say

If you identify in a different way, please specify below:

2.2 What is your age?

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say

2.3 What is your marital status?

- Single, that is, never married and never registered in a civil partnership
- Married
- In a registered civil partnership
- Separated but still legally married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated but still legally in a civil partnership
- Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
- Surviving partner from a civil partnership
- Prefer not to say

2.4 Which council area do you live in?

- Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Belfast
- Causeway Coast and Glens
- Derry City and Strabane
- Fermanagh and Omagh
- Lisburn and Castlereagh
- Mid and East Antrim
- Mid Ulster
- Newry, Mourne and Down
- Ards and North Down
- Prefer not to say

2.5 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

If you answered 'Yes', does your condition(s) or illness(es) reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all
- Prefer not to say

2.6 What is your religion?

- No Religion
- Catholic
- Presbyterian
- Church of Ireland
- Methodist
- Baptist
- Free Presbyterian
- Brethren
- Protestant - not specified
- Christian - not specified
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

2.7 Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?

- Heterosexual or Straight
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other
- Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

2.8 Do you have responsibility for caring of any of the following groups?

- Care of a child
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say

- Care of a person with a disability
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say

- Care of a dependant elderly person
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say

2.9 What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Irish Traveller
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other Asian background
- African
- Caribbean
- Other Black/African/Caribbean background
- Arab
- Other
- Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

2.10 Do you think of yourself as a unionist, a nationalist or neither?

- Unionist
- Nationalist
- Neither
- Other
- Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify

Section 3 – Responding as an organisation

3.1 Please provide your organisation contact details below

Organisation name and email address are required for validation purposes. (required)

Organisation name: Ards and North Down Borough Council

Organisation email address:

Adele.Faulkner@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

3.2 Which of the following best describes the sector you work in?

(Please tick the relevant box)

This will assist us in monitoring the range of respondents the consultation has reached.

- Statutory or Regulatory Body
- Arm's Length Body (ALB)
- Organised interest Group: e.g. Education, Health, Business, Creative Industries, Environment, Community, Voluntary & Third sectors
- Business operator
- Local Government
- Government Department
- Trade Union
- Church or faith group
- Media
- Academia
- Charity
- Political Party
- Other (please specify):

3.3 **Can we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation?** This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify. **(required)**

Yes

No

3.4 **Can we contact you in future about the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030?** For example, to provide you with a link to the results of this consultation, to inform you of further consultations or provide updated information on the plan. **(required)**

Yes

No

3.5 To support transparency in our decision-making process, we will publish a summary of the consultation feedback on the [PHA website](#). This will sometimes include the responses themselves and may mention names of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals responding on a personal capacity will only be published where consent has been given. Please note we will not publish contact details. **(required)**

Yes, I consent to my organisation name being published with my response

No, please remove my organisation name before publishing my response

Section 4 - Have your say

The following questions focus on the core elements of the draft PHA corporate plan 2025-2030.

Our purpose, vision, values and strategic outcomes are set out below and in the document.

Purpose: Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.

Vision: A healthier Northern Ireland.

Values: The PHA endeavours to translate the Health and Social Care values into its culture by putting individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do, acting with **openness and honesty** and treating people with dignity, respect and **compassion; working together** in partnership to improve the quality of life of those we serve, listening to and involving individuals and communities; valuing, developing and empowering our staff and striving for **excellence** and innovation; being evidence led and outcomes focused.

Over the next five years, as we work to fulfil our purpose and advance towards our vision of a healthier Northern Ireland, we will focus on delivering a number of key public health priorities under the following strategic outcomes:

- **Protecting Health** - protecting the population from serious health threats, such as infectious disease outbreaks or major incidents
- **Starting Well** - laying the foundations for a healthy life from pre-birth, infancy, early years, childhood to adolescent years
- **Living Well** - ensuring that people have the opportunity to live and work in a healthy way

- **Ageing Well** - supporting people to age healthily throughout their lives

Each outcome sets out our ambition and a number of priorities for the years ahead. These are aligned with the draft Programme for Government Framework 2024-2027 and the strategic direction outlined in key departmental strategies.

Using the scale, please indicate using a cross (x) or a tick (✓) to what extent you agree or disagree with the content in each of the sections

4.1 Do you agree with our purpose? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below:

The defined purpose of the organisation includes the key elements of protecting and improving public health alongside reducing health inequalities. Recognition that this will be achieved through strong leadership, meaningful partnerships and evidence-based practice is critical to success.

When considering partnership working, recognition should be given to existing partnerships such as Community Planning, Children Services Plan, Civil Contingencies, Regional Age Friendly, HAPSIG etc and how these can be utilised with PHA support and where appropriate, leadership to achieve the aims and objectives of a healthier Northern Ireland.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on collaborative working to make partnerships meaningful and successful in delivering outcomes.

4.2 Do you agree with our vision and values? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				x

Please include any comments in the box below.

The vision is clear, concise and easy to understand.

The values are as would be expected of an organisation.

4.3 Referring to the draft plan, do you agree with Outcome 1: Protecting Health and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below.

The importance of a collaborate approach to infection control cannot be underestimated. Clear roles and responsibilities are necessary for all delivery partners in this area. The recent Department of Health consultation on an updated Public Health Act was lacking in this area. It should be considered that should roles of individual partners change further specific consultation is necessary.

Consideration could be given in this area to link into existing structures such as Climate change Emergency Planning forums.

4.4 Referring to the draft plan, do you agree with Outcome 2: Starting Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below.

In addition to the priorities listed, specific mention of families where English isn't a first language should be included along with a recognition of the impact of poverty on early years.

As well as stating preventing deaths, mention should be made of injuries. It should also note home accidents in particular due to the high impact this has on the under 5 age group.

Consideration should be given to the impact of violence (particularly against Women and Girls) and perhaps the priority should be updated to state: support families to take care of their physical and mental health, *including protection from domestic violence*, with a particular focus on the first 1,000 days.

4.5 Referring to the plan, do you agree with Outcome 3: Living Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below.

There is no mention of workplace health, working with businesses and the value of places of employment as “settings” to improve public health.

Previous work done on a “healthy settings” base e.g. hospitals, prisons, universities, schools and workplaces may be lost in this change of approach rather than built on if not included.

Again, the impact of violence (particularly against Women and Girls) is relevant to this section.

Where there are dual or multiple work areas involved e.g. a dual diagnosis of mental health & addiction problems, there is often little coordination and engagement between teams. A priority to engage collectively with other workstreams to tackle issues would be beneficial.

There is no mention of the particular concerns around health and homelessness which is an ever-growing problem in today’s society. A priority should be to work with homeless agencies and support services to address the health implications as part of the overall care.

4.6 Referring to the plan, do you agree with Outcome 4: Ageing Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below.

The inclusion of Home Accident Prevention, Active Ageing and Age Friendly is welcomed however the omission of a priority specifically related to dementia in ageing is disappointing. The inclusion of a priority to support those living with dementia to age well would be of benefit to the strategy.

Indicators – falls and frailty measures:

Data collected by Councils during home safety checks to households with people over 65 and or vulnerable adults (18-64) could be used as an indicator. For example, Percentage of households that had a home accident in the 12 months before their home safety check. Percentage of accidents that were falls etc.

4.7 Referring to the plan, do you agree with our organisation ambition and priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
			x	

Please include any comments in the box below.

In considering the value of staff, this must not be a lip service approach, there is an expectation that this will be delivered with clear targets, measurables and continuous improvements. Employee health and wellbeing should be one of the highest priorities for PHA and they should be an exemplar organisation in this regard. If “health is your wealth” then PHA should be setting this example from within.

4.8 Is there an outcome you feel is missing or is not sufficiently reflected?

Yes []

No []

Please include any comments in the box below:

Reduction in inequalities needs to be more prominent in stipulated priorities.

The statistical evidence illustrated should be more closely to priorities to show the evidence base from where these priorities have arisen.

4.9 Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the document as a whole? If so, please outline these in the box below.

Whilst the statistics are well presented they should be more clearly linked to the priorities.

Consultation process and [PHA privacy notice](#)

The PHA will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process on the PHA corporate website. The responses will be used to amend and further develop the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request, in line with Freedom of Information legislation.

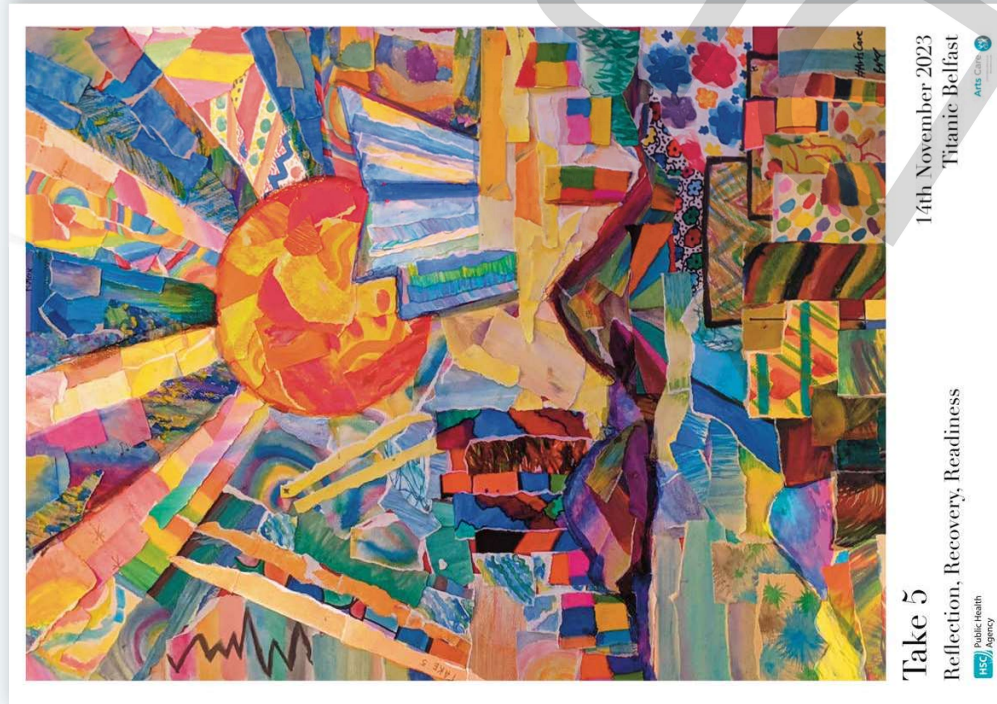
Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this questionnaire. We very much value your input.

Public Health Agency Corporate Plan 2025–2030

Preventing, protecting, improving:
Better health for **everyone**

Contents

- Foreword 4
- Purpose, vision and values..... 6
- Our context and the health profile of Northern Ireland..... 8
- What is public health? 16
- Our focus..... 20
- Protecting health..... 22
- Starting well 24
- Living well 26
- Ageing well..... 30
- Our organisation 32
- Summary table 39
- Glossary of useful terms 42
- References 45



Collage of artwork from PHA all staff event 2023.

Foreword

This Public Health Agency (PHA) Corporate Plan 2025-2030 sets out our strategic direction for the next five years: where we will target our work, based on evidence and informed by engagement with our partners, the public, key stakeholders and aligned to Programme for Government and Department of Health (DoH) strategies and priorities.

This plan is being developed during a period of reform both for our organisation and for Health and Social Care (HSC) and in a time of significant financial constraint. However, we have embraced the opportunity provided by this time of change and constraint to set out our vision and ambitions for health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland and reiterate our call for a continued focus on improving health and reducing health inequalities across HSC and wider society.

Over the period of our previous corporate plan (2017-2021), the PHA has continued to take forward work to improve and protect health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, improve the quality and safety of care services, and support research and development.¹ Much has been achieved, but much is yet to be done to deliver better health for everyone in Northern Ireland.

Our society has faced many difficult challenges in recent years, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact. This has shaped many of our priorities and work areas over recent years and the lessons learned continue to influence our work: pandemic preparedness and a re-energised focus on stubborn and systemic inequalities in health that we continue to experience. These unfair and avoidable differences in health impact our ability to lead healthy lives and too many people in Northern Ireland still die prematurely or live with preventable conditions. We must do all that we can to prevent this from being the case. Our commitment to work to reduce health inequalities is at the core of this plan and our work over the next five years.

The priorities set out in the following pages (and summarised on pages 40-41) relate to everyone in Northern Ireland irrespective of your age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, disability; whether you are a service user, a carer, independent or needing care. Our outcomes are ambitious, and will require energy, courage, commitment and creativity to deliver them – all against the backdrop of increasing demands

and financial constraints, as well as structural reform. We must take a 'whole system' approach and make partnership, involvement and engagement central to our work, to make the best use of our combined resources. We must work collaboratively with service users and carers, the community and voluntary sector and across government to have a positive, lasting impact on health and wellbeing.

It is also critical as we grow as an organisation that we focus on our people. We have a highly skilled and committed multidisciplinary workforce across a range of professions and we must strive to ensure they feel valued, equipped and enabled in their work. In particular, we must ensure that all staff are supported and given opportunities to develop both professionally and personally.

We must continue to develop as a learning organisation and build on significant developments in digital capacity in recent years. Embracing innovative, digital solutions and maximising the use of data will enable us to work more effectively to meet the current and future needs of the population.

This plan, supported by a more detailed implementation plan, sets out our next steps as we look forward. This will be a period of change and adaptation but also of great opportunity where we endeavour, as the lead organisation for public health, to be an organisation where people want to work, where we nurture collective and compassionate leadership.

Above all, this plan represents our unwavering commitment to improving health and wellbeing for everyone in Northern Ireland.



Aidan Dawson
Chief Executive



Colin Coffey
Chair

Foreword

Purpose, vision and values

Purpose:

Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.

Vision:

A healthier Northern Ireland.

Values:

The PHA endeavours to translate the Health and Social Care values into its culture by putting individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do, acting with **openness and honesty** and treating people with dignity, respect and **compassion**; **working together** in partnership to improve the quality of life of those we serve, listening to and involving individuals and communities; valuing, developing and empowering our staff and striving for **excellence** and innovation; being evidence led and outcomes focused.



Purpose, vision and values

Our context and the health profile of Northern Ireland

Since its establishment in 2009, the PHA has worked to improve and protect health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, promote healthy behaviours and reduce barriers to good health, improve the quality and safety of care services, and support related research and innovation.

There have been many developments and advances in recent years in respect of interventions and programmes to improve and protect health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. The graphics on pages 10-15 show a snapshot of health in 2022-23. In general, the health of our population has been improving over time, as seen in increases in life expectancy (the number of years a person can expect to live) and healthy life expectancy (the number of years lived in good health). However, in recent years, improvements in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy have slowed and health inequality remains a major issue (see page 10).

Determinants of health

Health is determined by many factors: social, political, environmental and economic. Changes in these can have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of the population and in recent years, society has experienced many significant events of this nature: the COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, climate change, the outworking of EU exit and other political change.^{2,4} The pandemic also highlighted both the stubborn and systemic inequalities in health that Northern Ireland continues to experience. Health inequalities remain and continue to divide our society. While this situation is not unique to Northern Ireland, it remains a major issue with significant differences in health outcomes between the most and least disadvantaged.

A time of change

The challenges facing our health and social care system, and indeed health systems worldwide, are also well documented, and Northern Ireland's health and social care system remains under immense and growing pressure.³ Further change is also underway both in the development and implementation of the Integrated Care System for Northern Ireland (ICSNI). The current economic climate and constrained financial environment for HSC continues to impact on population health and requires creative, innovative and collaborative ways of working,



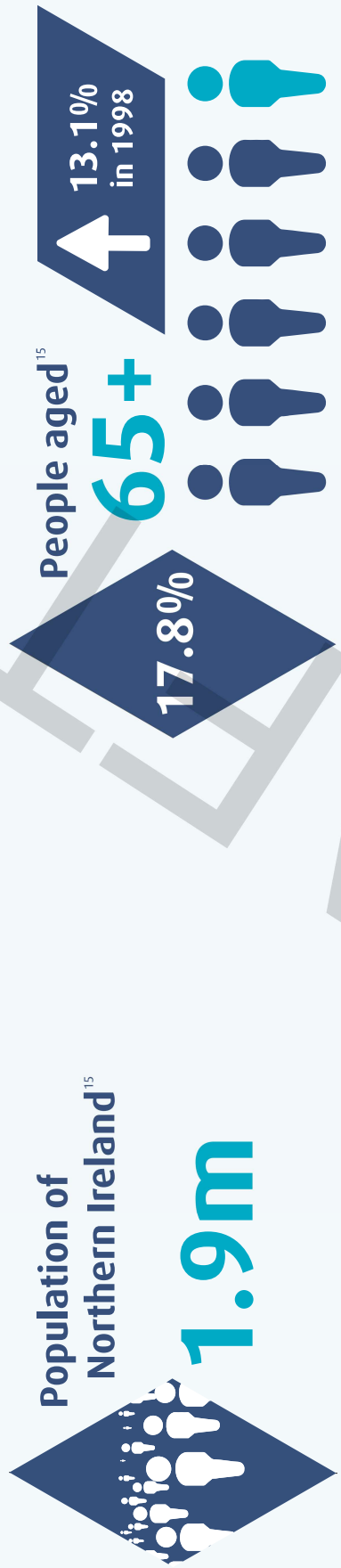
and making best use of available resources to deliver better health outcomes and help people to stay well. It is well documented that long-lasting and significant improvements in health and wellbeing can only be achieved through a 'whole system' approach.^{2, 5,7} Our current context, compounded with the additional challenges to health and wellbeing further strengthen the need for a population health approach, a focus on prevention and early intervention and strong cross-sectoral, multi-agency collaboration.

Regional strategic frameworks

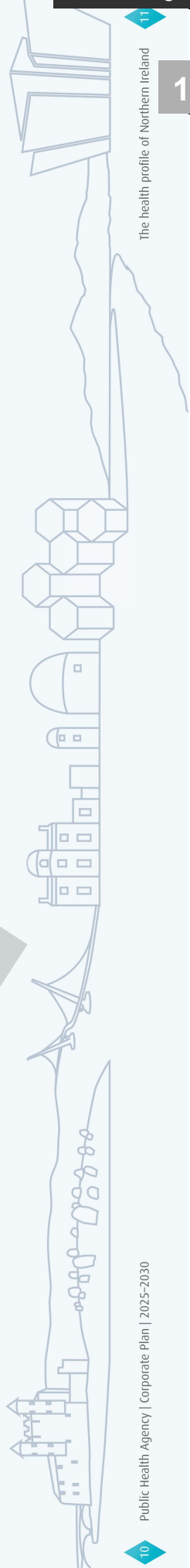
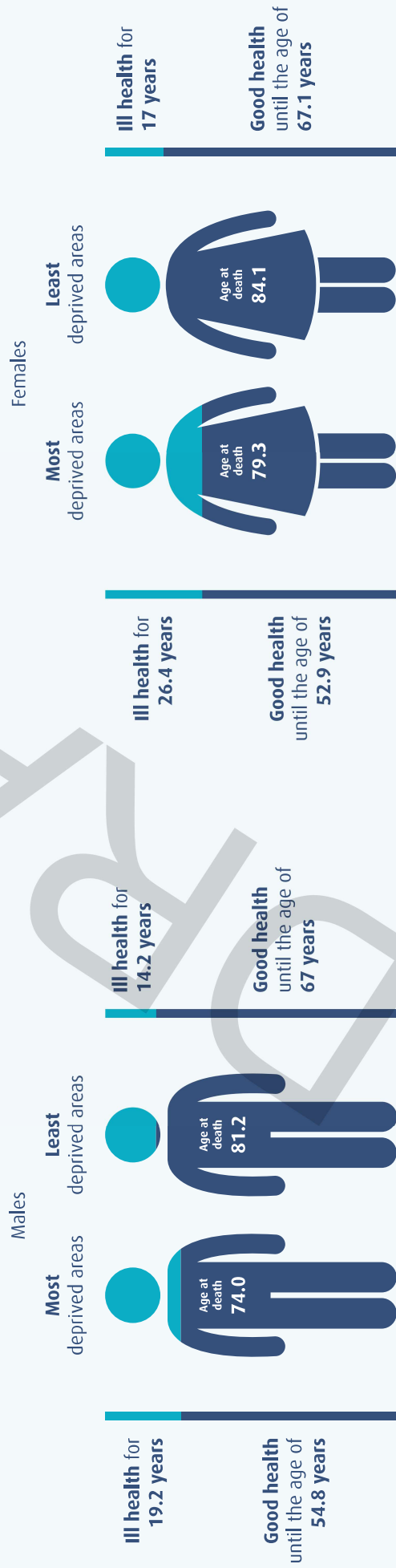
These key foundations for our work are reflected across the draft Programme for Government framework 2024-2027 and the wide range of departmental policies and strategies that influence and determine the work of PHA, including Making Life Better public health framework, and Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together.^{2,3} The PHA also has lead responsibility for implementing a number of strategies across key areas of work, including maternity and early years; mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention; obesity; tobacco use; alcohol and drugs; and long-term conditions, including cancer.⁸⁻¹⁴

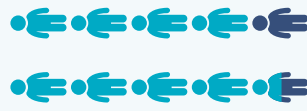
There are many DoH and indeed other departmental strategies and policies that are relevant to the setting of priorities for the PHA. The outcomes and priorities for the PHA for the next five years reflect and align with these key strategic documents, and our contribution to progressing this agenda and our commitment to working collaboratively with others, will help ensure that these outcomes are realised.

Snapshot of health in Northern Ireland, 2022-2023.



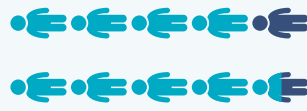
Life expectancy and Healthy life expectancy¹⁶





Adults who smoke¹⁷

14%



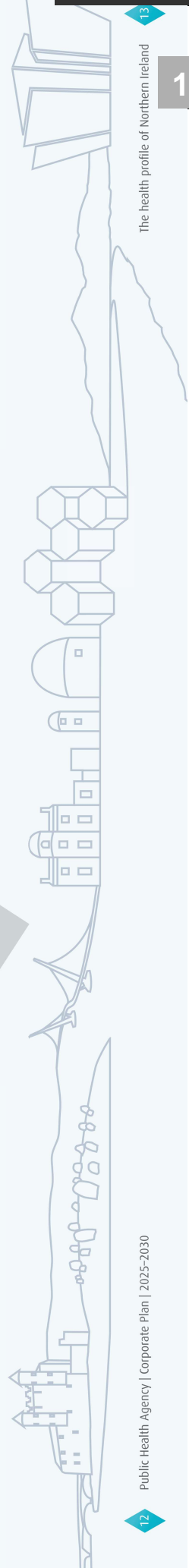
Adults living with overweight or obesity¹⁹

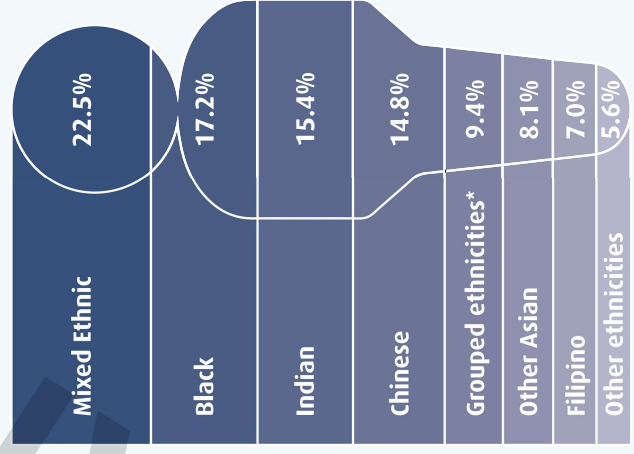
65%



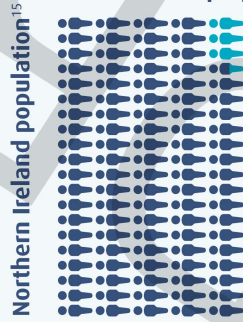
Babies breastfed (at discharge)¹⁷

51%

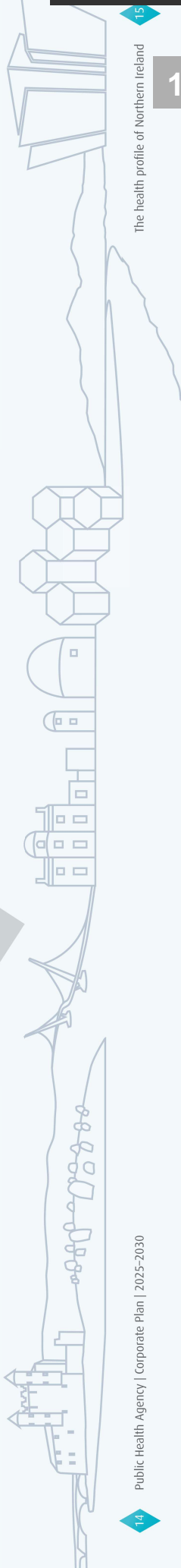




65,600
Ethnic minority population



*Includes Irish Traveller, Arab, Pakistani and Roma



What is public health?

What is public health?

Public health works to protect communities and has a strong focus on equity.

There are three key domains of public health practice:²²

1. Health protection

This involves protecting the population from threats to their health from infectious diseases and other hazards. It involves both proactive preventative actions (such as vaccination) as well as reactive response to incidents such as disease outbreaks.

2. Health improvement

This involves wide ranging actions working with a variety of stakeholders to improve health and wellbeing. It includes influencing other sectors to address the wider determinants of health, as well as working with the general public and specific vulnerable or marginalised groups, to improve health literacy and promote healthy lifestyle choices. There is a heavy focus on addressing health inequalities.

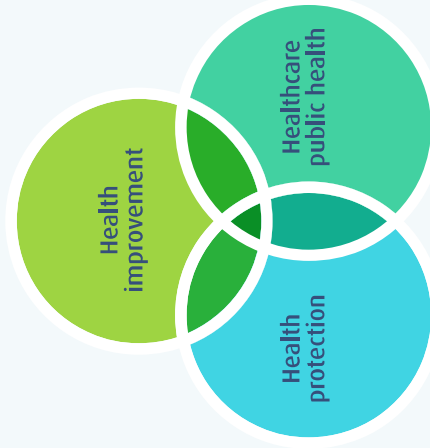
3. Healthcare public health

This involves actions in the planning, commissioning and development of healthcare services working with partners across the HSC and related services to ensure provision of high quality, safe and effective services, while working to reduce inequalities.

As set out in the diagram, these three aspects of public health practice are not stand-alone and overlap with each other, requiring a skilled workforce that can work across these various domains to address complex issues.

HSC services make a significant contribution to the health of individuals and the population. The PHA has a statutory responsibility to work with the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) and provide professional input to commissioning healthcare services. We work with SPPG and colleagues across HSC to ensure that people in Northern Ireland have access to high-quality and effective health services no matter where they live.

Three key domains of public health practice



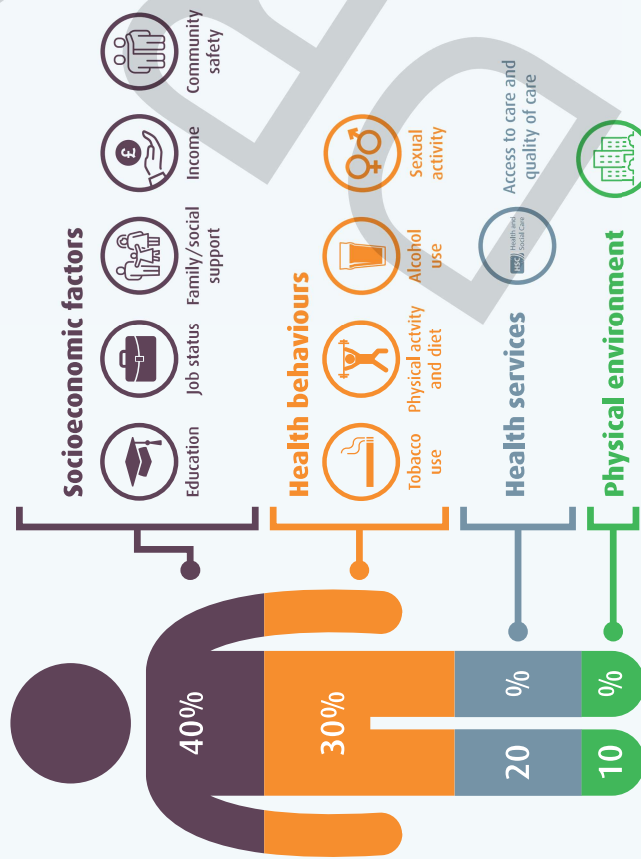
The work of the PHA in each of these three domains is underpinned by a strong basis in science, with evidence informing all of our work. We cannot deliver improvements to public health in isolation, so partnership working and building relationships with our partners is a key element of our work.

“ Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health and wellbeing, through the organised efforts of society.”²³ //

What factors impact on our health and wellbeing?

Many factors, known as the 'wider determinants of health' affect our health and wellbeing. These include social, economic and environmental conditions such as income, education, access to green space, healthy food, work and living conditions.^{2,24} It is widely recognised that, taken together, these factors are the principal drivers of how healthy people are.^{2, 25}

The PHA works with various sectors to influence these wider determinants of health, aiming to make it easier for our population to have healthy lifestyles and make healthy choices.



Source: Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement. Going beyond clinical walls: solving complex problems (October 2014)

What are health inequalities?

Health inequalities are "avoidable differences in health status between different population groups" and are influenced by variation in the determinants of health referred to above.²⁶ Health inequalities are evident in terms of differences in the prevalence of certain health conditions among certain groups in society or differences in outcomes (like life expectancy or cancer survival, for example) for certain population groups.²⁶

Some groups are disproportionately impacted by the determinants of health, which can lead to health inequalities.

Factors impacting on health inequality:

- socioeconomic factors, for example living in socioeconomically deprived areas;
- geography, for example, region or whether urban or rural;
- specific characteristics including those protected in law, such as sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability;
- socially excluded groups, for example, people experiencing homelessness.

The determinants of health interact with each other and can often have a cumulative effect with people often experiencing challenges across multiple determinants contributing to inequalities in health and health outcomes.²⁶



Our focus

Our focus

These strategic themes encompass core areas of focus for our organisation as we work towards our vision of a healthier Northern Ireland.

Protecting health

Protecting the population from serious health threats, such as infectious disease outbreaks or major incidents

Starting well

Laying the foundations for a healthy life from pre-birth, infancy, early years, childhood to adolescent years

Living well

Ensuring that people have the opportunity to live and work in a healthy way

Ageing well

Supporting people to age healthily throughout their lives

The first is focused on protecting health and the others adopt a life course approach. Whilst we have taken a life course approach, we recognise there are a number of cross-cutting areas, including for example mental health, learning disability and inclusion health.

Each theme sets out our ambition and a number of priorities for the years ahead. These are aligned with the strategic direction outlined in key departmental strategies. Population level indicators are also provided for each ambition to support regular evaluation.

In working to achieve the priorities set out in this plan, we commit to:

- tackling and reducing health inequalities being at the heart of our work
- championing a 'whole system', cross-government approach to tackle the challenges and barriers to improving health and reducing health inequalities
- providing professional public health advice to the planning and commissioning of safe, effective, equitable, high-quality healthcare

- listening to, involving, and working together with individuals, families, local communities, HSC and other key partners in all our work
- ensuring planning, guidance and decisions are based on best available evidence and driven by data, research and experience
- improving equity of access to prevention and early intervention information and services for those who need them.

Reporting against this corporate plan will take place through our annual business plans and corporate monitoring. In addition, a more detailed delivery and action plan will be developed setting out the actions to be taken forward and appropriate measures within each of the themes.

We commit to reviewing this plan in line with any future programme for government framework and departmental strategies to be developed during the period of this plan.

Protecting health

Our ambition

That our population is protected from threats to health arising from infectious diseases and environmental hazards and that we reduce death and ill health through effective screening.

Protecting our population's health is one of our core functions. We do this through surveillance, identification and timely response to threats to public health; providing advice and support; monitoring of threats to health; and education, training and research. This includes the prevention of infectious diseases through vaccination and early detection of disease through population screening programmes. Our focus is also on preparing and planning for potential future pandemics and other potential threats to the population's health and wellbeing. We will

work effectively across the organisation to ensure a robust coordination of the overall public health response. We will ensure that we learn from and implement recommendations from inquiries and incidents.

Our people will have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to deliver an effective and efficient service, using evidence-informed approaches to mitigate the impact of inequalities on prevention and control of infectious diseases and other defined hazards. The PHA has responsibility for commissioning, coordinating and quality assuring a number of population screening programmes: infectious diseases in pregnancy, newborn blood spot and hearing; diabetic retinopathy; bowel, breast and cervical cancer; and abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA).

Priorities 2025-2030

- develop emergency response plans to support readiness to respond to incidents that may have an impact on public health for Northern Ireland;
- work collaboratively to minimise the impact of infectious disease, with a focus on antimicrobial resistance and our elimination targets for blood-borne viruses;
- deliver a high-quality and responsive health protection surveillance and epidemiology programme;
- strengthen the multidisciplinary coordinated approach to infection prevention and control across the wider HSC system through the established infection, prevention and control forums;
- ensure the delivery of high-quality screening programmes;

- lead the development and commissioning of vaccine programmes to ensure they are accessible to all, addressing the associated barriers and inequalities and ensure there is a key focus on seldom heard groups;
- scope existing evidence for public health approaches to protect people and communities from the public health impacts of the environment, including climate change, and develop a PHA climate action plan;
- build public confidence and trust in public health advice, information and messaging through improving health literacy via education and engagement with the public.

Indicators

We will measure success through the following:

- surveillance data
- notifications of infectious disease

- screening uptake
- vaccine uptake.

Protecting health
Protecting the population from serious health threats, such as infectious disease outbreaks or major incidents



Starting well

Starting well
Laying the foundations for a healthy life from pre-birth, infancy, early years, childhood to adolescent years



Our ambition

That all children and families in Northern Ireland have the healthiest start in life.

What happens during pre-conception, pregnancy, the early years, the school years and adolescence is key to what happens in later life. This includes having an adequate standard of living, a secure family environment, good physical and mental health and wellbeing and being protected from harm.

We will support and empower families to create and provide a safe and nurturing home environment and to make good decisions about their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We recognise that adolescence is a unique stage of development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health.

Health inequalities can have a profound impact on a child's start in life. All children and young people, including those who have additional needs, should have the opportunity for better health and wellbeing. Adverse childhood experiences can have long-term impacts on health and wellbeing. We will embed a trauma-informed approach and work with partners to prevent these from happening.

The challenges faced by families are complex and multifaceted and we cannot improve their health in isolation. We must work together in strong partnerships with families and across society in a whole system, holistic approach to make a meaningful difference.

Priorities 2025-2030

- support families to take care of their physical and mental health, with a particular focus on the first 1,000 days;
- reduce the impact of social complexity in pregnancy;
- promote the health benefits of breastfeeding and encourage support for breastfeeding mothers;
- protect the health of children and young people through antenatal and newborn screening programmes and childhood vaccination programmes;
- deliver universal and targeted support programmes, including Healthy Child Health Future, Family Nurse Partnership, and Northern Ireland New Entrants service (NINES);

- work together to reduce child deaths through improved use and application of data and evidence;
- support children and young people with special education needs, their families and carers in addressing the unique health challenges and disparities they face, by enhancing access to services, resources and support systems that contribute to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing;
- support adolescents to establish patterns of behaviour that can protect their mental and physical health;
- work with others to promote the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.

Indicators

We will measure success through the following:

- screening and vaccination in pregnancy uptake
- percentage of babies born at low birth weight
- avoidable child death rates
- percentage of mothers breastfeeding on discharge
- developmental progress in pre-school

- childhood vaccination uptake
- number of children starting school at a healthy weight
- smoking and alcohol use in children and young people
- incidence of hospital attendance with self-harm/deaths by suicide among children and young people.

Living well

Our ambition

That all people in Northern Ireland can live longer, healthier and independent lives.

Adults now generally enjoy better health and wellbeing and can expect to live longer than previous generations. However, in recent years life expectancy rates have been stalling and there are still many challenges and significant health needs within our population that impact the ability of people to experience good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

There are many factors that impact our health and wellbeing during our adult lives. These include where we live, our environment, access to education and employment, health services and the effects of poor diet, smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, low levels of physical activity, homelessness and food, fuel and financial poverty.

Many of the challenges that impact our physical health, also impact our mental health and emotional wellbeing. Too many people in our communities are struggling with ill mental health, which is impacting their ability to make healthy choices. It is important that we support and promote good mental health and emotional wellbeing across society.

Health inequalities continue to compound challenges to health and prevent many from experiencing good health and wellbeing. We must ensure that we provide targeted approaches where needed for those more vulnerable in our society.

As well as equipping people to live longer, healthier lives, we must also help protect them from becoming ill or needing health interventions. This includes access to adult immunisation programmes, screening and detection programmes and tackling issues that lead to poor health. Promoting healthy choices and healthier environments and communities, including within workplaces, will also be a key focus.

Supporting everyone to adopt healthier behaviours, avail of preventative services and access high-quality care throughout our lives can make a significant contribution to improving the health of the population. This is not about placing the responsibility on the individual but working together to support people and create supportive environments and opportunities for good health for all.

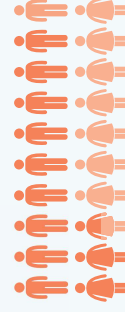
Living well

Ensuring that people have the opportunity to live and work in a healthy way



Alcohol

Adults drinking over recommended guidelines



Priorities 2025-2030

- create the conditions for people to adopt healthier behaviours and reduce the risks to health caused by low physical activity, smoking and vaping, poor diet and sexual behaviours;
- support those living with long-term conditions to live well with disease;
- deliver high-quality programmes and initiatives, including prevention and early intervention approaches, to protect and improve mental health and emotional and social wellbeing;
- continue to work in partnership across government and with communities, services, and families across society to reduce suicides and the incidence of self-harm;
- reduce harm caused by substance use by improving access to high-quality prevention and early intervention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services to ensure people can access the right service at the right time delivered in the right place to best meet their needs;
- support prevention and early detection of illness through vaccination and screening programmes;
- provide targeted information and support to help everyone, including those who experience multiple barriers to health, to adopt healthy behaviours, avail of preventative services and access high-quality care.

Indicators

we will measure success through the following:

- percentage of people with a high GHQ-12 score, indicating a mental health problem
- tobacco use, including smoking and vaping prevalence
- suicide rates
- obesity and physical activity measures
- alcohol and substance use
- screening and vaccination uptake rates
- percentage self-reporting a physical or mental health condition or illness expected to last 12 months or more
- percentage of those living with long-term conditions reporting a reduced ability to carry out daily activities.



Ageing well

Our ambition

That older people live healthier, independent lives.

As a population, we are living longer and many older adults enjoy good health and make significant contributions to their communities.

For others, however, older age brings a risk of poor physical and mental health, social isolation and complex health problems. Poor health and frailty should not be inevitable outcomes as we age. As well as living longer, we also want to live healthier for longer so that we can continue to participate in activities we enjoy and live fulfilled, independent lives.

There are many factors that impact our health and wellbeing throughout our lives and this is no different as we age. These include the environment we live in, access to health services and the impact on our health and wellbeing of poor diet, smoking, drug and alcohol

misuse, low levels of physical activity and food, fuel and financial poverty.

As our older population continues to grow, we want to support and promote healthy, positive ageing both for individuals and as a society. We must enable people to live longer, healthier more fulfilling lives but also create environments and communities that enable healthy behaviours and also support, value, respect and protect our older population.

Working with partners, we will support and advocate for delivery of healthcare that is wrapped around the person, be that in their own home, hospital or care home. We must take a lifelong approach to positive health and active ageing and work to reduce the impact of health inequalities through education and support for people to improve their health.



Ageing well

Supporting people to age healthily throughout their lives

Priorities 2025-2030

- implement the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly movement across Northern Ireland;
- reduce and prevent falls and home accidents, including the development and implementation of a regional model for safer mobility;
- reduce the impact of frailty by raising awareness and increase early detection;
- support prevention and early detection of illness through vaccination and screening programmes for older adults;
- increase levels of physical activity and promote opportunities to stay active;

- work with key partners to identify and reduce levels of loneliness and social isolation and to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- champion the voice of older people and the issues that impact on their health and wellbeing;
- lead and implement initiatives to ensure people who live with long-term conditions and those who live in care homes have good health and wellbeing and improved quality of life;
- work with partners to support individuals and families at the end of their life through advance care planning;
- build and develop a strong research and evidence base to support ageing well programmes in Northern Ireland.

Indicators

We will measure success through the following:

- percentage of people aged 65+ with a high GHQ-12 score, indicating a mental health problem
- percentage of people who report feeling lonely 'often/always' or 'some of the time'

- adults aged 65+ stating health is good or very good
- obesity and physical activity measures
- falls and frailty measures
- screening and vaccination uptake.

Our organisation

The PHA is a multidisciplinary, multi-professional body with a strong regional and local presence and was set up with the explicit agenda to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland.

Since its establishment in 2009, we have worked to improve and protect health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, promote healthy behaviours, reduce barriers to good health, improve the quality and safety of health and social care services and support related research and innovation.

As part of the health and social care family, we work closely with the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health (DoH), local Health Trusts (HSC Trusts), the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and the Patient Client Council (PCC).

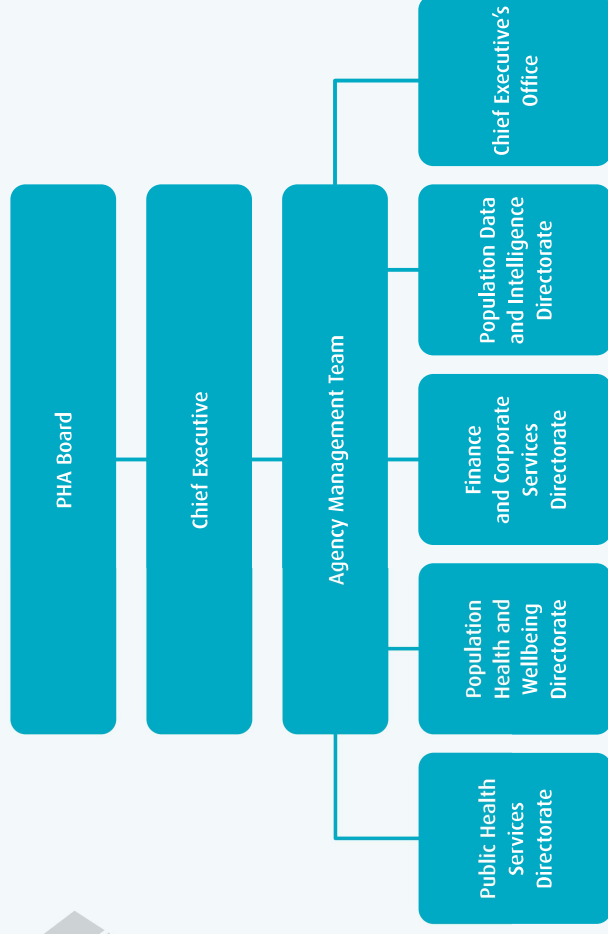
Central to our main responsibilities is working in close partnership with individuals, groups and organisations from all sectors – community, voluntary and statutory.

Through our organisational 'Reshape and Refresh' programme to design and implement a new operating model for the organisation, we continue to evolve as an organisation to ensure we can continue to meet the public health needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

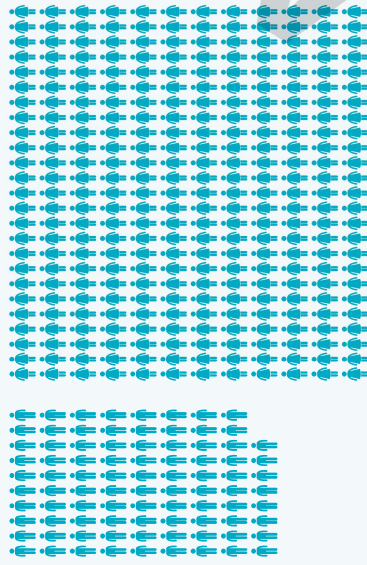
As part of this programme, our organisational structure has changed and is outlined below.

Our legislation determines that we should hold two distinct professional roles: Director of Public Health and Director of Nursing and AHP. These will be encompassed within the Public Health Services and Population Health and Wellbeing directorates.

PHA organisation chart



Staff at 31 March 2024



Our ambition

That we are an exceptional organisation, working effectively to improve health and wellbeing for everyone.

Our progress towards this ambition over the next five years depends on our people. We must therefore ensure that our staff feel supported, equipped and empowered in their work. We will continue to develop our staff and make use of their expertise, building on their experience, to make sure we achieve the greatest impact and can effectively respond to new challenges.

In fulfilling this ambition, we are committed to:

- People**
- Partnership**
- Process**
- Digital**
- Research and evidence**

People



Our people are our greatest asset and we must strive to ensure staff feel valued, are equipped and enabled in the work they do and given opportunities to develop both professionally and personally. We want to be an organisation where people want to work and are proud to be part of. All staff working in PHA should have a common understanding of public health and have a shared sense of purpose, feel valued and supported and have opportunities to upskill, develop and progress in their career.

We must ensure a multidisciplinary workforce which is highly skilled in the area of public health to ensure effective and appropriate preparation for future threats and that we are agile, designed to deliver and able to manage emerging risks to health. The PHA currently is the lead organisation in the delivery of the Public Health Speciality Training Programme for people wishing to become Consultants in Public Health. It is important that the quality and standards of this training programme are maintained in order to safeguard the future workforce.

As we work to implement the 'reshape and Refresh' programme, we must remain focused on valuing and

supporting our people, recognising that periods of change and uncertainty are difficult for everyone and ensuring that staff are equipped and enabled to adapt to any new structures and to continue to take forward the important work set out in this plan.

Culture is key to the success of any organisation. We must continue to develop into an organisation where:

- our culture and values are clear in everyone's experience of the PHA;
- we are agile and adaptive to changes and challenges;
- we attract and retain high calibre staff;
- we are leaders in our field and strive to learn from research and evidence;
- we embrace collective and compassionate leadership, nurturing collaboration, continuous improvement and empathetic care and support.

Budget



Priorities 2025-2030

- implement the Reshape and Refresh recommendations and restructure;
- deliver Our People Plan and develop subsequent plans encompassing culture, staff experience and workforce development. This will include a wide range of targets with the overall aim of supporting the underlying goals that our staff:
 - are inspired with a shared sense of purpose to improve and protect the health of our population
 - feel valued, supported and engaged in all they do
 - are knowledgeable, skilled and competent;

Partnership

Improving the health and wellbeing of the population is the work of not just one single organisation but requires collaborative cross-society efforts. This includes ensuring that our communities, service users and carers are not only the focus of our work but that their voices are heard and listened to.

We are committed to working collaboratively with others, to help ensure the best outcomes for the population of Northern Ireland. This will include working with and across government departments, local government, other statutory bodies (such as housing and education), community and voluntary organisations and commercial and private providers and organisations as we create and distribute knowledge and information, interventions and services to improve health and wellbeing.

We will continue to engage and collaborate with partners with public health expertise locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, to maximise our combined resources to improve health and wellbeing. In line with the PHA's regional leadership role across the HSC in lived experience and involvement and in keeping with statutory and policy responsibilities in this area, we are committed to actively listening to and meaningfully involving service users, carers and the public who we serve.



Priorities 2025-2030

- carry out a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and relationship profiling and collaborate with leaders in key sectors to implement improvements; enhance partnership working and target messaging;
- develop our communications and engagement strategy and resources to support the implementation of the corporate plan priorities;
- engage with key structures and foster partnerships focused on improving health and wellbeing including through SPPG Planning and Performance Teams, ICS Area Integrated Partnership Boards and Local Government Community Planning Partnerships;
- develop a partnership working strategy that embeds lived experience and involvement into the culture and practice of the PHA;
- use expertise and data from other sources to develop a comprehensive joined up approach to planning public health investment and programmes across government.

Process

We know the importance of demonstrating good organisational and professional governance in how we conduct our work, ensure good stewardship of all our resources and accountability for the use of public monies. In the volatile and continuing changing environment in which we are working, with organisational, sectoral and strategic change, increasing demand on health services and ongoing financial and economic constraints, it is essential that we have strong accountability and dynamic processes to enable effective delivery and achieve the greatest impact possible within organisational resources. We must also ensure our processes allow us to be agile, designed and able to manage any emerging risks.

The PHA will continue to look at creative, innovative and collaborative ways of working to make best use of available resources to achieve maximum impact. Strong planning and multidisciplinary ways of working as well as strong governance processes will be crucial to our success as an organisation.



Priorities 2025-2030

- establish and embed robust financial governance in line with new financial management arrangements as part of the ongoing transformative restructure;
- review, refresh and embed key corporate and information governance policies and procedures, ensuring that staff across the PHA understand their responsibilities and implement these ensuring good governance in how we do our business;
- develop the planning and procurement arrangements in the PHA, ensuring the necessary skills, expertise and capacity to work alongside programme leads and together progress these, to meet the health and wellbeing needs of the population ensuring best use of public monies;
- continue to implement the multidisciplinary public health planning structure.

Digital

In recent years, we have made rapid and significant development around digital capacity, embracing innovative ways of working and harnessing the potential of new technology.

Technology is continually changing the way we live, interact, learn play and work, offering new opportunities to connect and engage with people and communities in different ways. Digital tools offer new ways to gather and analyse data, collaborate within the PHA and with external partners to improve public health, support our core functions and build capabilities. Embracing new technology requires new thinking about public health provision models, data, governance, partnership and engagement. The PHA will take a 'digital first' approach to its work and develop an open data approach that supports openness and transparency.



Priorities 2025-2030

- strengthen public health leadership in digital innovation through development and implementation of innovative public health models, positioning PHA as a leader in digital health provision;
- enhance digital awareness and understanding across PHA; building digital literacy and fostering a shared understanding of digital opportunities and challenges;
- embed a digital first approach in planning by integrating digitalisation into the design of external and internal products, services and business processes;
- build and continuously improve the accessibility and functionality of underpinning digital platforms for the PHA;
- increase digital skills across the PHA, embed learning and development for digital ways of working and design new digital roles.



Research and evidence

The availability, analysis and interpretation of good data and evidence is essential for effective planning and delivery of services. As an organisation, we will bring together evidence and learning from both national and international sources and continually seek to develop and improve our data sources and analytic capability. We have a wealth of experience and knowledge in health intelligence, data management and surveillance, and it is essential that we invest in and further develop this over the next five years. This will inform not only PHA policy and actions but crucially also the policy, actions and plans of our partners, to improve the health and wellbeing of the population.

HSC Research and Development (R&D) division works to support research that provides high quality evidence to improve care for patients, clients and the general population, and adds to our understanding of health, disease, treatment and care. A new HSC R&D strategy is in development for launch in 2025, building on the existing strategy with an enhanced focus on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), sustainability and the safe and appropriate use of data in HSC research.

Developing as an organisation and enabling innovative, data-driven approaches to the planning and delivery of our services will enable the organisation to deliver a public health service that meets the current and future needs of the population and respond to emerging challenges or threats.

We will become a more research active organisation, both in identifying research questions and encouraging staff to engage in active research and collaborate with the Northern Ireland Public Health Research Network.

Priorities 2025-2030

- establish a new directorate focused on health intelligence, research and digital approaches;
- implement the new HSC R&D strategy;
- develop research literacy and capacity in research within the PHA workforce, through training and development opportunities such as critical appraisal and evidence synthesis training and R&D fellowships;
- build strategic partnerships with clear data-sharing agreements to ensure access to a comprehensive range of data sources, enabling robust modelling, planning and public health response capabilities;
- strengthen our reputation as a leader in evidence-based decision-making, using data to drive public health policy, inform practices and guide resource allocation;
- expand analytical capabilities by further developing skills in areas such as behaviour change analysis, data science, health economics and modelling and equipping the organisation for in-depth programme evaluation;
- use high-calibre modelling and evaluation techniques to assess equality impacts and effectiveness of interventions and programmes;
- be recognised as a leader in health intelligence, predictive modelling and scenario planning, driving insights for proactive public health strategy.

Summary table

Summary table

Summary of PHA priorities for 2025-2030 and indicators for each strategic theme

Protecting health	
Priorities	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop emergency response plans to support readiness to respond to incidents that may have an impact on public health for Northern Ireland; work collaboratively to minimise the impact of infectious disease, with a focus on antimicrobial resistance and our elimination targets for blood-borne viruses; deliver a high-quality and responsive health protection surveillance and epidemiology programme; strengthen the multidisciplinary coordinated approach to infection prevention and control across the wider HSC system through the established infection, prevention and control forums; ensure the delivery of high-quality screening programmes; lead the development and commissioning of vaccine programmes to ensure they are accessible to all, addressing the associated barriers and inequalities and ensure there is a key focus on seldom heard groups; scope existing evidence for public health approaches to protect people and communities from the public health impacts of the environment, including climate change, and develop a PHA climate action plan; build public confidence and trust in public health advice, information and messaging through improving health literacy via education and engagement with the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> surveillance data notifications of disease screening uptake vaccine uptake
Starting well	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support families to take care of their physical and mental health, with a particular focus on the first 1,000 days; reduce the impact of social complexity in pregnancy; promote the health benefits of breastfeeding and encourage support for breastfeeding mothers; protect the health of children and young people through antenatal and newborn screening programmes and childhood vaccination programmes; deliver universal and targeted support programmes, including Healthy Child Healthy Family, Family Nurse Partnership, and Northern Ireland New Entrants service (NINES); work together to reduce child deaths through improved use and application of data and evidence; support children and young people with special education needs, their families and carers in addressing the unique health challenges and disparities they face, by enhancing access to services, resources and support systems that contribute to their physical, mental, and social wellbeing; support adolescents to establish patterns of behaviour that can protect their mental and physical health; work with others to promote the safeguarding and protection of children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> screening and vaccination in pregnancy uptake percentage of babies born at low birth weight avoidable child death rates percentage of mothers breastfeeding on discharge developmental progress in preschool childhood vaccination uptake number of children starting school at a healthy weight smoking and alcohol use in children and young people incidence of hospital attendance with self-harm/deaths by suicide among children and young people

Living well	
Priorities	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create the conditions for people to adopt healthier behaviours and reduce the risks to health caused by low physical activity, smoking and vaping, poor diet and sexual behaviours support those living with long-term conditions to live well with disease deliver high-quality programmes and initiatives, including prevention and early intervention approaches, to protect and improve mental health and emotional and social wellbeing continue to work in partnership across government and with communities, services, and families across society to reduce suicides and the incidence of self-harm reduce harm caused by substance use by improving access to high-quality prevention and early intervention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services to ensure people can access the right service at the right time delivered in the right place to best meet their needs support prevention and early detection of illness through vaccination and screening programmes provide targeted information and support to help everyone, including those who experience multiple barriers to health, to adopt healthy behaviours, avail of preventative services and access high-quality care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage of people with a high GHQ-12 score, indicating a mental health problem tobacco use, including smoking and vaping prevalence suicide rates obesity and physical activity measures alcohol and substance use screening and vaccination uptake rates percentage of people self-reporting a physical or mental health condition or illness expected to last 12 months or more percentage of those living with a long-term condition reporting a reduced ability to carry out daily activities
Ageing well	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly movement across Northern Ireland reduce and prevent falls and home accidents, including the development and implementation of a regional model for safer mobility reduce the impact of frailty by raising awareness and increase early detection support prevention and early detection of illness through vaccination and screening programmes for older adults increase levels of physical activity and promote opportunities to stay active work with key partners to identify and reduce levels of loneliness and social isolation and to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing champion the voice of older people and the issues that impact on their health and wellbeing lead and implement initiatives to ensure people who live with long-term conditions and those who live in care homes have good health and wellbeing and improved quality of life work with partners to support individuals and families at the end of their life through advance care planning build and develop a strong research and evidence base to support ageing well programmes in Northern Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage of people aged 65+ with a high GHQ-12 score, indicating a mental health problem percentage of people who report feeling lonely 'often/always' or 'some of the time'. adults 65+ yrs stating health is good or very good obesity and physical activity measures falls and frailty measures screening and vaccination uptake

Glossary of useful terms

Term	Definition
AAA	Abdominal aortic aneurysm. A swelling in the abdominal aorta, the main artery that supplies blood to your body, which can be fatal.
Age-friendly	An WHO initiative to create liveable communities that are inviting and accessible for people of all ages – especially older adults.
Area Integrated Partnership Board (AIPB)	A local planning body with the overarching aim of improving health and social care outcomes and reducing health inequalities for its local population.
Collaboration	The action of working with someone to produce something.
Coronavirus disease/ COVID-19	An infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
Delivering Together 2026	Approach launched by the then Minister of Health, Michelle O'Neill, on 25 October 2016 and driven by the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government, setting out an ambition to support people to lead long, healthy and active lives.
Department of Health (DoH)	A devolved government department in the Northern Ireland Executive.
Diabetic retinopathy	Diabetic retinopathy occurs when diabetes damages the small blood vessels in the part of the eye called the retina, affecting vision.
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion.
GHQ-12	General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) consisting of 12 items, each one assessing the severity of a mental problem.
Health and wellbeing	The combination of factors contributing to a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health.
Health inequalities	Unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population and between different groups within society.
Health intervention	A treatment, procedure or other action taken to prevent or treat disease, or improve health in other ways.
Health literacy	The ability to access, understand, appraise and use information and services in ways that promote and maintain good health and wellbeing.
Healthy life expectancy	The average number of years of full health that a newborn could expect to live.
Health and Social Care (HSC)	Publicly funded healthcare system in Northern Ireland. Although created separately to the National Health Service, it is nonetheless considered a part of the overall national health service in the United Kingdom.

Glossary of useful terms

References

Term	Definition
Integrated Care System Northern Ireland (ICS NI)	The new (2024) commissioning framework for Northern Ireland. It is a single planning system that will help us to improve the health and wellbeing of our population.
Life course approach	An inclusive approach that considers people's health needs and opportunities across all age groups.
Live Better initiative	A series of planned initiatives set out by the Health Minister in October 2024 to help tackle health inequalities in Northern Ireland and bring targeted health support to communities that need it most.
Making Life Better, the NI Public Health Framework	A strategic framework for public health designed to provide direction for policies and actions to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland and to reduce health inequalities.
MMR Vaccine	Vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella.
Mortality	In medicine, a term also used for death rate, or the number of deaths in a certain group of people in a certain period of time.
Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)	Active and meaningful involvement of service users, carers, their advocates and the public in the planning, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of Health and Social Care (HSC) services, in ways that are relevant to them.
Programme for Government (PFG)	The Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most outlines the Executive's priorities for making a real difference to the lives of people here.
Public Health	The science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society.
Public Health Agency (PHA)	Established in April 2009 as part of the reforms to Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland, responsible for providing health protection and health and social wellbeing improvement to every member of every community in Northern Ireland.
Smoking cessation	The process of discontinuing tobacco smoking.
SPPG	Strategic Planning and Performance Group.
Whole system approach	A strategic integrated approach to planning and delivering services.
World Health Organization	(WHO) The World Health Organization sets standards for disease control, healthcare and medicines; conducts education and research programs; and publishes scientific papers and reports.

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216

ITEM 17**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development
Date of Report	24 January 2025
File Reference	CW8
Legislation	Local Government (NI) Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: N/A - Response to Gvt Consultaion
Subject	Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation January 2025
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Proposed Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation Response Appendix 2 - DfC Consultation on draft fuel poverty Appendix 3 - DfC consultation on draft fuel poverty stakeholder engagement report

The Department for Communities (DfC) has released a consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy that sets out a pathway to a Northern Ireland where everyone lives in a warm, healthy home. Responses are due no later than Thursday 6 March 2025.

Officers have consulted with colleagues in other Councils to provide the attached proposed response. The response broadly agrees with the series of actions, guided by clear and fair principles, to help achieve three key goals:

- to make homes more energy efficient,
- to collaborate and build capacity, and
- to protect consumers.

Not Applicable

217

The consultation narrative explains that at present, too many people live in houses that they struggle to heat, and most recent modelling by DfC suggests that in 2022 more than a quarter of households here were living in fuel poverty. Living in cold and damp homes impacts health and well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable in our society. The continued high prices of fossil fuels, low standards of energy efficiency in our homes and the ongoing cost of living all contribute to unacceptably high levels of fuel poverty.

The 2024 announcement to restrict the winter fuel payment creates an additional financial burden for less well-off older people and this Fuel Poverty Strategy aims to better understand the longer-term impact of the removal of the payment on pensioners who are above the threshold for winter fuel payments and provide support, if necessary, to help those who have moved into fuel poverty.

Drawing on experience from the Affordable Warmth Scheme, Officers were keen to emphasise that schemes to improve insulation should aim for a whole house approach to maximise benefits but at the same time remain mindful of the need to consider exceptions. There was also a consensus that the qualifying criteria for such schemes need to be more flexible during the life of the scheme to consider fluctuations of fuel prices and rises in cost of living, which can have a significant impact and increase the numbers living in fuel poverty.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to submit the proposed response to the DfC consultation on draft Fuel Poverty Strategy.

Appendix 1

Response to Fuel Poverty Strategy NI Jan 2025

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed vision and guiding principles? If not, please suggest alternatives and why.

The Department for Communities' (DfC) vision of warm, healthy homes for everyone, underpinned by the principles of long-term sustainable solutions, collaboration, participation and a needs-based approach, is sound. Ards and North Down Borough Council supports the concept of a needs-based approach to addressing fuel poverty, which involves identifying households most in need and providing targeted support accordingly. Such an approach is necessary to ensure that those who require assistance get it.

A collaborative approach, where stakeholders such as government agencies, statutory, voluntary and community sectors work together in a meaningful way to produce and implement a NI strategy is key. Collaboration can bring diverse expertise, resources, and perspectives, ultimately leading to more effective solutions and better outcomes.

Participative approaches that effectively engage with households and communities are also important. Building effective partnerships, referral networks and collaboration across all sectors, with meaningful involvement in the planning and decision-making process is necessary to ensure that solutions address actual need and thus are more likely to be successful and sustainable in the long term.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the complexity of fuel poverty and the various factors contributing to it. A multifaceted analysis of these factors and their interactions is required, rather than focusing solely on a needs-based approach.

Ultimately, whether the government vision is effective in addressing fuel poverty will depend on how well it is implemented and the level of commitment and resources allocated to it.

To provide long-term sustainable solutions as an underpinning principle, the strategy should also consider the following:

- Economic factors - The strategy and implementation plan must be sufficiently flexible and responsive to take into account changes in energy prices, the economy, and other factors that can impact household income and energy expenditure.
- Social factors - Addressing fuel poverty often requires addressing underlying social issues such as inequality, and social exclusion.
- Environmental/educative factors - Encouraging energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, and reducing energy consumption can help mitigate the effects of fuel poverty and contribute to a more sustainable future.
- Monitoring and evaluation – regular and timely monitoring and evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that adjustments are made as needed to ensure that the strategy remains flexible and fit for purpose
- Political factors – the political will to work collaboratively to agree a budget and work cross departmentally and with partners such as local government to deliver positive outcomes.

In summary, the DfC's vision and underpinning principles for tackling fuel poverty are sound in theory, but the effectiveness of the strategy will depend on its implementation, the level of commitment, and the incorporation of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that adequately addresses the various factors contributing to fuel poverty.

Question 2: Do you agree with the timeframe and review period? If not, why not?

Ards and North Down Borough Council agrees that the 10-year strategy focus period from 2025-2035 with a 5-year review in 2030 seems a reasonable period to allow for planning and delivery.

Question 3: What would a readily understandable and measurable definition of 'thermal comfort' look like?

Thermal comfort describes the human satisfactory perception of the thermal environment. It refers to a number of conditions in which the majority of people feel comfortable.

Thermal comfort describes the warmth, ventilation and humidity of a room in which at least 80% of occupants would describe as comfortable.

In terms of measurability, with regards to the Fitness Standard in privately rented properties, the current method is by using temperature/humidity datalogging equipment to interpret whether the dwelling meets the minimum required by Private Tenancies Northern Ireland Order 2006 Officer's Guidance Document which states:

"In deciding whether a house is or is not unfit, the authority should consider whether the house currently has for heating a main "living" room, provision for fixed heating, capable of efficiently maintaining the room generally at a temperature of 18 deg C or more than the outside temperature is -1 deg C, and for the other main habitable rooms, provision for heating capable of maintaining an equivalent temperature of 16 deg C or more."

Thermal comfort depends on wider factors than just looking at temperature in isolation; an approach considering a suite of factors should include:

- Temperature: as defined by WHO standards
- Relative Humidity: for example, between 30% and 60% to prevent condensation and discomfort caused by high humidity.
- Ventilation: There is a gentle air movement of for example 1.5m/s to prevent drafts and discomfort caused by stagnant air.
- Thermal satisfaction: The overall thermal comfort experience is rated as satisfactory by at least 80% of occupants.
- The conservation and retention of thermal energy within properties as identified by the standards of Part F1 (Conservation of fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations (NI).
- The provision and maintenance of adequate ventilation of domestic dwellings as identified by the standards of Part K (Ventilation) of the Building Regulations (NI).

A readily understandable and measurable definition of thermal comfort in the home can be based on a combination of the above factors. To make these definitions more accessible to homeowners, however, consider the following:

- Encourage homeowner use of a simple thermometer to measure indoor temperature.
- Encourage homeowner use of hygrometer to measure relative humidity.
- Encourage homeowner use of a portable fan or blower to improve air movement.
- A smart thermostat or a thermostat with a built-in sensor to monitor and adjust temperature and humidity levels.

By promoting use of such measures, homeowners are better equipped to create a comfortable indoor environment that meets their thermal comfort needs.

Question 4: For Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector to effectively alleviate fuel poverty, what information or data do you think would be useful and what barriers would we need to overcome?

To effectively alleviate fuel poverty through minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector, DfC will need specific information and data, as well as an understanding of the barriers that might hinder data collection and analysis. The following information would be useful to provide a sound evidence base for the strategy:

- **Current Energy Efficiency Ratings:** Data on the energy performance of rental properties, typically derived from Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), indicating their current efficiency levels and potential for improvement.
- **Demographic Data:** Information about the tenants, including income levels, family size, and specific vulnerabilities (e.g., elderly, disabled, children) to identify those at greater risk of fuel poverty.
- **Fuel Poverty Statistics:** Data on the proportion of households that experience fuel poverty, including metrics such as household income, energy costs, and heating needs.
- **Property Characteristics:** Detailed information on housing type, age, heating systems, insulation levels, and any previous upgrades to understand factors affecting energy efficiency.
- **Energy Consumption Patterns:** Data on energy usage trends to understand how energy consumption relates to the energy efficiency of properties.
- **Landlord Compliance and Awareness:** Information on landlord awareness of energy efficiency standards as well as their data relating to existing EPC ratings.

Barriers to obtaining this data are likely to include:

- **Data Privacy and Accessibility:** Concerns over data privacy may limit access to personal information regarding tenants, particularly regarding income and demographic characteristics.
- **Incomplete or Inaccurate Data:** Many properties lack up-to-date EPCs or relevant efficiency data, leading to incomplete datasets. Additionally, inaccuracies in self-reported data from landlords can complicate assessments.
- **Reluctance of Landlords:** Landlords may be hesitant to share information about their properties due to concerns over potential regulations or financial obligations associated with data disclosure.
- **Funding Constraints:** Limited financial resources may restrict DfC's ability to conduct comprehensive research and data collection initiatives.

- **Legislative and Regulatory Challenges:** Complicated legislation surrounding housing, energy efficiency, and tenants' rights may slow the process of gathering and analysing necessary data. Building Regulation considerations and Planning restrictions associated with listed buildings and conservation areas should also be considered where appropriate.
- **Stakeholder Coordination:** Effective data collection often requires coordination among various stakeholders (e.g., councils, housing associations, NIHE, energy providers), which can be challenging to achieve.

To establish effective minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector aimed at alleviating fuel poverty, DfC must prioritise gathering comprehensive and accurate data on housing and energy use. Addressing the barriers to obtaining this information will be crucial for formulating policies and initiatives that truly benefit vulnerable populations while driving meaningful improvements in energy efficiency across NI housing stock.

Question 5: Should Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards also be applied to other tenures? Please give reasons for your answer.

The introduction of minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) for tenures beyond the private rented sector, such as owner-occupied homes or social housing, can have benefits, for example:

- **Environmental Impact:** Expanding energy efficiency standards can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.
- **Energy Cost Savings:** Improved energy efficiency can lead to lower energy bills for residents, making housing more affordable over the long term.
- **Public Health:** Increased energy efficiency can improve indoor air quality and thermal comfort, leading to better health outcomes for occupants, especially in vulnerable populations.
- **Economic Stimulus:** Implementing energy efficiency upgrades can stimulate economic activity through job creation in the construction, energy, and related sectors.
- **long-term Resilience:** Enhancing energy efficiency can make housing more resilient to energy price fluctuations, benefiting both occupants and the economy.

However, there are further considerations which must be taken into account when formulating policy in relation to extension of MEES beyond the private rented sector. For example,

- **Cost and Financial Implications:** Homeowners may face significant upfront costs associated with upgrades, which could be a barrier, particularly in lower-income households.
- **Equity and Access:** Ensuring that all households, especially low-income or vulnerable ones, have access to resources and support for achieving energy efficiency improvements is crucial.
- **Market Readiness:** The construction and renovation sectors need to be equipped to handle increased demands for energy-efficient upgrades, which may require training and resources.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Implementing these standards would require careful consideration of the regulatory framework, including enforcement mechanisms and potential penalties for non-compliance.
- **Behavioural Change:** In addition to regulatory measures, promoting education and awareness around energy efficiency can encourage voluntary adoption beyond just meeting minimum standards.

While there may be compelling reasons to extend energy efficiency standards beyond the private rented sector, careful planning and consideration of the economic, social, and administrative implications are essential for successful implementation. Engaging stakeholders, including homeowners, local governments, and energy providers, can foster collaborative solutions that address the challenges and opportunities associated with improved energy efficiency across various housing tenures. It is suggested that owner occupied, social and private rented sector housing should be of the same thermal standards where possible.

Question 6: Do you agree that introducing updated fitness standards will contribute to making homes more energy efficient? Please provide reasons for your answer

Ards and North Down Borough Council are of the view that the introduction of new government housing fitness standards could potentially contribute to making houses more energy efficient, depending on the specifics of those standards. The current fitness standard for human habitation has not been significantly updated since 1981. If the revised standards focus on aspects such as insulation, heating systems, thermal comfort, energy-efficient appliances, and the use of renewable energy sources, they can lead to homes that consume less energy.

Examples of new housing standards, that could improve energy efficiency include:

- Insulation and building materials: Requirements for enhanced insulation and the use of energy-efficient building materials can significantly reduce heating demands.
- Energy-Efficient appliances and systems: Standards that mandate the use of energy-efficient appliances, heating systems, and water heaters can reduce energy consumption in households.
- Renewable Energy Integration: If the standards encourage or require the installation of solar panels or other renewable energy systems, this can lead to self-sufficient homes that rely less on traditional energy sources.
- Smart Home Technology: Incorporating requirements for smart home technology can help residents monitor and reduce their energy usage, including taking advantage of tariff bands at times when energy costs are lower, leading to overall efficiency gains.
- Sustainability Practices: Standards that promote sustainable building practices, such as the use of recycled materials or water conservation measures, can also contribute to energy efficiency indirectly.
- Ventilation Rates for rapid, background and mechanical extract ventilation or energy efficient passive ventilation systems should be considered in accordance with Part K (Ventilation) of the Building Regulations (NI)2012
- Occupier education will always help but we cannot be seen to be solely “blaming” the occupier for conditions relating to condensation and mould growth. All other variables must be considered and landlords given the tools they need to help tenants – this can be educational but financial help will be required for landlords if it is to be successful.
- An updated Fitness standard will help but it will need to take into consideration the range of types of properties, especially those built before 1945 or from non-traditional construction methods.
- Any improvements need to be reasonable, practical and applicable. Clarity will be required on implementation and enforcement responsibilities across Environmental Health and Building Control departments. Clear instruction and guidance for officers must be provided

by Depts for Communities/Finance. Resources both practical and financial must be provided to local authorities.

Overall, if new standards are well-designed and enforced, they are likely to encourage the construction of homes that are more energy-efficient, ultimately leading in the long term to lower energy consumption and a positive impact on fuel poverty.

Question 7: Do you agree that all government domestic energy schemes should take account of the Fuel Poverty Strategy principles?

Ards and North Down Borough Council agree that all government domestic energy schemes should take account of the Fuel Poverty Strategy principles.

Question 8: Do you agree that DfC should take a more flexible approach that considers current data when setting and reviewing:

- a) Income thresholds and
- b) Eligibility criteria?

Please give reasons for your answer.

Ards and North Down Borough Council agree that a more flexible approach that considers current data when setting income thresholds and eligibility criteria for energy grant schemes, would be beneficial, for the following reasons:

- **Dynamic Economic Conditions:** Economic situations can change rapidly due to various factors, including inflation, job market fluctuations, and other socioeconomic challenges. A flexible approach to income assessment and eligibility criteria allows for assessment and adjustment based on the most recent data, ensuring that schemes remain relevant and supportive of those in need.
- **Targeted Support:** By using up-to-date data, DfC can more accurately target support to those who need it most. For instance, individuals or families who may not have qualified under outdated thresholds could be struggling and in need of assistance.
- **Encouraging Participation:** More inclusive and adaptive eligibility criteria could encourage a wider range of participants to engage in energy efficiency programmes, leading to greater overall impact. When people see that a scheme considers current realities, they may be more likely to apply.
- **Efficient resource allocation:** Continuously reviewing eligibility criteria can help ensure that financial and policy resources are allocated efficiently and effectively, avoiding waste and ensuring that assistance reaches the intended recipients.
- **Promoting equity:** A flexible approach can assist in addressing inequalities faced by different communities. By being responsive to data reflecting disparities, DfC can design a scheme that promote equal opportunities for energy efficiency upgrades.
- **Moving to a regional rather than local approach to promote “worst first”** where evidence suggests this is necessary to aid those most in need.

Overall, a flexible, data-informed and evidence led approach to income thresholds and eligibility criteria in energy grant schemes can lead to more effective and equitable outcomes.

Question 9: Do you agree that an income threshold should increase in line with minimum wage levels/inflation or another index such as Retail Price Index (RPI) to mitigate increases in the cost of living? Please give reasons for your answer.

Ards and North Down Borough Council favour increasing income thresholds for energy efficiency grant schemes in line with the retail price index (RPI) as a beneficial policy response to mitigate the impact of rising living costs rather than minimum wage/inflation, for the following reasons:

- **Expanded Accessibility:** Raising income thresholds in line with RPI would allow more individuals and families who are struggling with energy costs to access grants, thus alleviating financial pressure.
- **Alignment with Cost of Living:** As living costs rise, adjusting thresholds in line with RPI helps ensure that support measures remain relevant and effective in helping those in need.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Populations:** By updating income thresholds in line with the RPI, DfC can ensure that low-income households, who are often disproportionately affected by energy costs, receive the assistance they need.

It is however recognised that there are identifiable constraints with this approach.

- **Budget Constraints:** Expanding eligibility in line with the RPI may increase the financial burden on public funds, necessitating careful consideration of budget allocations and the sources of funding for these schemes.
- **Potential for over-qualification:** If thresholds are raised too high, it may allow individuals who are not in genuine need of assistance to access grants, potentially diluting the impact of the scheme.
- **Measurement of effectiveness:** It's important to have mechanisms in place to regularly evaluate the impact of policy decisions on energy efficiency uptake and overall cost savings.

Increasing income thresholds for energy efficiency grant schemes in line with RPI could be an effective measure to support households facing rising living costs and promote energy efficiency. However, it requires careful evaluation of funding mechanisms and ongoing assessment of the programme's effectiveness. Balancing support for vulnerable populations while ensuring efficient use of public resources is key to a successful implementation. Any modifications to schemes should be considered on a reasonable frequency and an agile approach, with clear guidance on how these changes can positively impact those who are already on any eligibility waiting list.

Question 10: Should the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of a house be considered as part of eligibility criteria (i.e. the least energy efficient homes are considered first?) Please give reasons for your answer

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council believe the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of a house should be considered as part of the eligibility criteria for an energy grant scheme. The following reasons supporting this approach:

- **Targeting Inefficiency:** Focusing on homes with the lowest EPC ratings ensures that resources are directed towards those properties that are the least energy efficient. This prioritisation can lead to reductions in energy consumption, thus making a more substantial impact on fuel poverty and ultimately climate change.
- **Maximising Impact:** By targeting the least efficient homes first, grant schemes can achieve better outcomes in terms of energy savings. Improving the efficiency of low-rated homes can lead to drastic improvements in energy use compared to already reasonably performing homes, offering greater returns on investment.
- **Addressing fuel poverty:** Homes with poor EPC ratings are often associated with lower-income households that struggle with high energy bills. By prioritising these properties, grant schemes can alleviate financial strain on vulnerable populations, contributing to social equity in energy access.
- **Compliance with policy goals:** UK have set ambitious targets for reducing carbon emissions and improving overall energy efficiency. Using EPC ratings to guide grant distribution aligns with these policy objectives by ensuring that efforts to enhance building efficiency are strategically focused
- **Encouraging upgrades:** Providing grants to improve the EPC ratings of the least efficient homes may encourage homeowners and landlords to invest in necessary upgrades. This could stimulate the green economy, creating jobs in energy retrofitting and construction.
- **Regulatory alignment:** Many countries are already incorporating energy performance into building regulations and financial incentives. Including EPC ratings in grant scheme eligibility criteria aligns with existing frameworks, making the strategy more coherent and easier to implement.
- **Improving Property Value:** Energy efficiency improvements can enhance the value of properties. By improving the worst-rated homes first, grant schemes can help increase property values in areas that may have been economically stagnant, leading to broader community revitalisation.

In conclusion, considering EPC ratings as part of eligibility criteria for energy grant schemes not only addresses immediate energy inefficiencies but also aligns with broader social and environmental goals. It enables more effective allocation of resources while fostering sustainable development and energy equity.

Question 11: Do you agree that the new Affordable Warmth Scheme should take a Whole House retrofit approach? Please give reasons for your answer.

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council are of the opinion, with careful implementation, taking a whole house retrofit approach to energy efficiency measures can be highly effective for several reasons:

- **Comprehensive solutions:** A whole house approach considers the interconnectedness of various building systems (heating, cooling, insulation, ventilation, etc.) rather than addressing individual components in isolation. This can lead to more effective and holistic energy savings
- **Increased energy savings:** By optimising the entire home's energy performance, homeowners can achieve greater energy savings than through piecemeal upgrades. This can significantly reduce energy bills and increase thermal comfort.

- **Enhanced Thermal Comfort:** Improvements made through a whole house approach can enhance indoor air quality, reduce drafts, and maintain more consistent temperatures, resulting in a more comfortable living environment.
- **Long-Term value:** Investing in comprehensive retrofits can improve the overall value of the property by enhancing its energy efficiency and sustainability, making it more attractive to potential buyers.
- **Environmental benefits:** By reducing energy consumption, retrofitting homes can contribute to climate change mitigation efforts.
- **Economic Growth:** A push for whole house retrofits can spur job creation in the construction and home improvement sectors, promoting local economies.
- **Accessibility and Equity:** Implementing a whole house approach through government initiatives can help low- and moderate-income households access energy efficiency upgrades that they might not be able to afford otherwise.

In summary, a whole house retrofit strategy can lead to significant environmental, economic, and social benefits, making it a compelling approach for DfC policy on tackling fuel poverty. However, a one size does not fit all, and there will be circumstances where this approach will not work (see Question 12 below).

Question 12: If the whole house approach is used, do you agree that all recommended measures must be installed unless there are exceptional reasons not to? Please give reasons for your answer.

The idea of a "whole house approach" in government energy efficiency grant schemes emphasises a comprehensive strategy to improve the energy performance of a home. Ards and North Down Borough Council are of the opinion that under this approach, *all* recommended measures should ideally be installed to maximise benefits. While a "whole house approach" can dramatically enhance the effectiveness of energy efficiency initiatives, making all recommended measures mandatory without exceptions may not be practical or feasible for every homeowner.

Reasons for Allowing Exceptions:

- **Financial Constraints:** Homeowners may face limitations, particularly if the upfront costs of all recommended measures are prohibitive. Providing flexibility allows participants to prioritise based on financial capability.
- **Property-specific conditions:** Each home is unique, and some measures may not be suitable due to structural limitations or existing conditions such as solid wall construction, design and physical footprint or construction type that can make a whole house approach financially prohibitive.
- **Homeowner preferences:** Homeowners may have specific preferences or priorities based on their lifestyle or needs that could lead them to opt out of certain measures. For example, the need for internal drylining may require the redecoration of each and every room affected, or elderly householders are often unable to clear out their roof space used as a storage area, to allow for the fitting of roof insulation. This can result in homeowners who are in need, rejecting the progress of the improvement works. Such scenarios should be considered on a case-by-case basis to avoid the vulnerable elderly population in particular, from being excluded or excluding themselves, from a scheme due to practical constraints.

- **Appropriate prioritisation:** Not all measures may yield equal benefits in all homes. A focused approach could consider the most critical improvements that provide the best return on investment in terms of energy savings. Consideration of a prioritisation of measures as identified in previous schemes should be introduced in a specific order that align to most effective thermal benefits for the home. This could also be used to help determine exceptions to a whole house approach.
- **Potential problems during installation:** In some instances, recommended measures may reveal or lead to other issues (like mould or structural damage) that could complicate a full installation. In such cases, exceptions or staged installations may be necessary.

Rather than insist on a whole approach only, it would be beneficial to encourage comprehensive upgrades while allowing some level of flexibility to address individual circumstances. This balanced approach could promote participation in grant schemes while still achieving significant energy efficiency improvements.

Question 13 Do you agree that the new scheme should prioritise low carbon heating solutions where possible?

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council agree the new Affordable Warmth Scheme should prioritise low-carbon heating solutions where possible, for the following reasons:

- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Low-carbon heating solutions, such as solar, heat pumps, and biomass, play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. By transitioning to low-carbon heating, governments can help meet their climate change mitigation targets and reduce their carbon footprint. It is essential that low-carbon solutions are only used where suitable, as they may be ineffective in certain property types. For example, heat pumps will only be effective and efficient as a home heating method in a well-insulated property, and their use may therefore be very limited in households impacted by fuel poverty.
- **Air Quality Improvement:** Northern Ireland still relies heavily on fossil fuels as a home heating source which can lead to air pollution, negatively impacting public health. Low-carbon heating solutions, on the other hand, produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, resulting in improved air quality.
- **Renewable energy integration:** Prioritising low-carbon heating helps integrate renewable energy sources into the energy mix. This can contribute to a more diversified energy supply, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting energy security.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Low-carbon heating solutions often require less energy to operate than traditional heating systems. This can lead to cost savings for households and reduce strain on the grid during peak demand periods.
- **Economic benefits:** Investing in low-carbon heating solutions can create new economic opportunities, such as jobs in the renewable energy sector, and stimulate local economies. Additionally, the long-term savings from reduced energy consumption can have a positive impact on a region's economic growth.
- **Public Health benefits:** Exposure to air pollution from fossil fuel-based heating can have significant health impacts. By promoting low-carbon heating solutions, this can contribute to a reduction in respiratory diseases and other health problems associated with air pollution.

To prioritise low-carbon heating solutions effectively, the fuel poverty strategy for NI should consider:

- Incentivising low-carbon heating options through grants, subsidies, or low-interest loans for households (and businesses).
- Developing and implementing policies that support the deployment of low-carbon heating technologies, such as building control standards that promote energy efficiency.
- Investing in energy grid modernisation to ensure that it can accommodate increased adoption of low-carbon heating solutions.
- Providing education, training and awareness raising programmes to ensure that individuals have the knowledge and skills to select, install and maintain low-carbon heating systems.
- Encouraging public-private partnerships to accelerate the development and deployment of low-carbon heating technologies.

Question 14: Do you agree that the new scheme should offer renewable technologies such as solar panels and battery storage to offset the running costs of low carbon heating solutions in low-income households? Please give reasons for your answer

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council support this approach:

- **Economic Relief and Energy Independence:** Low-income households often struggle with energy costs. By offering renewable technologies, the government can help reduce their reliance on conventional energy sources, thereby potentially lowering their monthly energy bills. Solar panels and battery storage empower households to generate and store their own energy. This independence can shield low-income families from fluctuating energy prices and provide a more stable financial situation.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Transitioning to low carbon heating solutions and renewable technologies is crucial for the UK's climate goals. By promoting these solutions, the government can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to combating climate change and improving air quality.
- **Job Creation:** Investment in renewable technologies can spur job creation in the green energy sector. This includes opportunities in manufacturing, installation, and maintenance, which can benefit both low-income communities and the broader economy.
- **Public Health:** Low carbon heating solutions and renewable energy can help reduce pollution, leading to better air quality and improved public health outcomes. This is particularly important in low-income areas that may experience higher levels of air pollution and related health issues.
- **Social Equity:** By prioritising access to renewable technologies for low-income households, the strategy can address fuel poverty and promotes social equity. Ensuring that all households, regardless of income, can benefit from clean energy solutions is fundamental to a fair transition.
- **Long-term Savings:** While the initial investment in renewable technologies may be a barrier, government support through grant schemes can facilitate access. Over time, these technologies can lead to substantial savings on energy costs, making them a financially viable option for low-income households.

- **Incentives for Adoption:** By providing incentives for renewable technologies in low-income households, the government can drive greater adoption of low carbon solutions, accelerating the transition to a sustainable energy future.
- **Community Resilience:** Renewable technologies and low carbon heating solutions can enhance resilience in communities, especially during energy supply disruptions or price spikes. Increased self-sufficiency is vital for vulnerable populations.

In summary, offering renewable technologies to low-income households aligns with economic, environmental, and social justice goals. It provides an important pathway for these communities to engage with and benefit from the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Question 15: Do you agree that rural properties should be prioritised for energy efficiency support? Please give reasons for your answer.

In general, Ards and North Down Borough Council are of the opinion that priority should be based on need and the “worst first” principle rather than geographical location. Whether a 10-year strategy should prioritise rural properties for energy efficiency support involves several considerations, and there are compelling arguments for and against such prioritisation. Here are some reasons to support prioritising rural properties:

- **Ageing Infrastructure:** Many rural homes are older and may lack modern energy-efficient features. ‘Hard to Treat’ homes with solid wall construction are typically located in rural areas. Targeting these properties for support can lead to significant reductions in energy consumption, lowering utility bills and improving overall energy efficiency in the region.
- **Access to Resources:** Rural areas may have limited access to resources such as the gas network distribution system that support energy efficiency improvements. By prioritising these areas, governments can directly address systemic inequities and ensure that rural residents have the same opportunities to benefit from energy efficiency programs as those in urban areas.
- **Environmental Impact:** Improving energy efficiency in rural properties can contribute to broader environmental goals, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. Rural areas often have significant agricultural activities, and enhancing energy efficiency can lead to lower carbon footprints and promote sustainable practices.
- **Reducing Strain on Energy Grids:** Energy-efficient rural properties can reduce overall demand for energy, which can help alleviate strain on national energy grids. This is particularly important during peak energy usage times when rural areas may face higher costs or energy shortages.
- **Local Economic Growth:** Supporting energy efficiency retrofits can create local jobs in construction, skilled trades, and energy audits. Prioritising rural areas can stimulate local economies and promote sustainable economic development.
- **Resilience and Self-Sufficiency:** By enhancing energy efficiency, rural properties can become more resilient against energy price volatility and disruptions.

However, it is also important to consider counterarguments, such as the possibility of neglecting urban areas that might need similar support or the logistics and costs associated with implementing programs in sparsely populated areas. Ultimately, an effective approach will involve a balanced strategy that assesses and addresses the specific needs of both rural and urban properties based on sound evidenced-based analysis.

Question 16: Do you agree with a sliding scale approach to funding for home energy schemes?

Ards and North Down Borough Council agrees with this approach. A sliding scale approach to funding home energy schemes can be beneficial for several reasons:

- **Affordability:** It allows for a more equitable distribution of funds, ensuring that those who can least afford to invest in energy efficiency get more support. It also aligns with the public health approach of 'proportionate universalism' where actions are universal but the scale and intensity of is proportionate to the level of disadvantage.
- **Incentivising Participation:** A sliding scale can encourage broader participation by providing greater incentives for those who might be hesitant to invest in energy improvements due to cost concerns.
- **Targeted Assistance:** It enables the allocation of resources based on specific needs and circumstances, addressing barriers faced by different sectors of the population.
- **Improved Energy equity:** It can contribute to reducing fuel poverty, ensuring that energy-efficient homes are accessible to all socio-economic groups
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** A sliding scale approach can be adjusted over time based on changing economic conditions or energy markets, making it a more dynamic and responsive funding strategy.

However, there are also challenges to consider:

- **Cost and complexity:** Implementing a sliding scale may require more administrative oversight and could complicate the funding process.
- **Potential for misuse:** There may be concerns about ensuring that the funds are used appropriately and that those who truly need assistance are receiving it.
- **Balancing Interests:** It's important to balance the needs of different stakeholders, including taxpayers, homeowners, and energy providers.

Overall, if carefully designed and implemented, a sliding scale approach can enhance the effectiveness of home energy schemes and promote sustainability while addressing social equity concerns. The success of such an approach would depend on transparent criteria, robust oversight, and effective communication and support for the target population.

Question 17: Do you agree that loans are the fairest financing option for landlords who are required to improve their assets? If not, what would you suggest as alternative funding options?

While loans can be a viable financing option for landlords seeking to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, they may not always be the fairest or most suitable solution for every situation. Here are some considerations and alternative funding options:

Considerations for Loans:

- **Repayment Burden:** Loans require repayment with interest, which may be burdensome for landlords, especially if cash flow is tight.
- **Creditworthiness:** Access to loans can depend on a landlord's creditworthiness, potentially excluding those with less favourable financial backgrounds.
- **Market Variability:** Interest rates can fluctuate, affecting the overall cost of borrowing.

Alternative Funding Options:

- **Match funding grants:** These funds do not require repayment, making them a more accessible option for many landlords. However, 50% grant funding has been available to landlords for some years through the current Affordable Warmth Scheme, but unfortunately to date uptake has been stubbornly low (5-8%). DfC must first conduct research to uncover the reasons behind poor uptake before considering a similar roll out.
- **Incentives and rebates:** Offering incentives such as rates rebates could encourage landlords to undertake energy efficiency improvements.
- **Repayment Programmes:** Implemented on-bill financing programmes that allow landlords to finance energy improvements through their rates or utility bills can linking repayment directly to energy savings.
- **Public-Private partnerships:** Collaborations between government departments and private firms can provide funding, expertise, and shared risk for large-scale energy efficiency projects.
- **Energy Performance contracts:** These agreements allow landlords to partner with energy providers to implement energy-efficient upgrades with financing based on the savings realised from reduced energy bills.
- **Community partnerships:** Collective funding programmes can enable individuals or communities to finance energy-efficient improvements through contributions from a large number of people.
- **Introduction of claw back options** where grant-aided households are sold after securing the improvements or where the eligible tenant renting the improved dwelling moves on within a defined period of time.

While loans can be an effective means to finance energy efficiency improvements, they aren't necessarily the fairest or most accessible for all landlords. A multifaceted approach that includes grants, incentives, and innovative financing models may provide a more equitable and supportive framework for property owners addressing energy efficiency upgrades.

Question 18 Do you agree that we should consider increasing levies from electricity bills to fund energy efficiency schemes for low income households? Please give reasons for your answer.

Ards and North Down Borough Council do not agree that consideration should be given to increasing levies from electricity bills to fund energy efficiency schemes for low-income households.

It is thought that implementing such a policy would:

- **Increase costs for consumers:** Higher levies on electricity bills may lead to increased costs for consumers, which could exacerbate fuel poverty, particularly for those already struggling to pay their energy bills.
- **Have a regressive impact:** Energy bills are often seen as a regressive tax; thus, increasing levies could exacerbate inequality if not carefully designed to protect the most vulnerable.
- **Create equity concerns:** Some critics argue that a levy-based approach may place an unfair burden on certain consumers, such as those who are not eligible for energy efficiency schemes or those with limited access to energy-efficient technologies.
- **Have administrative complexities:** Implementing and managing a levy-based system can be complex and may involve significant administrative costs, which could eat into the budget allocated for energy efficiency schemes.

Question 19: Should we explore introducing levies on gas to increase funding for such energy efficiency measures? Please provide reasons for your answer

Ards and North Down Borough Council do not agree that consideration should be given to exploring the introduction of levies on gas bills to increase funding for such energy efficiency measures.

It is thought that implementing such a policy would:

- Increase costs for consumers: An introduction of levies on gas bills may lead to increased costs for consumers, which could exacerbate fuel poverty, particularly for those already struggling to pay their energy bills.
- Have a regressive impact: Energy bills are often seen as a regressive tax; thus, introducing additional levies could exacerbate inequality if not carefully designed to protect the most vulnerable.
- Create equity concerns: Some critics argue that a levy-based approach may place an unfair burden on certain consumers, such as those who are not eligible for energy efficiency schemes or those with limited access to energy-efficient technologies.
- Increase administrative complexities: Implementing and managing a levy-based system can be complex and may involve significant administrative costs, which could eat into the budget allocated for energy efficiency schemes.

Question 20: What are your thoughts on exploring any revenue-raising opportunities for energy efficiency schemes from unregulated heating sources such as home heating oil?

Ards and North Down Borough Council do not believe that consideration should be given to exploring revenue raising opportunities for energy efficiency schemes from unregulated heating sources such as home heating oil.

NI is currently still more reliant on home heating oil than other parts of the UK. It is thought that implementing such a policy would have a higher impact on those who are most at risk of being in fuel poverty. Such a policy would :

- Increase costs for consumers: An introduction of levies on oil bills may lead to increased costs for consumers, which could exacerbate fuel poverty, particularly for those already struggling to pay their energy bills.
- Regressive impact: Energy bills are often seen as a regressive tax; thus, introducing additional levies could exacerbate inequality if not carefully designed to protect the most vulnerable.
- Equity concerns: Some critics argue that a levy-based approach may place an unfair burden on certain consumers, such as those who are not eligible for energy efficiency schemes or those with limited access to energy-efficient technologies.
- Administrative complexities: Implementing and managing a levy-based system can be complex and may involve significant administrative costs, which could eat into the budget allocated for energy efficiency schemes.

Question 21: Do you agree that we should utilise and build referral pathways between Government, Local Government, health professionals and the Voluntary and Community Sector? If yes, how can we best achieve this?

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council are of the opinion that building referral pathways for people needing advice and support is absolutely essential for creating a comprehensive support system to enhance overall community well-being, particularly for vulnerable populations who may struggle with energy-related issues. There does however need to be clear leadership with one organisation responsible for delivering the scheme.

Effective collaboration is critical to ensuring that those struggling with fuel poverty are provided with accessible and timely assistance. The skills and competencies of partnership working can help through the local knowledge, emotional intelligence and trust building capabilities of staff who can be the conduit between the scheme and eligible customer connectivity.

To achieve this effectively, the NI fuel poverty strategy must ensure

- **Effective stakeholder engagement at all stages of planning and implementation:** Involve all relevant stakeholders from the outset, including government agencies, health professionals, and VCS representatives, to ensure their insights and needs are considered. Regular meetings and workshops can facilitate collaboration and build trust among partners.
- **Shared Goals and objectives:** Develop a clear framework outlining shared goals, objectives, and outcomes for the referral pathways. This can help ensure that all parties are aligned and working towards common aims, such as reducing fuel poverty and improving health outcomes.
- **Training and awareness:** Conduct training sessions for health professionals and VCS workers on the energy advice available, common energy-related issues faced by clients, and how to refer individuals effectively. This will empower them to recognise when someone needs support and know where and how to direct them.
- **Integrated information systems:** Establish a centralised information system or platform where stakeholders can easily access resources, share information, and track referrals. This can help ensure consistency in service delivery and facilitate communication between different sectors.
- **Clear referral processes:** Develop clear, user-friendly referral procedures that outline how individuals can be referred between sectors. This should include a simple process to follow and the types of information required for referrals.
- **Community engagement:** Implement community engagement programmes to raise awareness about available resources and support channels. This could include workshops, informational sessions, or partnerships with local organisations or community groups that engage with residents.
- **Feedback and evaluation:** Create mechanisms for regular feedback and robust evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the referral pathways. Analyse data on referrals made, support outcomes, and areas for improvement to refine the process continuously.
- **Focus on accessibility:** Ensure that the referral pathways are accessible and inclusive, addressing potential barriers such as language, mobility, and technological access. Tailor services to meet the diverse needs of the community.

- Data Sharing agreements: Establish data sharing agreements among partners to facilitate information exchange while ensuring data privacy and security. This can help improve the understanding of community needs and enhance service provision.

Question 22: Do you agree with a taskforce/working groups to develop enabling frameworks for energy communities

Ards and North Down Borough Council strongly support the appointment of a taskforce with clear timescales for action, and representation from industry, councils, communities etc to develop enabling frameworks for community energy. A taskforce or working group can be an effective way to bring together diverse stakeholders, including community representatives, experts, and decision-makers, to co-create and implement such frameworks. Enabling frameworks can help communities overcome specific challenges and barriers by providing a structured approach to addressing them. This can include:

1. Facilitating dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders
2. Identifying and mapping community strengths and resources.
3. Developing tailored interventions and strategies
4. Enhancing community engagement and participation.
5. Building capacity and resilience within communities.
6. Developing and refining the frameworks based on community needs and priorities
7. Ensuring that frameworks are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the evolving needs of communities.

Question 23: Do you agree that government should assess the most relevant recommendations of the NICE6 guidelines and consider their implementation

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council agree, implementation of the NICE6 guidelines will increase awareness within the health, care and voluntary sectors of how health problems caused or exacerbated by cold homes can be addressed through appropriate referrals, training and identifying needs as well as ensuring people are discharged from hospital to a warm home.

Question 24: Do you agree that we should work with organisations that provide emergency support, to seek a consistent approach across NI and the inclusion of a referral to a long-term solution. If so, what would be the best way to achieve this?

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council, agree that the government should collaborate with organisations providing emergency energy support, such as local councils and the Public Health Agency, to establish a consistent approach and facilitate referrals to long-term solutions. This collaboration can help ensure that people in need receive not only immediate assistance but also sustainable support.

Question 25: Do you agree with the proposal to prioritise discretionary support to provide emergency financial support if there is a future energy or cost of living crisis, until we have better data to target large scale payments? If not, can you provide a reason?

There are compelling arguments to continue to provide emergency financial support in the short term, at least until a time when there is data gathered about who is most in need and allow prioritisation. These include

- Flexibility and responsiveness: Discretionary support can be more adaptable to changing circumstances and can be tailored to meet immediate needs of individuals or families facing financial distress.
- Targeted assistance: It allows agencies to quickly direct funds to those who are most in need without waiting for extensive data collection, which can be time-consuming.
- Prompt Relief: In times of crisis, immediate financial support can prevent people from falling into deeper financial hardship, homelessness, or inability to afford basic necessities.

However, the disadvantages of this approach are clear:

- Risk of inequity: Without robust data, there's a potential risk that support may not reach the most vulnerable populations, as decisions could be influenced by subjective criteria or less visible needs.
- Sustainability concerns: Discretionary funding may be limited in scope or duration, potentially leading to gaps in support once the initial funds are depleted. Clear criteria would be essential if there are to be any discretionary funds allocated.
- Lack of comprehensive strategy: Prioritising discretionary support might detract from the development of a more systematic approach that looks at the root causes of financial crises and provides longer-term solutions.

Question 26: Do you agree with the proposal to gain a better understanding of the impact of changes to Winter Fuel Payments and introduce additional support where appropriate? If not, why, and do you have alternative suggestions?

Ards and North Down Borough Council agree, the proposal to analyse the impact of withdrawing Winter Fuel Payments from pensioners above the pension credit threshold is essential as it acknowledges the diverse financial situations pensioners face. Many pensioners, even those above the threshold, may struggle with heating costs, particularly during harsh winters. A thorough assessment could provide insights into how this policy affects vulnerable groups and inform future decisions. Additionally, introducing additional support where appropriate would ensure that those who are still in need receive assistance, promoting fairness and social equity.

If there are concerns, alternatives could include:

- Income assessments: Instead of a blanket withdrawal based on the pension credit threshold, a more nuanced approach could consider individual circumstances, such as other sources of income or cost of living considerations.
- Targeted support programmes: Establish specific programmes that target lower-income pensioners who may be less able to afford heating costs, ensuring that support goes to those most in need.
- Emergency Funds: Creating an emergency fund that pensioners can access during particularly cold periods could alleviate financial strain without entirely withdrawing support.

- Broadening eligibility: Instead of withdrawing payments, consider gradually tapering them based on income levels, allowing for a smoother transition and minimising the impact on those who may just exceed the threshold.

Overall, it is essential to balance fiscal responsibility with the need to support vulnerable populations, ensuring that all pensioners can maintain a comfortable and safe living environment during the winter months.

Question 27: Do you agree that we should improve our understanding of the impacts of energy decisions on the energy bills of different consumer groups? If so, what would be the best way of understanding these impacts?

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council agree that improving our understanding of the impacts of energy decisions on the energy bills of different consumer groups is crucial. Understanding these effects can help policymakers design more equitable energy policies and ensure that no particular group bears an undue financial burden.

The best ways to understand these impacts include:

- Sound evidence base: Collect and analyse data on energy consumption patterns across different demographic groups, including income levels, geographic locations, and household sizes. This could involve utilising smart meter data, historical energy use data, and bill payment histories to assess how different policies or energy prices would affect various groups.
- Consumer segmentation: Identify and segment consumer groups based on factors such as income, energy usage, and access to renewable energy sources. This segmentation can help in predicting how changes in energy pricing will affect sector-specific demographics.
- Surveys and focus groups: Conduct surveys and focus groups to gather qualitative insights from consumers about their energy usage, the impacts of energy bills, and the willingness to adopt energy-saving technologies or practices. Understanding consumer preferences can shed light on how policies could impact their bills.
- Modelling and simulation: Use econometric models to simulate the impacts of different energy policies on consumer bills. This could include modelling scenarios like carbon pricing, changes in subsidies for renewable energy, or alterations in energy market structures.
- Pilot programmes: Implement pilot programmes aimed at specific consumer groups to measure the impacts of particular energy policies or decisions before rolling them out on a wider scale.
- Collaboration with utilities: Work closely with utilities, consumer advocacy groups etc to get a holistic view of the consumer impacts. These organisations often have valuable insights and data on consumer behaviour and challenges.
- Transparency and reporting: Ensuring that energy decision-makers provide transparent reports on how decisions affect various consumer groups, with accessible breakdowns of potential financial impacts, can foster a better understanding within the community.
- Feedback and evaluation mechanisms: Create channels for ongoing feedback from consumers regarding their experiences with energy pricing and policies, which can inform future policy adjustments.

By combining quantitative data with qualitative insights and consumer feedback and evaluation, policymakers can develop a comprehensive understanding of how energy decisions impact different groups and work towards more equitable energy solutions.

Question 29: How can we support vulnerable people to ensure they are on the most affordable tariff?

Government can implement a variety of strategies to assist vulnerable individuals in accessing the most affordable energy tariffs. Here are several approaches:

- **Information and education campaigns:** Launch campaigns to educate vulnerable populations about available energy tariffs and programs, helping them understand how to select the most cost-effective options. Provide resources in multiple languages and formats to ensure accessibility.
- **Tariff Comparison Tools:** Develop or support online platforms where individuals can easily compare energy tariffs from different suppliers. This can include filters for special rates for low-income households.
- **Subsidies and financial assistance:** Provide direct financial assistance or subsidies to low-income households to help cover energy costs, ensuring they can afford the best tariffs. Implement programmes that automatically enrol eligible households in low-income energy assistance programmes.
- **Partnerships with Energy Companies:** Collaborate with energy providers to create special tariffs or discounts for vulnerable people, such as elderly citizens, low-income families, or those on disability support. Encourage energy companies to offer simplified processes for vulnerable groups to determine their eligibility for lower tariffs.
- **Consideration needs to be given to the role of the Utility Regulator to monitor the energy companies in ensuring lowest tariffs are given to vulnerable groups.**
- **Engagement programmes:** Deploy community engagement initiatives to connect with at-risk populations and help them navigate energy services. This can include partnerships with local councils who already work locally to assist vulnerable families in applying for energy programmes and understanding their options.
- **The revision of the arms' length service that was introduced by the DfE 'One stop shop' as it is not thought to be as accessible or user friendly for certain sectors such as the elderly who don't have the confidence or family support to navigate the system. These are often the sectors that need the most assistance.**
- **Legislative measures:** Introduce legislation or policies that prioritise affordable energy access for vulnerable populations, including limits on energy shut-offs during extreme weather. Ensure that consumer protection laws are in place to prevent exploitative practices targeting low-income households.
- **Data Sharing and referrals:** Utilise data sharing agreements (with privacy protections) to identify individuals who may qualify for assistance, enhancing outreach efforts. Create referral programmes between social services and energy providers to seamlessly connect vulnerable individuals to financial assistance and resources.
- **Crisis support services:** Establish or bolster emergency assistance programmes for energy disconnection to support individuals facing immediate crisis situations. Set up hotlines or helplines for individuals to receive immediate advice and support regarding energy billing and concerns.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes aimed at helping vulnerable populations with energy tariffs to ensure they meet their goals and adjust as necessary.

By implementing these measures, government can significantly improve access to affordable energy for vulnerable citizens, reducing their financial burdens and enhancing their overall well-being.

Question 30: Do you agree that we should explore potential affordability support for populations where energy efficiency measures may not be the right solution? If so, which population groups? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council agree that this is an area that requires exploration.

There are potential population groups who may require additional and targeted specific support. These could include low-income households living with a terminal illness, or long-term disability or dementia which requires the usage of specialised medical equipment and considerations from ethnic minority groups or those who do not have English as their first language.

Question 31: Is further research required to identify gaps in non-price protection for different energy users in Northern Ireland? If yes, what should we focus on?

Yes, further research is required to identify gaps in non-price protection for different energy users in Northern Ireland. Some key focus areas for this research could include:

- **Vulnerable Consumer identification:** Conduct studies to identify specific groups of vulnerable consumers, such as low-income households, elderly residents, and those with disabilities, to understand their unique energy needs and challenges.
- **Awareness and accessibility:** Assess the current awareness of existing non-price protections among different user groups and evaluate how accessible these protections are. This may include evaluating the effectiveness of communication strategies used by energy providers and regulatory bodies.
- **Impact of energy transition:** Analyse how the transition to renewable energy and changes in the energy market impact non-price protections for various user sectors and identify potential gaps in support.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Look at non-price protections in other jurisdictions to identify best practices and lessons learned that could be applied in Northern Ireland.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Review the existing regulatory framework to pinpoint any shortcomings or inconsistencies in protections for different types of energy users.
- **Method of Billing and Payment Options:** Explore the different billing methods and payment options available, assessing their fairness and accessibility for all user groups, especially those who may struggle with traditional payment systems.
- **Consumer Rights and Dispute Resolution:** Investigate the effectiveness of consumer rights protections and dispute resolution mechanisms in place, focusing on their adequacy for protecting non-price aspects of energy services.
- **Environmental and Social Impact Considerations:** Assess the intersection of environmental policies with non-price protections, ensuring that energy strategies are equitable and do not disproportionately impact vulnerable communities.

- **Engagement with Stakeholders:** Gather input from a wide range of stakeholders, including consumer advocacy groups, energy providers, and governmental agencies, to understand their perspectives on current protections and needed improvements.

By focusing on these areas, research can help to ensure that non-price protections are comprehensive, effective, and adaptable to the evolving energy landscape in Northern Ireland.

Question 32: What is your view on whether government should adopt a common quality assurance standard or framework across all energy efficiency and low carbon heat grant schemes?

The adoption of a common quality assurance standard or framework across all energy efficiency and low carbon heat grant schemes by the government could offer several significant benefits:

- **Consistency and Transparency:** A unified framework would ensure that all schemes adhere to the same standards, promoting consistency in the fuel poverty strategy implementation. This would provide clarity for both consumers and service providers, fostering trust in the strategy.
- **Improved Quality of Services:** A common standard could help ensure that all contractors and service providers meet minimum quality requirements, reducing the risk of poorly executed installations and ensuring that the benefits of energy efficiency measures are fully realised.
- **Streamlined Processes:** Having a standard framework may simplify administrative processes, reducing confusion and making it easier for applicants to navigate the various programmes. This could also ease the burden on government agencies managing these schemes.
- **Enhanced Reporting and Accountability:** A common framework would facilitate better tracking and reporting of outcomes across different programmes, allowing for more effective evaluation of their success and identification of areas for improvement.
- **Encouragement of Best Practices:** A standardised approach could promote the sharing of best practices across different areas and schemes, leading to continuous improvement in energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies.
- **Increased Participation:** With clear standards in place, more homeowners may be encouraged to participate in energy efficiency programmes, knowing that they will receive support that meets a recognized quality standard.

However, there are also considerations to keep in mind:

- **Implementation Costs:** Establishing and enforcing a common standard may require significant initial investment in terms of resources and training. This needs to be weighed against the long-term benefits.
- **Potential for Bureaucracy:** A standardised approach could lead to increased bureaucracy, which might slow down the rollout of grants and limit accessibility for potential beneficiaries.
- **The potential for fraud and/or misinformation provided by applicant**

Overall, while the development of a common quality assurance standard or framework presents certain challenges, the potential benefits in terms of consistency, quality, and effectiveness make it a worthwhile consideration for improving energy efficiency and low carbon heat grant schemes. Careful planning and stakeholder engagement would be crucial to ensure that the implementation is practical and beneficial across different contexts.

Question 33: Do you agree that government should take a common approach to consumer protection across all supported energy efficiency schemes?

Ards and North Down Borough Council agree that government should take a common approach to consumer protection across all supported energy efficiency schemes. Consumer protection measures and consumer confidence in those measures are essential components of well-functioning energy efficiency schemes.

Question 34: Do you have suggestions about how government could change our use of language to improve buy-in and engagement on fuel poverty?

Yes, a more positive or constructive term for "fuel poverty" could be "energy affordability challenges." This phrasing focuses on the issue as one of affordability rather than deprivation, emphasising the need for solutions and support rather than solely highlighting the negative aspects of the situation. Other alternatives might include "energy accessibility needs" or "energy security challenges," which also frame the issue in a way that suggests potential for improvement and support. A consideration for a simplified title could be "Warm and Healthy Homes"

Question 35: Do you agree that government should take a basket of indicators approach to measuring and understanding fuel poverty?

Yes, Ards and North Down Borough Council agree, a basket of indicators approach can be very effective for measuring and understanding fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is a multifaceted issue that encompasses not only income levels but also housing quality, energy prices, and household energy usage patterns. Utilising a range of indicators, such as winter deaths, household energy expenditure relative to total expenditure, and other socio-economic factors, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding fuel poverty. For example:

- Winter Deaths: Tracking winter mortality rates can highlight the health impacts of inadequate heating and poor living conditions, illustrating the human cost associated with fuel poverty.
- Energy Expenditure: Comparing energy costs to overall household expenditure can help identify how much of a household's budget is being consumed by energy needs, revealing financial strain and potential risk of fuel poverty.
- Housing Quality: Including indicators related to insulation, heating systems, and overall energy efficiency can shed light on the structural factors that contribute to fuel poverty.
- Income Levels: Understanding income levels, including disparities based on demographics or geographic locations, can help identify which populations are most at risk.
- Energy Prices: Monitoring fluctuations in energy prices can provide insights into how external economic factors impact households' ability to afford energy.

By using a diverse set of indicators, with particular focus on the poverty index, government can better tailor policies and interventions to address the root causes of fuel poverty and implement more effective solutions.

Question 36: Are the indicators suggested the correct ones?

Yes, however there is the potential for data overload. Careful consideration of the most meaningful indicators is necessary.

An additional indicator on the quality of housing stock may also be useful.

Question 37: If you agree with the introduction of an indicator based on energy confidence or awareness, do you have suggestions about what kind of indicator might be most valuable?

To gauge consumer energy awareness and confidence, several indicators can be valuable such as

- **Surveys and Polls:** Conducting surveys that assess consumer knowledge about energy sources, conservation methods, and renewable energy can provide direct insights into awareness levels. Questions about their understanding of energy costs, efficiency, and environmental impacts can be particularly revealing.
- **Energy Consumption Patterns**:** Analysing trends in energy usage can indicate consumer confidence. A significant shift towards energy-efficient appliances, smart home technology, or renewable energy adoption may suggest increased awareness and confidence in sustainable energy choices.
- **Participation in Energy Schemes:** Tracking participation in energy efficiency programmes, renewable energy adoption (like solar panel installation), and demand response initiatives can indicate both awareness and confidence levels among consumers.
- **Feedback Mechanisms from Utility Companies:** Utility customer feedback about rates, service quality, and energy saving programs can serve as an indicator of consumer confidence. High satisfaction rates may correlate with awareness and confidence in energy management initiatives.

Combining these qualitative and quantitative measures will provide a fuller picture of consumer energy awareness and confidence, helping to inform policies and programs designed to enhance energy literacy and promote sustainable practices.

Question 38: Do you agree with our proposal that carbon emissions are not used as a fuel poverty indicator? Please provide reasons for your answer.

The question of whether carbon emissions should be used as a fuel poverty indicator is complex and involves various considerations.

There are compelling arguments for not using Carbon Emissions as a Fuel Poverty Indicator such as:

- **Primary Focus on Affordability:** Fuel poverty is primarily about the inability of households to afford adequate heating and energy. Using carbon emissions as a metric may shift the focus away from the immediate financial stress experienced by low-income households.
- **Diverse Energy Sources:** Different communities rely on a variety of energy sources with different carbon profiles. Some low-income households may use cheaper, less environmentally friendly energy sources (e.g., coal or older gas systems) to stay warm, which may not reflect their overall carbon footprint
- **Impact on Policy:** Relying on carbon emissions as a fuel poverty indicator could lead to policies that focus more on emissions reductions than on helping people access affordable energy. The needs of vulnerable populations could be neglected.

- **Complexity of Measurement:** Accurately measuring carbon emissions requires comprehensive data on energy usage, which can be difficult to obtain. This adds complexity to an already critical issue.

However, ignoring carbon emissions in the context of fuel poverty could counteract long-term sustainability goals. Fuel poverty initiatives should ideally align with climate goals to ensure energy systems are both affordable and environmentally responsible. Households in fuel poverty often live in energy-inefficient homes, which can result in high carbon emissions. Improving energy efficiency could reduce both fuel poverty and carbon output, making it relevant to consider both issues together.

In addition, using carbon emissions as a factor could raise awareness about the environmental impacts of energy consumption, potentially encouraging more sustainable practices among low-income households in the long run.

Ultimately, while there are valid reasons for DfC's proposal not to use carbon emissions as a fuel poverty indicator, it is also essential to recognise the interconnectedness of these issues. A balanced approach that considers both immediate needs for affordable energy and long-term sustainability goals may be the most effective strategy for addressing the dual challenges of fuel poverty and climate change.

Question 39: What is the best way to continue to engage with people experiencing fuel poverty?

Engaging with people experiencing fuel poverty requires an empathetic approach that considers their specific needs and challenges. This may be facilitated through Community Planning structures.

Establish connections through regular communication, showing genuine care and understanding. Use trusted local representatives such as local council officers or trusted community members to facilitate relationships.

Share clear, concise information about available assistance programmes, energy-saving tips, and financial support options. Use multiple formats (e.g., hard copy leaflets, social media, workshops) to reach different audiences.

Organise local community gatherings, workshops, or forums to raise awareness about fuel poverty and discuss solutions. This can also help build a supportive community network.

Encourage feedback through surveys, focus groups, or informal check-ins to understand their experiences, needs, and preferences better.

Collaborate with Local organisations: Work with local councils, charities, social services, and energy companies to develop comprehensive support programmes tailored to the community's specific needs.

Offer Practical Support, providing resources such as energy efficiency assessments, assistance with applying for grants or subsidies, and connecting them with home improvement schemes.

By combining these strategies, stakeholders can effectively engage with individuals experiencing fuel poverty, providing the support they need while also empowering them to take charge of their energy needs.

Question 40: Do you agree with the proposal for a Fuel Advisory Group. If not, can you suggest an alternative?

Yes. The formation of a fully representative fuel advisory group is critical to ensure that all stakeholders are fully engaged and aligned towards achieving the vision of warm, healthy homes for everyone.

Question 41: If you have any further comments or suggestions not already captured, please provide these.



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Consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy

December 2024

Contents

1. Ministerial Foreword	4
2. Executive Summary	5
3. Strategic Framework	7
4. Introduction	9
5. Strategic Context	11
Reflecting and building on existing government priorities	11
Stakeholder engagement	12
6. Vision and Principles	14
Vision	14
Principles	14
Timeframe	15
7. Make homes more energy efficient	16
Outcome 1: Improved energy efficiency for vulnerable households	16
Objective 1: Raise and appropriately enforce housing standards	17
Objective 2: Increase investment in energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households	20
8. Collaborate and Build Capacity	28
Outcome 2: Increased access to trusted energy efficiency advice, measures and support for low-income, vulnerable households through partnership working	28
Objective 3: Utilise and build on experience and knowledge of others to increase energy wellbeing	29
Objective 4: Ensure consistent, accessible financial support for vulnerable people in emergencies	34

Contents

9. Protect Consumers	38
Outcome 3: Informed, protected consumers have access to essential, sustainable and affordable energy	38
Objective 5: Implement a new support framework for energy affordability	38
Objective 6: Ensure robust protection and redress for heating and energy efficiency	42
10. Governance and Accountability	46
Understanding fuel poverty	46
Transparency and Accountability	55
11. Next Steps	57
How to respond	57
Annex A - Summary of questions in consultation	58
Annex B - Consumer Protection/Redress	62

1. Ministerial Foreword

This consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out a pathway to a Northern Ireland where everyone lives in a warm, healthy home. Too many people live in houses that they struggle to heat, and our most recent modelling suggests that in 2022 more than a quarter of households here were living in fuel poverty. Living in cold and damp homes impacts health and well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable in our society. The continued high prices of fossil fuels, low standards of energy efficiency in our homes and the ongoing cost of living all contribute to unacceptably high levels of fuel poverty.

My Department has made significant investment in improving energy efficiency in low-income households. In addition, I have recently secured a £17million allocation to provide a one-off £100 payment to pensioners no longer eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment and an uptake in additional benefits of £62million in 2023/24 through my Department's Make the Call service, £21.3million of which went to pensioners. These have all supported people struggling with high energy bills, especially older people, and have made a meaningful contribution to addressing fuel poverty.

In developing this consultation we have worked collaboratively with those who understand and can address fuel poverty. Our stakeholders provided valuable insights into the lived experience of people living in fuel poverty and have shaped the proposals contained within this consultation. Using the

input gathered during our engagement we now set out a series of actions, guided by clear and fair principles, to help us achieve three key goals: to make homes more energy efficient, to collaborate and build capacity, and to protect consumers.

Tackling fuel poverty will require significant collaboration across government and our partners to continue to provide both emergency and long-term support. It will help achieve wider societal benefits by supporting those struggling with the cost of living, improving health outcomes and decarbonising our homes.

The recent announcement to restrict the winter fuel payment creates an additional financial burden for less well-off older people and this Fuel Poverty Strategy aims to better understand the longer-term impact of the removal of the payment on pensioners who are above the threshold for winter fuel payments and provide support, if necessary, to help those who have moved into fuel poverty.

I encourage you to play your part in this consultation to help guide and shape this important strategy. This is a continuation of the engagement which my officials have carried out with the most vulnerable in our society. A warm home is a healthy home and your contribution will ensure that this strategy reflects and responds to the needs of those who cannot afford to stay warm in their own homes in the coming winters.

2. Executive Summary

There are many factors that contribute to making energy unaffordable. These include the energy efficiency of homes and the energy needs of the household, the cost of energy, household income and people's ability to access energy solutions that are right for them. Tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland will help protect people, particularly the most vulnerable, from the effects of cold and damp living conditions. Doing so sustainably will also make a positive contribution to our carbon reduction targets.

Our vision is a warm healthy home for everyone, and we propose that our approach to addressing fuel poverty should be needs-based, participative, collaborative and focused on long-term, sustainable solutions. Achieving our vision and being guided by these principles will make a significant positive contribution to a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is the first of our objectives and is a key priority. The energy efficiency of Northern Ireland's housing stock is among the worst in Europe and to address this we need to establish and raise housing standards and significantly increase investment in energy efficiency. Improving housing standards will help make homes easier to heat and

set clear expectations from government for homeowners across a range of housing tenures. This consultation also explores proposals for the successor to the Affordable Warmth Scheme and proposes alignment of our Fuel Poverty Strategy principles in all new home energy schemes.

Through our stakeholder engagement process we heard repeatedly about the importance of coordinating services to improve outcomes for citizens. Our second key objective is therefore to collaborate and build capacity, and particularly to build partnerships that can identify and provide advice and long-term sustainable support to those most in need. We will work closely with the voluntary and community sector and statutory bodies to build capacity and confidence and improve people's ability to seek the right energy solutions for them. However, we know that many people face stress just trying to pay for the essentials of life. Part of our response will need to address the immediate difficulty of keeping people's homes warm in emergency situations and ensuring such support is accessible and consistent. We will improve the pathway to ensure that they can also access the long-term, sustainable solutions that will help prevent or reduce future emergencies.

Making our homes more sustainable will help create warmer, healthier houses, reduce air pollution and create new job opportunities. However, the transition will mean changes to people's homes, energy sources and behaviours. Our third objective therefore focuses on protecting consumers. This means improving our understanding of the impacts of changes on their energy bills and exploring bill support for those groups for whom energy efficiency measures may not be a viable option. It also means making sure that when we fund energy efficiency and low-carbon heating measures that people can expect a common standard of installation and protection. This will also help industry plan their investment in training and accreditation.

We were asked by stakeholders to ensure that the language we use when designing and delivering schemes is clear, dignified and appropriate. This consultation therefore asks whether we should consider moving away from the language of fuel poverty and towards energy wellbeing to emphasise

the importance of essential and affordable energy to enable a decent standard of living and health.

During our engagement, there were calls for better and more frequent data on fuel poverty and its impacts. We propose improving our understanding of how fuel poverty affects people and utilising data to design better policy and ensure that interventions reach those who need help the most. We will improve monitoring and accountability by introducing indicators on issues that stakeholders have told us are important to them.

Our renewed focus on transparency also includes proposals for more regular, visible reporting and, reflecting our commitment to inclusiveness, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by fuel poverty continue to inform the implementation of this strategy.

3. Strategic Framework

Context	Just Transition, Climate Change Act (NI) 2022, Carbon Budgets, Programme for Government (“Our Plan”)		
Vision	A warm, healthy home for everyone		
Principles	Long-term, sustainable solutions	Needs-Based	Collaborative
Objectives	Make homes more energy efficient	Collaborate and build capacity	Protect Consumers
Outcomes	Improved energy efficiency for vulnerable households	Increased access to trusted energy efficiency advice, measures and support for low income, vulnerable households through partnership working	Informed, protected consumers have access to essential, sustainable and affordable energy
Governance & Accountability	Introduce a comprehensive, more frequent framework for understanding fuel poverty indicators and outcomes	Ministerial statement annually before the Assembly	Form a Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel

Fuel Poverty Strategy Policies & Actions

Objectives / Policies

Make homes more energy efficient

1. Raise and appropriately enforce housing standards
2. Increase investment in energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households

Collaborate and build capacity

3. Utilise and build on experience and knowledge of others to increase energy wellbeing
4. Ensure consistent, accessible financial support for vulnerable people in emergencies

Protect Consumers

5. Implement a new support framework for energy affordability
6. Ensure robust protection and redress for heating and energy efficiency

Proposed Actions

1. Introduce a revised Decent Homes Standard for social housing by 2026
2. Introduce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) by 2027
3. Implement improved Fitness Standards for all tenures by 2030
4. Alignment of Fuel Poverty Strategy principles in all new home energy schemes
5. Introduce a more ambitious fuel poverty energy efficiency scheme
6. Consider alternative funding models to increase investment in energy efficiency schemes

1. Utilise and enhance referral partnerships across government and our partners to raise awareness of energy wellbeing, identify people in fuel poverty and provide support
2. Introduce a One Stop Shop
3. Explore role of community energy in addressing fuel poverty
4. Implement key aspects of NICE Guidelines on the health risks associated with living in a cold home
5. Work with other organisations to ensure consistent emergency support and referrals to efficiency measures and advice
6. In a future energy crisis, target financial assistance at those most in need
7. Gain a better understanding of the impact of changes to the Winter Fuel Payment and introduce additional support where appropriate

1. Improve our understanding of energy decarbonisation policies on the affordability of domestic energy bills
2. Raise awareness of existing price protection tools
3. Investigate targeted affordability support for certain vulnerable households
4. Assess need for non-price protection of less-protected energy and take appropriate steps
5. Agree minimum quality standards for all energy efficiency schemes
6. Ensure appropriate aftercare and redress mechanism for government energy schemes

4. Introduction

Fuel poverty is the inability to heat or power a home to an adequate degree at a reasonable cost. It is affected by household income, the cost of energy and how much energy is needed in the home. Fuel poverty levels in Northern Ireland have fluctuated from 27% in 2001, to 44% in 2009 and 22% in 2016¹ as reported in the NI House Condition Survey.² The most recent modelled fuel poverty estimate using the 2016 baseline data estimated a fuel poverty figure of 27% in 2022.³ Protecting human health from the detrimental effects of living in cold and damp homes is the primary driver for tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

Our extant Fuel Poverty Strategy was published in 2011 and since then we have invested significantly in improving heating and energy efficiency in low-income households. However, much more needs to be done to improve the energy efficiency of homes. This will also help protect households

from volatile fossil fuel prices and economic shocks caused by geopolitical unrest.

In 2022, climate legislation was introduced in Northern Ireland with targets to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and an intention to do so in a way that contributes to reducing poverty and inequality through a Just Transition. This is core to our approach.

The proposals contained in this consultation have been developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including the public, organisations and parts of Government that have responsibility for, or are impacted by, fuel poverty.

Purpose of document

This document sets out draft proposals for a Fuel Poverty Strategy that will contain a range of actions to make homes more efficient, raise awareness and build confidence and

1 Lead author Dr Salvador Acha, from the Department of Chemical Engineering at Imperial College London, said: "Studies show the UK's 28.6 million homes are among the least energy efficient in Europe and lose heat up to three times faster than on the continent, making people poorer and colder.
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/publications/energy-and-low-carbon-futures/decarbonising-buildings-in-sights-from-across-europe.php>

2 The Housing Executive - House Condition Survey (nihe.gov.uk)

3 The Housing Executive - House Condition Survey (nihe.gov.uk)

capacity, enhance collaboration and protect consumers. We are carrying out a full public consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy. We expect to publish a final strategy in Summer 2025.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity will be published. We will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses, but apart from this, we will publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our consultation privacy notice. Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). However all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (UK) 2016/679. If you wish your response to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, such that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

Impact assessments

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality between all Section 75 groups. Without prejudice to these obligations, the Department is also required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. Equality screening of this consultation document has identified no adverse impacts. On this basis, the decision is that the proposed fuel poverty strategy should not be subject to a full equality impact assessment.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment: The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 introduced a new duty on NI departments, district councils and other public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. The Department, under a commitment to rural proof, is also required to identify the potential impact on rural areas and if appropriate, adjust to take account of rural circumstances. As part of the development of this consultation, issues in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas have been identified and taken into consideration.

5. Strategic Context

Fuel poverty is affected by and impacts policies and actions across government. Our approach in developing this draft strategy has been to reflect and build on existing government priorities relating to fuel poverty while setting new ambitions. We have collaborated closely with other parts of government and ensured stakeholder engagement throughout the process.

Reflecting and building on existing government priorities

The draft Programme for Government includes the publication of a new Fuel Poverty Strategy, as well as a commitment to provide more social, affordable and sustainable housing and making a contribution to the people, place and prosperity missions.⁴ The draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland⁵ recognises the importance of improving domestic energy efficiency in addressing fuel poverty, decarbonising our homes and reducing emissions and supporting green jobs for economic growth.

Since 2021, Northern Ireland has set a new ambition to decarbonise our economy. This includes a new Climate Change Act which sets a legal requirement to reduce emissions (from base year emission levels) by 48% by 2030.⁶ The Act includes a Just Transition principle to ensure that the benefits of moving to a green economy are shared widely and support is provided for sectors and people who are likely to be most affected by the transition. We believe that this strategy, which aims to reduce fuel poverty, makes a particular contribution to a Just Transition by its focus on actions to help eliminate poverty, inequality and social deprivation.

Other government policies impact our approach to fuel poverty including those relating to poverty, health, housing, energy and climate. Among these are the draft Green Growth Strategy⁷, the Carbon Budgets⁸ and the Climate Action Plan that will deliver on these. The Energy Strategy - The Path to Net

4 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most. Draft Programme for Government 2024 – 2027. <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-programme-for-government-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most.pdf>

5 Draft ISNI 2050. <https://isni.gov.uk/strategy/draft-isni-2050/>

6 Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

7 Consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

8 Summary of Responses: Consultation on Northern Ireland's 2030 & 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets & First Three Carbon Budgets & Seeking views on Climate Change Committee (CCC) Advice Report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

Zero Energy has a key indicator of reducing households in fuel poverty⁹. Our Housing Supply Strategy¹⁰ sets out a 15-year journey to transform housing supply. Work has also been carried out on developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy¹¹ as well as a review of the People and Place Strategy.¹² Consideration is currently being given to a refresh of Making Life Better, our public health strategy¹³ which relates to the health impacts of fuel poverty.

We have reflected the ambitions of these in developing this draft strategy. Addressing fuel poverty in the right way can lead to a reduction in emissions, improve housing conditions and, through better, warmer homes, improve health outcomes and ensure people have to spend less on their fuel costs.

Stakeholder engagement

Our approach has focused on engaging with stakeholders through the formation of a Reference Panel, holding workshops and focus groups to understand and learn from existing experience and knowledge of fuel poverty and building close links across those parts of government that have responsibility for or respond to those who are impacted by fuel poverty.

A Reference Panel was formed with external expertise to provide advice, evidence-based communication and a reference-and-challenge function throughout the development of this strategy. A Project Board comprised of senior officials from across government was established to provide high-level oversight and strategic direction. Both groups met regularly from September 2023.

In addition to these groups and ongoing bilateral engagement, we organised workshops to engage and listen to stakeholders. A total of 268 registrants from a wide range of backgrounds came together to inform the process, raise issues and concerns, bring forward new ideas, and highlight what has worked and what can be strengthened. Focus groups were also held with vulnerable groups impacted by fuel poverty. We held a webinar on fuel poverty definitions with experts from New Zealand and the Netherlands to inform our understanding of measuring fuel poverty.

A Stakeholder Engagement Report outlining our approach and findings from the engagement process has been published alongside this strategy.

9 Energy Strategy - Path to Net Zero Energy | Department for the Economy ([economy-ni.gov.uk](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk))

10 Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039 ([communities-ni.gov.uk](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk))

11 Anti-poverty | Department for Communities ([communities-ni.gov.uk](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk))

12 People and Place Review | Department for Communities ([communities-ni.gov.uk](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk))

13 Making Life Better - Strategic Framework for Public Health | Department of Health ([health-ni.gov.uk](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk))

To provide a voice to those impacted by fuel poverty we have included quotes from our focus groups throughout this consultation document.

6. Vision and Principles

“In relation to damp and mould. Everyone knows that this affects your health. People know that they need to keep the heat on, but they simply can’t afford it”

Vision

A warm, healthy
home for everyone

Tackling fuel poverty will contribute to Executive commitments to improve health and wellbeing, tackle poverty, contribute to climate change targets and deliver positive outcomes for society. To support this strategy, we have set out a vision that describes our goal, setting out our desired outcome for the future and what success will look like. This vision will be shared across government departments and our partners.

During our stakeholder engagement phase this vision was tested and discussed. Most stakeholders welcomed the proposed vision. This vision is aspirational and should guide our work and the work of our partners when making decisions that may impact on people experiencing fuel poverty. It sets out our overall outcome and should be easily understood, not just by our partners, but also the people we are trying to help.

Principles

These principles support our vision and guide all the work we do, describing the way we will deliver solutions to tackle fuel poverty. All proposals and actions must meet each guiding principle and contribute to our vision for the future.

PRINCIPLE	EXPLANATION
Long-term sustainable solutions	Ensure people are lifted out of fuel poverty by focusing on long term solutions rather than short term fixes, aligning our duties under the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022, including those relating to the Just Transition principle and its connected objectives to ensure that actions taken eliminate poverty, inequality and social deprivation.
Needs-based	Respond to the changing needs of people in or at risk of fuel poverty by providing more flexible, holistic support that prioritises those most in need.
Collaborative	Building partnerships, referral networks and collaboration across all sectors of society will be at the heart of everything we do.
Participative	Empowering people and communities to seek long-term solutions, recognising and removing barriers, and enhancing the capacity and confidence of fuel poor people to seek support.

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed vision and guiding principles? If not, please suggest alternatives and why?

Timeframe

We believe that a new Fuel Poverty Strategy needs to give sufficient long-term direction for stakeholders while also recognising that we are in a period of significant change in decarbonisation policy. We propose that the strategy focus on a ten-year period to 2035

with a review in 2030. This will provide a clear pathway for homeowners, our partners and industry to plan, prepare, invest and engage in the journey to more efficient homes and greater energy security.

Question 2: Do you agree with the timeframe and review period? If not, why not?

7. Make homes more energy efficient

OUTCOME 1: Improved energy efficiency for vulnerable households

Energy efficient homes are easier to heat and stay warm for longer. Improving energy efficiency is therefore a priority to reduce fuel poverty. A vulnerable household is one that is most at risk of fuel poverty and most likely to be negatively impacted by it, for example, households with low incomes, a long-term health condition or illness exacerbated by the cold. Good quality, warm, secure housing is vital to both mental and physical health, with the very young and very old most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel poverty.

More efficient homes contribute to the Energy Strategy principle of “Do more with less”¹⁴ and the Housing Supply Strategy objective of reducing whole-life carbon emissions from new and existing homes.¹⁵

To deliver on this outcome, we will:

- Raise and appropriately enforce housing standards

- Increase investment in energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households

Current schemes to improve energy efficiency include the Affordable Warmth Scheme, Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) and projects developed and delivered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Government energy efficiency schemes raised mean SAP figures (an estimate of how much energy a property uses) from 59.63 to 65.83 between 2011-2016 and contributed to fuel poverty reduction during this period. However, investment in energy efficiency must increase significantly. Government must also collaborate across departments to ensure that there is a common approach to how we design and target future home energy schemes.

Minimum housing standards in Northern Ireland are significantly lower than those in the rest of the UK. Inefficient housing stock contributes to fuel poverty and stakeholders

¹⁴ The Path to Net Zero Energy. Safe. Affordable. Clean. (economy-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁵ Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039 (communities-ni.gov.uk)

particularly raised concerns about inadequate housing in the private rented sector (PRS). In addition to improving thermal comfort, raising housing standards will make homes easier to heat, reduce damp and condensation through appropriate ventilation, make rental properties more attractive, and increase the value of the house.

Objective 1: Raise and appropriately enforce housing standards

Housing standards include a mix of statutory and administrative standards applying to different tenures and covering a range of safety, environmental and amenity aspects. Elements of each impact the efficiency and thermal comfort of housing and will impact fuel poverty, though none were designed specifically for this purpose. Some of our housing standards have not been updated significantly for decades and therefore significant improvement is now required.

Our aim is for all homes to be of good quality meaning that everyone can expect the same high standards no matter their tenure. This means updating existing policies and developing new policies that will ensure our housing standards support the delivery of higher quality homes across all tenures.

Through our pre-consultation engagement, there was an emphasis on the challenges facing tenants in the PRS. Tenants feel they have very little control over energy efficiency

and heating provision and landlords often blame them for damp, mould, or disrepair. They feel vulnerable if they raise concerns about their living conditions, fear eviction if they make complaints about poor conditions and fear retaliatory rent rises after energy efficiency improvements.

Proposed action: Introduce a revised Decent Homes Standard for social housing by 2026

The Decent Homes Standard applies to the social housing sector. A home is considered decent if it meets four criteria:

- a) It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (Fitness Standard)
- b) It is in a reasonable state of repair
- c) It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- d) It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

DfC is developing a new Decent Homes Standard and social housing will be required to comply with this standard as part of the regulatory programme for social housing. Introducing this standard may impact fuel poverty as 'criterion d' (a reasonable degree of thermal comfort) requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating. A 'reasonable degree of thermal comfort' is not yet defined but is likely to require higher standards of energy efficiency

and the consultation on the new Decent Homes Standard will explore this more fully.

Question 3: What would a readily understandable and measurable definition of “thermal comfort” look like?

Proposed action: Introduce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) by 2027

The 2016 NIHCS¹⁶ estimated that only 43% of private rented dwellings had an EPC rating A-C and 26% of those living in the PRS were living in fuel poverty - the highest percentage of any sector. Tenants in the PRS make up a very high proportion of the number of calls to Housing Rights advice services and some of the most common issues raised are damp, mould and cold.¹⁷

DfC has enabling legislation to establish standards for the PRS.¹⁸ Given the highest levels of fuel poverty are in this sector we propose to set MEES for PRS by 2027. Landlords will be required to comply with these new MEES standards within this strategy period and the exact date will be subject to consultation. DfC is currently progressing the transfer of the Landlord Registration Scheme to Councils, with Lisburn

and Castlereagh Council acting as the lead for this work. The overarching aim of the transfer is to make registration a more meaningful tool for improving the PRS. A second phase of this work will include exploring the potential to link standards more explicitly to the registration process.

MEES for other sectors may also be needed to achieve our aim that everyone can expect the same high standards. The Scottish Government is proposing that owner-occupied homes will be required to meet the same MEES as the PRS five years later (2033 and 2028 respectively).

Question 4: For MEEs in PRS to effectively alleviate fuel poverty, what information or data do you think would be useful and what barriers would we need to overcome?

Question 5: Should MEES also be applied to other tenures? Please give reasons for your answer.

16 The Housing Executive - House Condition Survey (nihe.gov.uk)

17 A 'just transition' to net zero in Northern Ireland | Housing Rights

18 Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

Proposed action: Implement improved Fitness Standards for all tenures by 2030

The Fitness Standard is a basic standard for human habitation. It has not been substantially updated since its introduction in 1981 and has not kept pace with building standards, environmental or health and safety issues. 2% of dwellings (16,370) were considered unfit in 2016 and the most common reason for a property being classified as unfit was dampness.¹⁹ The House Condition Survey also assessed our housing stock based on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which is a risk-based system that replaced the Fitness Standard in England and Wales. Applying these standards, 9% of dwellings (69,900) had Category 1 hazards²⁰ and one of the common risks in HHSRS was excess cold.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The HHSRS is a statutory, risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. Environmental Health Officers inspect a property and consider the likelihood of harm to the occupier, how

serious it would be and whether it would pose any additional risk for children or older people.

The HHSRS assesses 29 hazards and the effect that each may have on the health and safety of current or future occupants of the property. If a hazard is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety, this is known as a Category 1 hazard. If a hazard is less serious or less urgent, this is known as a Category 2 hazard. Local Authorities have a duty take appropriate action in relation to Category 1 hazards and may choose to act in relation to other hazards.

The Housing Supply Strategy²¹ recognises that our Housing Fitness Standard lags behind other jurisdictions. It notes issues with the quality, security and safety of the PRS and commits to undertaking a comprehensive review of fitness standards. To address this, we commit to updating Fitness Standards by 2030. One area in which this standard is particularly deficient is defining "thermal comfort"; it requires "adequate provision for heating," but no minimum standard is specified. "Thermal comfort" will consider the outcomes of the Decent Homes Standard

¹⁹ House Condition Survey Main Report 2016 ([nihe.gov.uk](https://www.nihe.gov.uk))

²⁰ House Condition Survey Main Report 2016 ([nihe.gov.uk](https://www.nihe.gov.uk))

²¹ Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039 ([communities-ni.gov.uk](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk))

review and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

Question 6: Do you agree that introducing updated fitness standards will contribute to making homes more energy efficient? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Objective 2: Increase investment in energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households

A very significant increase in funding for energy efficiency schemes is required. This will deliver substantial savings for consumers²² and generate savings for public health²³. Investing in energy efficiency will tackle fuel poverty, help our communities, reduce emissions in the residential sector, support green jobs for economic growth, and improve health outcomes for tenants and homeowners, contributing to a reduction in health inequalities. Government must collaborate to ensure that access to different kinds of support is straightforward and home energy schemes complement and align with each other.

A key policy to support this objective is the successor to the Affordable Warmth Scheme. This new scheme will be vital to improving the energy efficiency of low-income households and in this consultation, we

explore some key aspects of the new scheme. We also need to ensure that we consider all potential funding pathways for investment to enable us to achieve our energy efficiency ambitions.

Proposed action: Alignment of Fuel Poverty Strategy principles in all new home energy schemes

All government domestic energy efficiency, heating and other energy schemes should be coordinated to ensure help is available to those who need it most. The majority of government funding for domestic energy efficiency schemes should be allocated to those on low incomes and particularly when facing additional vulnerabilities. Stakeholders called for home energy schemes to be complementary and proposed a common approach to eligibility, ensuring there are no gaps or cliff-edges in support.

While not all domestic energy schemes will focus on the fuel poor, we believe that they should take account of the principles proposed in this strategy so that the fuel poor are not left behind:

- Long-term sustainable solutions
- Needs-based
- Collaborative
- Participative

²² <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

²³ [Capturing the Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency \(windows.net\)](#)

For example, there is already a commitment that the roll-out of smart meters will be done with consumers at the core, in terms of both consumer protection, empowerment and cost effectiveness. Smart meters can improve consumer understanding of electricity use in the home, and, if new tariffs are introduced, they can help people manage or adjust their electricity use to take advantage of times when costs are lower²⁴.

Question 7: Do you agree that all government domestic energy schemes should take account of the Fuel Poverty Strategy principles?

Stakeholders also told us that as government develops new schemes we should ensure:

- **Consistency** – the need for long-term schemes and avoiding a ‘stop and start’ approach. Support to be available across Northern Ireland, moving away from what was sometimes referred to as a ‘postcode lottery’
- **Flexibility** – government should be responsive to changing needs and stakeholders requested that schemes build in flexibility in both eligibility and approach
- **Transparency** – making it clear what schemes are offering and who is eligible, as well as communicating with applicants

throughout the application process.

It also means government sharing appropriate data to help plan and target schemes to areas or groups of people who need support most.

Proposed action: Introduce a more ambitious fuel poverty energy efficiency scheme

All questions posed in this section refer to the Department for Communities new fuel poverty energy efficiency support scheme.

Improving the energy efficiency of vulnerable households has been a central element of the Government’s Fuel Poverty Strategy for many years. In Northern Ireland, the Affordable Warmth Scheme was introduced in 2014.

This Scheme provided a wide range of energy improvement measures including installation of new heating systems, cavity wall and loft insulation, replacement windows and external insulation in solid wall properties. The current Affordable Warmth Scheme stops in March 2026.

The Department for Communities is now planning an expanded, more ambitious energy efficiency support scheme that will take account of current economic issues, construction inflation and include the potential for replacing energy sources with lower carbon options.

²⁴ Data-For-Good-Final.pdf (esc-production-2021.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)

Eligibility Criteria

The current eligibility criteria used to assess applications within the Affordable Warmth Scheme are that:

- (i) applicants must own their own home and occupy it as their sole or main residence, or rent from a Private Sector landlord, and
- (ii) have a total gross annual household income of less than £23,000.

The income threshold and eligibility criteria are currently set in legislation within the Domestic Energy Efficiency Grants Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the use of gross income including certain passport benefits to define eligibility for grants provides a simple means of administering applications. However, the income threshold for the Affordable Warmth Scheme currently excludes groups such as the working poor and some pensioners as the calculation of the threshold was made using data that is now outdated.

During the stakeholder engagement workshops, participants raised the need to consider the makeup of income and stated that disposable income was the most important factor when looking at those low-income households most in need.

Additionally, the issue was raised that by only using income threshold as an eligibility criterion, it could mean a lack of flexibility.

Further discussion raised the point that as well as looking at household income, the makeup of a household was equally important, i.e. whether it was a couple with or without dependents or a single person, as it can also determine the amount of disposable income available.

Question 8: Do you agree that DfC should take a more flexible approach that considers current data when setting and reviewing:

- a) income thresholds and
- b) eligibility criteria?

Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 9: Do you agree that an income threshold should increase in line with minimum wage levels/inflation or another index such as Retail Price Index (RPI) to mitigate increases in the cost of living? Please give reasons for your answer.

Participants also felt that using the energy rating and age of a house as eligibility criterion was important, as investing in energy efficiency can make homes more sustainable and resilient which will not only help the current occupier of the house but also assist future generations that will live in the property.

Question 10: Should the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of a house be considered as part of eligibility criteria (i.e. the least energy efficient homes are considered first)? Please give reasons for your answer.

Energy Efficiency Measures

Given that in a typical household, heating accounts for over half of the fuel bills²⁵, most people think of their heating as a key factor when considering the energy efficiency of their home. But there is limited benefit in upgrading to an efficient boiler if other elements of the home such as windows that are single-glazed, doors that have gaps around the edges, and uninsulated floors, roofs, and walls are not addressed at the same time.

How well a home retains heat also plays a very important role in how much energy is used when heating your home. If your home is poorly insulated, your heating system will need to work harder and use more energy to maintain the temperature of your home. A typical house with no insulation will lose 33% of heat through walls and 25% through the roof²⁶.

The main element of retrofitting existing properties is to install measures to improve the fabric of the building such as insulation,

replacement glazing, controlled ventilation and improved airtightness. This alongside renewable energy sources such as solar panels and battery storage, plus low carbon heating options will make homes warmer, easier to heat and healthier for both the occupants and the planet. This is commonly known as the Whole House approach or providing a Whole House solution.

One of the lessons learned from the current Affordable Warmth Scheme is that although there was a priority of measures recommended, applicants could choose not to install all measures offered, opting instead to tackle one energy efficiency issue at a time, such as only replacing an old or broken boiler. By tackling individual measures, they weren't boosting the overall energy efficiency of their homes or maximising the support available.

Question 11: Do you agree that the new scheme should take a Whole House retrofit approach? Please give reasons for your answer

Question 12: If the Whole House approach is used, do you agree that all recommended measures must be installed unless there are exceptional reasons not to? Please give reasons for your answer

²⁵ Help and advice for heating your home - Energy Saving Trust

²⁶ Energy Saving Trust – Home Insulation

In order to meet climate change obligations, it will be necessary to phase out fossil fuel heating and move towards low carbon heating and renewable technologies such as solar panels with battery storage. Heat pumps are by far the most efficient technology, with their co-efficient of performance²⁷ approximately three to five times higher than the efficiency of condensing gas and oil boilers. However, to address and reduce the impact of fuel poverty it is imperative that the property is well insulated and ventilated so that the cost savings are passed to the householder.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme currently replaces or upgrades fossil fuel boilers if there is no functioning heating system in place or where an existing boiler is at least 15 years old. With the heavy reliance in Northern Ireland on fossil fuels such as oil, there will be a requirement for a stepped approach in the move to low carbon heating. Additionally, the Affordable Warmth Scheme failed to address the long-standing problem of 'hard to treat' homes, which typically are located in rural areas, off the gas network and often have a solid wall construction. This was a consequence of the current Affordable Warmth Scheme grant limits being too low to fully support these properties.

Question 13: Do you agree that the new scheme should prioritise low carbon heating solutions where possible?

Question 14: Do you agree that the new scheme should offer renewable technologies such as solar panels and battery storage to offset the running costs of low carbon heating solutions in low-income households? Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 15: Do you agree that rural properties should be prioritised for energy efficiency support? Please give reasons for your answer.

Proposed action: Consider alternative funding models to increase investment in energy efficiency schemes

The Energy Strategy included an Executive commitment to substantially increase funding and support for retrofitting buildings. The scale of the ambition to make homes more efficient is also set out in the Housing Supply Strategy. The draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland also recognises the need to facilitate retrofitting of the

²⁷ A heat pumps co-efficient of performance (COP) is a measure of its efficiency or how well it converts electricity into heating. A higher COP indicates a more efficient heat pump. For example, a COP of 4, means that for every kW of electricity used, 4 kW of heat was provided to the property.

existing housing stock to improve energy efficiency through increased investment and sustainable funding and partnership models. Investment in energy efficiency must increase significantly.

To achieve our ambitions, we must consider all financing options for home energy investment. Funding currently comes via core funding from the block grant (Affordable Warmth), electricity consumer bills (NISEP), rental income (for investment in social housing, supplemented by borrowing by Housing Associations), as well as individuals or institutions who invest for themselves, either for research purposes or to make a return.

‘The higher the percentage of people who are in fuel poverty should equate to more funding being made available to help with the problem.’

Government funding: We must increase energy efficiency funding for low-income households, particularly those who are more vulnerable. A multi-year budget is necessary to ensure that schemes are both long-term and sustainable. This would enable experience to be built up by delivery agents and referral partners and give confidence to industry to invest in requisite skills and training. It would also help prevent bottlenecks in applications and ensure that schemes are not closed early to new applicants. A key action to deliver this funding is DfC’s new fuel poverty scheme.

Private investment: To achieve higher standards of energy efficiency and thermal comfort we must unlock additional private investment. Stakeholders support a “sliding scale” or tiered approach, whereby those with greatest need receive the most support while those more able to pay contribute in line with their circumstances. This aligns with the public health concept of “proportionate universalism” whereby actions must be universal but with a scale and intensity proportionate to the level of disadvantage.

Landlords will need access to finance to support them to invest in their assets to reach new standards. However, landlord uptake of energy efficiency grants has been historically low: between 5-8% of home upgrades were installed in the private rented sector when Affordable Warmth offered 50% grants to landlords. In Scotland, schemes enabled landlords to access loans,

including the PRS Landlord Loan Scheme. As new standards are introduced, financing options for landlords will be consulted upon individually.

Housing Associations and NIHE carry out maintenance or improvements through their asset management programmes, funded by rental income. We are exploring Financial Transactions Capital funding being made available to Housing Associations to enable investment.

Question 16: Do you agree with a sliding scale approach to funding for home energy schemes?

Question 17: Do you agree that loans are the fairest financing option for landlords who are required to improve their assets? If not, what would you suggest as alternative funding options?

Consumers: The wholesale cost of energy makes up the largest and most volatile aspect of energy bills. Levies are also applied to bills to generate investment to save energy and reduce emissions, which also contribute to reducing costs in the longer-term. In

Northern Ireland, levies applied to electricity bills support the NI Renewables Obligation and the NISEP energy efficiency scheme for lower-income households. In GB, levies on electricity bills support new renewable generation as well as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) domestic energy efficiency grants scheme and the Warm Home Discount (WHD). ECO and WHD levies are also applied to gas bills.

In Northern Ireland levies usually comprise around 10% of electricity bills²⁸. In GB levies comprise approximately 16% of electricity bills and 6% of gas bills (April-June 2024).²⁹

Additional funding for energy efficiency schemes for low-income and vulnerable households could be enabled by increasing the current levy on electricity bills. NISEP costs a subsidised £3.12³⁰ per domestic customer and the estimated average Lifetime Gross Customer Benefit is between £2,310 and £5,500: a significant benefit for households who access the scheme³¹. Importantly, business and industrial users contribute to NISEP but the vast majority of funding is ringfenced for households.

28 Power NI Tariff Briefing Paper - April 2024.pdf (uregni.gov.uk)

29 Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit | Are 'green levies' going up in... (eciu.net)

30 Annual Retail Energy Market Monitoring Report 2022 | Utility Regulator (uregni.gov.uk)

31 Annual Report

Introducing levies on gas bills may also be a route to increasing investment for energy efficiency schemes. This could also help ameliorate potential disincentives to moving to low carbon, electrified heating in the future: only applying levies to electricity helps make it more expensive relative to gas.

For oil and other heating fuels there would be a number of challenges in considering energy efficiency levies, for example, the fact that these are unregulated, the high number of smaller suppliers, and potential taxation implications.

We would also want to understand the impact of increased energy efficiency levies on different consumers so that we may consider appropriate mitigation if required. This is addressed under Outcome 3.

Question 18: Do you agree that we should consider increasing levies from electricity bills to fund energy efficiency schemes for low-income households? Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 19: Should we explore introducing levies on gas to increase funding for such energy efficiency measures? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Question 20: What are your thoughts on exploring any revenue-raising opportunities for energy efficiency schemes from unregulated heating sources such as home heating oil?

8. Collaborate and Build Capacity

OUTCOME 2: Increased access to trusted energy efficiency advice, measures and support for low-income, vulnerable households through partnership working

While improving the energy efficiency of homes is an important element of alleviating fuel poverty, maximising incomes also plays an important role. The Department for Communities has a key role in this through the payment of social security benefits and helping people into employment, as does the Department for Economy through their economic policy, employment and skills programmes and support for further and higher education.

To alleviate fuel poverty, we want to ensure that people are accessing all the support they are entitled to, taking a holistic approach and collaborating with partners to ensure energy efficiency advice is included in the help provided to meet the needs of the person. The importance of collaboration and coordination of services to minimise duplication, maximise resources and improve outcomes for people was a key theme during our stakeholder engagement. We heard of the difficult circumstances people are in, and the stress and anxiety many face just trying to pay for the essentials in life. This experience meant that

people relied on trusted partners, friends and family to seek help, support and advice.

“People only really seek help when they are at rock bottom and are desperate. To really help you need to get people before they hit rock bottom especially to help with mental health. There is a stigma attached to seeking help and it puts people off.”

This section focuses on collaborating and building partnerships to identify and provide advice and long-term sustainable support to those most in need. A key part of this will be to build the capacity and confidence of people to seek solutions. However, in many cases, that means dealing with the immediate challenge of keeping their home warm before they can focus on the future.

To deliver on this outcome, we will:

- Utilise and build on experience and knowledge of others to increase energy wellbeing

- Ensure consistent, accessible financial support for vulnerable people in emergencies

“When people are already tired and down the last thing they have the energy for is to fight for what they are entitled to.”

Objective 3: Utilise and build on experience and knowledge of others to increase energy wellbeing

During our engagement all stakeholders praised the invaluable help and support provided by advice organisations, community groups, charities and church / faith groups. These organisations are trusted by their communities and have local knowledge that we could never replicate. We also heard of the importance of professionals who are in people’s homes on a regular basis, such as health workers and midwives, in identifying people most in need and providing vital advice and information.

We want to utilise these networks and build on established relationships to ensure those in fuel poverty can access long-term sustainable support to enable them to obtain and afford adequate energy to support their wellbeing in their home (energy wellbeing). To ensure people who

need our help seek it, it is important that we raise the importance and benefits of energy wellbeing and remove the stigma of seeking help and support. We also need to highlight and educate about the visible signs when someone may be struggling.

We know that people are more likely to seek support from people they trust. For some populations this trust may be lacking more than others, for example those from certain migrant communities and travellers. Trusted sources may be family, friends or organisations that have provided support in the past and built a relationship with the person needing help. There is an important role for trusted partners in the health sector, the independent advice network and across the voluntary and community sectors to raise awareness of energy wellbeing, remove any stigma to seeking help and direct people to the appropriate support.

During our engagement, the support provided by the Independent Advice and Debt Services Sector was widely praised and used as an example of how to build referral partnerships and support vulnerable people. This Sector is part of the wider Voluntary and Community Sector and comprises local community-based advice services in each council area, supported by regional advice organisations Advice NI and Law Centre NI. DfC currently

invests approximately £6.6 million annually into the provision of Independent Advice and Debt Services.

Local councils are co-funders and commissioners of community-based advice provision and this is central to the ambitions of Community Plans which have a focus on individual and community well-being.

The Family Support Hub model was also praised. This is a multi-agency network of statutory, community and voluntary organisations that provide early intervention services, or work with families who need support.

Referral partnerships within DfC include DfC's Make the Call benefits advice line following up on Personal Independence Payments (PIP) applications following notification of a terminal illness diagnosis. This leads to an offer of advice and guidance on the wide range of support the applicant may be entitled to, from benefits and transport to energy advice, providing referrals or application assistance as needed.

Subject to Executive approval, during 2025 DfC will consult on the People and Place Strategic Framework Review to improve how we address the objective

need of using a place-based approach to tackling deprivation. This will build on existing structures to develop practical community-based led delivery models to rebalance the relationship between government and communities, giving communities an increased ownership of decision making and improved outcomes.

Proposed action: Utilise and enhance referral partnerships across government and our partners to raise awareness of energy wellbeing, identify people in fuel poverty and provide support

To raise awareness, identify people who need support and provide this support, we will utilise and build upon collaborative partnerships and referral pathways between Government, local Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. We do not want to duplicate support but rather build a partnership approach to better blend support services to the community and people in need including energy advice and the installation of energy efficiency measures, where appropriate. We will take best practice used by these organisations and provide specialist support when needed, using warm handovers to ensure vulnerable people access the support they need. This will include raising awareness with voluntary and community and health professionals on the signs and impact of fuel poverty, energy advice and referral pathways.

Building on and utilising existing partnerships and referral networks should improve outcomes for people struggling with fuel poverty as they will have access to more holistic support from the right people, delivering the right service at the right time. The Utility Regulator Code of Practice for Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances requires companies to ensure processes are in place to enable a warm handover of consumers in vulnerable circumstances who need additional support.³² Energy companies could use these referral partnerships to support their customers who are experiencing hardship, either by building a relationship with partners or by referring their customer to additional advice and support.

“I was financially stable, was working and had money coming into the house. I was able to get a mortgage and buy the house and then everything changed when my partner died.”

Referral pathways and holistic support are crucial at crisis or transition points in peoples’ lives, such as following a bereavement or serious health diagnosis. We will seek to enhance the support

provided by Make the Call at these critical transition points to include energy advice and support, working with a wide range of partners including health, Voluntary and Community partners, statutory organisations and energy companies.

Question 21: Do you agree that we should utilise and build referral pathways between Government, local Government, health professionals and the Voluntary and Community Sector? If yes, how can we best achieve this?

Proposed action: Introduce a One Stop Shop

Throughout our stakeholder engagement we heard the call for a local, tailored support service so people can access the energy, financial, technical and behavioural advice they need to become more energy efficient and reduce their energy costs. The Energy Strategy made a commitment to establish a One Stop Shop to act as a focal point for consumers as we transition to Net Zero, deliver trusted advice and support to consumers, raise awareness and provide coordination across Government, the public sector and Voluntary and Community Sector. This was expanded on in the 2022 consultation on the One Stop Shop Implementation Plan.

³² Appendix 2 (NIW) - Code of Practice for Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances.pdf (uregni.gov.uk)

The establishment of a One Stop Shop was widely endorsed by all stakeholders. It underpins many key energy priorities for government. A One Stop Shop offers the opportunity to empower consumers through the provision of free impartial advice, building trust in new technologies, ensuring alignment and delivery of support, services and grants, and supporting behavioural change.

We support the provision of all energy efficiency advice and measures through the One Stop Shop model. One single point of contact for all energy efficiency support will allow us to assess the needs of the consumer and offer the appropriate support. This may mean financial support, either grants or loans, or by offering support with the actual application process, right through to aftercare support, based on the individual circumstances and needs of the consumer.

Many stakeholders conveyed their frustration of frequently changing information, contacts, support and eligibility criteria. The One Stop Shop will offer a single point of contact for specialist advice and grants, and additional support depending on the needs of the consumer. Having a single point of contact will reduce confusion and increase transparency of schemes, while still leaving space for the schemes to be flexible if required.

The Department for the Economy has committed to establish a One Stop Shop. Collaboration across Government and our partners will be necessary to ensure those likely to experience fuel poverty are supported to access specialist energy advice and grants.

Proposed action: Explore role of community energy in addressing fuel poverty

Communities can work together to discover and implement solutions to their energy needs, an approach taken in the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere. This was also recognised in the Energy Strategy which contains a specific commitment to adopt policies that facilitate active consumers and energy communities.

Stakeholders noted local examples of community energy, such as the Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE) solar energy scheme, which fed profits into a community fuel poverty fund, the GAA green energy fund, the Drumlin Wind Farm Cooperative and recently launched Sustainable Energy Communities project. More broadly we heard calls for the development of community masterplans or community workshops on energy efficiency with more consistent support from Councils.

Community buy-in to energy infrastructure was raised as a significant issue in rural areas where most renewable energy generation is located. Rural communities particularly felt that community energy and renewable technologies were crucial in fostering energy wellbeing.

The Welsh Government Energy Service provides financial and technical support to help public sector and community groups develop their own renewable energy projects. When a community comes forward with an idea, support can be provided with feasibility studies, technical support, non-repayable grants and access to further Welsh Government loan funding. Scotland also has structures in place to support community energy projects such as private sector-funded grant schemes and the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) which supports communities to engage with, participate in, and benefit from the transition to net zero emissions.

Through GB Energy, the Labour Government has committed to scale up municipal and community energy by partnering with energy companies, local authorities and cooperatives to develop small- and medium-scale community energy projects. Profits will flow directly back into local communities to reduce bills with more local generation and ownership

During our stakeholder engagement we heard that those who may be struggling to pay their energy bills may find it harder to engage in seeking or developing community energy solutions. Additional bespoke support will be required to support people and communities to develop community energy projects in response to fuel poverty.

To ensure that vulnerable people and communities can participate in this potential solution to fuel poverty and provide energy stability and resilience for their communities, government will establish a taskforce comprising industry, councils, community energy schemes, experts and community representatives to develop enabling frameworks for community energy.

Question 22: Do you agree with a taskforce/working groups to develop enabling frameworks for energy communities?

Proposed action: Implement key aspects of the NICE 6 Guidelines on the health risks associated with living in a cold home

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produces guidelines containing evidence-based recommendations for the health and social care sector. NG6 focuses on reducing the health risks (including preventable deaths)

associated with living in a cold home.³³ The recommendations relate to:

- developing a strategy for people living in cold homes
- identifying people at risk from cold homes
- training practitioners to help people with cold homes
- raising awareness of how to keep warm at home
- ensuring buildings meet required standards

Implementing these guidelines in Northern Ireland would increase awareness within the health, social care and voluntary sectors of how health problems caused or exacerbated by cold homes can be addressed through appropriate referrals, training, and identifying heating needs as well as ensuring people are discharged to a warm home. There are also recommendations for housing and energy suppliers on how to deal with certain vulnerable groups whose homes may be too cold for their health and wellbeing. Their implementation would also help to address health inequities in a society where those who live in deprived areas have lower life expectancy, greater health struggles and worse outcomes.

Question 23: Do you agree that government should assess the most relevant recommendations of the NICE6 guidelines and consider their implementation?

Objective 4: Ensure consistent, accessible financial support for vulnerable people in emergencies

During our stakeholder engagement, we heard of the difficulties people struggling with fuel poverty have in looking towards the future and seeking long-term help. We also heard of the challenges that vulnerable people, such as elderly people or those with health conditions, have in accessing appropriate help and support. While we are committed to collaboration and building partnerships to ensure long term help, we recognise that people will still experience crises when access to emergency financial support is required. However, in line with the overarching principles of this strategy, the provision of emergency support must always be accompanied by energy advice and / or a referral to a long-term sustainable solution to support long-term energy wellbeing.

“To get the bare necessity of heat, I have to go to a foodbank.”

³³ Overview | Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes | Guidance | NICE

Proposed action: Work with other organisations to ensure consistent emergency support and referrals to energy efficiency measures and advice

People may experience occasions in their lives, when, potentially due to an unforeseen bill or an unexpected life event, they will require emergency financial support to keep the lights on or heat their homes. There are many organisations such as food banks, councils' hardship funds and charities such as Bryson House, the Salvation Army or St Vincent De Paul that provide crisis fuel support. However, awareness of support available, knowledge about how to access it, scheme eligibility and availability vary widely across council districts. Many vulnerable people do not know where or how to access support and through our engagement, it seemed that for some, securing emergency support was by chance, maybe hearing from a friend or family member or through contacting a charity.

In response, we will work with organisations, such as local Government, to increase awareness and accessibility of emergency financial support for vulnerable fuel poor people across Northern Ireland. This support should be geographically consistent and must include a referral to energy advice and / or a long-term sustainable solution, most likely an energy efficiency / fuel poverty scheme.

“There is nothing out there. If I had no gas or oil, I don't know where to go.”

Question 24: Do you agree that we should work with organisations that provide emergency support, to seek a consistent approach across Northern Ireland and the inclusion of a referral to a long-term solution? If so, what would be the best way to achieve this?

Proposed action: In a future energy crisis, target financial assistance at those most in need.

The Discretionary Support scheme is unique to Northern Ireland and was introduced in November 2016 to provide a fast and responsive means of providing short-term financial support. Eligibility criteria includes an income threshold, residency in Northern Ireland and being in an extreme or exceptional situation or a crisis. Applicants

who receive financial assistance from Discretionary Support are referred to Make the Call who complete a benefit needs assessment to identify potential entitlement to benefits and services. Discretionary Support is a well-recognised provider of emergency financial support, and it is available across Northern Ireland.

During the COVID pandemic, Discretionary Support was able to respond quickly, amending legislation to deliver financial support to people who were required to self-isolate. During the subsequent cost of living crisis, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also made large-scale payments (on behalf of DfC) using the benefit system as a quick and easy way to identify those who needed support. During the winter of 2022/23, large scale energy payments were made to all energy customers. While this support was much welcomed, it was not targeted at those most in need.

If there was a future energy or cost-of-living crisis, due to the relative flexibility of Discretionary Support to provide emergency assistance, we propose, until we can secure improved data of who is most in need, that financial support through Discretionary Support should be prioritised rather than developing local large-scale payments based on benefit entitlement. This should ensure that assistance is based on need,

which is a more targeted approach and a much better use of resources. Optimising referral pathways highlighted previously should ensure people who need support are referred to Discretionary Support and could offer support to vulnerable people who may find the application process a barrier.

If Discretionary Support is to undertake this role in the future, it must be appropriately resourced, both financially and physically, potentially having the ability to stand up teams to manage claims in critical times of need.

In addition, we will explore options to share data between relevant organisations, such as the Department for Communities, the Utility Regulator and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to ensure, if a future energy price emergency was to occur and large-scale payments were to be made, financial assistance could be targeted at those most at need.

Question 25: Do you agree with the proposal to prioritise Discretionary Support to provide emergency financial support if there is a future energy or cost of living crisis, until we have better data to target large scale payments? If not, can you provide a reason?

Proposed action: Gain a better understanding of the impact of changes to the Winter Fuel Payment and introduce additional support where appropriate

The Winter Fuel Payment was introduced in 1997 as a non-means-tested annual payment ranging from £100 - £300 paid to everyone who reached the qualifying age for State Pension, which is currently 66, and due to rise to 67 in 2026. On 29 July 2024, the Chancellor announced that from Winter 2024/25 onwards, only those receiving Pension Credit or other means-tested benefits would receive the annual Winter Fuel Payment in England and Wales, targeting these payments at those who are most in need. The NI Executive had to maintain parity with GB and implemented the revised eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments locally.

An estimated 28% of households entitled to Pension Credit are not receiving it, with approximately £1.1 million in unclaimed Pension credit expenditure. To maximise claims from those who are eligible, DfC has begun a campaign to promote its uptake.

To minimise the impact of this change on pensioners here, we will analyse the impact of the removal of Winter Fuel Payments on pensioners who are above the threshold for Pension Credit to gain a better understanding of who may be at risk of fuel poverty as a result of this change. Following this analysis, we will provide support, if necessary, to help those who have moved into fuel poverty. This may include working with referral partners and / or energy companies to provide energy advice and long-term support through fuel poverty interventions. If necessary, and subject to the allocation of the necessary budget by the NI Executive, emergency financial support to pensioners who have moved into fuel poverty or are at risk of falling into fuel poverty will also be considered.

Question 26: Do you agree with the proposal to gain a better understanding of the impact of changes to Winter Fuel Payments and introduce additional support where appropriate? If not, why and do you have alternative suggestions?

9. Protect Consumers

OUTCOME 3: Informed, protected consumers have access to essential, sustainable and affordable energy

The cost of energy is a concern for many households. Improving energy efficiency and generating and using more local renewable energy are crucial to reducing our reliance on expensive imported fossil fuels. However, we need to improve our understanding of how new energy policies impact bills and any potential impacts on fuel poverty, as initial investment in energy efficiency and low-carbon heating sources is required to ensure longer-term savings. It may be necessary to implement energy cost mitigation measures if decarbonisation policies have imbalanced or unfairly distributed impacts on energy bills for different groups of people.

Other forms of energy consumer protection are also important, such as measures relating to debt, standards of service, Codes of Practice and energy literacy.³⁴ Currently price protections only apply to some regulated energy suppliers for electricity and gas; we want to assess whether there are specific vulnerabilities that affect those using oil or pre-payment meters.

We also need to consider protection of consumer's homes when new insulation measures or changes to heating systems are required. People should be able to easily access reliable advice, have confidence in the quality and standard of work carried out, and trust that, if things go wrong, they will be put right with help and support. Protecting consumers in these ways will help to ensure that we achieve a Just Transition.

To deliver on this outcome, we will:

- Implement a new support framework for energy affordability
- Ensure robust protection and redress for heating and energy efficiency

Objective 5: Implement a new support framework for energy affordability

Affordability is a key aspect of consumer protection. Carbon reduction investment brings long-term benefits but there will be necessary short-term costs.³⁵ This strategy's priority is to help manage energy costs through improved energy efficiency in homes. However, a Just Transition means that all policies that will impact energy costs

³⁴ Consumer Protection Programme 2024 – 2029 (CPP24) – Final decision paper | Utility Regulator (uregni.gov.uk)

³⁵ [The-Sixth-Carbon-Budget-The-UKs-path-to-Net-Zero.pdf](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publications/the-sixth-carbon-budget-the-uks-path-to-net-zero/) (theccc.org.uk)

must be developed and implemented in such a way that they alleviate fuel poverty, particularly for those most impacted by it. Where this is not possible, appropriate mitigation measures should be considered to ensure that households still have access to essential and affordable energy to enable a decent standard of living and health. Therefore, we need to improve our understanding of the impacts of new policies and schemes on different types of consumers.

Network costs represent about 25% of domestic gas bills and domestic electricity bills. Supply costs make up around 8% and environmental policy costs – NISEP and NIRO renewable energy support – around 10% of electricity bills.³⁶ In Northern Ireland fixed costs are more heavily skewed towards industrial and commercial consumers than domestic consumers.

Proposed action: Improve our understanding of energy decarbonisation policies on the affordability of domestic energy bills

While low-carbon investment will generate savings in the long-term, the distribution of costs and savings over time could create

both winners and losers. Achieving a Just Transition in Northern Ireland requires us to ensure that the impacts of decarbonisation policies will be just and fair. This aligns closely with the Path to Net Zero Energy commitment to assessing the impacts of upfront investment and long-term energy bills on identified consumer populations.

Taking this commitment forward may mean that we need to introduce or improve mechanisms for identifying the impacts and trade-offs of new policies or regulatory decisions on different groups of people. Assessing costs and benefits can be a complex issue. For example, funding for the NISEP energy efficiency scheme comes from levies on all domestic and non-domestic electricity bills. The levies, although small, make up a larger proportion of the household income of lower-income groups. However, the scheme improves energy efficiency in lower-income households which leads to significant lifetime savings in their energy bills. There are potential challenges for regulators to make such trade-offs without government guidance; conversely, government may require information on the context and potential impacts of different choices from the regulator before providing such guidance.³⁷

³⁶ Power NI Tariff Briefing Paper - April 2024.pdf (uregni.gov.uk)

³⁷ Strategic Investment and Public Confidence (nic.org.uk)

Ofgem has introduced an impact assessment tool to better understand the impacts of changes in the energy system on consumers. This assesses how the costs or benefits are distributed across consumers with different characteristics such as income levels, disabilities and fuel types.³⁸ The assessments are part of the decision-making process and provide a structured framework for understanding the impacts of certain decisions (see box).³⁹ They can provide an insight into how policy costs can be spread across either unit rates or standing charges.

After calls for the abolition of standing charges in GB Ofgem analysed potential impacts using their distributional impact assessment tool and concluded:

- 5 million lower-income households would benefit
- 1 million lower income households would lose out and these would include some vulnerable customers with high energy needs, including those reliant on medical equipment and those with poorly insulated homes

The overall effect would be progressive (lower-income consumers would benefit more) but lower-income households that would lose out would see an increase in bills by twice as much as bills would fall

elsewhere. Using this analysis, Ofgem was able to develop options to reduce standing charges by moving some charges to the unit rate and increasing the range of such charges that suppliers offer. The analysis highlights an overall benefit from the changes proposed but also that some consumers' bills would increase. Ofgem was then able to work with government on how the impact on households in the domestic retail market could be reduced.

A better understanding of how new policies could impact the energy bills of different population groups could support evidence-based decision-making and help identify whether potential mitigations may be required. The Consumer Council highlights this as an important aspect of future-proofing consumer affordability and it also reflects Utility Regulator's commitment to embed Just Transition principles within their analysis and decision-making.

³⁸ Assessing the distributional impacts of economic regulation (ofgem.gov.uk)

³⁹ Standing charges: domestic retail options | Ofgem

Question 27: Do you agree that we should improve our understanding of the impacts of energy decisions on the energy bills of different consumer groups? If so, what would be the best way of understanding these impacts?

Proposed action: Raise awareness of existing price protection tools

Consumers can manage their energy bills by understanding and reducing their energy use and looking for the cheapest supplier. For electricity and gas, the best way a consumer can affect their bill is through switching suppliers to get a cheaper tariff. However, switching is challenging for some people: even if they get help to switch, they may not be able to check and change when the initial offer stops and prices rise. People can also engage with suppliers on payment methods that may be more suitable for them.

Oil prices are more volatile than gas or electricity and competition between suppliers is the primary method of keeping costs down.⁴⁰ Oil-buying clubs can help people buy in bulk with average savings of £10-£30 on 200 litres of oil, however stakeholders, particularly in rural communities, reported inconsistency in the availability of such clubs. The Consumer Council also publishes weekly data on oil prices to help people find the cheapest supplier.

Not enough people are aware of, or use, the tools that help access lower-cost energy. It is therefore important to increase awareness and engagement in tariff and supplier switching and oil-buying clubs while recognising that there can be barriers to accessing the cheapest energy source for those who have certain vulnerabilities.

Question 28: Do you have suggestions for how we could improve understanding and awareness of existing tools to enable consumers to manage their energy costs?

Question 29: How can we support vulnerable people to ensure they are on the most affordable tariff?

Proposed action: Investigate targeted affordability support for certain vulnerable households

While investment in energy efficiency is our priority to help people keep their homes warm, this solution is not always appropriate. For example, people living with a terminal illness or significant disability can have higher bills due to medical or life-saving equipment. Energy efficiency measures could support these groups but the timeframe and potential disruption for such works may not be the right solution.

⁴⁰ Home Energy Index | Consumer Council

Stakeholders suggested bill support to help certain low-income households. This would support targeted households through either an ongoing discount on the unit rate, a commitment to certain customers always being on the lowest tariff, a regular rebate on bills, or some combination of these.⁴¹ Such support would usually be subsidised by a levy on all consumer bills.

We believe that any support, if implemented, should be targeted at particularly vulnerable households for whom other forms of support, such as energy efficiency schemes, may not be appropriate. These vulnerable households could be groups such as low-income households with a terminal illness or a long-term disability that necessitates the usage of specialised medical equipment. We will build an evidence base that includes an analysis of the wider financial impacts of such support. We will also explore the barriers and opportunities of extending the GB Warm Homes Discount to Northern Ireland. We are aware that there are likely to be a number of legislative and operational challenges to doing so.

Question 30: Do you agree that we should explore potential affordability support for populations where energy efficiency measures may not be the right solution?

If so, which population groups? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Objective 6: Ensure robust protection and redress for heating and energy efficiency.

The Energy Strategy notes the need to review existing consumer protection frameworks. Such protections may mean different things depending on the service or product being offered, for example the type of energy supplied, or a new technology being installed in a home.

Certain protections are already in place for consumers in Northern Ireland, but we want to look at those areas where greater protection may be needed. For example, in GB Ofgem identified some consumer protection issues in off-grid markets such as heating oil and LPG.⁴² In our focus groups we heard from people, particularly low-income, those in rural areas and those with disabilities, who experience challenges with their oil supply. Furthermore, people who use pre-payment meters can “self-disconnect” by not topping up and data on this is limited. Similar “self-disconnection” occurs for off-grid fuels, whereby consumers are unable to afford the cost of fuel and either ration significantly or simply go cold.

⁴¹ The UK Energy Bill Support Scheme and Energy Price Guarantee, introduced in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, were not social tariffs as they were not targeted to low-income or vulnerable households.

⁴² insights paper on households with electric and other non-gas heating | Ofgem

When choosing or installing energy efficiency and renewable energy options, people need to have confidence in the quality and standards of work carried out. They should be able to easily access advice and they need to trust that if things go wrong, they can be put right, with help and support.⁴³ We propose that the following core components should be in place across all Government energy efficiency schemes:

- Trusted advice is available and provided in an easily understandable form
- Confidence in the suitability of recommended energy efficiency and renewable energy measures made through a consistent and complete assessment of the property
- Quality installations are carried out to robust standards by skilled installers, who are members of a standards body, helping consumers identify reliable, trustworthy businesses
- Reassurance that if things go wrong, there is a simple, fair and consumer-focused redress process to make it right

Proposed action: Assess need for non-price protection of less-protected energy and take appropriate steps

In our focus groups we heard that home heating oil accessibility and supply issues are experienced by some low-income, disabled or rural populations and that those from traveller communities have had similar experiences with other alternative heating sources. As we transition our energy use away from fossil fuels these issues may present a greater challenge for those unable to make the change to other energy sources, such as electricity, where a more robust standard of service exists because of market regulation.

Within the regulated sector, people who use pre-payment meters can also experience physical accessibility issues. Recent research also highlights that while people who use gas or electricity prepayment meters are protected by a Code of Practice, most people do not contact their supplier for support when facing challenges⁴⁴. Those who may be struggling should contact their suppliers to see whether help is available but it may be that communication could be improved to encourage this type of engagement.

⁴³ [Decarbonisation_Energy_Transport_and_Water_Summary.pdf \(consumercouncil.org.uk\)](#)

⁴⁴ [Energy Hardship - Consumer Lived Experiences - full report.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](#)

There are therefore different challenges and protection levels for different energy users. More research may be required to identify particular issues for different energy users before we determine whether there is a need to strengthen or provide more consistent non-price protection.

Question 31: Is further research required to identify gaps in non-price protection for different energy users in Northern Ireland? If yes, what should we focus on?

Proposed action: Agree minimum quality standards for all energy efficiency schemes

Reducing energy bills or improving warmth and comfort in homes include traditional methods like adding insulation, changing windows and installing energy-efficient boilers. Renewable energy technologies, such as heat pumps and solar power are becoming more cost-competitive and cheaper to run providing that the property is well insulated and ventilated and along with solar battery storage, play an increasing part in helping many householders produce and store energy in their homes.

‘Have trusted partners who are trusted to know what is needed in a home, that they will not rip people off and will have high standards’

Consumer confidence is required to support people to buy, install, or accept support to embrace these products. Therefore, it is critical that people can trust businesses to treat them fairly and are protected from harmful practices. During the stakeholder engagement workshops, participants raised fears that installers in Northern Ireland may not be fully competent in installing these technology products. However, whilst relatively new to Northern Ireland, they have been commonplace in USA and Europe for many decades. Participants also asked as to the need for specified installer certification, qualifications and / or trusted supplier lists. We believe that a key step on the customer journey is to ensure that quality installations are carried out to robust standards by skilled installers, who are members of a standards body helping consumers identify reliable, trustworthy businesses.

Question 32: What are your views on whether government should adopt a common quality assurance standard or framework across all energy efficiency and low carbon heat grant schemes?

Proposed action: Ensure appropriate aftercare and redress mechanism for government energy schemes

Participants also called for a clear system in place for escalating a complaint with an independent arbiter if complaints reached an impasse. Consumer protection law already places obligations on businesses to provide people with the key information they need to make informed decisions, to use fair sales practices and contract terms, to have an effective way of dealing with complaints and to carry out work with reasonable care and skill. Bodies that enforce consumer protection law ensuring businesses act appropriately and treat consumers fairly include national and local Trading Standards and the Competition and Markets Authority.

Standards bodies often require member businesses to provide consumers with financial protection in case the business stops trading and is unable to honour the terms of their workmanship guarantee. This can provide consumers with additional peace of mind and, in addition to the installer’s workmanship guarantee, the product manufacturer will typically provide a guarantee to repair or replace a faulty item for a certain period of years. To help ensure that consumers have the necessary confidence and trust that they are protected, it is vital that there are robust and consistently high standards of quality, customer care and business competency, and that these are effectively monitored and enforced across all supported schemes.

Consumer protection along customer journey



Question 33: Do you agree that government should take a common approach to consumer protection across all supported energy efficiency schemes?

10. Governance and Accountability

Understanding fuel poverty

There are three main factors in determining whether a household is fuel poor: household income; energy efficiency; and fuel prices. However, it is measured differently across the UK and in other parts of the world. Understanding fuel poverty also means recognising its impacts: cold homes can cause and worsen physical and mental health conditions⁴⁵. People in fuel poverty may also be more susceptible to damp, mould and poor air quality, while draughty, inefficient homes require more energy to heat.

Through our engagement there were widespread calls for better and more frequent data on fuel poverty. There was interest in improving our understanding of the impacts of fuel poverty and using data to design better policy and ensure that interventions reach those who need help the most. We propose improving monitoring and increasing accountability by introducing indicators on issues that stakeholders have told us are important to them. This could also help us to identify groups that are

not being supported by existing policies, enable us to be responsive to these needs and improve links between policies and fuel poverty outcomes. We will keep this new approach for understanding and reporting on fuel poverty under review.

Most of the data we currently use to measure fuel poverty comes from the NI House Condition Survey, which is carried out every 5 years. We propose using additional annual statistics for many of the new indicators. In addition, we can improve our use of the data and research published by other organisations to monitor energy affordability in situations where rapid changes may occur, as happened during the fossil fuel price rises in 2021-22.

Stakeholders suggested we improve our understanding of the impact of new home energy schemes. We currently collect data such as energy cost savings, SAP improvements and carbon emission reductions⁴⁶ and, to ensure linkages between our strategic indicators and new interventions, we will work across

⁴⁵ Poor housing conditions harm family wellbeing | ESRI

⁴⁶ <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getattachment/b83a9174-6361-4bff-aac0-90c570c0e8c8/Affordable-Warmth-Boiler-Replacement-Scheme-Evaluation-2020-2022.pdf>

government to ensure that all new schemes collect pre- and post-intervention data that can contribute to the indicators above.

Reframing the issue

Fuel poverty is not a term that people usually apply to themselves. Recent Utility Regulator research⁴⁷ indicates that even those who are struggling most to stay warm do not describe themselves as ‘fuel poor’. Use of the term ‘poverty’ was felt by stakeholders to be unhelpful and could prevent people from accessing support designed for them. Government should use language that is person-centred and treats people with dignity.

‘The phrase fuel poverty puts people off’

Our vision could be better supported by focusing on how people’s wellbeing improves when they live in a warm, healthy home. This could be done by reframing fuel poverty towards a positive focus on “energy wellbeing”, and this may also reflect the proposed basket of indicators approach, which is set out below. However, changing language can cause confusion and have unintended consequences in designing and delivering policies.

We could consider introducing energy wellbeing or a similar phrase to emphasise the importance of households having access to essential and affordable energy to enable a decent standard of living and health. This positive viewpoint is based on language introduced in the Energy Strategy. Whether or not we introduce a new way of describing fuel poverty, we recognise that the language used when designing and delivering schemes must be clear, dignified and appropriate to those whom we support.

Question 34: Do you have suggestions about how government could change our use of language to improve buy-in and engagement on fuel poverty?

Building a picture of energy wellbeing

Indicators help us to understand the persistence of a problem, identify trends, make comparisons with other countries, identify the people affected by the problem and design and deliver policy. However, no single indicator can fulfil all these roles and such statistics do not necessarily tell us about the outcomes of being fuel poor. This becomes more important if we want to prioritise better health by focusing on those most likely to be adversely impacted by living in a cold, damp home.

⁴⁷ Utility Regulator launches new lived experience research on energy hardship | Utility Regulator (uregni.gov.uk)

We propose introducing a basket of indicators to improve the understanding of fuel poverty and help us measure progress towards our outcomes. This will make better use of data already collected from a range of sources, provide a more person-centric understanding of fuel poverty and its impacts, and give us better information about how to design policy to help people move out of fuel poverty. We will also continue to make better use of relevant data and research carried out elsewhere.

Using a basket of indicators will enable us to monitor progress in a timelier manner. As this is a new approach, indicators may be staggered depending on how frequently different data sources are published.

Fuel Poverty 10% indicator

We currently use the 10% indicator for fuel poverty as set out in 2001:⁴⁸

“a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use and to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth. This is generally defined

as 21° C in the living room and 18° C in the other occupied rooms – the temperatures recommended by the World Health Organisation”

Consistent use of this indicator using robust data collection through the House Condition Survey (HCS)⁴⁹ helps us to identify trends and understand the persistence of fuel poverty over time. It identifies some characteristics of people affected such as age, income and employment status, as well as the types of home that they are likely to live in. As it is based on what a household would need to spend, ‘under consuming’ - turning off the heating - is not counted as not being in fuel poverty. We therefore propose retaining this as one of our indicators as this will support our understanding of the overall persistence of the problem in Northern Ireland.

10% indicator using an after-housing costs calculation

Stakeholders raised concerns that using ‘before housing costs’ income could hide vulnerabilities of those with high rent or mortgage payments, and that this particularly affected working families with

⁴⁸ Fuel poverty strategy 2001.pdf (bristol.ac.uk)

⁴⁹ House Condition Survey Main Report 2016 (nihe.gov.uk)

children and those living in the PRS. Our current methodology uses a ‘before housing costs’ calculation which means older people are much more likely to be classed as being in fuel poverty because they typically own their homes outright and are less likely to rent. We propose introducing an ‘after housing costs’ indicator which will use the same methodology as the current 10% indicator. This may provide an additional perspective on those who may be struggling to pay all their household bills. In future, it may also help us to link changes in housing policy with our energy support mechanisms.

Neither oil nor pre-payment meter users have bills; rather, people delay getting a fill of oil or topping up their meter, or don’t turn on their heating.⁵⁰ Some people also prefer to borrow elsewhere to pay their energy bills rather than go into arrears with energy companies. We therefore propose using the Family Resource Survey (FRS) to understand the choices that people make in their own homes. This will also address some stakeholder concerns that the current definition of fuel poverty does not use disposable income in its methodology.

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
We will begin to capture information on fuel poverty levels using the 10% indicator for both before and after housing costs.	NI House Condition Survey

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Are you able to pay regular bills, including gas, electricity or oil, without cutting back on essentials?	FRS

Ability to pay utility bills without going without

We believe that we should build a better picture of people’s ability to pay their energy bills and to what extent this impacts their ability to pay for other necessities. Some parts of Europe use arrears on utility bills as an indicator for energy poverty but there are limitations with this approach in NI.

Household Expenditure on Energy

In 2024 Northern Ireland had the highest weekly expenditure on energy of any UK region. This is likely to be due to a combination of factors including energy mix; geographic and weather conditions; energy pricing; and lower household income levels. A major contributor is our dependence on fossil fuels.⁵¹ This indicator includes energy used for transport and was introduced

50 Utility Regulator launches new lived experience research on energy hardship | Utility Regulator (uregni.gov.uk)

51 Energy in Northern Ireland 2022 (economy-ni.gov.uk)

by the Energy Strategy to create a more holistic understanding of our energy needs as they become increasingly connected: for example, as electricity starts to power heating (heat pumps) and transport (electric vehicles). We believe that linking this Energy Strategy indicator with our fuel poverty strategy will help start to capture the impacts of policies on overall household energy spending.

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Household energy expenditure relative to all expenditure	ONS Living Cost and Food Survey ⁵²

Damp and mould

Cold homes exacerbate health inequalities⁵³ and can cause and worsen respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia and problems with childhood development. In Northern Ireland, respiratory illness is a leading cause of excess winter deaths.⁵⁴ People are aware of the negative impacts of mould

but are unable to keep their homes warm and healthy. When homes are made more energy efficient, they are less cold and damp and become cheaper to heat, which leads to ongoing savings to the Health and Social Care System⁵⁵. We propose using damp and mould as a secondary indicator for energy wellbeing, an approach taken in New Zealand⁵⁶. While the HCS captures this information through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System⁵⁷ we propose using data from the annual FRS, which for the first time in 2024 requests data from all households on the presence of damp.

INDICATOR	SOURCE
Is your home damp-free?	FRS

Being able to keep homes adequately warm

Our 10% indicator defines a specific adequate standard of warmth, but stakeholders noted that people’s backgrounds and health can affect their

52 Household energy expenditure relative to all expenditure

53 Fuel Poverty and Human Health : A Review of Recent Evidence — Ulster University; The cost of poor housing in Northern Ireland 2016 (nihe.gov.uk)

54 Winter Mortality in Northern Ireland, 2022-23 (nisra.gov.uk)

55 The cost of poor housing in Northern Ireland 2016 (nihe.gov.uk)

56 Report on energy hardship measures | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (mbie.govt.nz)

57 House Condition Survey Summary Report 2016 (nihe.gov.uk)

needs (e.g. people with disabilities requiring medical equipment, families with young children, older people, or people from other climates feeling the need to keep their home warmer). Some people supported the Scottish approach⁵⁸ of specified temperatures for targeted vulnerable groups. However, others felt that needs are best determined by the household themselves. We propose a new indicator based on people’s own assessment of their energy needs and their inability to meet those needs. The FRS asks a question about people’s ability to heat their homes; using this annual indicator would provide a subjective understanding of people’s own needs.

Winter mortality

There is a clear relationship between Winter Mortality and low indoor temperatures.⁵⁹ In Northern Ireland, winter mortality in the last decade ranged from 560 - 1,620 and together circulatory disease and respiratory disease accounted for just over half of additional winter mortality in 2022/23.⁶⁰ Chronic respiratory disease is one of the six groups of conditions that are the greatest contributors to ill-health and early mortality.⁶¹ Living conditions are a risk factor in all groups and cold homes are the greatest risk factor for those suffering from chronic respiratory conditions, though other factors such as air pollution also impact these. Deaths from cardiovascular diseases are directly linked to excessively low indoor temperatures for long periods of time.⁶² However, there have been UK discussions around an overhaul of the definition and methodology for the Winter Mortality indicator to improve it and address some of the issues around reliability. We propose using winter mortality as an indicator but given the potential changes, we will include regular reassessments as to whether it is the most suitable indicator to use.

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
In cold weather, is your home kept adequately warm?	FRS

58 The Fuel Poverty (Enhanced Heating) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 (legislation.gov.uk)

59 <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty.pdf>

60 Winter Mortality in Northern Ireland, 2022-23 (nisra.gov.uk)

61 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-conditions-strategy-case-for-change-and-our-strategic-framework/major-conditions-strategy-case-for-change-and-our-strategic-framework--2#fn>

62 <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/research/effect-cold-weather-heart#Heading2>

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
Compare the number of deaths that occur in December - March with the average number of non-winter deaths occurring in the preceding August- November and the following April - July	FRS

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
Annual modelling of figures for both extreme and severe fuel poverty	HCS

Severe and extreme fuel poverty

Stakeholders told us that we need a renewed focus on identifying those who are in deepest fuel poverty. Since 2011 we have used a severity index, whereby households which need to spend more than 15% of income on fuel use are in “severe fuel poverty”; and households which spend more than 20% of income are in “extreme fuel poverty”⁶³. In 2016, 2% of homes were in extreme fuel poverty, and 4% in severe fuel poverty. We propose modelling severe and extreme fuel poverty annually, which could enable a tiered approach of support for such households. However, breaking these figures down by tenure, age or income presents statistical challenges as the numbers are low. This may require further refinement in future.

The drivers of fuel poverty

Our 10% indicator is calculated using income, energy price and energy use and this can make it difficult to isolate the reason for changes in overall fuel poverty levels. The last House Condition Survey identified that the sharp drop in fuel poverty levels between 2011-2016 was due to:

- Gas price reductions of 26%-28%, electricity price decreases of between 4%-16% and reduction of heating oil prices by 0.01p/kWh
- A 16% increase in household income
- Government investment in domestic energy efficiency schemes leading to improvements to mean SAP figures from 59.63 to 65.84

Improved fuel poverty levels were therefore both a direct result of government policy - domestic energy efficiency schemes - as well as factors where government has little impact - fossil fuel prices - to which our

63 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/warmer-healthier-homes.pdf>

definition is very sensitive.⁶⁴ Understanding changes in the underlying drivers will help assess where our policies are having an impact and this is recognised by NIHE who now model the impact of each driver on fuel poverty levels.⁶⁵ We intend to continue to provide this breakdown going forward.

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
In our annual modelling we will continue to assess the impact of each driver on overall fuel poverty levels.	HCS and annual BRE modelling

Low-income households in energy inefficient homes - NEW

We believe that, as the area of fuel poverty over which we have most influence, we should introduce an indicator focused on energy efficiency. This would enable us to track progress and provide a clear link between our strategy and new policies and schemes across government. The main tool used to measure energy efficiency is the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).⁶⁶ There are challenges in using EPCs, for example, they do not consider dwelling size and some low-carbon interventions could potentially cause a drop in EPC ratings. The

House Condition Survey collects SAP ratings and this is the base for energy efficiency rating band data for all types of dwellings in NI. This can be cross-tabulated with fuel poor households and can be used as a new indicator. However, in future we want to improve the availability and frequency of energy efficiency data for homes and will explore how to do this.

PROPOSAL	SOURCE
NEW - Link SAP data with income deprivation	HCS

Energy confidence and awareness - NEW

‘How do you know where to go for help with energy? I didn’t have a clue where to go.’

A frequent theme from stakeholders was a lack of energy confidence, agency and awareness. There was a reasonable understanding of where to access emergency financial help, but for grants or

64 Hills, John (2012) the measure of fuel poverty: Final Report of the Fuel Poverty Review.

65 Estimates of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland in 2020 and 2021 (nihe.gov.uk)

66 Energy rating of housing in Northern Ireland - up to March 2023 (nisra.gov.uk)

trusted advice on energy efficiency, there is low awareness of where to go, who to ask and what support is available. If people lack confidence in how to engage in long-term solutions, they will be more likely to focus on short-term options such as vouchers or incurring debt. We believe that agency and awareness must be core to our approach and that policies need to be designed and delivered to enable people to engage in the solutions to fuel poverty. This reflects the Energy Strategy commitment to ‘Place you at the centre of our energy future’. We propose introducing a new indicator to help provide a better understanding of how confident and aware people are of information and support for energy solutions in their home. The NIHCS social survey asks about ‘seeking energy advice in the last 12 months’, however this data is only collected every five years.

INDICATOR	SOURCE
NEW - People’s awareness and confidence in being able to address their own energy issues	TBC

Question 35: Do you agree that government should take a basket of indicators approach to measuring and understanding fuel poverty?

Question 36: Are the indicators suggested the correct ones? Please provide reasons for your answer

Question 37: If you agree with the introduction of an indicator based on energy confidence, agency or awareness, do you have suggestions about what kind of indicator might be most valuable?

Carbon emissions

Achieving the targets in our Climate Change Act requires action to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Residential sector emissions form part of our overall reporting on carbon reduction. This means that new home energy schemes and new housing standards will be required to assess and report on their contribution to carbon emission reductions. We therefore do not propose using carbon emissions as an indicator for fuel poverty. However, we will ensure that carbon savings from all home energy schemes is reported in a consistent manner across government in future.

Question 38: Do you agree with our proposal that carbon emissions are not used as a fuel poverty indicator? Please provide reasons for your answer

Transparency and Accountability

The societal and health impacts of cold homes require a renewed focus. We recognise that alleviating fuel poverty and improving people's energy wellbeing will be an iterative process. The data we propose to capture and analyse will help us monitor our progress towards achieving our outcomes and allow us to target our policies and interventions more effectively. As part of our commitment to alleviating fuel poverty, we must increase visibility of the issue, thereby improving accountability and demonstrating government's best endeavours. This work will be guided by a cross-Departmental working group.

Lived Experience

In developing this consultation document, engagement with people living in fuel poverty was invaluable in helping develop proposed policies and actions, providing evidence and urgency to act. It is our desire to keep the lived experience of fuel poverty at the centre of this strategy and we are committed to ongoing engagement with people experiencing fuel poverty while building their confidence and capacity to engage / participate.

Question 39: What is the best way to continue to engage with people experiencing fuel poverty?

Annual Reporting

We believe that data on fuel poverty needs to be more frequent, more timely and more accessible. To achieve this, we propose to produce an annual report outlining our progress in achieving the actions contained within this strategy, modelling of the data from the proposed indicators and data from new home energy schemes, sharing the lived experience and future actions that will continue to address fuel poverty and contribute to the achievement of our outcomes.

Given the cross-cutting nature of fuel poverty and importance of collaboration this report should be laid before the Assembly by the Minister for Communities and will form the basis of an annual Ministerial statement on fuel poverty.

Fuel Poverty Advisory Group

As recognised in the introduction, alleviating fuel poverty requires a whole of government approach. It also requires a multi-agency approach. This complex issue cannot be resolved by just one organisation and the support we received from across Government, the Voluntary and Community Sector and the public in developing this strategy is proof of that. It also demonstrates the commitment of our partners to strive for change and we want to maintain and build on the partnerships and commitment we have gained.

To ensure all the key stakeholders are fully engaged and aligned towards achieving the vision, guided by our principles, ongoing communication and engagement built on trusting, working relationships will be key. Time and effort will be required to build and develop these relationships to ensure a truly collaborative approach is taken to alleviating and tackling the root causes of fuel poverty.

To assist with this, we propose the establishment of a Fuel Poverty Advisory group with partners from statutory agencies and the Voluntary and Community Sector. This group will play an advisory role to guide, advise and challenge actions and progress over the lifetime of the Fuel Poverty Strategy. While membership of the group will be appointed by the Minister, with secretariat provided by the Department

for Communities, the Advisory Group will be independent and offer a critical friend function in the implementation of the strategy. This will include reviewing the annual report and providing an assessment of our progress, helping develop future policies and actions as required.

Question 40 – Do you agree with the proposal for a Fuel Poverty Advisory Group, if not, can you suggest an alternative proposal?

Question 41 – If you have any further comments or suggestions not already captured, please provide these.

11. Next Steps

How to respond

This consultation will be hosted online at the following website: **<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/fuel-poverty-consultation>** The Citizen Space website has been specially designed to be as user-friendly and welcoming as possible for those who wish to complete the consultation. It also allows DfC to rapidly collate results. For this reason, we would encourage anyone who is interested in responding to this consultation to utilise Citizen Space as the method of their response.

If this is not possible, you can however respond to this consultation via email to **FuelPovertyStrategy@communities-ni.gov.uk** or you can respond in writing to the following address:

Fuel Poverty Strategy
Department for Communities
4th Floor, Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

When responding via email or in writing, please state whether you are responding as an individual, or representing the views of an organisation (please state the name of the organisation). Please also quote the following reference in your response: “Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation”.

Responses must be received by 23.59 on Thursday 6 March 2025.

Annex A - Summary of Questions in Consultation

1. Do you agree with the proposed vision and guiding principles? If not, please suggest alternatives and why.
2. Do you agree with the timeframe and review period? If not, why not?

Make homes more energy efficient:

3. What would a readily understandable and measurable definition of “thermal comfort” look like?
4. For MEES in PRS to effectively alleviate fuel poverty, what information or data do you think would be useful and what barriers would we need to overcome?
5. Should MEES also be applied to other tenures? Please give reasons for your answer.
6. Do you agree that introducing updated fitness standards will contribute to making homes more energy efficient? Please provide reasons for your answer.
7. Do you agree that all government domestic energy schemes should take account of the Fuel Poverty Strategy principles?
8. Do you agree that DfC should take a more flexible approach that considers current data when setting and reviewing income thresholds and eligibility criteria? Please give reasons for your answer.
9. Do you agree that an income threshold should increase in line with minimum wage levels/inflation or another index such as RPI to mitigate increases in the cost of living? Please give reasons for your answer.
10. Should the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of a house be considered as part of eligibility criteria (i.e. the least energy efficient homes are considered first)? Please give reasons for your answer.
11. Do you agree that the new scheme should continue with the Whole House retrofit approach? Please give reasons for your answer.

12. If the Whole House approach is used, do you agree that all recommended measures must be installed unless there are exceptional reasons not to? Please give reasons for your answer.
13. Do you agree that the new scheme should prioritise low carbon heating solutions where possible?
14. Do you agree that the new scheme should offer renewable technologies such as solar panels and battery storage to offset the running costs of low carbon heating solutions in low-income households? Please provide reasons for your answer.
15. Do you agree that rural properties should be prioritised for energy efficiency support? Please give reasons for your answer.
16. Do you agree with a sliding scale approach to funding for home energy schemes? Please provide reasons for your answer.
17. Do you agree that loans are the fairest financing option for landlords who are required to improve their assets? If not, what would you suggest as alternative funding options?
18. Do you agree that we should consider increasing levies from electricity bills to fund energy efficiency schemes for low-income households? Please give reasons for your answer.
19. Should we explore introducing levies on gas to increase funding for such energy efficiency measures? Please provide reasons for your answer.
20. What are your thoughts on exploring any revenue-raising opportunities for energy efficiency schemes from unregulated heating sources such as home heating oil?

Collaborate and build capacity

21. Do you agree that we should and build referral pathways between Government, local Government, health professionals and the Voluntary and Community Sector? If yes, how can we best achieve this?
22. Do you agree with a taskforce/working group to develop enabling frameworks for Energy Communities?
23. Do you agree that government should assess the most relevant recommendations of the NICE6 guidelines and consider their implementation? Please provide reasons for your answer.

24. Do you agree that we should work with organisations that provide emergency support, to seek a consistent approach across Northern Ireland and the inclusion of a referral to a long-term solution? If so, what would be the best way to achieve this?
25. Do you agree with the proposal to prioritise Discretionary Support to provide emergency financial support if there is a future energy or cost of living crisis, until we have better data to target large scale payments? If not, can you provide a reason?
26. Do you agree with the proposal to gain a better understanding of the impact of changes to Winter Fuel Payments and introduce additional support where appropriate? If not, why and do you have alternative suggestions?

Protect consumers

27. Do you agree that we should improve our understanding of the impacts of energy decisions on different consumer groups? If so, what would be the best way of understanding these impacts?
28. Do you have suggestions for how we could improve understanding and awareness of existing tools to enable consumers to manage their energy costs?
29. How can we support vulnerable people to ensure they are on the most affordable tariff?
30. Do you agree that we should explore potential affordability support for populations where energy efficiency measures may not be the right solution? If so, which population groups? Please provide reasons for your answer.
31. Is further research required to identify gaps in non-price protection for different energy users in Northern Ireland? If yes, what should we focus on?
32. What are your views on whether government should adopt a common quality assurance standard or framework across all energy efficiency and low carbon heat grant schemes?
33. Do you agree that government should take a common approach to consumer protection across all supported energy efficiency schemes? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Governance and Accountability

34. Do you have suggestions about how government could change our use of language to improve buy-in and engagement on fuel poverty?
35. Do you agree that government should take a basket of indicators approach to measuring and understanding fuel poverty?
36. Are the indicators suggested the correct ones? Please provide reasons for your answer.
37. If you agree with the introduction of an indicator based on energy confidence, agency or awareness, do you have suggestions about what kind of indicator might be most valuable?
38. Do you agree with our proposal that carbon emissions are not used as a fuel poverty indicator? Please provide reasons for your answer.
39. What is the best way to continue to engage with people experiencing fuel poverty?
40. Do you agree with the proposal for a Fuel Poverty Advisory Group, if not, can you suggest an alternative proposal?
41. If you have any further comments or suggestions not already captured, please provide these in the box below.

Annex B - Consumer Protection/ Redress

Low carbon home heating and insulation products are increasingly important in the context of the rising cost-of-living and meeting statutory climate change obligations. These products will help people heat their homes in environmentally sustainable and more energy efficient ways.

However, without consumer confidence, there is a risk people are put off from either buying or installing these products and progress toward Net Zero is slowed. Consumer engagement is also needed to drive effective competition between businesses, to spur greater innovation and better consumer outcomes.

Across the UK and Ireland, government has introduced policies to encourage uptake, including support with the cost of energy efficiency measures via grant and funding schemes. Therefore, it is critical that people can trust businesses to treat them fairly and are protected from harmful practices. Businesses also need to comply with their legal obligations, which will help drive consumer trust and confidence.

Consumer experience

Making people's experience of buying/ installing energy efficiency products as simple and straightforward as possible, is crucial for developing consumer confidence, supporting uptake of measures and further development of the sector. People must be able to make informed decisions about which products are right for their circumstances, their property and have easy access to clear, impartial, appropriate, and usable information and advice at key stages.

Therefore, the onus is on government to provide greater centralised information and advice services for consumers, to ensure they can fully engage in the energy transition.

Consumer protection

Consumer protection law places obligations on businesses to provide people with the key information they need to make informed decisions, to use fair sales practices and contract terms, to have an effective way of dealing with complaints and to carry out work with reasonable care and skill.

Overall, there are a number of bodies that enforce consumer protection law to ensure businesses act appropriately and treat consumers fairly. This includes national and local Trading Standards, energy sector regulators (i.e. the Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland) and the Competition and Markets Authority.

Across government the need to ensure consumer protection is recognised within this growing sector. For example, the Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland also includes the need to review existing consumer protection frameworks within its key policies. The Utility Regulator has set a key objective to ‘provide the highest level of consumer service and protection’ within its corporate strategy 2024-2029.

During our stakeholder engagement fears that installers may not be fully competent in installing new technology products and the need for installer certification and/or trusted supplier lists were raised. Participants also explained they would like a clear system for escalating a complaint with an independent arbiter in place if complaints reached an impasse.

Standards landscape

Standards bodies play an important role in the low carbon heat and insulation sector, by helping consumers identify reliable,

trustworthy businesses. Using a business that is a member of a standards body should mean that consumers can be confident the business is qualified to do the work to a high standard, will treat them fairly and provide protection if anything goes wrong.

However, the current standards landscape is complex and confusing, with low consumer awareness of the benefits.

The landscape can be divided into three categories:

- Quality Standards – Such as the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) for low carbon heating products and the British Standards Institution (BSI) for the installation of insulation products.
- Certification bodies that assess businesses’ conformity with quality standards and are accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) to carry out this function.
- Consumer Protection standards such as the Renewable Energy Consumer Code (RECC) and the Home Insulation and Energy Systems Quality Assured Contractors Scheme (HIES) which set rules for member businesses selling low carbon heating products about how to engage with consumers and aim to strengthen consumer protection.

Quality Mark

The use of a government backed quality mark that represents a guarantee of adherence to standards provides consumers with a unified, equal, and consistent approach across different products and services at all stages of the consumer journey.

TrustMark is the quality mark established by the UK government and endorsed within the PAS 2035 retrofit framework. It is designed to ensure that professionals in the industry adhere to high standards of workmanship, technical ability, and customer protection. TrustMark also licences other standards bodies in the sector (including certification bodies and consumer codes) to deliver its scheme and to certify that businesses meet its requirements.

Additionally, the BSI publishes PAS 2035/2030 standards for retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency through the use of insulation and other energy efficiency measures. Installers must be certified to the appropriate PAS 2030 standard to take part in UK government-funded energy efficiency schemes in England.

In the insulation sector the Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency (CIGA) provides independent 25 year guarantees for Cavity Wall Insulation fitted by registered installers in the UK and Channel Islands.

Redress

A key component of consumer protection relates to complaints resolution and redress for when things go wrong. This is particularly relevant where new technologies may require high quality installation and specifications which will demand suitably robust regulation.

Standards bodies often require member businesses to provide consumers with financial protection in case the business stops trading and is unable to honour the terms of their workmanship guarantee. This can provide consumers with additional peace of mind and in addition to the installer's workmanship guarantee, the product manufacturer will typically provide a guarantee to repair or replace a faulty item for a certain period of years.

To help ensure that consumers have the necessary confidence and trust that they are protected, it is vital that there are robust and consistently high standards of quality, customer care and business competency, and that these are effectively monitored and enforced across all supported schemes. This will be particularly important given that most installers in the sector are small businesses.



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309



Fuel Poverty Strategy Stakeholder Engagement Report

December 2024

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Approach	5
3. Framing and Understanding Fuel Poverty	8
Vision	8
Principles	9
Understanding fuel poverty	10
How would we know if someone wasn't able to heat or power their homes adequately?	13
Who would have this information or data?	15
What data would you collect to measure the success of Fuel Poverty interventions?	15
4. Making homes more efficient	17
Housing Standards	17
Replacement for Affordable Warmth Scheme	18
Coordinating our approach across government	22
How do we prioritise government support?	25
5. Collaboration and capacity-building	27
Emergency support	27
Community energy	29
Targeting	29

Contents

Holistic support	30
Advice and information on emergency energy and benefits	30
6. Protecting consumers	33
Understanding and mitigating changing costs of energy	33
Other consumer protection issues	34
7. Appendices	36

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Department for Communities' (DfC) stakeholder engagement process in developing a new Fuel Poverty Strategy. It includes a collated summary of discussions with stakeholders across a series of workshops and focus groups held between April and July 2024. This includes some of the stakeholder feedback on how the Department could improve its new fuel poverty scheme, which will be launched in April 2026.

It also summarises the engagement with government colleagues and those working in relevant Arms' Length Bodies and other organisations with a responsibility for or interest in issues relating to fuel poverty.

This report is being shared to support the public consultation process. It demonstrates how the strategy has been informed by our engagement process and our commitment to continue to work alongside stakeholders to shape proposals.

2. Approach

Stakeholder involvement has been key to ensure that a new Fuel Poverty Strategy:

- reflects the Northern Ireland context
- is based on people's own experience of fuel poverty and energy hardship
- develops the right solutions and support for those who need it most
- makes use of other people's expertise and experience
- builds on and reflects related policy work elsewhere

Cross-government policy workshop

In January 2023 an internal workshop was organised to bring together key policy teams from across government and other public sector bodies. This was an opportunity to set out initial design assumptions, build relationships with relevant teams, develop a picture of emerging policy and explore key priorities and gaps that a future fuel poverty strategy could focus on.

Project Board

A Project Board was formed in September 2023 consisting of senior officials from relevant Departments as well as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Consumer Council NI (CCNI) and NI Authority for

Utility Regulation (NIAUR) (See Appendix A for membership). The Board provides high-level oversight and critically evaluates and provides strategic direction for the preparation, development and management of a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for NI. They will continue to support the transition from development to implementation of the strategy.

Reference Panel

A reference panel was also established in September 2023 to provide external expertise and insight (see Appendix B for membership). Members came from the community and voluntary sector, academia and arms' length bodies. The Panel provides advice, feedback and support as well as a reference and challenge function. Key issues were brought to the Panel to enable discussion of these in greater depth and hear thoughts on how to approach these in the strategy development process.

Webinar

A webinar was held in May 2024 to learn from other countries' experiences dealing with fuel poverty and to hear how they have used a 'basket of indicators' approach to gathering a more complete picture of the fuel poverty landscape.

Bilateral/other

Throughout this process we have also met bilaterally with government, community and voluntary sector, academic, practitioner and other public sector organisations to build relationships, raise awareness of the strategy development and learn from experiences elsewhere.

Intensive stakeholder engagement

From April-June 2024, the Fuel Poverty Strategy project team and the Home Energy policy team hosted a series of stakeholder engagement workshops and focus groups across Northern Ireland. The aim was to gather opinions and real-life experiences to support the development of a new Fuel Poverty Strategy and explore initial priorities for a new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Scheme. In total, more than 365 participants registered to attend the workshops or participated in the focus groups.

Workshops

We organised 9 workshops in total focusing on 3 key sets of topics. Each series of workshops had one online event for those unable to attend in person. Workshop topics were:

- Eligibility
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Understanding and Framing.

These events considered long and short-term support for those most in need, informed stakeholders about key issues and listened to lived experiences. Discussions were open and consideration given to the complex and wide-reaching issues faced by those in fuel poverty. There was a focus on how to work well across different sectors and government to achieve shared aims and make best use of our limited resources to help those most in need.

Participants came from the community and voluntary sector, energy companies, other government departments, housing associations, charitable organisations and energy industry professionals. A final online feedback event provided participants with an overview of what we had heard, in line with our 'feedback and feed forward' approach.

The workshop slides are available online at Fuel Poverty Workshop overviews | [Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

Focus groups

We held a series of focus groups to hear from vulnerable people and those who are most impacted by fuel poverty (See Appendix C for the dates and locations). In some circumstances it was challenging to speak with people directly and in these cases, we spoke to a number of representatives who support or work with these populations.

The discussions helped us to capture the real life experiences of vulnerable people, giving them a voice and including them in the process to help with strategy development. The groups provided real insight into the daily struggles of how fuel poverty impacts them and the choices people make in their homes. In addition, two focus groups were held with representatives from heating, insulation, renewable energy sectors, NIHE, Utility Regulator and colleagues from Department for Economy to discuss the energy

efficiency measures to be considered in the development of the new scheme. Discussion also centred on grant limits and a code of practice/quality standard for those working on the new scheme.

This report contains collated summaries of the discussions at the workshops and focus groups. It reflects discussions heard and does not reflect the views of the Department.

3. Framing and understanding fuel poverty

Stakeholders discussed a Vision and set of Principles for a new Fuel Poverty Strategy as well as addressing how we define fuel poverty and some of the challenges and opportunities for improving our understanding of both fuel poverty and its impacts.

VISION

The following proposed vision was tested:

Everyone lives in a warm, healthy home.

Generally, feedback was positive and some said that it states what we want to achieve in a simple and easy to understand manner. The word 'health' was welcomed. Alternative suggestions were to include 'sustainable' so that the vision would be linked to climate targets, with further suggestions to include energy efficient and affordable. Words such as accessible, inclusive and trust were also suggested, as well as affordability and urgency, recognising that people need immediate help.



Principles

The following proposed principles were discussed:

1. Long-Term Sustainable Solutions
2. Needs-Based
3. Person Centred
4. Collaboration

These principles generally received support, with discussions around how some of them might be applied. It was agreed that the principles should align with and underpin the vision. Stakeholders noted that it was important that the principles should be agreed and accepted by all government departments. Feedback included:

- **Long-Term Sustainable Solutions** – This should perhaps include innovation. Furthermore, all actions in the Strategy should be multiyear with a long-term focus.
- **Needs-Based** – When designing new interventions and taking forward the strategy we should consider both the home and the person who lives in it. Objective need is important but there are different types of need and vulnerability, not all of which may apply to the same people.
- **Person Centred** - often the most in need are vulnerable and they cannot advocate for themselves. We heard suggestions that support should be holistic. To be fully person centred we should be careful

around the use of language to remove the stigma that can be associated with poverty or fuel poverty. Also, we should recognise the behavioural change needed to reach net zero.

- **Collaboration** – If real collaboration is to be achieved a model must be in place. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of using existing relationships and not necessarily creating new structures. It was noted that there are many people and organisations that we can connect with to improve how we design and deliver policy.

Further suggestions included:

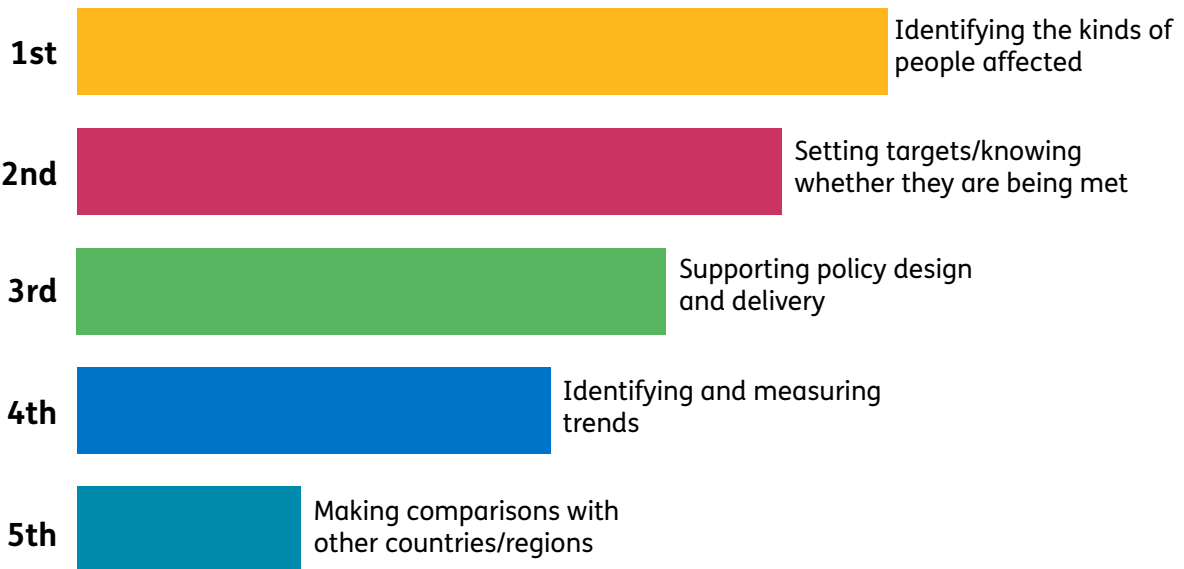
- **Transparency and trust** – there were concerns that people do not always know the support available, who is eligible, and why decisions are taken in certain ways. Building trust was considered important to improve awareness and confidence in what government wants to achieve
- **Empowerment** – we heard about the need to recognise structural barriers to participation. Some groups, such as private renters, can struggle to participate in energy efficiency measures and have little agency. Empowering people and communities also means increased awareness raising, advice and education.

Understanding fuel poverty

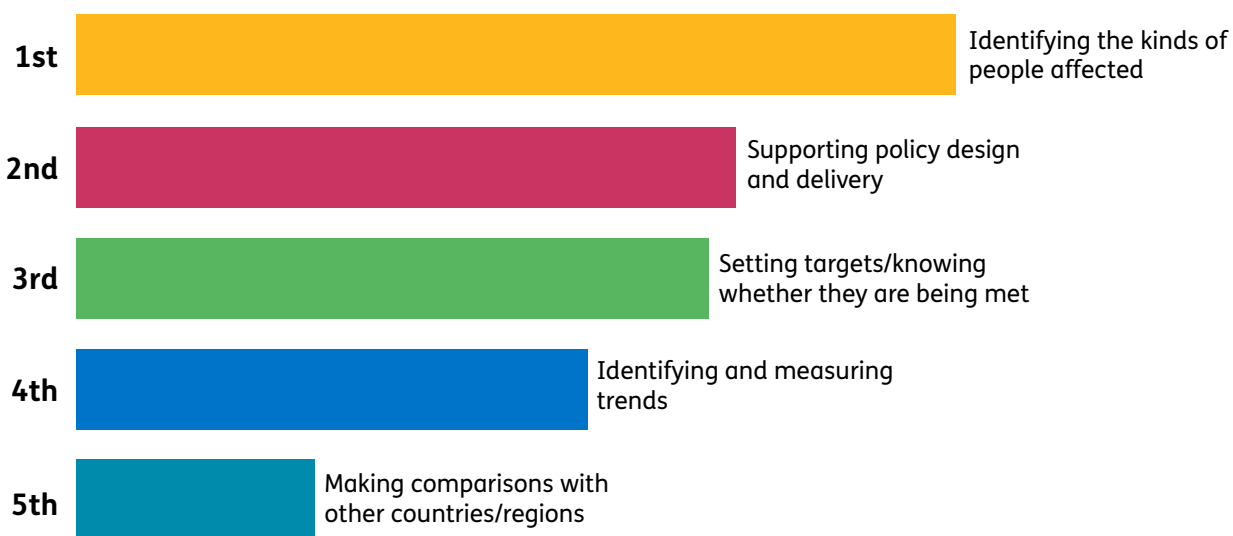
We discussed the definition of fuel poverty, the data we use to measure it and potential indicators in the future. These issues were informed by a webinar held with energy experts from New Zealand and the Netherlands to understand how other countries understand and measure fuel poverty. They used multiple mechanisms and data sources to build a picture of fuel poverty (also called energy hardship and energy poverty).

What is the most important aspect of a definition?

Results from workshop 3 – Understanding and Framing – held in NICVA Belfast



Results from workshop 3 – Understanding and Framing – Online session



Most groups agreed that identifying the kinds of people affected by fuel poverty was the most important aspect of a definition. This helps policy development and with targeting help to those who need it most. Linked to this, groups wanted to see a greater emphasis on the impacts of fuel poverty. It was considered important to link policy development with fuel poverty trends and understand the severity of fuel poverty.

There was disagreement on using a definition to set targets. Some wanted clear, timebound, measurable targets whereas others argued that target-setting can have adverse or unintended consequences. Making comparisons with other regions was considered less important because other regions are already changing their definition and there are different contexts across the

UK. There was more interest in regional comparisons within Northern Ireland and between rural and urban areas.

Concepts of a definition - People acknowledged that our definition is imperfect but there was wariness about ‘changing the goal posts’. Some felt the 10% definition was no longer relevant but others thought that other definitions weren’t necessarily better. It was suggested that people over the 10% threshold will also need support to achieve a warm healthy home. Some wanted to use multiple definitions but others disagreed.

‘Using a tandem approach can become confusing as there may be too many caveats’.

We also heard a number of times that using language like ‘fuel poverty’ or ‘poverty’ does not provide dignity and can put people off applying for help. Some said that government should be careful not to stigmatise people by using the wrong language.

Income and savings - Some didn’t think the definition sufficiently considers living and housing costs. An ‘after housing costs’ measure or disposable income was suggested. Some said that savings should be taken into account. The **Rural Focus group** and **Women’s group** both said high childcare costs can affect people’s ability to heat their homes and the **rural focus group** emphasised high transport costs in rural areas.

Different population needs - Groups discussed the importance of capturing the needs of different people, for example whether older or disabled people need a warmer home to be healthy and comfortable. Some suggested other vulnerabilities such as end of life or the working poor. There were different opinions on whether a specific temperature regime or a flexible approach would be best, with an argument that we should focus on people’s perceptions rather than making assumptions.

Carers said it is hard for them and disabled people to have a good quality of life if they are cold. **The terminal illness support group** noted the high running costs of vital life-saving equipment. We heard that people are switching off medical equipment due to the costs of keeping it running and that:

‘People have been left in hoists overnight and deaf smoke alarms can switch off’

Travellers live in a wide variety of housing such as caravans, mobile homes, social and private rented housing and mould is a big issue in all of them. Bottled gas or electric heaters at sites can be expensive to run. **Migrant communities** may have higher heating needs if they come from warmer climates and can’t afford to go out.

Health - Stakeholders said that living in cold homes affects people’s health and this has a knock-on effect on the health service. This includes hospitals being unable to discharge patients to a cold home, which reduces available bed space. It was noted that DfC and DoH priorities are often closely aligned but the link up isn’t always there.

‘Houses aren’t habitable without heat’

Health - Many stakeholders referred to the presence of damp, mould, condensation, or a fusty smell. They noted that health will deteriorate if the house is too cold or damp, particularly respiratory illness, asthma and excess winter deaths. A&E admissions for respiratory illness or asthma could be sources of data. The **women's disability focus group** mentioned a rise in the number of disabled people going to foodbanks.

'It gets you down and affects your mental health living in a cold home'

Living conditions - Stakeholders said that house visits provide clear indicators of fuel poverty: a cold or dark home, radiators turned off, lights off and people staying in the bedroom or in bed. People focus on heating themselves with blankets on the sofa or wearing coats indoors. Stakeholders noted reduced capacity of organisations to carry out home visits making it harder to pick up on these signs.

Seeking help - Stakeholders told us that a clear indicator for fuel poverty is when people go to warm places such as libraries or ask for help from charities, though there is a stigma in asking for help. Many ask family or friends for support but this is harder to capture. When people's health is affected by cold and damp it can also diminish their ability to seek help or take care of themselves and others. One health professional noted migrant children in

care increasing as parents believe that their children are better off in a home with adequate food and heat. The **Foyle Foodbank group** said people seek help when they are at rock bottom but this can be too late.

Debt and energy bills - People get into debt by borrowing money to pay for their utilities. They cannot pay their bills on time or self-disconnect. It was noted that the general cost of living caused an increase in expensive debt.

Social and behavioural aspects - Fuel poverty can cause social isolation, for example, children not bringing friends home and an increase in loneliness. Other signs were looking dishevelled or unkempt, or clothes with a damp smell. If people are not heating their home, they are also unlikely to be eating properly, and women particularly make decisions about whether to heat or eat. This was highlighted in all focus groups with the **disability focus groups** using heated throws, switching off the gas completely and sometimes choose between heating and eating.

Children and education - Fuel poverty can impact children through lower educational attainment, poor concentration, a decline in school attendance if uniforms can't be washed, children doing homework in busy rooms and teenagers working to support families. Restricted finances can cause stress, impact safeguarding and reduce

children's participation in activities. The **Women's Group** said that young children need warm homes but they sometimes make their families wear layers instead.

'When the house gets cold, we take the children to bed to watch TV'

Who would have this information or data?

People affected - A frequent suggestion about where to find information on fuel poverty was from those experiencing it. There were suggestions to ask people directly: 'are you worried about heating your home?'

Energy-related data - Energy suppliers may have data on who is vulnerable, on a payment plan, or making smaller top-up payments. Data on oil is hard to access but it was suggested that oil companies could help with referrals if they see people getting frequent small deliveries.

Health sector - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has statistics on health conditions linked to damp and mould such as chronic respiratory illnesses and excess winter deaths. A&E admissions, Public Health Agency (PHA) and clinics may have data on poor health exacerbated by cold homes. Treasury may have data on savings to the public purse from reducing fuel poverty.

Benefits system - This could provide data on the number of discretionary payments and if these are related to universal credit figures.

Community and voluntary sector (VCS) -

Specific organisations were noted such as Saint Vincent DePaul (SVP), Advice NI, Trussell Trust as well as general recommendations such as charities, social services and food banks. Other data sources suggested were other departments, teachers, Councils, NIHE, Housing Associations and universities.

What data would you collect to measure the success of Fuel Poverty interventions?

Workshop attendees discussed what data would help capture the success of new interventions. They also made suggestions about how data should be collected, for example baseline data, post-intervention data, and potentially further data after the scheme has been up and running for a year. It was suggested that all government schemes should measure outcomes in the same way and these should be holistic.

Energy data - Some attendees suggested that smart meters would enable data on self-disconnection and low energy users. A number of people suggested that a key indicator was energy usage e.g. pre and post-installation impact on the energy consumption of the property or the Energy

Performance Certificate (EPC). Others suggested that data on financial savings should also be captured. It is harder to capture data on oil usage.

Health data - Stakeholder suggested that data on damp or mould in homes should be collected as part of any fuel poverty intervention. They suggested that social housing has data on damp and mould and landlords know if there is damp but they will not take any action or help. One idea would be to check if there has been a change in

the number of cases sent to environmental health in councils.

Carbon - It was recommended that intervention should capture carbon reductions. It was noted that people considered to be in fuel poverty are not the biggest carbon offenders as they are more likely to have smaller houses, use public transport or have one car.

4. Making homes more efficient

The workshops highlighted the importance of increasing investment in energy efficiency. There were discussions about how government should determine eligibility for support in a coordinated way and consideration of how a new Affordable Warmth Scheme could be designed to support those who need it most. Stakeholders said that much more investment was needed and some suggested DoH funding as well as recommending long-term budgets.

‘You can give people fuel vouchers but the energy efficiency in the home [...] being rated so low it’s like leaving the front and back door open.’

Housing Standards

In every workshop the problem of poor quality housing was raised repeatedly. Most discussions related to the poor standards experienced in the private rented sector, although there were references to low housing standards in some social housing homes. Stakeholders noted that many vulnerable groups live in this sector and they are harder to reach, likely to be on low-incomes and have children.

Migrant communities fear that raising issues will lead to rent increases or losing their home and for this group there can be additional cultural or language barriers.

‘There is a feeling that anything will do for this group of people.’

Even the less vulnerable feel at risk: the demand for housing is so high that any tenant who requests improvements or repairs fears eviction or rent increases.

Many suggested that the PRS sector needs new standards, perhaps in legislation. Some suggested energy-related standards, such as Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES), EPCs or Standard Assessment Procedure(SAP) ratings. **Men and women’s disability groups** noted low standards in private rented accommodation. The **women’s group** said that landlords don’t want to help.

Others said that the fitness standards were far too low and enabled landlords to continue to rent out very poor quality housing. Overall there was a strong sense that regulation is needed to improve housing standards in the private rented sector and people regularly referred to

the need for a 'stick' in order to drive this change. The **Rural focus group** mentioned a case where the Environmental Health officer complained about a smell of damp but the house still passed fitness standards:

'How is this possible?'

Some believed that having an incentive such as financial support, a free EPC audit or rates reductions if energy ratings were met could raise standards. Stakeholders noted the importance of on-going protection, highlighting landlords can improve their properties with grants and then raise rents. Clawback mechanisms were suggested for those who benefit from improvements and then sell the property.

It was noted that there is government funding for new build social housing but not for retrofit which will need to be financed via rents. This could impact low-income homes. It was suggested that while there is generally higher energy efficiency in social housing, a targeted scheme for the least energy efficient homes is still required.

There is a unique challenge for the **traveller community** as a number live in caravans or mobile homes. These homes are usually of much poorer quality and are not subject to the same standards that apply to permanent homes.

Enforcement - It was noted that councils are not enforcing environmental health laws. Many wanted a focus on compelling landlords to take action to improve standards. Some tenants are aware of their rights but struggle to enforce change. Damp and mould are not being treated by landlords and stakeholders said they need to be held to account. The issue of vulnerability and a tenant/landlord power imbalance was raised multiple times. It was also noted that the landlord register is not up to date and there is no oversight of the Act or register.

'If private renters cannot participate, why should they be excluded when landlords are not held to account over poor standards?'

Replacement for Affordable Warmth Scheme

As DfC is in the early stages of developing a new fuel poverty intervention to replace the Affordable Warmth Scheme, it also gathered feedback on some operational aspects of this scheme. The current Scheme ends in March 2026, and a new scheme must support the principles of the new Fuel Poverty Strategy, align with the Energy and Green Growth Strategies and contribute to responsibilities under the Climate Change Act. Given the ongoing cost of living crisis, there is a need to review eligibility criteria, income thresholds and application mechanisms to ensure that the

most vulnerable and those experiencing fuel poverty can access the scheme.

Eligibility

Stakeholders ranked five potential eligibility criteria (income threshold, energy rating of a house, having certain health conditions, qualifying for certain benefits and age of applicant). Before the roundtable, groups placed most importance on using an income threshold to determine eligibility, followed by the home energy rating, having a certain health condition, being entitled to certain benefits, with age ranked as least important. Following the discussion income thresholds and home energy rating were rated as being of equal top importance with other rankings remaining the same.

It was noted that many with the lowest income are on benefits. However, using income threshold only as a criterion could mean a lack of flexibility. For example, a disabled person who requires lifesaving equipment has higher energy bills than a household without these needs. It was felt that the ‘working poor’ are often overlooked yet their disposable income can be less than those in receipt of benefits. It was also highlighted that older people often have low or no housing costs. Some noted the importance of household makeup i.e. a couple with or without dependents or a single person.

The consensus was that whilst certain health conditions were exacerbated by living in cold and damp conditions, not everyone with a health condition is fuel poor.

Energy rating of the home - This was considered most important by some. Using energy rating as a criterion would help those in the private rented sector and stakeholders said that improving efficiency of homes would not only help the current occupier but all future generations.

‘If it is not fixed then the energy spending will always be high’

This led to discussion on the potential use of a home energy efficiency audit and considering the age of a property among the criteria. Another argument for prioritising the home was:

‘Personal circumstances also change quickly – homes do not’.

Income - Stakeholders were asked to select the income band that they felt was most appropriate. It was felt that the current income threshold of £23k was low and stakeholders preferred the highest income threshold:

- £25-30k – 12.3%
- £30-35k – 27.7%

- £35-40k – 24.6%
- £40-45k – 35.4%

It was noted that if the budget for the new scheme is small, allowing higher income households to apply could mean that the most vulnerable do not get the help that they need. Many suggested that perhaps income could be on a sliding scale e.g. qualifying for an 80% grant with 20% loan.

The group felt that it should be net rather than gross income but acknowledged that this may be difficult to manage. Another suggestion was income after housing costs. Some felt that income should be backed with documentation and that savings should be considered. However some concerns were raised regarding the origin of savings, for example compensation claims due to injury. Stakeholders also asked:

‘Will the income threshold be raised each year in line with increases to, say, minimum wage levels?’

Benefits - 77.6% of stakeholders felt that recipients of all benefits should be eligible, 19% suggested only those on means-tested benefits and 3.4% felt that recipients of passport benefits should be included. If all benefits are included as eligibility criteria it was suggested the level of grant should be on a sliding scale as there are people in

receipt of disability benefits for example who are also high earners or have savings.

It was felt that if we were to consider disability benefits as eligibility criteria, that only those awarded for health conditions exacerbated by cold and damp conditions should be included. However, not all disabilities or conditions mean automatic entitlement to a disability benefit such as Personal Independence Payment e.g. asthma.

It was acknowledged that if means tested benefits were used to determine eligibility it would reduce the administration time and costs to process the scheme.

Other issues

- Can different models be used to help pay for making a home more efficient such as an interest free or low interest loan from the government as used in other countries?
- Can repayments be made straight from your salary as in childcare scheme?
- NI is the only jurisdiction that does not have a heat-pump or solar panel grants. The savings made from these measures could be reinvested back into the economy as disposable income is freed up.
- Broken boilers are a priority over insulation and financial assistance could be offered

for this short-term emergency need. Could a new scheme offer follow up services, annual servicing of boilers to maintain efficiency?

- There should be a multiyear budget for schemes and for voluntary and community sector funding to build up experience for the best outcomes.
- If administering 'green loans', safeguards need to be put in place for repayment – no high/increasing interest rates.
- The Affordable Warmth vulnerability matrix did help understanding who is most in need.

The Home Energy Branch held two focus groups in September 2024 with representatives from the heating, insulation & renewable energy sectors, NIHE, Utility Regulator and colleagues from Department for Economy (DfE) to discuss energy efficiency measures to be considered in the development of the new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Scheme.

Energy Efficiency Measures

Over the two sessions the groups felt that we should be optimistic with our planning but that ultimately budget will dictate the scale of the scheme and measures offered. There was strong agreement that a 'whole house, fabric first approach' is required to maximise efficiency of action and that there is a need to 'future proof' current housing

stock. Each house should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with an almost 'bespoke' solution offered and that all recommended measures must be accepted by the householder in order to proceed with the application.

With regards to 'distress retrofits' or emergency cases where a heating system breaks and is in urgent need of replacement, it was felt that these should be processed outside the remit of the new scheme. The groups also felt that low carbon heating solutions should be included within the scheme where appropriate to assist with meeting statutory Climate Change obligations. However, it was recognised that technologies are still evolving and that the scheme would need to reflect this through a transition period and emphasised the importance of progression towards low carbon heat away from the current heavy reliance on fossil fuels. The groups also felt that in those properties where a low carbon heating solution was installed, consideration should be given to the installation of PV (solar) panels with battery storage to maximise cost savings for the householder. The groups recognised the value of smart meters/monitoring to demonstrate savings in terms of energy efficiency, cost savings for the householder and return on investment for the Department. The addition of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) assessment pre and post installation was considered essential to report on energy efficiency gains.

Grant limits

The groups felt that the current Affordable Warmth Scheme grant limit of £7,500 (£10,000 for solid wall insulation) was too low given the current costs of the measures offered. They agreed that the grant limits for the new scheme should be reviewed periodically throughout the lifetime of the scheme and amended to reflect both cost of living and material increases. The groups agreed that the new scheme should offer a full quality retrofit (circa £28k-£33k per house) even if this meant that fewer households could be assisted overall.

Code of Practice

The groups were also asked to consider the use of a code of practice or mandating an established quality standard for the new scheme. Discussions centred around the use of existing governing standards bodies and the group agreed that only accredited contractors should be used to ensure a consistent level of standards, this also would provide reassurance for often vulnerable customers. Post work quality inspections were also discussed with the groups feeling that this should be an essential element of any scheme, this would build trust and maintain high standards of work. The groups discussed accountability and the need to have a clear simple redress process if things go wrong. They also suggested the addition of third party pre and post installation inspections to assess the requirements of each house and the quality of works conducted.

Coordinating our approach across government

Stakeholders wanted schemes to be coordinated strategically to ensure help is provided to those who need it most. Some stakeholders suggested that all schemes should take into account fuel poverty principles. Many said that higher fuel poverty levels should mean more funding is available to address it. Some common principles or approaches to future schemes emerged. Others suggested a joint DfE, Department of Health (DoH) and DfC funding pot to help people to avoid duplication and make administration easier.

Consistency – There were calls for multiyear budgets to provide consistency and confidence, enable planning and investment by industry and ensure that schemes remain open year-round:

‘Don’t stop and start schemes’

Flexibility - Stakeholders said schemes need to be flexible and need to have built-in protections for future proofing. It was noted that the people who need help will change over time and that government should ensure sufficient flexibility to avoid excluding certain groups. On the other hand, if criteria change too often it’s hard to keep track.

Accessibility and education - There are low levels of awareness of where to go for energy support. Many people suggested a one stop shop to enable help and advice on energy efficiency, grants and help with applications. Stakeholders told us that people need to be able to easily access information on schemes, customer care registers and other forms of support and requested much better awareness-raising and information campaigns:

‘It can be hard to know where to start, it is hard enough for people in the know to keep track of schemes.’

Stakeholders said that it was very hard to get good information on energy efficiency with no recognised government body to do this. Many in the **women’s disability group** who had medical equipment have not registered with the critical care or medical register with energy companies. The **Foyle foodbank group** had similar experiences:

‘Why are these things not advertised anywhere?’

Schemes need to be transparent, easy to apply for and understandable for all. More needs to be done to target people and bring them through the process. Inclusion is vital, including multiple forms of application such as telephone, digital and in person.

Handholding and support - Government should support home visits by social, voluntary and community sector or medical professionals to help determine who is eligible. There was strong support for a service that handholds through the process, recognising that the vulnerable will need extra help, empathy and understanding and may slip through the cracks.

Needs-based - The greatest discussion was how to ensure that support is needs based. Many stated that people with the greatest need should come first but this meant different things to different people: income, disabilities, health, the number and type of people in a home, energy efficiency or a combination were all suggested. We also heard that everyone should be eligible for some help otherwise the vision would not be achieved. This could range from advice, loans, partial grants or fully funded retrofits.

Some called this a tapered approach or sliding scale and it was suggested that this aligns with the proportionate universalism health inequalities model. This may allow a greater proportion of the population to benefit. On the other hand, some stakeholders suggested support should only be for those who cannot afford interventions. It was noted that broad eligibility could lead to long waiting lists which could erode trust.

Health - this was considered an important factor in determining eligibility for support because health conditions worsen in cold, damp homes.

‘If you have health conditions and on benefits then you are on a low income and being at home more means your energy bills are higher.’

Some priorities were suggested, for example carers of a disabled child, people with a life-limiting condition and those unable to leave the house due to a disability. It was noted that for these households, energy needs are higher and income lower due to caring responsibilities or a reduced inability to work. The **traveller community** has a high incidence of disability and respiratory illness, both exacerbated by cold and damp.

An alternative suggestion was to focus on people in deprived areas who currently are not seriously ill but might be more likely to be if their homes are cold.

Income and benefits – All agreed that lower income households should take priority for support and that the benefits system was not the best way of setting eligibility. Many stakeholders noted that working poor household incomes can be very low:

‘Just because they aren’t on benefits does not mean they do not need help’

Another argument against using benefits as a criteria is that not everyone who is eligible for benefits applies for them. There was agreement that certain benefits such as Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance should not be counted as income.

Some said that debt was a growing problem and this need factored in. Others said that savings needed to be considered, but there was no agreement on whether they should exclude support or how we could assess savings.

The home - Some stakeholders said that schemes must consider both house condition and household income. Others said that government must either target the home or target the people. There was a suggestion to focus on areas that had fewer heating options, such as rural areas. We heard that to determine energy efficiency an energy advisor, energy audit or EPCs could be used. However, many recognised that EPCs are imperfect tools for assessing costs, carbon emissions or the effects of mould and damp. Others said that in the absence of anything better EPCs should be used.

Private Rented Sector - There was a strong focus on the needs of tenants, as the private rented sector is harder to reach, struggling more, has less influence over living conditions and likely to be low-income.

Age - Some people noted that age should be a factor but there was not agreement on whether this should relate to pension credit, retirement pension or something else.

How do we prioritise government support?

There was broad agreement that all schemes need clear prioritisation if they are over-subscribed. This would help with ensuring waiting lists did not grow too long. It was argued that government should align approaches to prioritising support.

Matrix - A matrix was suggested as a tool to help prioritise limited resources. Affordable Warmth and Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) vulnerability matrices were suggested as a useful approach to help prioritise support. A points-based system was suggested e.g. children, disabilities/health, earnings, energy efficiency etc. Other suggestions were:

- higher scoring for somebody in an emergency
- scales to measure household characteristics
- worst first
- people-focused

Access to previous schemes - We heard that if a scheme provides a single intervention, then this could exclude the household from support from other aspects of the schemes in a subsequent year.

Data - Stakeholders felt that government should target support using good data and not just rely on the voluntary and community sector, though this sector can ensure that very few slip through the cracks. There were calls for departments to share data with each other. However, the **women's disability group** said that they would prefer not to be auto-enrolled on schemes for support as they have issues with data sharing.

Area-based - Another suggestion was to focus on local initiatives and there was reference to the PHA health improvement partnership model. Stakeholders said that rural areas have different needs and fewer low-carbon heating options so support should be prioritised here:

‘If they can't change from oil to gas, how can they make efficiency savings?’

Others argued that location should not exclude people from support.

Partnership - We were told that trust needs to be built with communities. Local knowledge helps identify people who are in need but less likely to apply for support and this could mean signposting to a range of support, but people should only need to 'tell their story' once. There were recommendations for partnership with health agencies, local authorities, statutory bodies and community groups.

Types of grant - Some stakeholders urged schemes not to neglect low cost options such as window seals, draft excluders, lightbulbs as these can make a difference in energy costs. These measures could be wide reaching and stimulate industry.

5. Collaboration and Capacity-Building

Emergency support

In was recognised that there will always be a need for short term emergency support and this will most likely be in the form of financial assistance. Such support is not always joined up and it varies from location and the type of help offered. There were calls to ensure that there is flexibility, for example people can get top up credit vouchers for gas and electricity, but for people who pay a bill there is less support. For those using oil or coal there is limited help and it may depend on location.

‘For my birthday I asked for a fill of oil’

It was noted that there is little advertising for support and people have no awareness of it. People often rely on word of mouth.

Discretionary support - This helps people in the form of loans and grants in emergency situations. It was raised that the length of time it takes to get the payment is too long, especially when people are in an emergency. Another issue is that people need a guarantee in an emergency but

Discretionary Support does not offer this and waiting for a decision adds to stress.

It is felt that it is too bureaucratic at times and although Discretionary Support can help in emergency situations, recovering the loan from people on benefits can be an issue. An example was given in the **Foyle foodbank focus** group of someone receiving a loan to cover fuel costs. They were due to get paid by Universal Credit, but Discretionary Support recovered the loan amount in full and put them back into an emergency situation. It was suggested that a repayment period should be agreed as in Universal Credit.

One stop shop - The **men’s disability group** said that despite feeling that they would be eligible for help nobody has applied for any schemes. They didn’t know there was anything out there, didn’t know how to apply and didn’t think there was anyone to help them apply as these things aren’t advertised anywhere. Knowing where to look can be an issue and they need to know what can be trusted. The only way they receive information is through the group or from Disability Action. The **women’s group**

also highlighted a lack of awareness about available support

‘If you don’t know who to contact you are completely lost’

The **Foyle foodbank group** noted that when they have sought advice from the existing advice line service it was very basic information. The **rural focus group** gave an example of calling all 11 councils for information on the Affordable Warmth Scheme but they were unable to get in contact with anyone to speak about the scheme or get information on energy efficiency.

Boilers - It was raised that people often contact charities looking for help to get their boiler repaired. For people in social housing and the private rented sector this should be the landlords’ responsibility. For homeowners they have nowhere to turn to for help. It was suggested that the government should provide this support or help should be available through discretionary support no matter how many loans they may have.

Universal Credit Budgeting Advance - It was raised in the workshops that if someone is claiming Universal Credit, they can get a budgeting advance to help with an energy household cost. This can be paid on the same day and an agreed repayment period

and amount arranged with the option to defer repayments to allow additional time to repay if they are struggling financially. However if someone had applied for an advance previously for another emergency, they are not able to get a further advance until this is repaid.

The Voluntary and Community Sector - This Sector was regarded as where most people go for help in an emergency situation. These groups all take a different approach to helping people but the one thing that they all had in common was that they put the person first and foremost and offer flexibility where they can.

When emergency energy assistance is required top ups for gas or electricity can be provided to help with that specific need. For people using coal or oil there is little to no help, although some charities, such as Saint Vincent DePaul, can help with oil drums. However, transport of drums can be challenging. Community organisations can refer people to foodbanks that may also operate as a fuel bank but this depends on location. We heard that many foodbanks do not offer fuel support as the demand would be more than they could cope with.

It was said that there is often a lack of collaboration between government and these organisations. There is a feeling that the government is looking them to do more and more with less and less and they are

putting an extra burden on organisations without providing extra resources or funding.

Energy Suppliers - Energy suppliers can support people in an emergency situation but the help varies from supplier to supplier. It may include help to ensure the electricity is not switched off or support with debt repayments. Suppliers noted that they are willing to help and support but they need partners to work with them as they do not have the capacity to deal with all the issues that are presented to them. The **terminal illness focus group** said that some suppliers help people going through terminal illness with top up vouchers for their electricity. This is not widely advertised.

Community energy

Stakeholders noted opportunities for communities to become more active in energy. Oil buying clubs are the most common type of community energy in Northern Ireland but other examples were the Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE) solar panel scheme on publicly owned buildings and GAA green club initiative.

Each community has different needs and community energy masterplans and workshops on home energy efficiency were suggested. Councils could support a community-based approach as some have energy efficiency advisors. There were calls

for a Northern Ireland community energy scheme and suggestions for community heating or heat networks with fixed costs spread over the year.

The **rural focus group** noted that community energy could provide sustainable energy solutions for rural areas. Some schemes already deliver energy efficiency and reduced energy bills. There were suggestions that when infrastructure for renewables is built there should be local discounts on electricity or community energy opportunities and there is a need to change the narrative in rural areas on renewables.

Community equity in wind farms, Community Private Partnership, the Drumlin Wind Farm Cooperative and a geothermal energy project in Tralee were examples of communities engaging in energy and building wealth or keeping costs down.

Targeting

Targeting was considered positive but only if done correctly. It was felt that people would prefer to be targeted than miss out on the opportunity for help and that people with vulnerabilities may not have the capacity or knowledge to seek help. There were concerns about targeting in the previous Affordable Warmth Scheme where people in similar circumstances were not eligible even though they lived only a few metres apart.

Targeting was recognised as a complex issue. For example, if a targeted intervention is delivered then what will happen to the people who sit just outside the scope of eligibility but are still struggling financially? How can people be targeted if there is no direct contact with them? It was raised that advertising is needed for available support or schemes through social media, schools, leaflet drops, community groups and people who are in contact with vulnerable people.

The Voluntary and Community Sector feel that they are well placed to reach out to those who need help and support. There were varied opinions on who to target, tying into income levels and the vulnerability matrix for the new fuel poverty scheme. Some suggested the working poor, others high energy users with vulnerabilities who could be pinpointed by energy suppliers if they are on the customer care register. There were calls for the benefit system to target people. They can easily contact households but it was noted that there is not a lot of trust there.

Holistic support

It was frequently raised that there is a need for holistic support when someone has requested support for energy. When someone has asked for help, this is a good time to find out the issues that led to them asking for support, for example the efficiency of the home, debt, benefit checks, energy tariff and budgeting etc. An

additional point raised was that if a person repeatedly requests emergency support, then follow ups should be done to offer support or a referral for any issues they are facing.

‘There should be no wrong door to access support.’

The **disability focus group** said they have to build themselves up to make a call for support. If they are put on hold and then do not get an answer or are passed off to another organisation then this is off putting. A more holistic approach would be to pass their details on to the relevant organisation and receive a call back.

It was recognised that not all organisations or people can deal with all these requests for additional support but greater collaboration with trusted partners would help. There is a feeling that when an application is made no further details are captured to find out why the request has been made. This is a lost opportunity to offer holistic support.

Advice and information on emergency energy and benefits

Stakeholders mentioned many places that people go to for support across local and central government, the VCS, arms' length bodies and others. They noted helplines such as Make the Call, organisations such as energy suppliers and foodbanks, Jobs

and Benefit offices and online sources such as the Consumer Council and NI Direct. Some felt that the majority of emergency support was in benefit advice through the government.

Improve energy awareness knowledge in VCS - When discussing energy awareness and efficiency with the VCS it was clear that there is a gap in knowledge and even informed people can struggle with staying up to date. Due to the funding of organisations and use of short-term contracts they lose experience and knowledge as people seek more job security and move on.

Health professionals, councils and people in the benefit system have limited energy knowledge but all have interactions with vulnerable people and there should be an avenue for all to source information, educate themselves and make referrals if they have the scope to do so. NIHE offers energy efficiency advice but many thought this was only available for NIHE tenants. People said that the system is hard to navigate, with long waiting times and you cannot make requests on behalf of vulnerable people.

Many suggested a greater online presence so people can easily access information on behavioural change and a one stop shop for all energy matters to enable trusted

partners to make referrals on behalf of vulnerable people. A one stop shop was requested in all workshops and focus groups as the best method of raising awareness, seeking support and delivering measures.

Increase data-sharing capabilities - It was suggested that improved data sharing within and across departments would improve the accuracy of support, reduce waiting and administration times and be used to target the right people. The **women's disability group** felt uncomfortable with data sharing, however.

If Discretionary Support or Universal Credit has received requests for emergency energy support this should be referred on, but some stakeholders felt a reluctance for government to do this due to GDPR. Many suggested that if successful data sharing pathways were set up, this would allow greater collaboration between departments and trusted partners and help develop referral pathways.

The **terminal illness focus group** said that data sharing would be a good idea for someone who has a terminal illness. If someone presents an SR1 (special rules identifier) to any government department then this could trigger additional referrals for support such as benefit and energy efficiency checks. This was seen positively but the issue of data sharing and consent

arose as the person themselves may not know they have a terminal illness and may not have given consent for data sharing.

It was also suggested that VCS, council and energy suppliers hold data that could benefit government in identifying trends in fuel poverty but again the issue of data-sharing arose. Saint Vincent DePaul and The Trussel Trust hold data on support given to people with oil but they feel this cannot be shared as they have confidentiality agreements with those who have sought help. One

suggestion is voluntary databases that use data to allow additional help and support and build a pool of data for analysis. The feeling was that the VCS are in a good place to get data as they are trusted.

There were many calls for government departments to seek clarity on what can be shared rather than taking a cautious approach.

6. Protecting Consumers

Stakeholders discussed protecting consumers from high energy costs and how education and awareness could help people manage their bills. In addition, there was discussion about unfair practices and how people could have a more protected experience of energy.

Understanding and mitigating changing costs of energy

Support to manage oil costs - It was noted that there is little help or support if you run out of oil or non-metered fuels. Not everyone has the capability to call around suppliers to find the cheapest provider though it was noted that the Consumer Council website has oil prices to help people find the best deals. Oil buying clubs run by NIHE enable lower prices but it is dependent on people placing orders and in rural areas does not always work. Another form of help is oil buying stamp schemes organised by local councils and we heard that some Credit Unions run interest free oil loans.

Those on lower incomes pay more for oil because buying smaller quantities costs more per litre. If there are minimum delivery quantities, low-income households are least likely to be able to afford oil when needed: a particular issue in rural areas.

Support to manage electricity and gas bills

- These are regulated but people do not have the capacity to switch suppliers due to different vulnerabilities. Newer customers often get the best deals which can leave someone who is unable to switch on a higher tariff. The **men's disability group** felt that they would forget to switch at the end of a contract.

Some suppliers offer a hardship fund for people who cannot afford to top up their electricity. This varies from supplier to supplier and it is not advertised to customers. It was suggested that a one stop shop could help vulnerable people switch providers to enable them to make savings. Some wanted loyalty deals for existing customers, especially vulnerable people who have limited capacity to switch. The Energy Cloud project is a potential tool to use excess wind energy to heat hot water. Others suggested offering solar panels to reduce bills.

Higher energy needs for vulnerable groups

- The **disability, carers and terminal illness** groups highlighted that vulnerable people have a high level of energy use due to health conditions, for example electric hoists, stair lifts, oxygen, dialysis, consistent lighting requirements (for people who are partially

sighted or suffer from dementia), and more washing and drying of clothes. These groups are at home a lot and need more heat to not exacerbate their conditions. The use of affordability tariffs was suggested as support for these vulnerable groups.

‘If someone has certain disabilities then there could be a discount scheme applied to them for oil, gas or electricity’

Types of support for those with additional needs - Energy suppliers can offer support for people who are terminally ill through an energy top up, but this is not advertised. Oxygen companies issue refunds for the use of oxygen and in Northern Ireland the NHS can refund money for the electricity needed for a dialysis machine. Some people suggested trialling free block units of energy for those who have a terminal illness along with their Personal Independence Payment claim. Great Britain has piloted warm home prescriptions and stakeholders suggested these be made available in Northern Ireland.

Other consumer protection issues

Non-regulated fuels - Some people use coal, anthracite or propane bottled fuel for heating. None of these are regulated and therefore their price can vary without any control. Lack of regulation also reduces ability to measure their use. Drums of oil, particularly used by those on low incomes,

are not always accessible – people must get the oil home and into their tank which can be challenging for the disabled or vulnerable. Rural areas often have a minimum delivery order and if people do not have £200, they go without.

Customer care registers - Energy suppliers hold a customer care register but most people do not know about this and struggle with the capacity and energy to register themselves. Some suggested that the register could be used to apply social tariffs to vulnerable people with high energy use to help mitigate their energy costs.

Smart meters - There were many calls for the introduction of smart meters to help consumers and allow data to be captured on energy usage, underconsumption and help with measuring fuel poverty. Smart meters can help customers see what appliances cost the most to use and may help change behaviour to make savings. There is a feeling that suppliers have no way of knowing that a customer has ‘self-disconnected’ and therefore no help can be offered.

Standards of work and redress - stakeholders want work carried out in the home to be of a good standard. New schemes should have retrofitting standards with regular review to ensure quality of work. Setting standards would build trust and confidence. There were suggestions for a trusted trader mark and government websites to provide links

to energy advice and trusted suppliers. It was noted that anyone looking to carry out energy efficiency improvements on their home should be able to find good, trusted companies. Stakeholders also said that anyone should be able to point out if things go wrong, and for problems to be resolved.

‘Have trusted partners who are trusted to know what is needed in a home, that they will not rip people off and will have high standards’

It was recognised that this would need investment and more training and skills development, including upskilling for the existing workforce. Some people noted that work carried out in the past was sometimes of a poor quality, citing installation of solar panels that led to leaks in the roof and disability amendments.

7. Appendices

APPENDIX A - FUEL POVERTY PROJECT BOARD

Angus Kerr – Department for Communities – Director of Climate Change Division – Chair

Meabh Cormacain – Department for Communities

Una McConnell - Department for Communities

Noyona Chundur – Consumer Council NI

Jane Corderoy – Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs - Climate Change, Science & Innovation

Kieran Devlin - Department for Communities - Housing and Sustainability

Sinead Dynan – Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Gary McGouran - Department for Communities

Colin Moffett – The Executive Office - International Relations

Elma Newberry – Northern Ireland Housing Executive - Director of Development

Liz Redmond – Department of Health – Director of Population Health

Carl Savage - Department for Communities - Engaged Communities Group

David Tarr - Department for Communities - Work & Health

Ryan White – Department for the Economy - Energy Group

APPENDIX B - FUEL POVERTY REFERENCE PANEL

Angus Kerr Department for Communities – Director of Climate Change Division – Chair

Meabh Cormacain – Department for Communities

Una McConnell - Department for Communities

Celeste McCallion – Department for Communities - Corporate Services Group (CSG)

Alan Mitchell - Fermanagh and Omagh Council

Alex Tennant - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Nuala Toman - Disability Action

Nigel Brady – Bryson Energy

Pat Austin – National Energy Action

Wilma Stewart – Age NI

Tracey Colgan – Public Health Agency

Paul McKenzie – Ulster University

Lucie Middlemiss – University of Leeds

Siobhan Harding – Women’s Support Network

Justina Corcoran – Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (ROI)

Graham Smith – Consumer Council NI

APPENDIX C - FOCUS GROUPS

DATE	LOCATION	GROUP
25 April 2024	Atlas Women's Centre, Lisburn	Women's group facilitated by the Women's Resource Network
13 May 2024	Online	BAME community workers, organised by StepNI
13 May 2024	Online	Disabled women's group, organised by Disability Action
15 May 2024	Online	Disabled men's group, organised by Disability Action
16 May 2024	Online	End-of-life care professionals, facilitated by Marie Curie
29 May 2024	NICVA	Discussion with Roma community worker
17 June 2024	Online	Focus group with foodbank users, organised by Foyle Foodbank
17 June 2024	Cookstown	Rural focus group, organised by Rural Community Network
25 June 2024	Online	Carers representative discussion, organised by Carers NI
26 June 2024	Online	Traveller community workers discussion, organised by Step NI and Travellers Community Support
27 June/ 8 August 2024	Online	Older people discussion, facilitated by Age NI
6 September 2024	Causeway Exchange	Representatives from heating, insulation, renewable energy sectors, NIHE, Utility Regulator and colleagues from DfE
20 September 2024	Causeway Exchange	Representatives from heating, insulation, renewable energy sectors, NIHE, Utility Regulator and colleagues from DfE

APPENDIX D - ORGANISATIONS WHO ATTENDED WORKSHOPS:

Advice NI	Department for Communities
Advice Space	Department for the Economy
Age NI	Department of Health
Alliance Party	Derry and Strabane Council
Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	Dry Arch Centre
Ards and North Down Council	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Ballysillan Community Forum	Electric Ireland
Barnardo's	Energy Saving Trust
Belfast City Council	Energy Store
Belfast Healthy Cities	Evolve Network
Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum	Fermanagh and Omagh Council
Bolster Community	Firebird
Bryson	Firmus Energy
Budget Energy	Forward South
Causeway Coast and Glens Council	Foyle Foodbank
Christians Against Poverty	Glen Development Initiative
Click Energy	Hillcrest Trust
CMG Energy Consultants	Lisburn and Castlereagh Council
Commissioner For Older People	Marie Curie
Community Advice Ards and North Down	Mid and East Antrim Council
Community Advice Fermanagh	Mid Ulster Age Well
Consumer Council NI	Mid Ulster Council
Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network	National Economic and Social Council Ireland
Credit Union	

National Energy Action

Newry, Mourne and Down Council

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Phoenix Energy

Power NI

Private Individual

Queen University Belfast

Refresh NI

Sinn Fein Party

South City Resource & Development

SSE

Step NI

Tada Rural Support Network

Trussell Trust

Utility Regulator NI

Vineyard Compassion

Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership

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We invest in people Standard

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Communities
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An Roinn
Pobal

Depairtment fur
Commonities



Unclassified

350

ITEM 18**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	28 January 2025
File Reference	CW32
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	Funding to Mary Peters' Trust
Attachments	Appendix 1. Letter from Mary Peters Trust for support 19.12.24

Members may be aware that Council has previously, on an annual basis, helped to support the Mary Peters Trust in the form of a grant. The Mary Peters Trust do excellent work in supporting upcoming local athletes from a wide range of sports through the distribution of financial support that allows the athletes to train and compete at the highest levels.

Since its inception more than 50 years ago, the Trust has made a difference to the lives of thousands of young athletes from across Northern Ireland, selecting the best athletes, supporting them financially and providing access to a team of experts, who help support their pathway to success and aid them in achieving their sporting dreams and ambitions.

As noted in appendix 1, throughout 2024 the Mary Peters Trust has provided financial support to 20 local athletes from 12 different sports across the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, totalling £14,500 of investment.

Not Applicable

351

Without this support many of the athletes would struggle to do the training required or be able to afford to travel to events to compete and represent everything that is good about this Borough.

It is proposed to continue to support the work of the Trust through the award of this grant. £5000 has been budgeted for.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the award of £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust.



Mary Peters Trust

Funding Northern Ireland's Future Sporting Champions

marypeterstrust.org

17th December 2024

Ms Susie McCullough

Ards and North Down Borough Council

City Hall

The Castle

Bangor

BT20 4BT



Dear Susie

Over the years you have assisted the Mary Peters Trust (we are a charity administered voluntarily by Directors) by providing encouragement and financial support to over 150 athletes every year. We invest our capital and the interest is distributed in the form of sporting awards to upcoming athletes we add to this amount with extensive fundraising and support from commercial businesses and individuals.

As a charity we are still committed to support our young athletes and as such we have given awards to the following young people in your Council area, listed at the end.

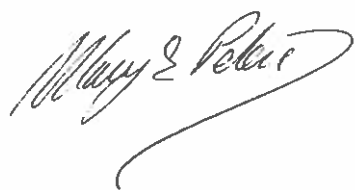
We are seeking your support to help maintain a level of funding to ensure the level and value of awards continues to grow. We need your support more than ever this year as we face another year of families struggling to support athletes.

This year the Trust is delighted to say that at some point in their sporting journey we funded every athlete from Northern Ireland that was on the podium at the Paris Olympics this summer.

We ask you to forward this letter to the relevant Council Committee and respectfully request they join in our work of helping young people achieve excellence in sport, by making a contribution for the financial year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

*Contribute to bring early
to GB level yes to P&S Council
& make award
+ Sports Forer Grounds
Sport Ireland + others
Total £50k.*

Best wishes and many thanks for your continued support.



Lady Mary Peters LG CH DBE

President

Ards and North Down BC			
Jess	Murray	Archery	750
Cassidy Jordan	Ogle	Fencing	750
Alexandra	Ong	Fencing	750
Rebekah	Gardner	Golf	1000
Harry	O Hara	Golf	500
Samuel	Irwin	Tennis	750
Erin	McConnell	Triathlon	1000
Bobby	Driscoll	Yachting	1000
Charlotte	Eadie	Yachting	750
Cameron	McCracken	Athletics	500
Jamie	Moffatt	Athletics	750
Erin	McCullough	Paddle NI	750
Haleigh	Miskimmin	Gymnastics	1250
Rosa	McCloskey	Netball	500
Lucy	McGonigle	NI Weightlifting	750
Harrison	McGrogan	NI Weightlifting	750
Brody	Neely	NI Weightlifting	500
Cody	Dunnion	Swimming	500
Lachlan	Reed	Swimming	500
Ben	Wilson	Swimming	500

Unclassified

354

ITEM 19**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	28 January 2025
File Reference	CW4
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Services (NI) 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	Public Consultation on Older Children Play Provision in Hollywood
Attachments	None

The Ards and North Down Play Strategy 2021-2032, made recommendations for play provision for each settlement in the Borough. Hollywood was identified as having the highest proportion of teenagers in the Borough and therefore in need of an outdoor play facility for older children. At present it does not have any specific play equipped provision for older children. The Play Strategy proposed that consultations take place to determine the way forward from the preferred options for young people in Hollywood.

A preliminary consultation was carried out in early 2022 with the Hollywood Children and Young People's Network via a Teams meeting online. They then spoke to their members and then submitted a response to the Outdoor recreation Officer in the Councils Parks and Cemeteries Team.

The suggestions included:

- Adding Ballymenoch Park to the site options (in addition to Seapark and Praegar's Field)

Not Applicable

355

- Add a rain shelter/youth shelter
- Provide lighting at the facility
- Make sure it is in an open location
- Not locked

The Hollywood Family Trust through their youth club, then conducted a poll of their members in June 2022. A total of **76 responses** were received from the young people attending the Youth Club and the majority wanted to see a **Multi-Use Games Area** delivered at **Seapark**.

A full public consultation was carried out in September 2023. The online survey commenced on Monday 11th September 2023, and this was advertised on the Council's social media channels. Posters were also placed at each of the four play parks (Seapark, Johnny the Jig, Ballymenoch and Redburn). A public drop-in session was held on Monday 11th September 2023 in Redburn Community Centre, hard copies of the survey were available as well as maps of the locations and images of the facility types. Details of the survey were issued via email to the Redburn and Loughview Community Forum, the Hollywood Children and Young People's Network, the Hollywood Family Trust, the Hollywood Steet Pastors and Ards and North Down Street Pastors via the Council's Community Development Team. Details of the survey were also issued to all Elected Members. The survey closed on 1st October 2023 and the results were as follows:

Total responses received: 57

- **Preferred location: Seapark 43.86%**
- **Preferred facility type: Multi Use Games Area 36.84%**

The results of the consultation were presented to Council in October 2023. Elected Members tasked Officers to investigate the possibility of other potential locations beyond those considered and to consult with the post primary schools in Hollywood (Sullivan Upper, Priory College, Rudolf Steiner and Rockport).

Alternative Locations

Officers researched other potential locations using GIS maps and site visits, land currently owned by Council and other public bodies was considered (Education Authority, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Health Trust etc), as well as researching current land for sale on the property market. NI Housing Executive and Health Trust land within the Hollywood area was not considered large enough or in the right location for a play provision for older children as, for example, it was too close to residential properties. **Conclusion- no suitable sites.**

- **Current sites for sale within the Hollywood Area and costings:**

Below shows potentially suitable land currently for sale in Hollywood. The costs are significant, and it is not considered that these are suitable locations for the older children facility due to the proximity of residential properties. **Conclusion- no suitable sites.**

Not Applicable




Asking Price
£650,000

Exceptional Seafront Building Site, 117a Station Road, Craigavad, Holywood, BT18

Site

simonBRIEN Residential
 Marketed by Simon Brien Residential (North Down)



Offers Over
£125,000

Site @, 42 Park Avenue, Holywood, BT18 9LS

Site

Marketed by Templeton Robinson (North Down)

TEMPLETON ROBINSON

- **Other Public Land.** Land behind SERC Holywood, land beside Sullivan Upper school Limited, land in Glenlyon Park

Land behind SERC Holywood



Source: GIS Maps

This land is owned by the Education Authority and following discussions they have advised that this land is earmarked for the development of a new school. **Conclusion-not available.**

Not Applicable

357

Land beside Sullivan Upper School



Source: GIS Maps

This land is owned by Lesley Holywood Properties Limited and following a site visit the land is currently being developed for a new housing development. **Conclusion- no longer available.**

Land in Glenlyon Park



Source: GIS Maps

This land is owned by Ards and North Down Borough Council and after visiting the site it was not considered that this would be suitable for an older children facility as it is quite enclosed with lots of trees, which could potentially increase the chance of anti-social behaviour. **Conclusion- not a suitable site.**

Not Applicable

358

After research the conclusion is the following sites are the only options in Holywood to provide a play provision for older children:

- Ballymenoch Park
- Seapark
- Praegar's Field

Consultation with Schools

The Councils Development Officer (Play and Recreation) contacted the local post primary schools to arrange for young people to complete an online survey about viable options. Each school was sent emails and contacted by telephone three times, to ask for support in completing the survey between August 2024 and January 2025. A visit was made to Sullivan Upper to deliver posters with a QR code link that the teachers could present to their classes.

The collective results from all school results are below:

- Responses received: **272**
- Preferred facility type: **Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) (44%)**
- Preferred location: **Seapark (55%)**

It will now need to be established if planning permission is required to deliver the facility. If it is deemed necessary, then a planning application can be submitted, and the facility will be delivered on completion of that process. If a planning application is not deemed necessary, the facility can be delivered during 2025/2026.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council proceed with the next steps to deliver a Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) at Seapark in Holywood.

Unclassified

359

ITEM 20**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	PCA116
Legislation	The Local Government (NI) Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Update Report
Subject	Cycling Friendly Borough Update
Attachments	None

The following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council in February 2023: "This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly Borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport."

In June 2023 a report was brought to Council outlining the elements that are in place or are currently in development, planned or being progressed that would contribute towards ensuring that a 'Cycling Friendly Borough' status can be declared and sustained. Business Cases were submitted as part of the budget setting process in autumn/winter 2023 for the 2024/2025 Financial Year to support the delivery of the One Path Initiative and a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough. The One Path Initiative business case budget was held until the 2025/2026 Financial Year and the Cycling Masterplan budget has now also been approved for the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

Not Applicable

360

The elements that will be developed that will contribute towards a Cycling Friendly Borough are as follows:

- a) The role of, and working with the Department of Infrastructure
- b) The proposed Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan
- c) Working with Sustrans, on its National Cycling Network and One Path Initiative
- d) The Councils Greenway network programme
- e) Cycle to Work Scheme
- f) Cycle Friendly Workplace Scheme

a) Department for Infrastructure (DFI)

Dfi are statutorily responsible for promoting and improving road safety via education, licensing, and regulation of transportation. The Safe and Sustainable Travel Division aims to promote improved road safety and deliver better regulation of the transport sector. The Division is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy. In addition, the Division has a role in promoting the use of alternative and sustainable modes of transport such as: walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.

DFI have developed a draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 which advocates partnership working to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads network and to develop a safe and sustainable transport network that meets the needs of all road users.

An annual programme of research and statistical investigations into road safety problems in Northern Ireland continues to be developed and implemented in partnership with road safety partner organisations. Dfi have over the years delivered several 'Road Safety' Campaigns such as:

- Being a safe pedestrian
- Cycling
- Protective clothing
- Road safety for children under seven
- Road safety for 7 to 11 year olds
- Teenage Road Safety
- Share the Road to Zero

They also produce a plethora of other safety awareness information, and in relation to cycling the information available is as follows:

- Cycle Journeys
- Cycle Parking and Security
- Cycle Safety for Children
- Cycling Safety
- Cycling – getting started
- Electric bikes (electrically-assisted pedal cycles)
- The Benefits of Cycling
- Using cycle lanes and other cycling facilities safely

Not Applicable

361

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme has been funded by DfI for over 50 years teaching children how to cycle safely as well as proposed Road Safety Campaigns. The impacts of the scheme were reviewed in a report in December 2024.

Council Officers meet representatives from The Safe and Sustainable Travel Division regularly to ensure connectivity with proposed DfI cycle lanes, public transport links, etc and the Council's proposed Greenway Network. Council Officers have also been liaising with representatives from DfI and Atkins in relation to the development of their Active Travel Plan and Council will be submitting a response to the consultation that is currently running on that, as outlined in Item 3.

b) Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan

Council Officers are keen to pursue a 10-year cycling masterplan for the Borough and a business case to secure the budget for its development was submitted as part 2025/6 Estimates Process and has been successful. The Masterplan will be developed over this Financial Year and would provide the basis for a strategic approach to developing a network of key active travel routes.

Development of the plan would be done in the following stages:

Stage 1: Review of strategic policy documents and a review Audit of Active Travel initiatives, in the following way.

- **A review of Physical Measures:** Desk-based audit of initiatives at national, regional and local level. Map and evaluate routes to make recommendations on which active travel initiatives should be considered for delivery in the Borough, identifying delivery partners, target audiences and potential funding sources.
- **A review of Soft Measures:** Evaluation of the impact of the delivery of behavioural change and engagement projects.

Stage 2: Engagement with key council staff (E.g., Planning, Regeneration, Leisure, Parks, Community Development and Environmental Health) and DfI.

- Further activity that will contribute to the development of a cycling friendly Borough will include engagement with cycling groups and clubs, community interest groups and the general public as part of the development of this strategy.

Stage 3: Drafting of the Cycling Masterplan

Using the information gathered, the Masterplan could propose the following:

- A cycle and walking path typography of three categories of cycle and walking routes that link to, expand and improve the existing NCN (National Cycle Network) and network of greenways across the borough: Segregated cycle routes (A routes), Quiet ways (B Routes), Off-Road Greenways (C Routes).

Not Applicable

362

- A suite of other measures that will lead to transformative change across the Borough. These will include junction improvements; pedestrianised areas and Bus and Cycle only streets; low traffic neighbourhoods; school streets; speed reduction measures; pedestrian priority measures; outline cycle parking and storage strategy; outline parking removal strategy; measures to activate public space, however it must be noted that some of this will be the remit of DFI to deliver.
- The masterplan will map infrastructure proposals at three levels of detail: 1- ANDBC wide, 2- Urban areas: Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and 3- an overview of Smaller Settlements.

Stage 4: Development of an Implementation Plan

Production of an implementation and delivery plan for the Masterplan would identify for delivery

- Priority routes considering cost, technical deliverability, such as landownership, political deliverability, connection to existing and proposed active travel initiatives, and anticipated benefit to the community.
- Indicative costings for projects, grouping these into short term 'quick wins', medium term projects, and longer term, more ambitious projects.

The rationale for developing a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough is clear and many current government strategies including transport, health and urban regeneration identify that cycling as a form of active travel can bring significant outcomes to people. Locally within the Borough active travel has a significant role to play in contributing to the outcomes identified in 'The Big Plan' and the Corporate Plan 'Towards a Sustainable Borough'.

c) Working with Sustrans

National Cycle Network

Council regularly liaises with Sustrans, who are a charity that promotes walking and cycling. Sustrans consists of engineers, educators and industry experts. It created the National Cycle Network, and as custodians, it is their role to care for it, improve it and champion a long-term vision for its future. The NCN has provided for nearly 30 million trips a year in Northern Ireland; two-thirds of which are cyclists. According to pre-pandemic data, across the UK, leisure and tourist cyclists and walkers on the National Cycle Network spend an estimated £2.5 billion annually in local businesses.

Following a UK-wide assessment of the quality of the Network in 2018, they produced a report entitled 'Paths for Everyone' with a vision for traffic-free, accessible routes by 2040. It aligns with the Department for Infrastructure's own 'Strategic Plan for Greenways' which earmarked £150 million to create new traffic free routes connecting communities across Northern Ireland. To meet this new vision, 80% of the NCN in Northern Ireland was reclassified and a further 6% removed in July 2020. In summary:

Not Applicable

Where a route is removed from the Network but is of importance to local tourism and of a significant distance and scale, it will be reclassified as a named strategic route e.g., Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

In the long-term, Sustrans’ aim is to re-route on-road parts of the NCN to new traffic free sections or create new protected infrastructure.

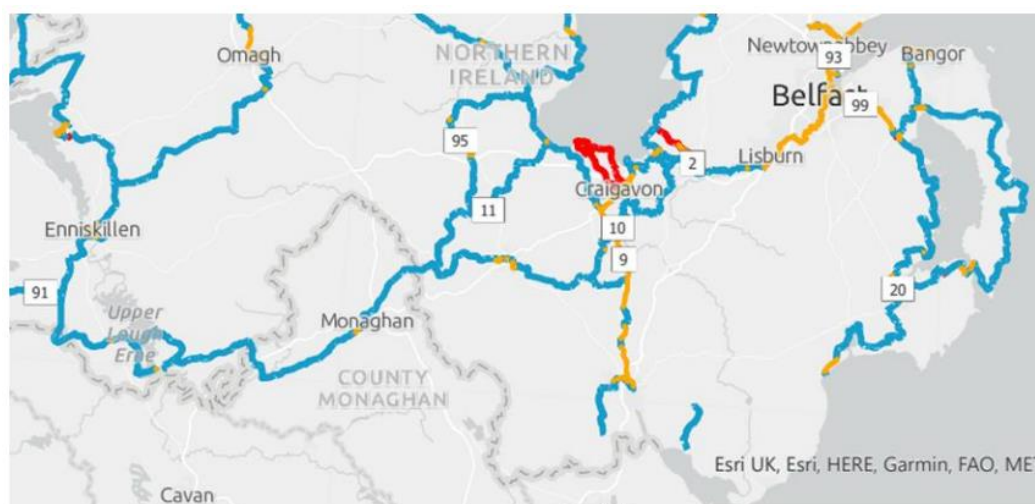
In Ards and North Down Borough Council no routes were removed, but three NCN/RCN (Regional Cycle Network) routes were affected by the changes as follows:

- RCN Route 20, from Whiterock to Comber along Strangford Lough, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.
- NCN Route 93, from Newtownards to Bangor (which includes the North Down Coastal Path, this section, as an off-road trail, will remain part of Route 93) the remaining sections will now be known as: North Down, Bangor to Newtownards.
- NCN Route 99, from Portaferry to Comber via Newtownards, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

(See map below)

As they are all largely on-road, these have all been reclassified and geared towards and adult audience and will be referred to as their local, familiar name.

It is the aim of Sustrans, following the Review, to re-invigorate the network in Northern Ireland and work with Councils and other partners to invest in a network that brings business to rural areas as well as giving people an opportunity to travel actively. Also, it will create a safer, more consistent user experience, manage user expectations and allow people to make an informed choice when using different routes on and off the Network.



— NCN Traffic Free — Remove — Reclassify

Not Applicable

364

One Path Initiative

As the amount of people walking and cycling in public spaces and on multi use paths has increased over the years, so too has the interactions between those users and in some cases these are negative. Sustrans has in recent years received a significant increase in contact from local Councils, members of the public and community groups about concerns relating to the behaviour of some path users and requesting support and guidance about how to manage this issue. Most of the conflicts being reported are occurring between different types of users for example, dog walkers complaining about cyclists or cyclists complaining about joggers and so on.

As managers of many public spaces and multi-use paths, it is incumbent on Council to try to respond to these to these complaints. The danger is however that a response such as imposing speed limits, segregation of paths or adding signage outlining a list of rules impedes one group of users and leaves them feeling targeted causing further tensions between user groups.

The approach of 'The One Path Initiative' is to discuss and understand the issues people face when using shared paths and to collaboratively develop ways which help people to better share the space. By participating in this process, people will feel more invested in their local space, understand other user's experiences, feel more connected to their community, and it will create a positive atmosphere. The ethos behind the One Path Initiative is 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

This would be a two-year initiative, helping users of shared spaces understand and respect how other users enjoy the space as follows:

Stage 1: An audit and analysis of issues

Stage 2: Development of a creative engagement programme

Stage 3: Embedding the One Path ethos, 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

In the first year the project provides for engagement with a variety of user groups through a series of focus group sessions e.g. with running groups, walking groups, cycling clubs, dog walker groups, local community groups, statutory bodies and so on. This is followed in the second year by on path animation events to engage users in conversations about messaging and how they and others can safely use the path together without the need for restrictive codes of conduct and lists of dos and don'ts – the initiative helps path users understand each other's perspectives and that the simple message of 'Share, Respect, Enjoy' is applicable to all.

At the end of the two-year programme a One Path festival would be held along a shared space giving the various user group representatives opportunity to highlight their own work by running engagement events then and thereafter.

Given the progression of the Comber-Newtownards-Green Road Greenway project, it is would be timely to deliver the One Path Initiative in 2025 and the budget for this has been confirmed.

Not Applicable

Greenways

In January 2023, Council scaled back its greenway plans for the Borough, but is still progressing with the following:

a) Comber to Floodgates Park, Newtownards

Planning Ref LA06/2019/0308/F – Permission Granted 10/01/2025. The A21 section was omitted and a sperate planning application will be submitted to cover that section in consultation with DFI. Discharge of planning conditions will be progressed and the progression of land acquisitions etc.

b) Floodgates Park to Londonderry Park, Newtownards

Planning Ref LA06/2019/0544/F - Permission Granted 02/09/2021. Construction work is underway on this section of the greenway.

c) Belvedere Road, Newtownards to Somme Heritage Centre

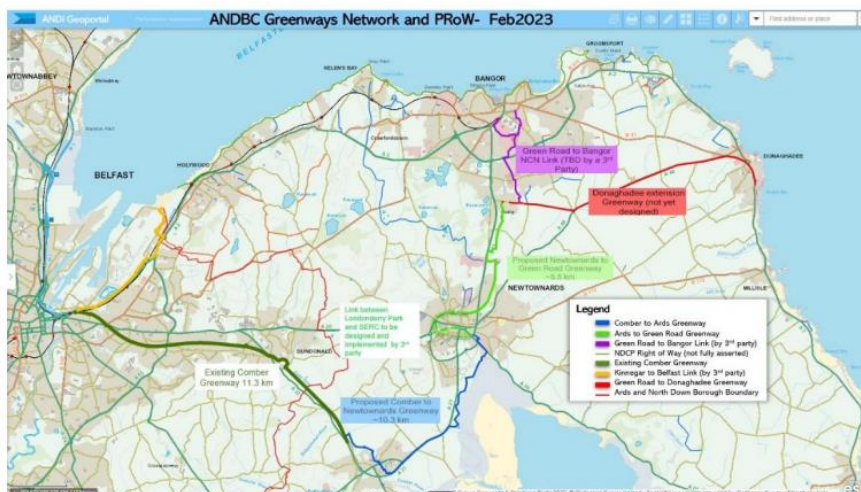
Planning Ref LA06/2020/0940/F - Permission Granted 01/09/2022, construction work is underway on this section of the greenway.

d) Somme Heritage Centre to Green Road, Bangor

Planning ref LA06/2021/0885/F – Permission Granted 09/10/2024, construction work is underway on this section of the greenway.

In relation to the Councils alternative decision concerning the abandoned Kinnegar to Donaghadee route, a Working Group has now been established to address connectivity, accessibility and maintenance issues along the North Down Coastal Path and that work is ongoing.

The Borough already has a greenway route; the Comber Greenway, connecting Comber to the centre of Belfast, this was Northern Ireland’s first greenway, created in 2008. A map of the greenway routes is shown below



Not Applicable

366

All external and internal funding has been secured for these schemes, with Council responsible for approximately 15% of the overall capital costs.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Cycling is a “Be Active” step in the “Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing” health message supported by the Council through the Employee Health and Wellbeing Group and various Community Planning projects. Employees are therefore encouraged to cycle and have been supported through the Council’s Cycle to Work Scheme – one of our advertised employee benefits packages designed to attract and retain staff. This scheme allows employees and Members to purchase a bike through a salary sacrifice scheme and as the costs are deducted before tax and National Insurance contribution, it represents a 12.5% saving on each purchase value for the council and 32% - 42% saving for the purchaser depending on tax bracket. The scheme was temporarily closed over covid but has now been reintroduced.

Through the Cycle to Work scheme, staff and Members can in purchasing a bike have the opportunity to become fitter, healthier, more energetic and focused at work and will also save money in using a bicycle rather than a car for journeys related to work and outside of work, and reduce carbon emissions.

Cycle Friendly Workplace Scheme

As part of the Council’s commitment to becoming a Cycle Friendly Borough, Officers are exploring opportunities for Council to become a Cycle Friendly Employer. Preliminary discussions have taken place with the accreditation body, Cycling UK.

The Health and Wellbeing Team are working closely with other Council departments to progress the first stage of this process which includes undertaking a survey to provide better information regarding the extent of measures needed and may identify quick wins to support the existing Employees Cycle Schemes such as the Cycle to Work Scheme. A small budget has been approved in the 2025/26 estimates to progress the accreditation and improve facilities.

Once the outlined recommendations have been progressed a further report will be brought back to advise on when the status of a cycling friendly Borough can be declared.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Notes the above areas of activity and how they will contribute to the delivery and sustaining of a Cycling Friendly Borough.
2. Seeks to advocate the Assembly’s adoption of the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 and ensure there is sufficient budget is made available to continue to deliver the Cycling Proficiency Tests and the wider Safety Campaigns within the Northern Ireland Government.
3. Officers continue with the delivery of a ‘Cycling Masterplan for the Borough’ and the ‘One Path Initiative’.

Not Applicable

367

4. Officers continue to meet and engage with Sustrans, the Safe and Sustainable Transport Division of DFI to further promote safe cycling and active travel.
5. Officers continue with the delivery of the greenways and the proposed improvements to the North Down Coastal Path
6. Continues to recognise the value of continuing with its Cycle to Work scheme.
7. Officers continue to work towards a Cycle Friendly Workplace Accreditation.

Unclassified

368

ITEM 21**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development
Date of Report	24 January 2025
File Reference	CW108
Legislation	Local Government (NI) Act 2014
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	Community Resuscitation Group (CRG) Update
Attachments	CRG updated Action Plan

Background

The Community Resuscitation Group workstream arose from the priority in The Big Plan (the community plan) “to create a community of lifesavers across Ards and North Down”. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) are the Lead Partner with other partners including ANDBC (secretariat and Chair), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), Chambers of Commerce, Ards Peninsula First Responders Scheme, Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI), Sport NI and representatives from the community and voluntary sector.

The Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland was launched in July 2014 with a vision to increase the survival rate for those who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, to the highest level that can be achieved across Northern Ireland. This workstream had progressed well and started to implement an agreed Action Plan, but work was paused because of Covid and resource pressures within NIAS. The workstream resumed in 2023.

Not Applicable

369

Workstream Update

The workstream met in January and September 2023, and modest progress was made in reinvigorating the group post covid. In 2024 a new NIAS Community Resuscitation (CR) Lead was appointed alongside a designated support team to cover all Northern Ireland. A CRG meeting was held in May & October, and commitment given to update the Terms of Reference and review and update the Action Plan, which covers the following areas:

- Education (mainly schools)
- Community
- Community First Responder Schemes
- Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)
- Business
- Communication

It was agreed in 2024 that this workstream group will prioritise:

- Re-establishing the networks of community lifesavers to strengthen the chain of survival.
- Developing Ards and North Down protocol for the location and maintenance of AEDs (defibrillators).
- Providing CPR training to local organisations.
- Promoting Restart a Heart Campaign in October through sharing social media posts.

In 2024 the following were actioned:

- The NIAS CR Lead and ANDBC Health and Wellbeing (H&W) leads worked over the summer months to review the existing actions, agree future plans and update timelines. The **new Action Plan** was presented for sign off by the CR Group October 2024. Priorities in the new Action Plan include:
 - Re-engagement with schools to continue the **“train the trainer”** programme for teachers to cascade CPR training to classes
 - Consideration of similar “train the trainer” schemes in the community
 - **Support for the First Responder Schemes** including a 10th Anniversary recognition event in 2025 which, with their agreement is planned for March 2025. It should be noted that Ards First Responders (AFRs) are highly qualified volunteers who agree to attend first aid emergencies and deliver first aid, including CPR, whilst waiting for ambulances to arrive. This work has saved many lives, particularly on the Peninsula where it can take longer for an ambulance to reach the patient, and every minute of delay for treatment in a cardiac arrest is a 10% reduction in the chances of survival. AFRs have attended over 700 incidents in the last 3 years.
 - The development of an **AED protocol** to assist with identifying and siting suitable locations
 - Re-engagement with the **Business Community** through the Chambers of Commerce/Trade associations, etc
- Work was also undertaken to update the terms of reference for the group and to reach out to other potential members.

Not Applicable

370

- A draft AED protocol was prepared with the expectation of being agreed by the group in January 2025, as one of the priorities in the Action Plan. This considers the siting, provision and maintenance of council AEDs alongside guidance for community groups and other interested parties who may wish to provide AEDs on council property or public spaces. Once finalised and agreed by the CRG, the document will be brought to Council for noting.
- As part of their routine work visiting premises to monitor the smoke free and tobacco/vaping control work, Council Tobacco Control Officers are checking if premises have an AED and if so, query if they are registered on the circuit. They provide an information leaflet to premises that are not registered. In the last 12 months 70 premises had AEDs and 62 (89%) were registered on the circuit. The remaining 8 premises were encouraged to register.
- A campaign to encourage householders and business premises to display their street number to make it easier for emergency services - Every Second Counts: Display Numbers on Your Doors. In the summer of 2024 press releases and social media posts were launched with this message to ensure houses and premises are numbered and clearly visible from the road, to make it easier for emergency services to identify their location, otherwise responders to 999 calls can lose valuable time, leading to potential life-threatening delays.

There was good coverage of the campaign in local newspapers and on social media. The Council website also hosted the news and photos, and press releases were provided to the emergency services partners so that they could also share the campaign message. It is intended to re-visit this message on a regular basis.

Such was the success of the campaign that it was agreed to consider ways to keep this important message in the public eye, with ideas such as each partner taking it in turns to lead on the message every few months, and providing leaflets/posters to local businesses that sell house signs.

- Work is also underway to develop a communication plan amongst all the partners to ensure that key messages are regularly placed in the public domain. Of particular importance is the Chain of Survival (below) so that the focus is recognising a cardiac arrest, calling 999 and starting CPR. AEDs are an important step but are not the first priority which is why it is so important that the right messages are communicated.



Not Applicable

371

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report and supports the work of the Community Resuscitation Group, and in particular the work of the Ards Peninsula First Responders group as they celebrate their 10th anniversary.

Appendix 1

Creating a Community of Lifesavers in Ards & North Down Borough Council

**Community
Resuscitation
Group**



Version 4.0

October 2024

Background

The Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland was launched in July 2014 with a vision to increase survival for those who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, to the highest level that can be achieved across Northern Ireland.

The objectives set out in the Strategy are to:

1. raise public awareness of the importance of early recognition of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, and the importance of early intervention;
2. encourage members of the public to intervene in the event of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest;
3. increase the availability of, and access to, appropriate and effective CPR training provision across Northern Ireland;
4. achieve high uptake of CPR training;
5. make the most efficient use of the resources available to support community resuscitation training
6. improve the availability of, and access to, the automated external defibrillators that are in place across Northern Ireland, and
7. enhance the capacity of information systems to capture and provide key data on out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and patient outcomes.

Action Plan

This plan sets out the priority actions to be taken forward over the period 2024-28 with an emphasis on CPR/AED and PAD related actions.

During 2018/19, the Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) Community Resuscitation working group will continue to work to identify, and develop the Community Resuscitation themes across ANDBC ensuring that outcomes in terms of survival are maximised. This requires collaboration by all partners to avoid duplication of effort, pool resources and expertise. It is hoped that working collaboratively will enable a Community of Lifesavers to be created within the ANDBC area.

The action plan takes cognisance of other related regional strategies and action plans and is intended to work alongside these. These include:

- Making Life Better – A Whole System Framework for Public Health. 2013-2023 (Under Review)
- EANI related strategies
- Council Community Plans

R = Red	Action/Project unlikely to be delivered. Requires immediate action.
A = Amber	Action/Project delayed/stalled. May require action.
G = Green	Moving forward, No immediate action required.

EDUCATION						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG status
E1	Baseline Schools registered to teach CPR Education	Scope the ANDBC Area for number of Post Primary and SEN Schools registered to teach CPR Education	October 2024	EANI NIAS BHF	9 of the 11 (82%) Post-primary schools in ANDBC area in October 2024 have registered with the Community Of Lifesavers (COL) programme.	Green
E2	Increase % of schools registered to teach CPR Education	Encourage schools who have not participated in the COL programme to do so.	June 2026	EANI NIAS BHF	In 2022, the Community of Lifesavers(COL) programme replaced the Heartstart programme. This is currently only mandatory for Key Stage 3 pupils. Primary schools need to be explored for a replacement for Heartstart.	Red
E3	Include CPR Education as a mandatory element within the NI Curriculum for both Primary and Post Primary Schools. Personal Development outcomes will include 'demonstration of emergency first aid skills'	Elected members, NIAS, EANI work jointly to address CPR education within the school curriculum	June 2026	EANI BHF ANDBC NIAS	Post-primary schools do not currently have Life-saving skills as part of the curriculum. This is currently being delivered as part of PD or LLW within schools that have signed up to the COL programme. Primary schools currently have no programme available, this is to be developed in conjunction with EANI.	Red

COMMUNITY						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG Status
C1	Establish a baseline for members of the public (over 18yrs old) <u>willing & able to provide CPR</u>	NIAS will work with Department of Health to develop questions for adults over 18 yrs as part of the NI Health Survey.	June 2026	ANDBC NIAS	CPR and AED questions for members of the public will be included in the next NI Health and Wellbeing Survey. The results will be regional and not council specific so may require a council statistician to extrapolate the NI figures for Council area specific statistics.	
C2	Establish a baseline for members of the public (over 18yrs old) <u>trained in CPR in the past 5 years</u>	NIAS to agree questions to be asked to obtain the information required	June 2026	NIAS	CPR and AED questions for members of the public will be included in the next NI Health and Wellbeing Survey. The results will be regional and not council specific so may require a council statistician to extrapolate the NI figures for Council area specific statistics.	
C3	Establish a baseline for children aged 11-16yrs who are <u>willing and able to provide CPR</u>	NIAS will work with Department of Health to develop questions for 11-16 yr olds as part of the NI Health Survey	June 2026	NIAS	CPR & AED questions to be finalised for children aged 11-16yrs and will be part of the next Young People's Behaviour & Attitudes Survey to establish trends/statistics.	
C4	Establish a baseline for children aged 11-16yrs who are <u>trained in CPR and the use of an AED during their school years</u>	NIAS will work with Department of Health to develop questions for 11-16 yr olds as part of the NI Health Survey	June 2026	NIAS	CPR & AED questions to be finalised for children aged 11-16yrs and will be part of the next Young People's Behaviour & Attitudes Survey to establish trends/statistics.	

C5	<p>Establish a model to build capacity for CPR training across Community & partner organisations within Ards and North Down Area.</p> <p>To explore with Sport NI and NIAS the opportunity to deliver Train the Trainer model to sporting clubs / organisations across the Borough.</p>	<p>ANDBC & SEHSCT Community Development team to signpost Community Groups to CPR training.</p> <p>Partner organisations to consider ways for CPR training to embedded in their routine business</p>	June 2025	<p>ANDBC</p> <p>Sport NI</p> <p>National Trust</p> <p>NIAS</p>	<p>There are 68 community Groups in ANDBC and only 2 have had CPR training within their group.</p> <p>SportNI: As part of the Defibrillators for Sport Programme applicants were offered places on Defibrillator Awareness Training Programme. For the Ards and North Down Borough Council Area: 93 AEDs were provided and Total Number of Trainees up to April 2019 was 96. The programme closed in 2019.</p> <p>National Trust are in early negotiations of how this CPR model will work.</p>
C6	All residential addresses would have a house number displayed.	Explore the potential of a campaign to have residents display their house number, particularly in rural areas. 'What's your Number Campaign' Press Release	July 2024	ANDBC	It is a legal requirement to display your house number. Potential to have an article in the council magazine regarding the importance of having a house number displayed in an emergency. Also consider Royal Mail Scamwise leaflet.

Commented [RM1]: Under review

Commented [RM2]: Under review

C7	Re-Run 2 nd Phase of Displaying your House Number campaign	Re-run 'What's your Number Campaign' every 3 years. Consider other ways of promoting campaign message.	July 2027	ANDBC NIAS All partners	Agree a programme with external agencies / partners to share campaign messages.	
COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDER SCHEMES						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG Status
F1	Assess need and feasibility for additional First Responder Groups in Ards and North Down area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review number of CFR schemes in the ANDBC area. Review radius covered by the current CFR Schemes 	March 2027	ANDBC NIAS CFR Schemes	Sept 2024 - There is 1 CFR Scheme in the ANDBC area – Ards Peninsula CFR Scheme. It is an extremely active scheme where their volunteers have attended over 700 alerts over the last 3 years. Ards Peninsula Scheme covers BT22.	
F2	Work in partnership with NIAS to maintain and extend as appropriate the existing First responder schemes in the Ards and North Down area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss ways of communicating the role of CFR Volunteers with ANDBC residents. Discuss how these schemes can be best supported. 	March 2025	NIAS ANDBC CFR Schemes	Consider the Council ezine to profile the CFR's including the area they cover and the purpose of the Scheme. CFR's 10 Year Anniversary in 2025 - Celebration Event to be hosted by ANDBC and NIAS with Mayor present – 5 th February 2025.	
F3	Obtain statistical information for ambulance response times within Ards and North Down area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide annual statistics of ambulance response times across the ANDBC Area. 	Annually in Sept	NIAS ANDBC	2018/19 stats are: 31.3% of Category A calls responded to within 8 mins. The target is 72.5% of Cat A calls should be responded	

					to within 8 mins. 2022: 36% 2023: 40% 2024: 33%	
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AED's/PAD						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG Status
	STATIC					
A1	All organisations across business, statutory, Community and Voluntary sectors who own an AED will register it with Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, ensure it is 'Emergency Ready' & consider making it publically available 24/7 where appropriate	Scope the locations and numbers of Council owned AEDs and register them with NIAS	Dec 2024	ANDBC	Premises officer in each building is responsible for the maintenance to the AED. July 2019 – All Council owned AEDs are now registered with NIAS	
		Map the number of staff CPR & AED trained across all Council locations	Sept 2024	ANDBC	From 2021 180 staff have received CPR/AED training as part of the 3 day First Aid Course and a further 50 are booked to attend over next 3 months (completed by the end of 2024.) Council running approximately 9/10 first aid courses per year.	

	Collate number of staff CPR & AED trained for partner agencies.	Dec 2024	All partners	Identify specific training completed; CPR/AED standalone course or as part of a first aid course	
	Encourage organisations and businesses across the Borough to register their AED with NIAS	June 2024	NIAS ANDBC SportNI	ANDBC Tobacco Control Officers advise businesses of registration if there is an AED on the premises. In the last 12 months: 70 premises had AEDS – 62 were registered on the circuit (89%), remaining 8 premises were encouraged to register (Oct 24).	
NIFRS			NIFRS officers advising businesses as part of fire risk assessments.		
	Baseline number of AEDs in the ANDBC area	Sept 2024	NIAS	September 2018 – 81 registered August 2019 – 106 registered September 2024 – 219 registered	
	All partners to have access to the AED Guidance document and awareness of how to register AEDs on the NIAS website	Oct 2024	All partners	AED Guidance and the AED map link has been made available to all partners. September 2024 - All AED information is held on The Circuit. Nearest AEDs are visible on Defibfinder.uk (BHF)	

		<p>Identify gaps of AED provision across ANDBC to enable prioritisation of resource.</p>	<p>June 2025</p>	<p>All partners</p>	<p>Requests for AEDs will be assessed using The Circuit data to ensure an equal spread across the Borough. Also Resuscitation Council UK provide a template to assess appropriateness and need for locating an AED.</p> <p>Reference will also be made to the ANDBC AED Protocol.</p>	
		<p>Ards & North Down Borough Council to consider the development of an AED policy for Council owned AEDs.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>ANDBC NIAS</p>	<p>ANDBC are utilising the NIAS / LCCC template to develop their own policy.</p>	

Business						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG Status
B1	Businesses within the ANDBC area will consider supporting the Chain of Survival concept for local communities and schools	Explore the potential of the following with businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsoring an Advert on a Community AED to help fund the purchase of it • Sponsor AEDs for Community First Responder Schemes • Sponsor CPR training equipment for Schools wishing to teach CPR 	June 2026	ANDBC NIAS Chamber of commerce Business in the Community	Further discussions are required as how this can be progressed.	

COMMUNICATION						
	Objective	Actions	Due date	Responsible	Progress	RAG Status
M1	Communicate effectively the collaboration with all partners in Building a Community of Lifesavers in ANDBC area	Develop a Communication plan	Sept 2025	ANDBC	Discussion with Comms team for them to provide assistance on how this should be developed.	
		Develop key messages for all Communication channels		All partners		
		Identify survivor stories		NIAS		
		Discuss the language used regarding defibrillators and CPR				
		Present on the Community Resuscitation Action Plan to Elected Members - Report to go to Council	Dec 2024	ANDBC	Report for Council to be produced.	
M2	Restart a Heart Day will be actively promoted and CPR awareness activities	All partners will play an active part in the promotion and delivery of CPR Awareness on World Restart a Heart Day (16 th October 2024)	October 2024	All partner organisations	Press Release / Social Media campaign promoting information on Restart a Heart Day.	

	carried out.					
M3	To explore a mechanism of support for those affected by an Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest	Adopt research evidence regarding emotional support for those who attempt CPR and those who survive an Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest	December 2027	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service All partners	NIAS, via their Health and Wellbeing Team provide team support to the CFRs after a traumatic event / incident. NIAS currently have a 5 year study ongoing on this.	

DRAFT

Unclassified

385

ITEM 22**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development
Date of Report	22 January 2025
File Reference	EHPD17
Legislation	The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Equality and Good relations screening is ongoing by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.
Subject	Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils
Attachments	None

Background and Key Issues

In 2023, SOLACE considered a report from the Department for Communities outlining the benefits of transferring the functions of Landlord Registration Scheme to local councils. In March 2023, it was agreed that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) would act as the lead council in the preparation for and transfer of the functions under the Landlord Registration Scheme within Northern Ireland. LCCC will administer the scheme.

Landlord Registration was introduced through '*The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014*' to create a single database of landlords who rent within the Private Rented Sector.

The Scheme is currently managed by a Landlord Registrar and small team that sits within the Department for Communities.

Not Applicable

386

Local councils have enforcement powers to act against non-compliant landlords.

In September 2023, a Programme Board was established to oversee the delivery of the project with representatives from DfC, LCCC and an independent SOLACE representative to oversee the transfer of these functions from DfC to local councils by March 2025.

Engagement has been ongoing with Councils and other stakeholders throughout the lifetime of this project including various all councils' groups such as Environmental Health NI (EHNI), IT officers', Head of Communications and Information Governance groups. Other stakeholders have included landlords, agents, tenants, DfC, PropertyPal and those who have contracts with the current scheme.

This scheme operates on a cost neutral basis with all services offered by this scheme being funded from the landlord registration fee only.

The purpose of this report to provide a final update as the project nears completion.

New Website and Registration Portal

Following an open procurement exercise conducted by LCCC in March 2024, an IT software company was awarded the contract for the build and management of a new dedicated website and registration portal. Currently, this system is going through the User Acceptance Testing stage which once finalised in early February will allow the data stored on the current system to be migrated over.

The transfer of the landlord registration functions to local councils will occur on Saturday 1st March 2025 with a 'go live' date for the new system on Monday 3rd March 2025. This will see the completion of Phase 1. Phase 2 will commence shortly after that date with all additional functionality completed by June 2025.

Full training, including user guides for future employees who will access the database, will be provided to all councils and other users to maximise the benefits of the new system.

Appointment of New Landlord Registration Team

A recruitment exercise for a new landlord registration team ran was completed in 2024 and a team of three positions have now been filled, including the appointment of a new Landlord Registrar.

This team is funded wholly from the income received from the landlord fee with no cost to any Council.

Communications Plan

The Department for Communities have developed an advertising campaign as part of a wider communications plan associated with the transfer of functions. This includes radio and social media advertisements that will go live from February 2025. These advertisements will focus on the need of any landlords within the private rented sector to register with the scheme with updates being provided by email or letter to those already registered about the changes. Post-transfer any campaigns

Not Applicable

387

will be led by the Landlord Registrar and shared with all other Councils for their social media channels.

Governance Structures Post Transfer

The Programme Board will formally be asked to consider a MOU, a new operations model and a timeline for regulation change. These documents are being proposed by Department for Communities at its meeting in January 2025. These documents provide clarity to the Council on the governance structures for the scheme post transfer and proposes how the Landlord Registration Scheme can become more meaningful to councils and landlords in the long term.

Finance and Resource Implications

There is no financial implication to any Council. All funding for the project to date has been funded by the Department for Communities. Post transfer of functions, all staffing costs, contracts and future initiatives will be funded through the registration fee. There will be no cost to any Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the report.

Unclassified

388

ITEM 23**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	20 January 2025
File Reference	SD151
Legislation	Recreation and Youth Services (NI) 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 January 2025)
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Successful Individual Travel Accommodation Report for Noting Appendix 2 - Unsuccessful Report Appendix 3 - Funding Streams Report 2024-25

Members will be aware that on the 26th of August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 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 allocation of funding to facilitate all eligible requests for the remainder of the year with the surplus being sourced from the success at ABMWLC in surpassing income targets.

Not Applicable

389

During December 2024, the Forum received a total of 6 applications: 1 Goldcard and 5 Individual Travel Accommodation Grants. A summary of the 4 successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Individual Travel/Accommodation Appendix.

2024/25 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Proposed Funding Awarded December 2024	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	-£1,999.90
Coach Education	£3,000	£0	£1,195.00
Equipment	£14,000	£0	*-£5,012.41
Events	£6,000	£0	£869.46
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£420	*-£5,735.07
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£4,570
0 Goldcards Awarded in December (46 Goldcards in total during 2024/25)			

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£5,012.41** is based on withdrawn/reclaimed costs of **£277**.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£5,735.07** is based on a proposed award this month of **£420** and withdrawn costs of **£150**.

The proposed remaining budget for 2024/25 is **-£4,612.92** (110% of the 2024/25 budget spent).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note this report. The report outlines December grants that have been administrated and approved by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum. This is in line with the Councils Grant Policy effective from 5 December 2024.

APPENDIX 1 - SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	LOCATION	REPRESENTING2	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Alex Cree (1693)	Archery	GB National Indoor Archery Home Nations	07/12/2024	Birmingham NEC	Northern Ireland	£150.00	£150.00	An email from Archery NI confirms Alex has been offered a place on the NI Home Nations Team for the AGB Junior National Indoors 2024. Recommend funding of £150. (Applicant has advised he is receiving a one-off payment of £150 from Archery NI for this event, however, costs of ferry and accommodation total £747).
Sam Irwin (1696)	Tennis	Tennis Ireland National Training Camp	19/01/2024	National Tennis Centre, DCU, Dublin	Ireland	£50.00	£50.00	Sam has been selected to attend the Tennis Ireland National Training Camp in Dublin on 19 January. This has been confirmed by an email from Tennis Ireland. Recommend funding of £50. (Sam is in receipt of the Mary Peters Trust Hughes Award; £750 for this financial year and to help fund general training which is extensive throughout the year.)

APPENDIX 2 - UNSUCCESSFUL REPORT

APPLICANT	APPLICATION	REQUEST	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	EXPLANATION
Chloe Finlay (1694)	INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL / ACCOMMODATION	Chloe's sport is Judo and requested £300 for the 'European Get Together Tour' taking place on 23 November 2024 in Venray, Netherlands.	Our guidelines state we will NOT fund, "Applications received after the event commencing".	Funding not recommended as application was received on 9 December 2024; the event took place on 23 November 2024.
Harry Thallon (1695)	GOLDCARD	Harry has been training with Ulster Rugby U19 and has requested a Goldcard for Bangor Aurora and Queen's Leisure Complex.	Our guidelines state that applicants must, "Provide a letter from the relevant SNI/Sport Ireland recognised governing body...the letter must verify that you are part of a recognised squad or an Individual in preparation for a specific event/competition. The Governing Body letter/email MUST state what event/competition details you are preparing for... the event/competition must be within 12 months of application being made".	Goldcard not recommended as Harry has not provided a valid selection letter or email from Ulster Rugby; selection email is named "U19 Summer Programme Invite" and dated 10 April 2024. Another application would be welcomed when selection for the current season can be confirmed.

STREAM	ANNUAL BUDGET	AWARDED TO DATE	OPENING BUDGET	PROPOSED FUNDING	RECLAIMED COSTS	WITHDRAWN	PROPOSED REMAINING BUDGET
Anniversary	£1,000.00	£2,999.90	-£1,999.90	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,999.90
Coaching	£3,000.00	£1,805.00	£1,195.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,195.00
Equipment	£14,000.00	£19,289.41	-£5,289.41	£0.00	£28.00	£249.00	-£5,012.41
Events	£6,000.00	£5,130.54	£869.46	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£869.46
Seeding	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£500.00
Travel/Accommodation	£14,500.00	£19,965.07	-£5,465.07	£420.00	£0.00	£150.00	-£5,735.07
SCHOOLS/CLUBS	£5,000.00	£430.00	£4,570.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£4,570.00
DISCRETIONARY	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,000.00
TOTALS	£45,000.00	£49,619.92	-£4,619.92	£420.00	£28.00	£399.00	-£4,612.92

GOLDCARDS	
AWARDED TO DATE	46
AWARDED THIS MONTH	0
TOTAL	46

Unclassified

394

ITEM 24**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	PCA28
Legislation	Burial Regulations (NI) 1972 Part 3 of the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1985
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: update information
Subject	Future Cemeteries Provision Project
Attachments	None

The purpose of this report is to update Elected Member on the Future Cemeteries Provision project and development of additional facilities to provide ongoing cemetery provision for the Borough for the next 30 to 40 years.

There are currently twelve active cemeteries within the Borough. Movilla and Redburn have a capacity of approximately two years, with a further three cemeteries (Greyabbey, Clandeboye and Ballyvester) expected to be at capacity in less than ten years. The Council has a statutory duty to provide public burial grounds sufficient to the present and future needs of the Borough.

Not Applicable

395

To preserve supply of burial space and ensure immediate demand can be met, only five of the twelve cemeteries currently have new graves available to pre-purchase, with the remaining seven cemeteries only having capacity for burials to take place in existing graves, or in graves only available to purchase at the time of interment.

An initial phase one sift of 21 potential sites was undertaken by AECOM in 2019. This resulted in a recommendation on a strategic direction which was to develop two green field out of settlement sites rather than extend existing cemetery sites. However, this strategy was not approved by Council.

Additional feasibility study was carried out by Cavenagh Kelly in 2021 identifying further options. These included: extending Movilla and Clandeboye, developing a new facility in the Holywood Hills; developing existing ground at Ballyvester and Greyabbey and investigate land at Kinnegar. Of the above, investigation work at Clandeboye, Kinnegar, and the Holywood Hills and, by giving due consideration to relevant planning policy, indicated that the sites were not viable. In addition, development works at both Greyabbey and Ballyvester were facilitated by the in-house Cemeteries team and have been successfully concluded.

Following this review and a further Council decision in December 2022 it was agreed to appoint a specialist to update the Outline Business Cases for Extending Movilla Cemetery, and, identify one of the following locations for a combined site to service the Holywood, Bangor, Ards and Comber areas. These were. Conlig, Six Road Ends, and extending Loughview Cemetery in Comber. A draft OBC was produced by December 2023.

1. Extending Movilla Cemetery using Council owned land.

In February and March 2024, the council owned land adjacent to Movilla Cemetery was cleared of scrub to facilitate test digs and survey's for a proposed planning application. The test digs were positive and confirmed that the location is suitable for burial space. As this land is currently zoned for housing, planning is required for a change of use. To progress a change of use, Council has sought AECOM's assistance to complete drawings and maps including proposed levels and locations for new grave sections. Over the Summer and Autumn period several surveys have been carried out to inform the proposed planning application. Completed surveys have been submitted by AECOM and reviewed by our Planning Consultant in November 2024. The Consultant has advised that further monitoring for a minimum of six-months is required at the site to monitor the natural ground water table. An application to planning for change of use is being proposed for March 2025. Our consultants are finalising the Outline Business Case for this proposal, which will be brought to Council in the near future.

2. New Cemetery Site

(Conlig; Six Road Ends; or extending Loughview Cemetery in Comber)

Our appointed consultants are finalising the Outline Business Case for this proposal. To help inform this, test digs are currently being planned at four sites within some of the above locations. We hope to conclude these tests by Spring 2025. In addition, an advertisement in local newspapers has been published and local landowners and estate agents have been contacted, seeking expressions of interest from landowners

Not Applicable

396

who individually or jointly are in a position to offer circa. 14 hectares of land for consideration as a suitable site for a new Cemetery site or sites which it requires to enable it to accommodate the need for burial spaces within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the above and progress made to date.

ITEM 25

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Date of Report	29 January 2025
File Reference	PCA4
Legislation	Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Tree Asset Valuation
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Tree Asset Valuation Report

The purpose of this report and attachment outlines the findings of the Councils first Tree Asset Valuation, an analysis commissioned by Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2024 to assess the value, composition, and benefits of the borough’s tree population. The findings of this report will directly benefit the delivery of the Council Tree and Woodland Strategy. It serves as a crucial tool for understanding the ecological, financial, and community benefits provided by the Council’s managed trees. It sets a baseline for enhancing urban canopy cover and aligns with the Council’s Roadmap to Sustainability, Climate Adaptation Plan and Tree and Woodland Strategy.

The report examines over 10,700 trees across the parks and open spaces (approximately 70% of council owned trees), analysing their contribution to ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, pollution removal, and water runoff reduction. It also evaluates the monetary value of these trees, providing essential insights to inform future policies, planting strategies, and community engagement efforts. Additionally, this document identifies opportunities for increasing urban tree canopy coverage by highlighting areas where additional trees can be planted to maximize benefits for residents and the environment.

Not Applicable

398

1. Overview of the Tree Asset Valuation Report

The attached Tree Asset Valuation Report provides an in-depth analysis of the tree population managed by Ards and North Down Borough Council. This report was commissioned to evaluate the composition, distribution, and ecosystem benefits of the council's trees, as well as their structural and amenity value. The assessment forms part of the Council's 'Tree and Woodland Strategy,' supporting sustainability goals and informing long-term tree management strategies.

The report recorded over 10,700 trees across public parks and open spaces within the borough, representing 151 species. Key metrics such as carbon storage, pollution removal, avoided water runoff, and replacement costs were analysed. This data underpins the strategic value of trees in mitigating climate change, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing public well-being.

2. Key Findings

Tree Population and Diversity

- **Population:** 10,700 trees over 7cm DBH were recorded, encompassing 151 species.
- **Diversity:** The most common species are Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), and Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), collectively accounting for 31.3% of the population. The population's diversity indicates resilience to pests, diseases, and climate change.
- **Distribution:** 60.7% of the trees are in Bangor area, with significant populations also in Holywood and Newtownards.

Ecosystem Services

- **Carbon Storage:** The trees reviewed store 7,690 tonnes of carbon, valued at £7.6 million, with an annual sequestration (process of storing carbon) of 143 tonnes, £141,000.
 - **Air Pollution Removal:** 1,620 kg of pollutants (NO₂, SO₂, PM2.5) are removed annually, worth £47,200.
 - **Avoided Surface Runoff:** Trees intercept 1,200 m³ of water annually, saving £2,700 in drainage costs.
 - **Leaf Area:** The total canopy leaf area spans 424 hectares, underscoring trees' significant role in providing ecosystem services.
- Asset Value**
- **Replacement Cost:** The estimated cost to replace the tree population is £25 million.
 - **Amenity Value:** The trees' amenity value, is £277 million. Castle Park Bangor's trees alone have an amenity value of £97.9 million.

3. Recommendations for Enhancing Urban Tree Canopy

Strategic Expansion Areas

This report identifies urban parks and spaces with low canopy coverage as priority areas for planting new trees. For example, Newtownards, with only 694 trees across

Not Applicable

399

its parks, offers significant potential for increasing tree density. Similarly, smaller parks such as Pickie Park and Bloomfield Playing Fields, with less than 1% of the total population, can benefit from targeted tree planting programs. By addressing these gaps, the Council can work towards a more equitable distribution of tree benefits across the borough.

Increasing Urban Tree Canopy Benefits

Urban tree canopy directly improves environmental, social, and economic conditions. Trees provide shade, reducing urban heat islands and plus canopy cover enhances air quality by filtering pollutants, reduces noise pollution, and mitigates stormwater runoff. Socially, a robust urban canopy improves mental well-being, promotes outdoor activity, and increases property values in greener neighbourhoods. Enhanced canopy cover also supports biodiversity by providing habitats for wildlife. Strategically planted trees in urban centres can create green corridors, connecting fragmented habitats and supporting migratory species. Identifying and planting in areas with insufficient canopy cover is essential for these ecological benefits.

Species Selection and Diversity

The Council is encouraged to prioritise diverse and climate-resilient species in new planting initiatives. By selecting species that are tolerant of urban stressors, such as poor soil quality and limited water availability, the urban tree canopy can become more resilient to climate change and pests. Increasing genetic diversity will also reduce reliance on a few dominant species and mitigate risks associated with monocultures.

Community Involvement

Engaging residents in tree planting and maintenance can foster a sense of ownership and ensure the long-term success of new plantings. Public awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of urban trees can inspire community participation and support for Council initiatives.

Alignment with the Sustainability Roadmap

The Tree Asset Valuation Report serves as a foundational document supporting the Council's Sustainability Roadmap. By providing baseline data on tree population, diversity, and ecosystem services, the report allows the Council to measure progress in enhancing urban canopy cover and achieving climate resilience.

Key contributions include:

- **Baseline Metrics:** The report establishes quantifiable benchmarks for carbon sequestration, pollution removal, and water runoff management. These figures can guide future initiatives aimed at increasing tree canopy coverage.
- **Strategic Planning:** Insights from the report inform long-term planting schemes and species selection, ensuring alignment with sustainability goals and climate adaptation strategies.
- **Urban Heat Island Mitigation:** Increasing tree canopy in identified urban heat zones can significantly reduce temperatures and improve living conditions for residents.
- **Public Engagement:** The findings provide a platform for engaging communities on the importance of urban forestry.

Not Applicable

400

The findings highlight the immense value of Ards and North Down’s tree population in terms of ecological benefits, monetary valuation, and community well-being. The data-driven insights provided in this report can guide council policies and strategies to maintain and enhance the urban forest, ensuring it continues to deliver vital ecosystem services for future generations. Additionally, this report provides the Council with essential baseline metrics to monitor and improve canopy cover, directly contributing to the broader Roadmap to Sustainability and Climate Adaptation Plan.

By identifying areas with low canopy coverage and providing actionable recommendations, the report empowers the Council to strategically increase urban tree density. This effort not only addresses environmental challenges but also enhances the quality of life for the borough’s residents, creating greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

Members are asked to note this Tree Asset Valuation Report was compiled before the Storm Eowyn, which brought down and damaged a significant number of trees across the Borough. Although sadly many mature trees have fallen, it has not had a significant impact on overall tree canopy within the Borough and the principles and recommended way forward as outlined in the report remain.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.



Draft Report

Tree Asset Valuation

Ards and North Down

August 2024



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council





Authors

Lead Consultant - Ben Coles

Lead Technician - Rosie Webb

Reviewed by

Danielle Hill

Catherine Vaughan-Johncey

This assessment was carried out by Treeconomics

September 2024

Contents

Executive Summary	4	5.1 Tree Condition	23
Headline Figures	5	6. Recommendations	24
1. Introduction	6	7. Appendices	26
1.1 Background	6	Appendix I - Tree Values by Genus and Species	26
2. Structure	7	Appendix II - Notes on the Methodology	42
2.1 Tree Population	7	Appendix III - Bibliography	48
2.2 Population by Park	8		
2.3 Size Distribution	9		
2.4 Leaf Area and Dominance	10		
2.5 Tree Diversity	12		
3. The Value of Ecosystem Services	13		
3.1 Carbon Storage	13		
3.2 Annual Carbon Sequestration	15		
3.3 Air Pollution Removal	17		
3.4 Avoided Surface Runoff	18		
4. Asset Value	20		
4.1 Replacement Cost and Amenity Value	20		
5. Pests and Disease Risk	22		

Executive Summary

This report highlights the findings of a study to record the structure and composition of the trees within Ards and North Down's public parks and open spaces and to calculate some of the benefits, public goods or ecosystem services they provide.

- **10,700** trees over 7cm DBH were recorded in Ards and North Down's inventory.
- 151 species of tree are recorded within the district's tree inventory, with a relatively even spread that shows little reliance on a single species dominance. The most common tree species are Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with 1,227 trees, Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) with 1,081 trees, and Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) with 1,053 trees. Note: this is likely to be an underestimation of tree diversity, reflecting multiple surveyors and their identification ability, that may be improved with subsequent surveys.
- The tree population includes a wide variety of species, which is a good indication that the sites will be more resilient to pests, diseases and climate change than a less diverse treescape. The most prominent threats in this regard are Asian Longhorn Beetle, Citrus Longhorn Beetle and Dothistroma Needle Blight.
- Trees also confer many other benefits as part of functional urban ecosystems, including habitat provision, soil conservation and noise reduction, which currently cannot be valued. These should be considered when shaping policy or strategy documents.
- These trees have the potential to remove over **1,620 kg** of air pollution annually at a current value of **£47,200**. These pollutants include sulphur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter (PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).
- These trees reduce water runoff by **1,200 m³** per year, preventing it from entering the combined water drainage system, worth an estimated **£2,700** in avoided surface runoff water treatment costs annually.
- In total, the trees store over **7,690 tonnes** of carbon and sequester a further **143 tonnes** of carbon annually - with associated values of around **£7.6 million** and **£141,000** respectively.
- The amenity value of the campus and garden trees were calculated to be **£277 million**, as determined using a CAVAT valuation approach. The replacement cost of these trees was an estimated **£25 million**.

Headline Figures

Structure and Composition	
Number of Trees	10,700
Number of Species	151
Most Common Tree Species	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)
Replacement Cost (CTLA)	£25,000,000
Amenity Valuation (CAVAT)	£277,000,000

Ecosystem Services		
Total Carbon Storage	7,690 tonnes	£7,580,000
Annual Carbon Sequestration	143 tonnes	£141,000
Annual Pollution Removal	1,620 kg	£47,200
Annual Avoided Runoff	1,200 m ³	£2,700
Total Annual Benefits	£191,000	

¹ Hollis, 2007

² Doick *et al.*, 2018

³ gov.uk, 2012 [online]

⁴ DEFRA, 2023

⁵ NI Water, 2024

Replacement cost: Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers Methodology from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.¹

Amenity valuation (CAVAT): Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) is a method developed in the UK to provide a value for the public amenity that trees provide.²

Carbon storage and carbon sequestration values are calculated based on figures jointly published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, at a sum of £269 per metric tonne of CO₂e.³

Pollution removal: This value is calculated based on the UK social damage costs: £9.328 per kg (nitrogen dioxide), £17.118 per kg (sulphur dioxide), £65.693 per kg (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns).⁴

Avoided runoff: The value is based on an average volumetric charge of £2.243 per cubic metre from Northern Ireland Water.⁵

Data processed using i-Tree Eco version 6.0.35.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Tree Asset Valuation was commissioned by Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2024. Ards and North Down Borough Council manages over 10,000 trees across their park sites. These sites include parks, sport centres and war memorials across urban areas in Bangor, Newtownards and Holywood.

The Borough of Ards and North Down is located east of Belfast, Northern Ireland. It is a peninsula overlooking the Irish Sea to the East, whilst Strangford Lough borders much of the West coast. We can expect this area to support tree species well adapted to temperate and coastal conditions.

Ards and North Down Borough's tree population is rapidly changing. Since 2021, the STAND4TREES initiative saw 30,000 trees planted in woodlands, hedgerows and orchards⁶. With this rapid change, routine monitoring of tree populations (and the benefits they provide) can greatly support tree management strategies. It should be noted that council managed park trees constitute a fraction of the trees present within the borough. Figures for this particular group of trees, as presented throughout the report, yield particular benefits. For example, Ards and North Down Borough Council can implement greater management strategies for trees under their ownership and

use carbon storage, sequestration data etc. to greater understand their progress in achieving particular sustainability goals.

This Tree Asset Valuation forms part of Ards and North Down Borough Council's 'Tree and Woodland Strategy' - a comprehensive ten year plan to achieve multiple national and regional tree-related sustainability targets⁷. In particular, this report compliments item 10 of the Tree and Woodland Strategy Action Plan, to 'Investigate Carbon Capture, Sequestration and Storage'. Furthermore, findings from this report can be considered in relation to items 11 and 12, as well as the Woodland Trust 'Space for People' strategy.

⁶ Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2024

⁷ Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2021

2. Structure

2.1 Tree Population

Within the council’s tree population, trees belonging to 61 genera were identified, with 124 species identified.

The three most common species Sycamore, Scots Pine and Beech account for 31.3% of the population. Figure 1 indicates that the top 2 species exceed the recommended 10% share of the population suggested by Santamour’s 10-20-30 ‘rule’⁸. All genera were within the recommended 20% share of the population.

Ards and North Down’s population does not rely on a single species - it shows a good range of species. There are both conifers and deciduous trees within the 10 most common species, although deciduous species are more prevalent.

Ards and North Down’s most common species, Sycamore, is distributed amongst all bar two of the boroughs parks.

"The conservation of biodiversity is not just about saving a few species, but about preserving the intricate web of life that sustains us all."

- Dr. Thomas Lovejoy

⁸ Santamour, 1990

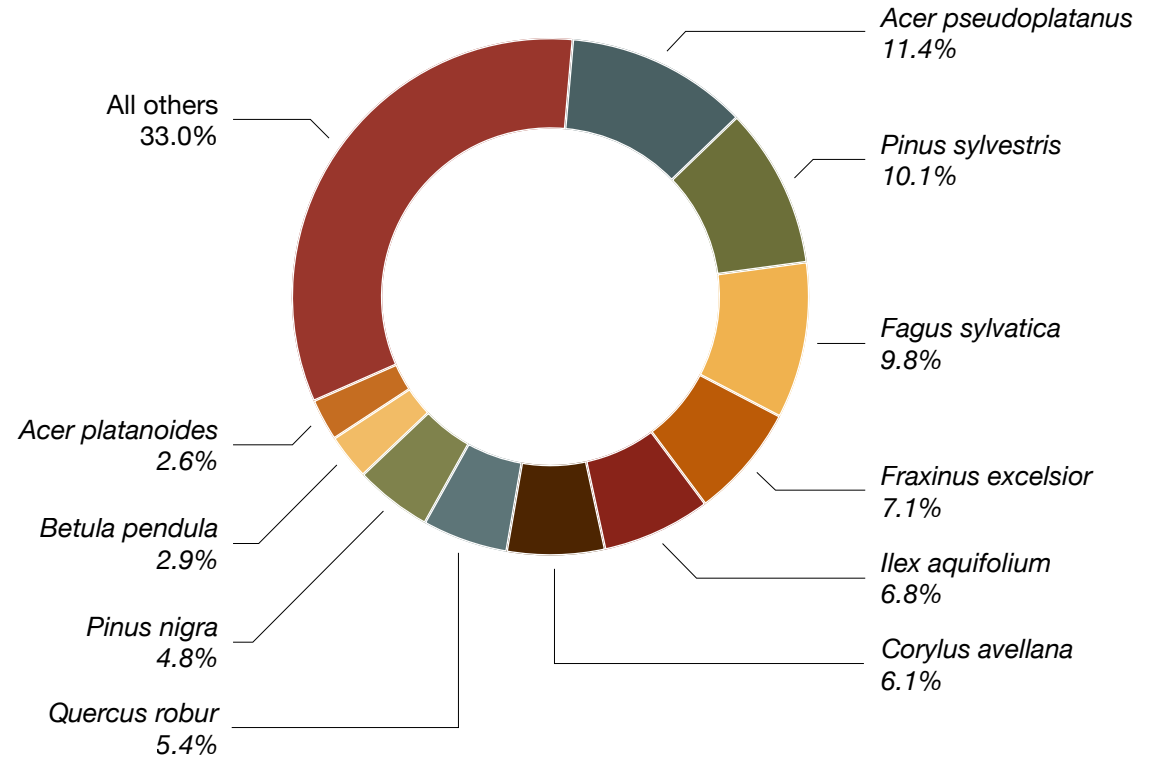
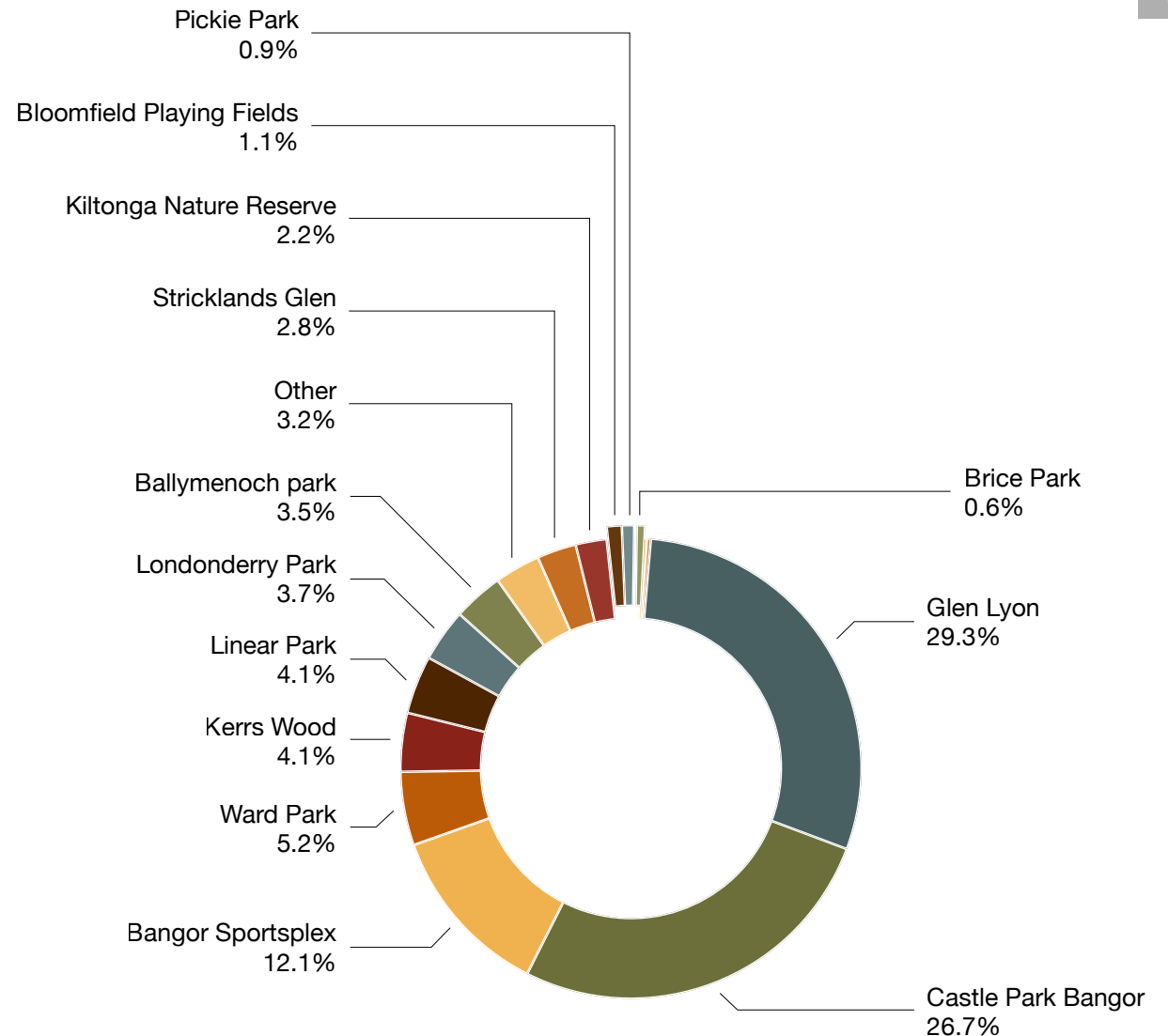


Figure 1. Most common species* within Ards and North Down’s population

*Only named species are included in the top 10. Any trees identified only to genus level are included in ‘Other’ to avoid mixing metrics.

2.2 Population by Park

All parks and trees included within this study are based in urban areas of Ards and North Down. Out of approximately 10,700 recorded trees, 6,520 (60.7%) are located in Bangor. Multiple parks contribute towards this total, such as Kerrs Wood, Ward Park, Bangor Sportsplex and Castle Park. Across Ards and North Down, Glen Lyon has the largest number of recorded trees - 3,150. Trees in Hollywood constitute 32.9% of the total population. Meanwhile, Newtownards records 694 trees (6.46%) across its 4 parks of Newtownards War Memorial, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Londonderry Park and Movilla Cemetery. This suggests that Newtownards will benefit the most from future tree planting and urban forest management strategies. However it is important to note that this report accounts for trees located in parks, and therefore omits other urban trees such as street trees and trees in private gardens, in addition to trees and hedgerows situated in rural areas.



2.3 Size Distribution

Size class distribution is an important aspect to consider in managing a sustainable and diverse tree population, as this helps ensure that there are enough young trees to replace those older specimens that are eventually lost through old age or disease. Diameter at breast height (DBH) can be considered a proxy for age, bearing in mind species and potential ultimate size and form. It is also relevant in terms of benefit delivery, as generally larger trees deliver greater benefits.

Figure 3 shows the share of tree population within each DBH class.

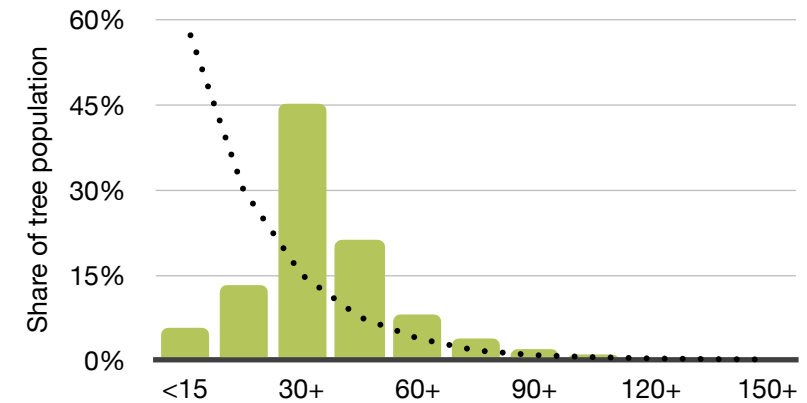


Figure 3. Tree population by DBH class (cm)

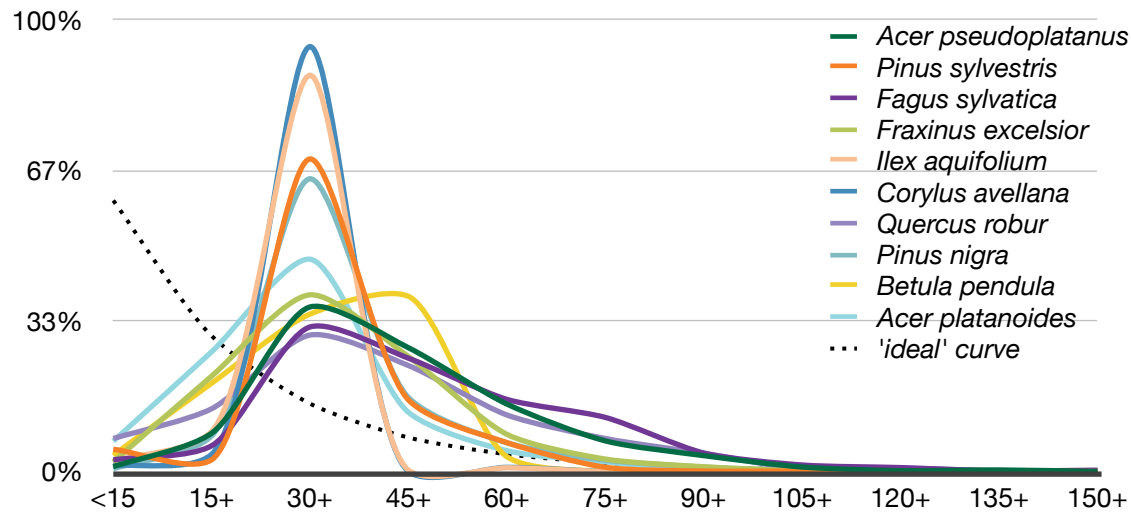


Figure 4. Spread of size classes amongst the top ten species, showing comparison to 'ideal' J-curve

'ideal' J-curve values reduce by half for each increase in DBH class

⁹ Kimmins, J. P., 2004

The size class distribution of trees within Ards and North Down is good (figure 3), mostly following a J-curve model that might be expected in a natural context⁹. This curve is a good guiding principal when looking to maintain tree cover within a landscape in the long term. However, a long term challenge is to increase the proportion of both larger stature and juvenile trees. High structural diversity can contribute to an increase in the overall resilience of the tree stock.

Figure 4 shows the size class distribution for the most common species, indicating which species could be at risk of tree cover decline in the future due to a lack of new planting.

2.4 Leaf Area and Dominance

Diversity is critical to a healthy and resilient tree population. Whilst a good range of different species present is vital, it is also important to consider the evenness of species distribution. This means assessing whether the population relies heavily on a few species, or if each species represents a more even proportion of the population.

Leaf area is an important metric because the total photosynthetic area of a tree’s canopy is directly related to the amount of benefits provided. The larger the canopy and its surface area, the greater the volume of air pollution or stormwater which can be captured in the canopy of the tree.

The Dominance Value is calculated by taking into account the leaf area and relative abundance of the species. A high dominance value shows which species are currently delivering the most benefits based on their population and leaf area. These species currently dominate the urban forest structure and are therefore the most important in delivering benefits.

Ards and North Down’s leaf area is dominated by Sycamore and Beech - it has a % Leaf Area larger than its already large share of % Tree Population. The overall Top 10 species list for Dominance Value remains the same as that which can be seen for percentage population in previous figures. The ranking does change in places: Beech overtakes Scots Pine and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) overtakes Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

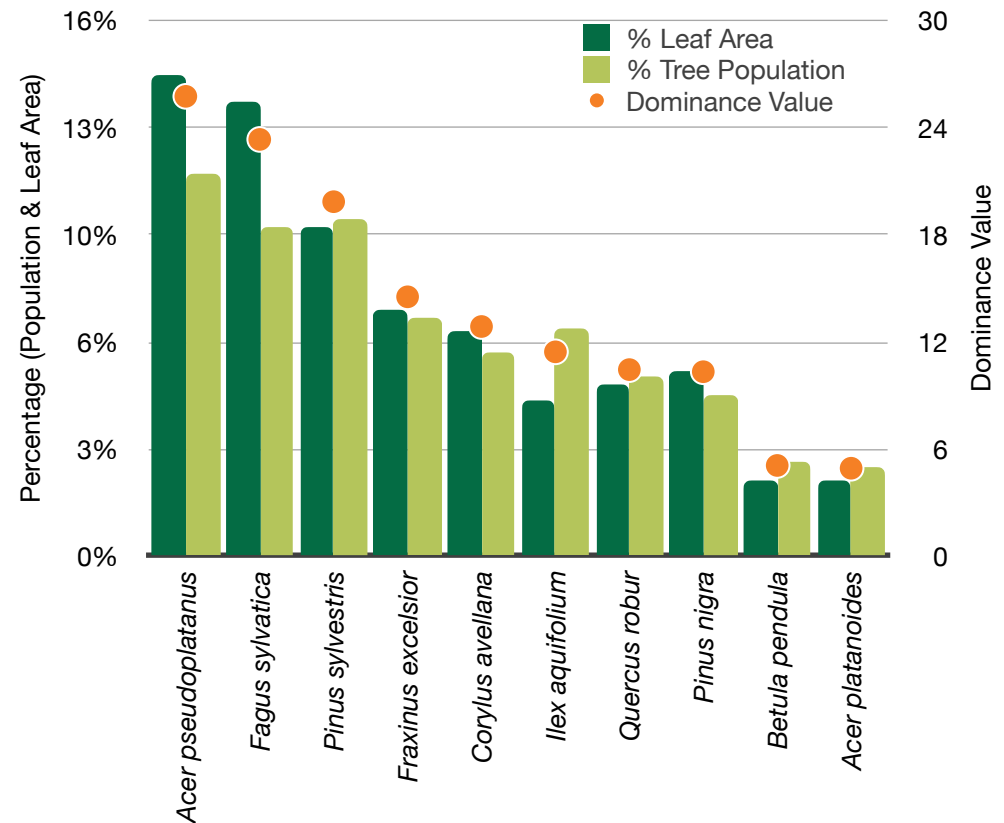


Figure 5. Dominance value, and share of leaf area vs share of population for the top ten taxa

The total leaf area is estimated at 424 Ha. If all the layers of leaves within the tree canopies were spread out, they would cover an area 3 times the size of Copeland Island. Both Glen Lyon and Castle Park Bangor have high dominance values (61.0 and 56.9 respectively).

A greater diversity at both species and genus level should increase resilience to anticipated climate change impacts and pathogens. Sourcing a range of species and individuals from a variety of locations, increases the chance of genetic diversity and the likelihood of community resistance to pathogens not yet present in the UK.

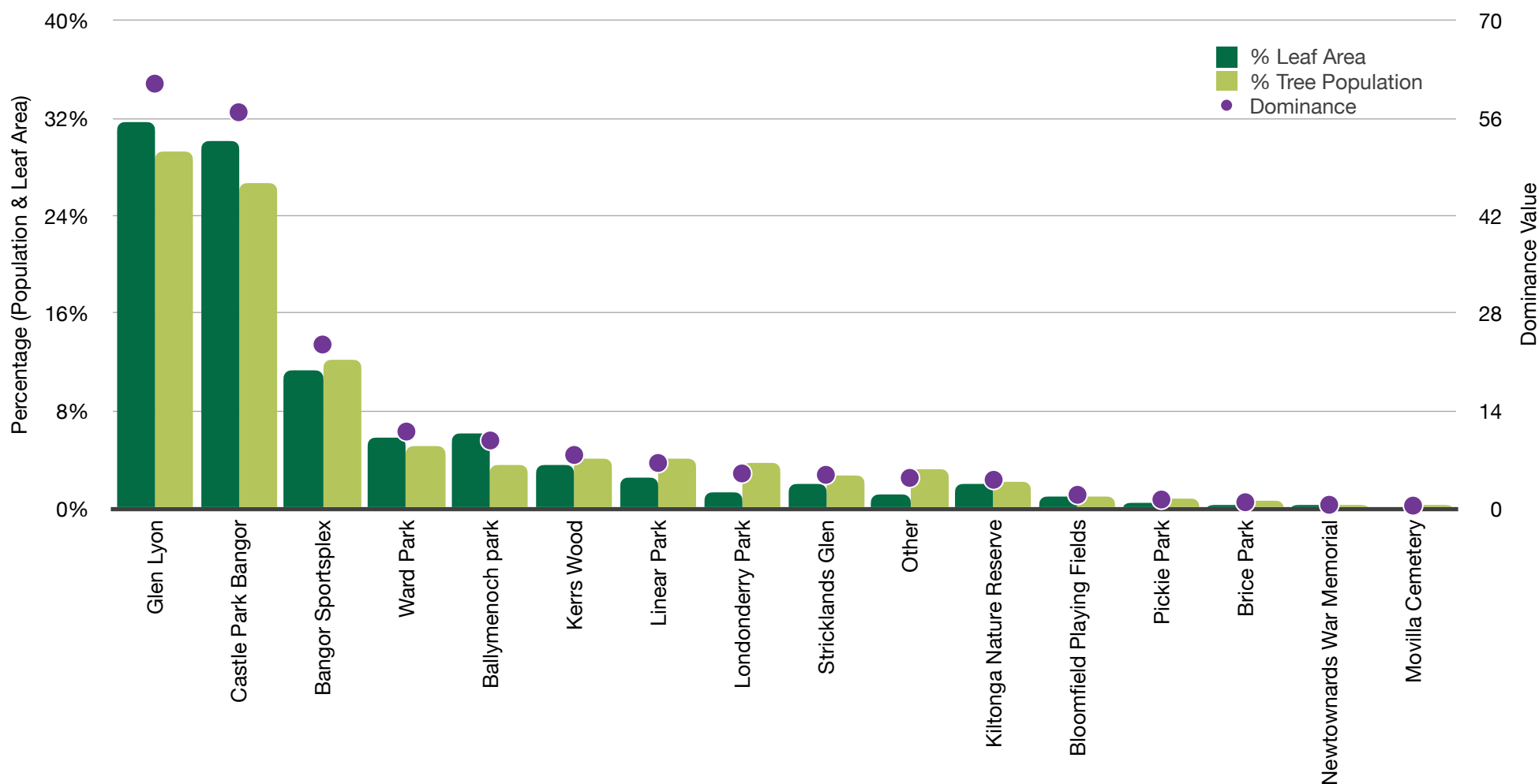


Figure 6. Dominance value, and share of leaf area vs share of population for the top ten parks



2.5 Tree Diversity

Diversity is critical to a healthy and resilient tree population, and whilst a good range of different species present is vital, it is also important to consider the evenness of species distribution. This means assessing whether the population relies heavily on a few species, or if each species represents an even proportion of the population.

Diversity indices aim to take into account a number of factors, such as species count, population and dominance in different ways. For this study, the Shannon – Wiener diversity index has been calculated. Another measure of diversity is Santamour’s 10-20-30 rule of thumb, which can be used to guide tree planting in an attempt to avoid over-reliance on individual species and genera.

Pinus is the most dominant genus, with a 17% share of the population. The Pinaceae (Pine) family, including *Pinus* (Pine) and *Cedrus* (Cedar), makes up 19% of all trees. Fagaceae (Beech) family accounts for the highest share of leaf area. Increasing the species range across Ards & Northdown will provide greater resilience against pest and diseases and the effects of climate change.

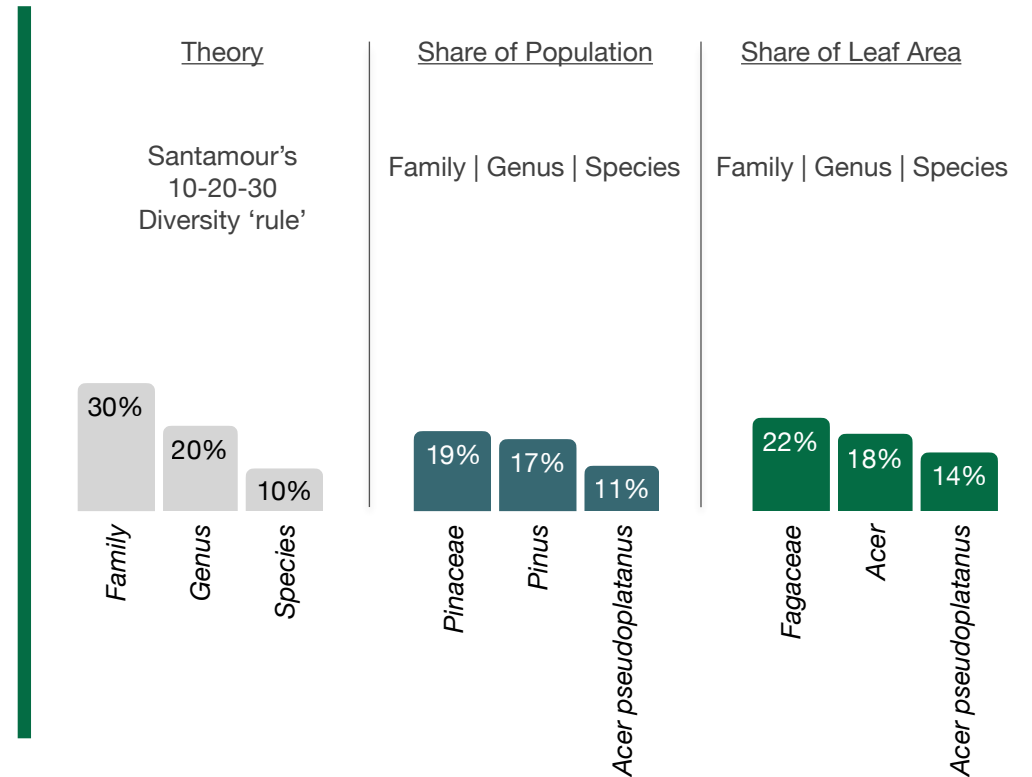


Figure 7. Santamour’s tree diversity rule of thumb, comparing tree numbers with leaf area

Shannon - Wiener Diversity Index

A single number that takes account of two key concepts in diversity: richness (number of species) and evenness (how equally they are distributed). The higher the number, the greater the diversity.

Ards and North Down:	3.16
London:	3.92

Santamour’s 10-20-30 rule of thumb

This suggests upper limits for a tree population as follows:

- Single species - 10%
- Single genus - 20%
- Single family - 30%

Many old city park and urban tree populations do not adhere to this ‘rule’ due to historic plantings, but it can help inform future plantings.



3. The Value of Ecosystem Services

3.1 Carbon Storage

Trees take in carbon dioxide during photosynthesis; the oxygen is released and the carbon is stored within the plant. As trees grow they store more carbon by holding it in their tissue, but as trees die and decompose they release much of this carbon back into the atmosphere.

Approximately 50% of wood by dry weight is comprised of carbon. Tree stems and roots can store it for decades or centuries as woody matter whilst the tree lives, or even for millennia if it is formed into coal. Trees are therefore an excellent, natural way to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and positively influence climate change. Maintaining a healthy, growing tree population will ensure that more carbon is stored than released.

Total carbon storage by trees in Ards and North Down is estimated to be 7,690 tonnes, with a value of £7,580,000. Beech is the leading tree species for carbon storage, despite ranking below Sycamore in dominance. The top 10 species for carbon storage differs significantly from that of dominance, indicating that carbon storage varies amongst species. Many factors influence storage capacity, such as the age, size and species of a tree.

On average, each tree within Ards and North Downs stores 715 kg of carbon.

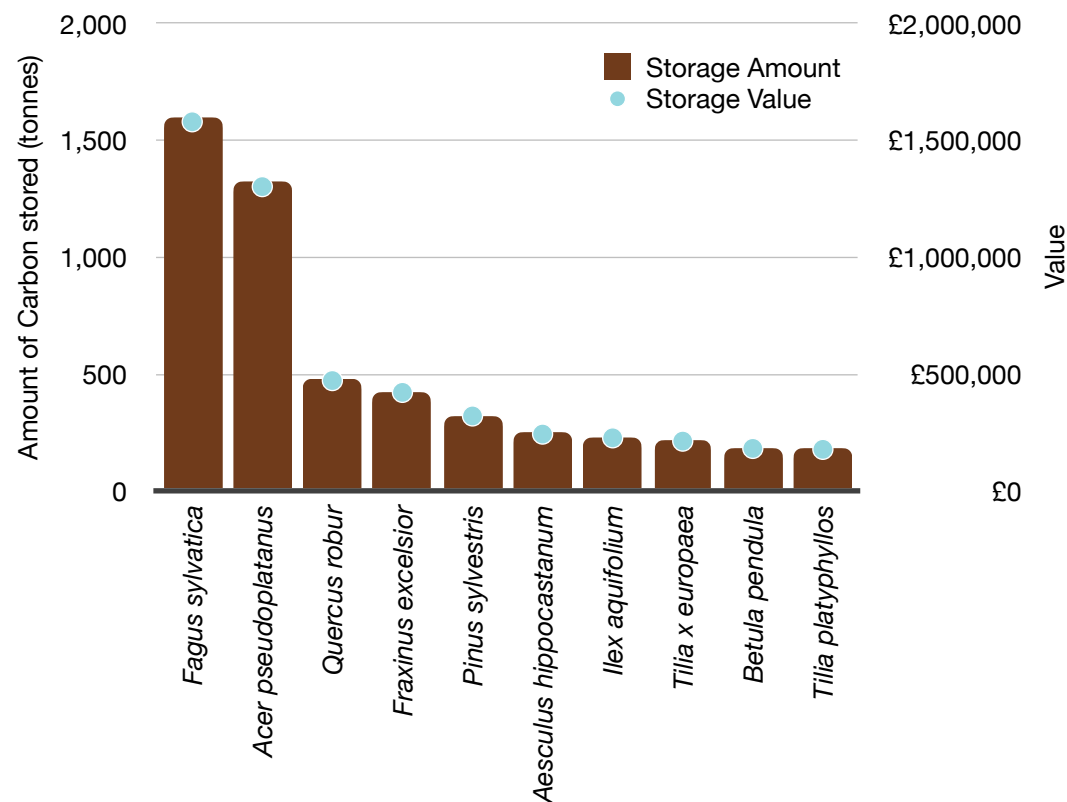


Figure 8. Amount and value of carbon stored by the ten most significant tree taxa for carbon storage

Across Ards and North Down Borough Council, the park with the highest carbon storage is Castle Park (Bangor), with 3,160 tonnes.

Despite having similar dominance values, Castle Park stores over 3 times as much carbon as Glen Lyon. A large factor contributing to this is that trees in Castle Park have a much greater average DBH than in

Glen Lyon. Many Giant Sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and other large species measure DBH values greater than 1m. Higher DBH equates to a larger volume of woody mass in the trunk and branches; it is these parts of trees which store large quantities of carbon.

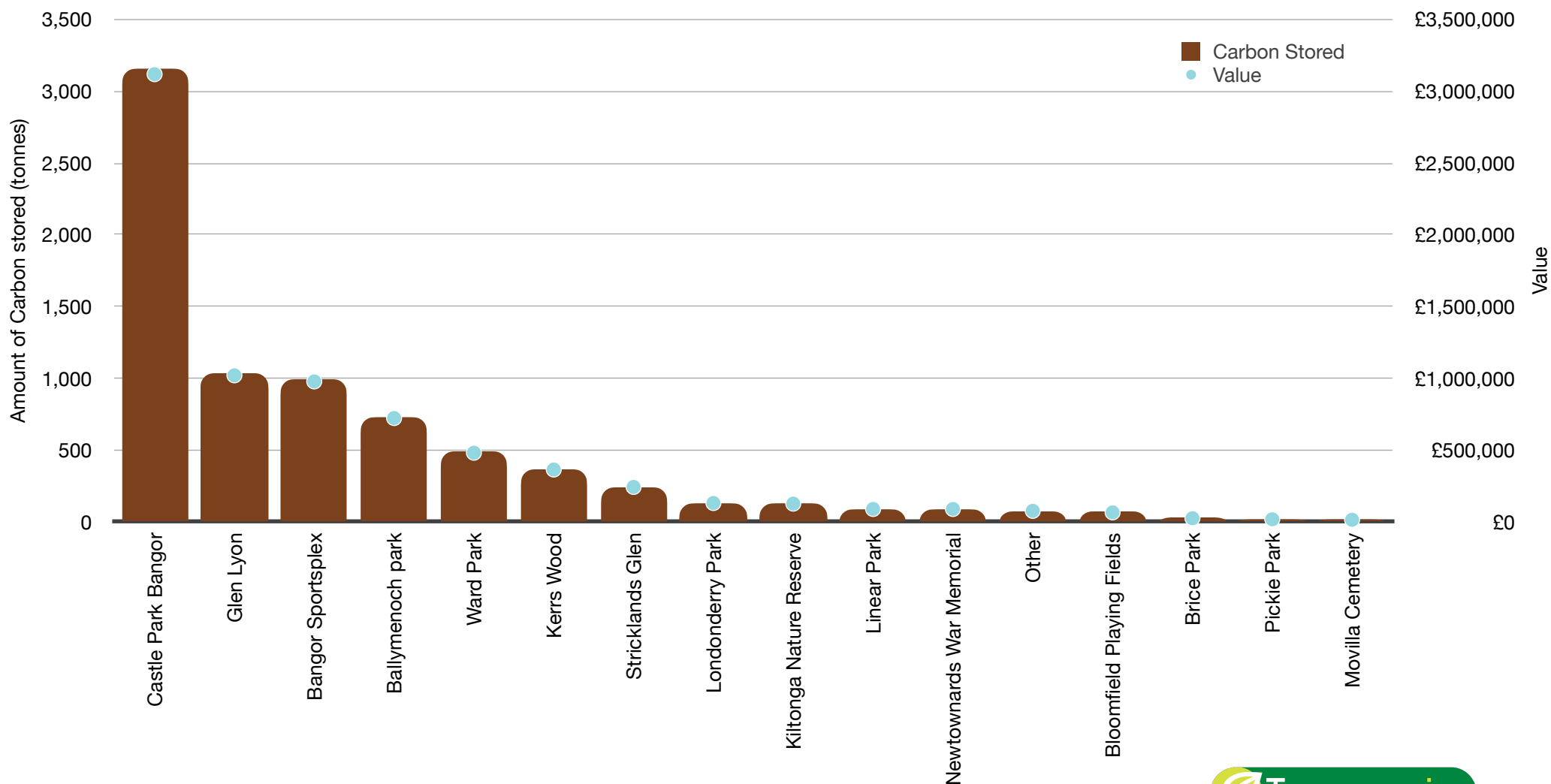


Figure 9. Amount and value of carbon stored by park



3.2 Annual Carbon Sequestration

The main driving force behind climate change is the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere. Trees can help mitigate climate change by sequestering atmospheric carbon as part of the carbon cycle.

Carbon sequestration is an annual metric calculated from tree measurements, climatic data and predicted growth rates. It is measured (and reported here) as tonnes of carbon, which is converted to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂e), which is then valued using government published figures.

The trees in Ards and North Down’s parks sequester a total of 143 tonnes of carbon annually. This is a service worth £141,000. On average, each tree sequesters 13kg carbon annually. Figure 10 shows the ten tree genera that sequester the most carbon per year and the value of the benefit derived. Of all trees inventoried, Ards and North Down’s Sycamore population sequesters the most carbon annually with a combined total of 25 tonnes (C).

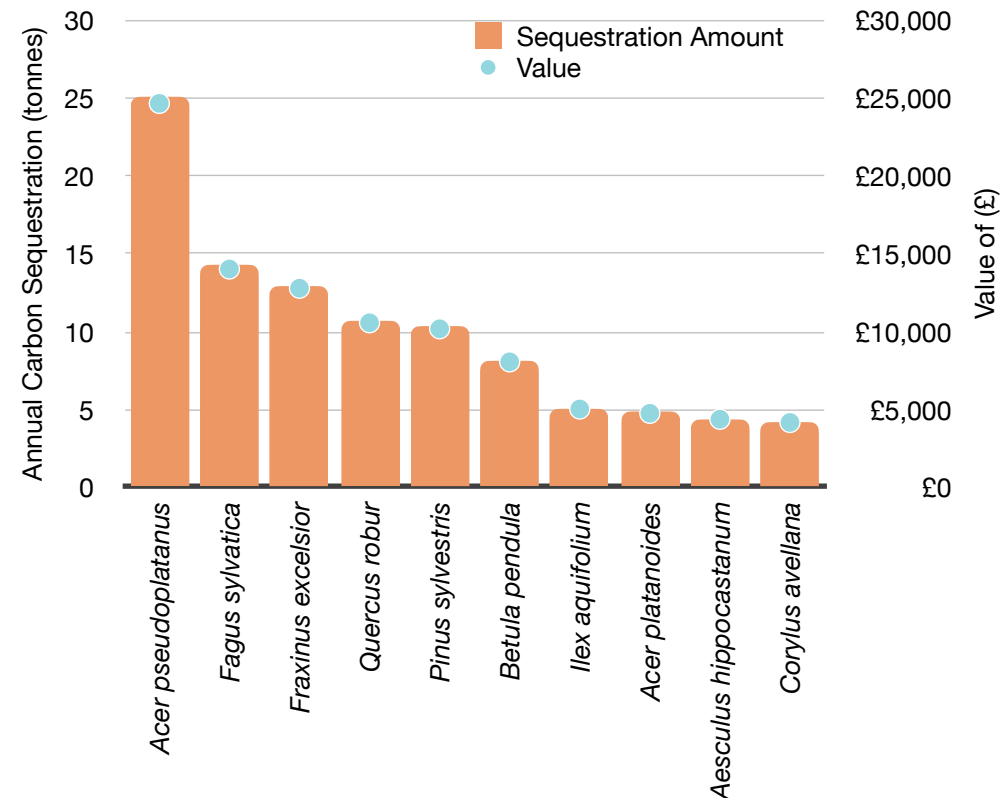


Figure 10. Amount and value of carbon sequestered annually by the ten most significant tree species for carbon sequestration

The park which sequesters the most carbon annually is Castle Park Bangor. Castle Park sequesters 44.0 tonnes (C) annually . Bangor Sportsplex and Glen Lyon also sequester significant proportions of carbon. These 3 parks sequester 99.3 tonnes (C) out of a total 143

tonnes (C). This is over 2/3 of carbon sequestration across all Ards and North Down's park sites.

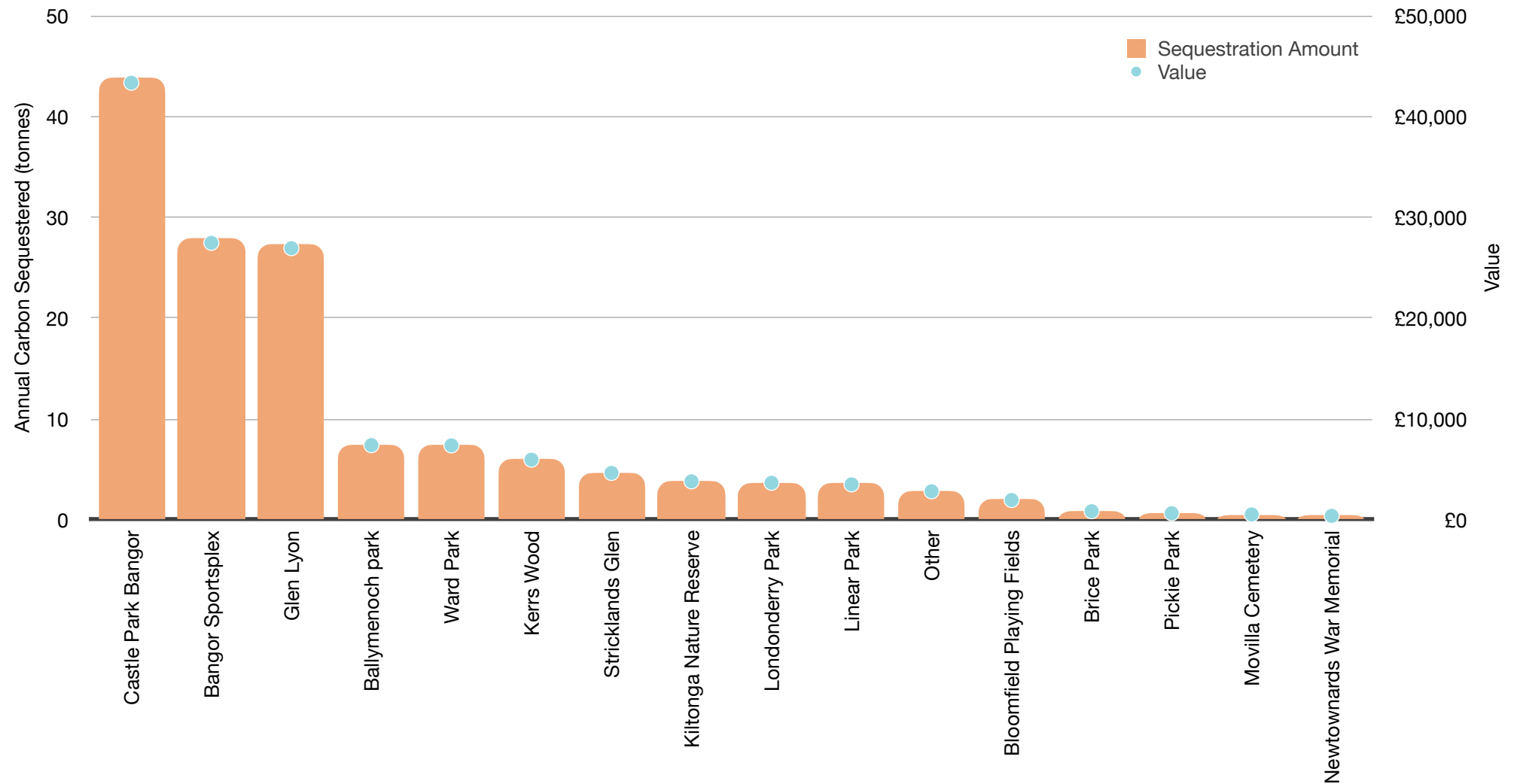


Figure 11. Amount and value of carbon sequestered annually by park



3.3 Air Pollution Removal

Poor air quality is a particular problem in many urban areas and along road networks. The problems caused by poor air quality are well known, ranging from human health impacts to building damage. Trees significantly contribute to improving air quality by directly removing pollutants from the air¹⁰, absorbing them through leaf surfaces¹¹, intercepting particulate matter (eg: smoke, pollen, aerosols created in the atmosphere and dusts) and reducing air temperature.¹² Removing pollution from the atmosphere can reduce the risks of respiratory disease and asthma, amongst other things, thereby contributing to reduced health care costs.

Tree cover, air pollution concentrations and leaf area are the main factors influencing pollution filtration and increasing tree planting has been shown to make further improvements in air quality.¹³ As filtering capacity is closely linked to leaf area, it is generally the trees with larger canopy potential that provide the most benefits.

The species which removes the most pollution across Ards and North Down is Sycamore, removing 143 kg NO₂, 9.36 kg SO₂, and 80.3 kg PM2.5, valuing around £6,770 in total.

¹⁰ Tiwary et al., 2009

¹¹ Nowak et al., 2000

¹² As well as reducing ozone levels, some tree species also emit the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that lead to ozone production in the atmosphere. The i-Tree Eco software accounts for both reduction and production of VOCs within its algorithms, and the overall effect of the trees is to reduce ozone through evaporative cooling, however this is not valued in this report as there is no UK Social Damage Cost for this pollutant.

¹³ Escobedo and Nowak, 2009

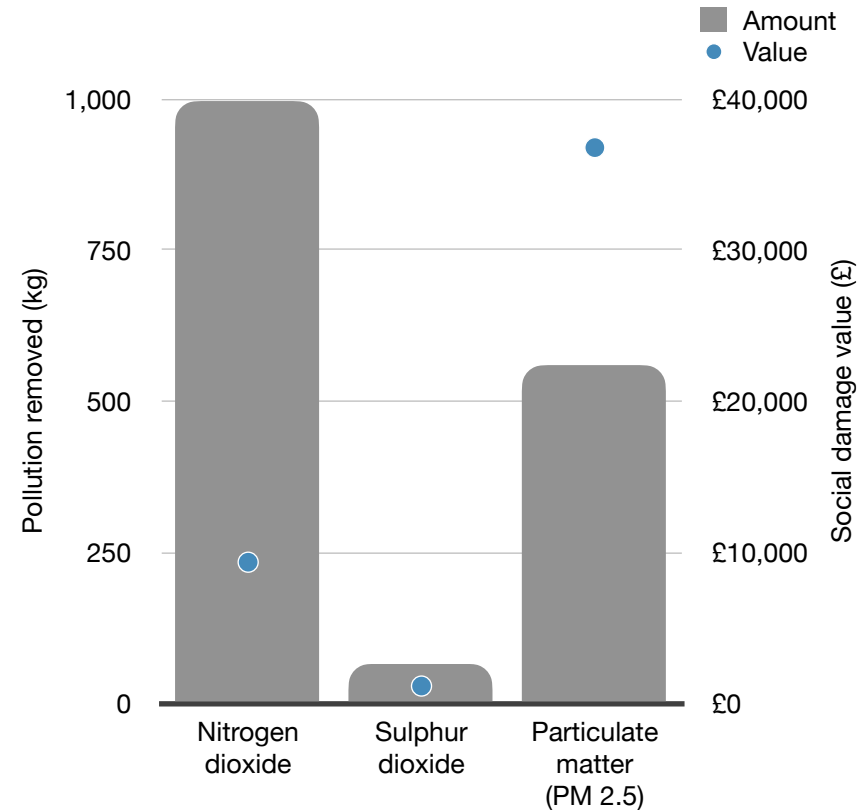


Figure 12. Amount and value of air pollution removed annually

Nb. It is normal to expect high levels of NO₂ removal and lower levels of SO₂ and PM2.5 removal due to the capacity of trees to remove each pollutant. The value of PM2.5 is comparably much higher due to the social damage cost applied.

3.4 Avoided Surface Runoff

Surface run-off can be a cause for concern in many areas as it threatens people, transport and property, and can contribute to pollution in streams, wetlands, rivers, lakes and oceans. During precipitation events, a portion of the precipitation will be intercepted by vegetation; precipitation that reaches the ground and does not infiltrate into the soil becomes surface run-off.¹⁴

Within an urban area, the large extent of impervious surfaces increases the amount of run-off, however, trees are effective at reducing this. Trees intercept precipitation, whilst their root systems promote infiltration and water storage in the soil. Interception slows down rainwater reaching the ground and some water will be evaporated without reaching the ground.

Sycamore intercepts the most water, removing a total of 180 m³ of water per year, a service worth £404 (figure 13). These trees have an expansive canopy to intercept rainfall, and they represent a high proportion of trees within Ards and North Down.

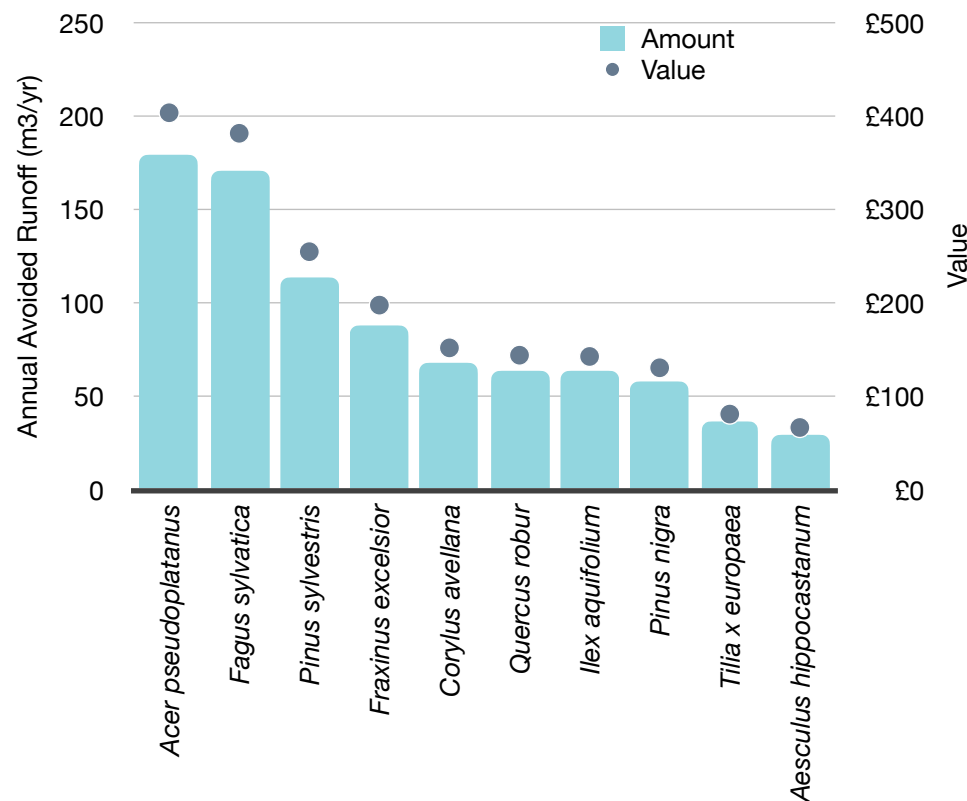


Figure 13. Amount and value of runoff avoided by the ten most significant tree taxa for interception

¹⁴ Hirabayashi, 2012

The trees of Ards and North Down help to reduce run-off by an estimated 1,200 cubic metres a year with an associated value of £2,700.

It intercepts 390 m³ of water per year, with a value of £866. The average volume of water intercepted per park is 75.1 m³.

The park with the highest avoided runoff and associated financial benefit annually is Castle Park Bangor.

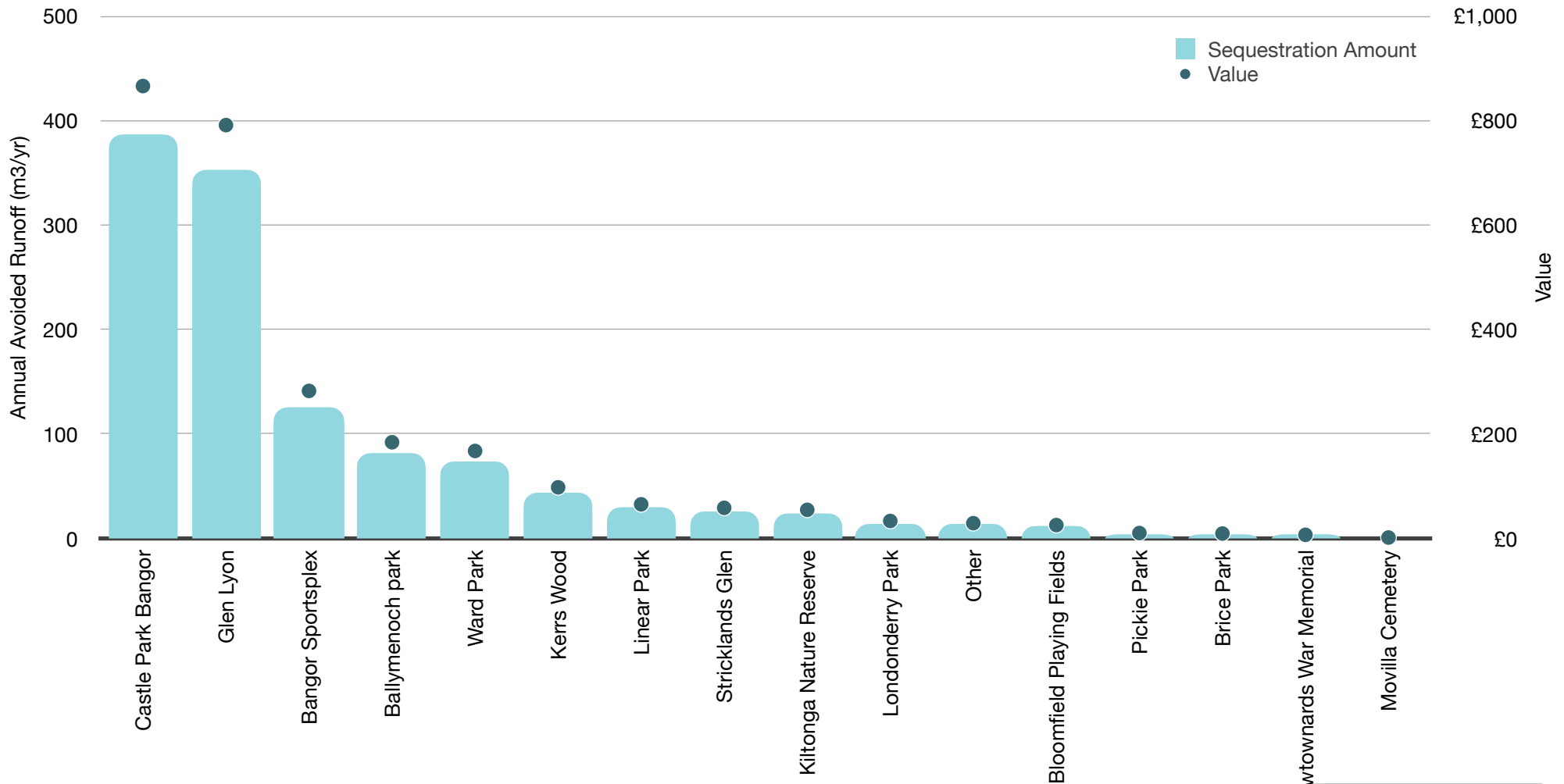


Figure 14. Amount and value of avoided surface water runoff by park

4. Asset Value

4.1 Replacement Cost and Amenity Value

In addition to estimating the environmental benefits provided by trees, i-Tree also provides a structural valuation. In the UK this is termed the ‘Replacement Cost’. It is a depreciated replacement cost, based on the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) formula¹⁵ intended to quantify what it might cost to replace any or all of the trees (taking account of species suitability, depreciation and other economic considerations) should they become damaged or diseased for instance.

In contrast, CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees) attempts to place a value of trees to the local population, accounting for the level of public access and population density, thus establishing a value for the public amenity that trees provide and is in use by many local authorities across the country.¹⁶

Replacement cost is relatively constant irrespective of location, whereas a CAVAT valuation is highly dependent upon trees’ proximity to people. Note when comparing figures 15 and 16 that CAVAT is an order of magnitude larger than Replacement Cost in this instance. In Ards and North Down, Beech and Sycamore are considered the most valuable in terms of replacement cost and amenity value, given their dominance within the population.

¹⁵ Hollis, 2007

¹⁶ Doick *et al.*, 2018

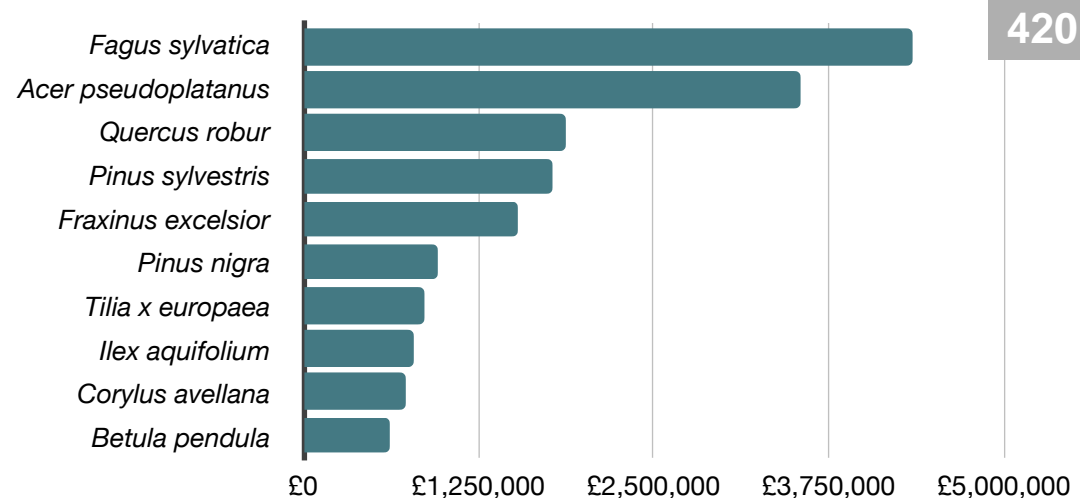


Figure 15. Replacement cost of the ten most significant tree species in Ards and North Down

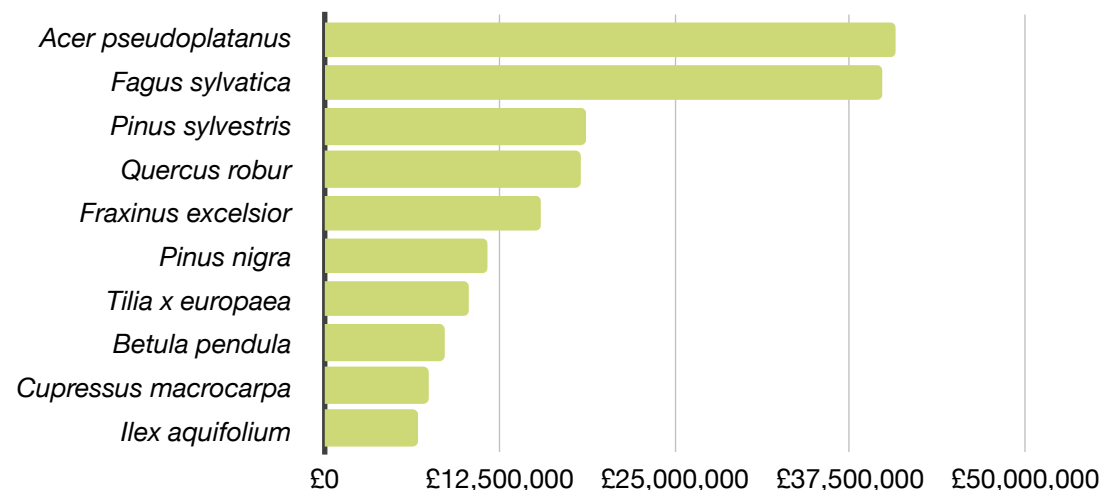


Figure 16. Amenity value of the ten most significant tree species in Ards and North Down

Castle Park Bangor's trees have the highest replacement cost and amenity value.

It should be noted that local factors do have some influence. Equally, due to the nature of street trees and the CAVAT method, management choices could not be taken into account as part of this study. The value should reflect the reality that public trees have to be managed for safety. They are often crown lifted, especially those close to the roadways and are generally growing in conditions of greater stress

than their open grown counterparts. As a result, they may have a significantly reduced functionality under the CAVAT system.

Overall, Ards and North Down's inventoried trees would cost an estimated £25 million in replacement costs, and have a value of £277 million in amenity value. Castle Park Bangor has the highest asset value, with a replacement cost of £9.1 million, and an amenity valuation of £97.9 million.

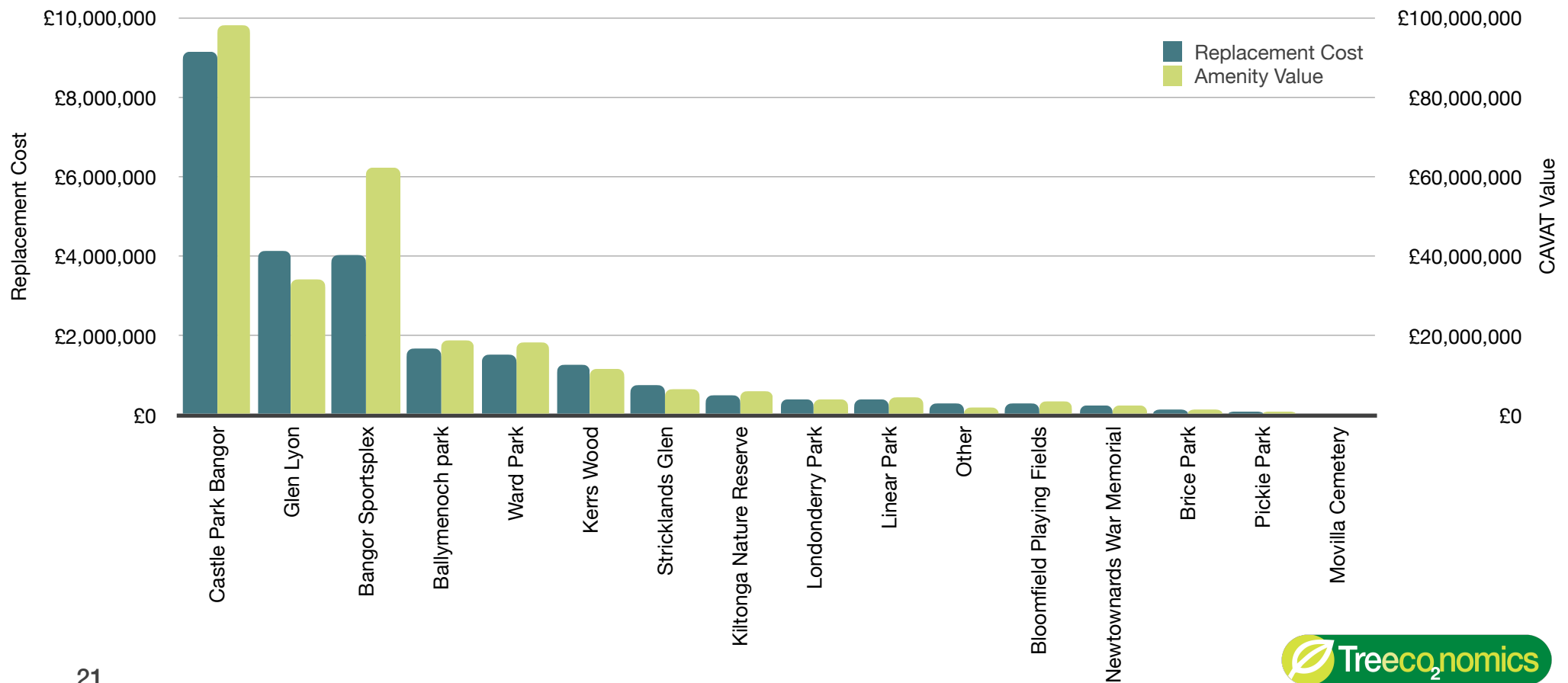


Figure 17. Replacement Cost and CAVAT value of the tree population in each park of Ards and North Down



5. Pests and Disease Risk

Pests and microbial pathogens are a serious threat to urban forests and society, causing direct economic costs from damage and impacting on ecosystem service provision¹⁷. It is likely that climate change will result in the introduction of pests and diseases not yet present in the UK.¹⁸ The changing climate of the UK is predicted to increase growth and spore release of root pathogens and make trees more susceptible to infection.¹⁹ Temperature changes are likely to affect the geographical range, development rate and seasonal timing of life-cycle events of insects, and will have an impact on their host plants and predators.

Figure 18 shows the proportion of trees at risk for each of the most critical invasive pests and diseases of concern to the UK according to Observatree, led by Forest Research.²⁰ Potential impact varies based on climate and weather, tree health, local tree management and individual young tree procurement policies. The figure shows that the threats which could have the largest impact are Asian Longhorn Beetle and Citrus Longhorn Beetle, despite not currently being present in the UK. Dothistroma Needle Blight, which is present in the UK, poses the largest risk, due to the likelihood of the pathogen reaching Ards and North Down’s population, and the proportion of the trees which could be affected.

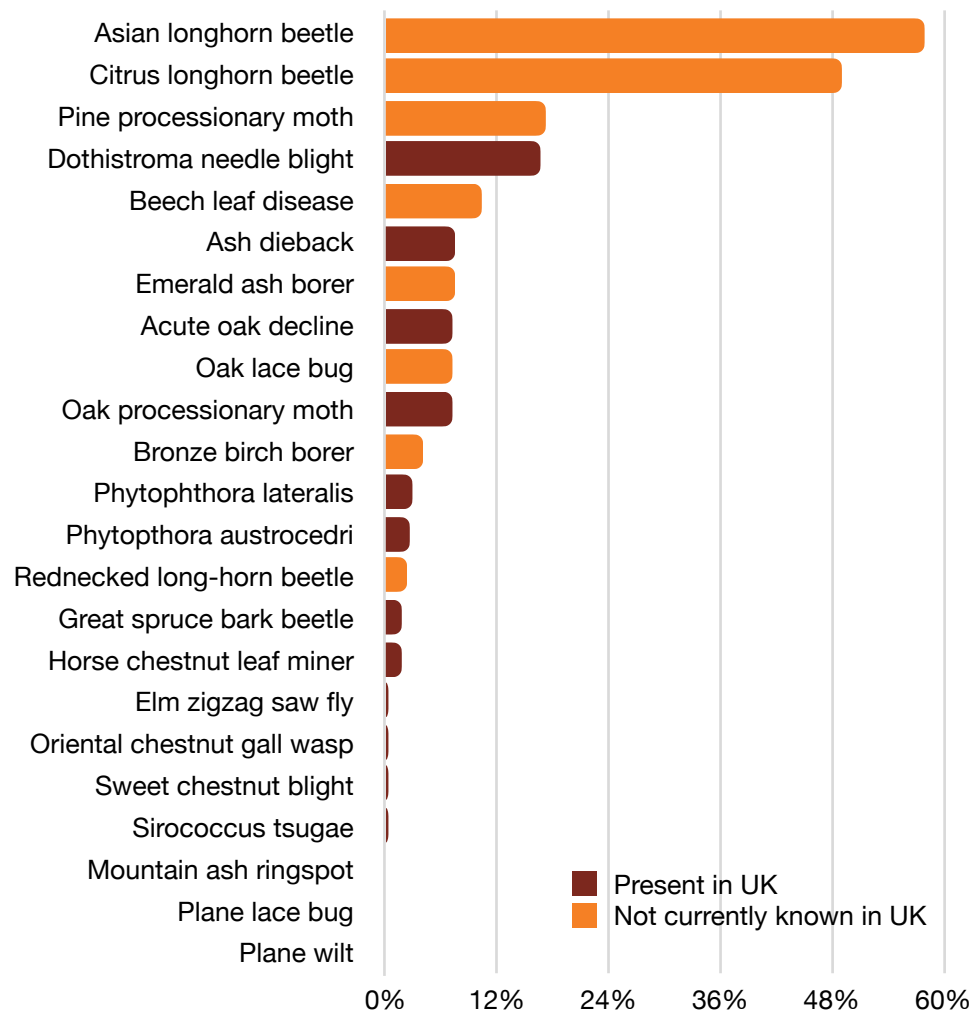


Figure 18. Share of tree population under threat from different named pests of highest concern at time of publication (Observatree, 2024)

¹⁷ Kew Royal Botanical Garden, 2017

¹⁸ Wainhouse and Inward, 2016

¹⁹ Federickson-Matika and Riddell, 2021

²⁰ Observatree, 2024

5.1 Tree Condition

By far the most important factor when dealing with any potential pest or disease impact is to consider the health of the tree. Stressed trees are less resilient and therefore more vulnerable to pests and diseases; the better their health and condition, the greater their resilience²¹. Tree condition was measured as part of the survey and Figure 19 (below) shows the overall health of the trees in Ards and North Down. Tree condition also directly affects the ecosystem services each tree

provides. The vast majority of the trees within Ards and North Down are in 'Fair' condition.

Tree condition can deteriorate rapidly where pests and diseases take hold. It may also appear worse at different points within the year, for example in the case of Ash Dieback. This means that the reality on the ground may differ from the data displayed, particularly in the case of Ash (*Fraxinus*) species.

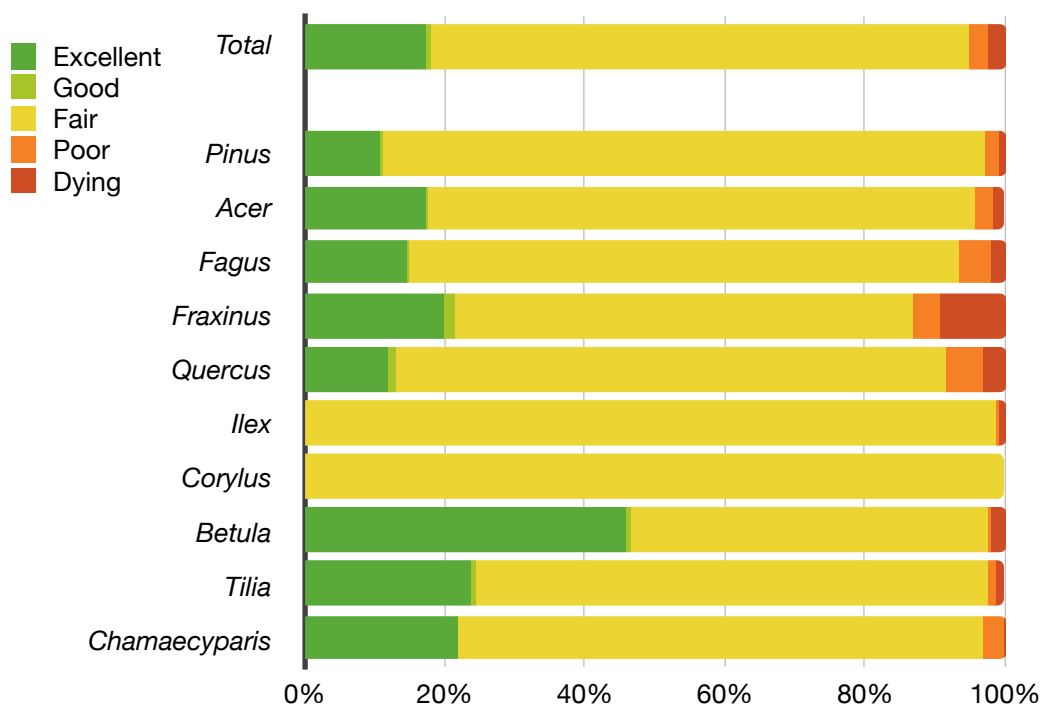


Figure 19. Tree condition for the top 10 most common genera

²¹ Defra, 2018

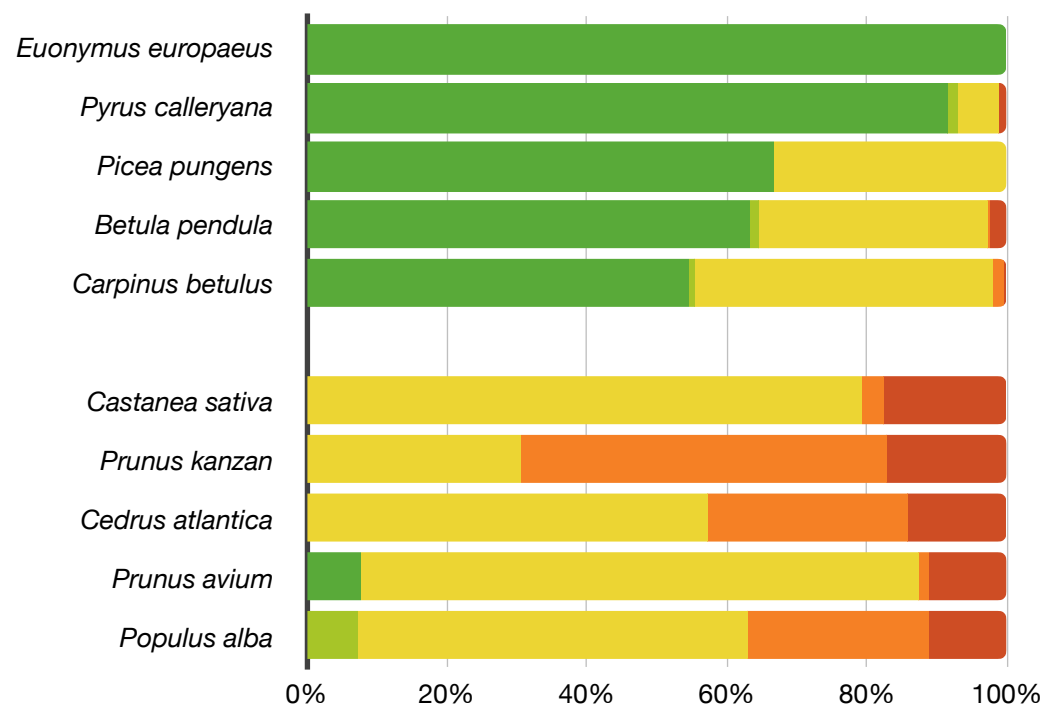


Figure 20. Tree condition for the healthiest 5 species and the least healthy 5 species

6. Recommendations

The results and data from previous i-Tree Eco studies have been used in a variety of ways to improve the management of trees and inform decision making. The information in this report on the structure, composition and value of Ards and North Down Borough Council's tree inventory can be used to make more informed decisions on how these trees can be managed to provide long-term benefits to communities. This is one of the key outcomes of undertaking a project such as this.

1. Policy Review - leverage tree benefits for other council agendas

Carry out an internal policy review to identify where trees have a significant role to play. This includes policy areas within health and education as well as sustainability, planning and environment.

2. Pro-actively manage species diversity

Continue to introduce a wide variety of species. Consider contract growing to ensure supply of unusual or untried species to maintain high levels of diversity. Take opportunities to reduce reliance on Quercus, whilst bearing in mind the contribution of these trees to the character of particular areas.

3. Plant forest-size trees where possible

Size and space matter. Identify trees that can grow to full maturity and reach their optimal canopy size and contribute the most benefits to the surrounding urban communities. Such an approach must pay

heed to any site-specific restrictions and diversity-management requirements.

4. Engage the public

Use the report's content to inform and advise local communities about the trees in their streets and the measurable benefits they provide. Public engagement has been shown to improve tree establishment as residents are more willing to contribute personal time and effort to looking after them.

5. Cost benefit analysis

Use the data for cost benefit analysis to inform decision making, e.g. securing water supplies through tree pits linked to SuDS are recovered as benefits accrue.

6. Embrace private trees

Consider a broader borough-wide study encompassing all trees, both private and public. Such trees are a vital aspect of a total borough-wide approach to climate resilience. Private back gardens and larger open land, such as golf courses, all have a role to play.

7. Understand climate impact on species choice

Consider further study or analysis into this area to inform long term tree and parkland strategies, particularly with regards to species choice.

8. Include trees within wider decision making

Ensure that policy makers and practitioners take full account of Ards and North Down Borough Council's trees in decision making. Not only are trees a valuable functional component of our landscape, they also make a significant contribution to peoples' quality of life.

7. Appendices

Appendix I - Tree Values by Genus and Species

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Pinus Total</i>	1,778	565.41	15.94	274.9	190.7	£3,122,307	£35,870,894
<i>Pinus</i>	162	45.89	1.45	22.59	15.8	£304,900	£4,261,428
<i>Pinus contorta</i>	4	0.42	0.02	0.23	0.2	£3,353	£20,138
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	520	171.35	4.03	89.41	58.2	£955,106	£11,695,679
<i>Pinus radiata</i>	5	18.72	0.02	2.68	2.3	£53,704	£983,938
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	3	2.73	0.06	0.42	0.3	£16219.47	£149793.28
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	1,081	324.62	10.33	159.18	113.6	£1,780,637	£18,682,526
<i>Pinus wallichiana</i>	3	1.68	0.03	0.41	0.3	£8388.22	£77391.70
<i>Acer Total</i>	1631	1527.75	31.5	284.24	217.1	£4306841.05	£49264915.51
<i>Acer</i>	52	45.29	1.34	8.19	5.4	£180879.62	£2548145.35
<i>Acer campestre</i>	49	15.91	0.22	4.41	3.2	£62232.47	£605441.81
<i>Acer cappadocicum</i>	3	0.83	0.03	0.19	0.2	£3513.74	£29351.47

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Acer palmatum</i>	15	4.69	0.05	0.91	0.5	£21802.16	£252317.67
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	283	140.35	4.83	37.48	27.8	£476184.06	£5003050.14
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	1227	1319.97	25.01	232.96	179.9	£3558353.99	£40800581.46
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	1	0.02	0	0	0	£235.06	£1443.26
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	1	0.69	0.02	0.11	0.1	£3639.95	£24584.35
<i>Fagus Total</i>	1121	1662.53	15.99	228.78	176.3	£4602260.22	£42451991.16
<i>Fagus</i>	68	61.1	1.76	8.71	6.2	£245995.74	£2654420.74
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	1053	1601.43	14.23	220.07	170.1	£4356264.48	£39797570.42
<i>Fraxinus Total</i>	812	441.02	13.37	126.06	93	£1603227.06	£15932564.67
<i>Fraxinus</i>	45	14.09	0.4	5.86	4.9	£62779.81	£541447.91
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	767	426.93	12.97	120.2	88.1	£1540447.25	£15391116.76
<i>Quercus Total</i>	766	753.98	13.93	120.17	94	£2619663.65	£25519998.64
<i>Quercus</i>	103	139.35	1.59	17.6	13.9	£377347.72	£3798589.62
<i>Quercus cerris</i>	17	45.5	0.31	7.43	6.1	£123448.95	£1234392.54

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	4	2.39	0.09	0.61	0.5	£9949.30	£87309.78
<i>Quercus falcata</i>	1	0.39	0.01	0.14	0.1	£1625.89	£16048.69
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	20	56.21	0.54	3.89	3.1	£119166.02	£1197311.77
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	6	1.79	0.04	0.8	0.6	£8142.47	£61022.13
<i>Quercus robur</i>	576	478.16	10.72	82.89	64.2	£1882535.82	£18185611.57
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	38	30.04	0.63	6.81	5.5	£96750.67	£934172.43
<i>Quercus suber</i>	1	0.16	0.01	0.01	0	£696.81	£5540.11
<i>Ilex Total</i>	733	229.66	5.11	75.32	63.6	£786765.61	£6760446.64
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	733	229.66	5.11	75.32	63.6	£786765.61	£6760446.64
<i>Corylus Total</i>	657	165.4	4.23	109.79	67.7	£728924.11	£6325074.00
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	657	165.4	4.23	109.79	67.7	£728924.11	£6325074.00
<i>Betula Total</i>	441	226.39	9.69	46.13	32.9	£753939.41	£9991562.88
<i>Betula</i>	85	24.95	0.92	6.56	5	£85251.84	£839213.79
<i>Betula nigra</i>	5	4.01	0.14	0.71	0.5	£12774.75	£127962.31

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	6	0.78	0.05	0.25	0.1	£3807.17	£27635.13
<i>Betula pendula</i>	307	183.73	8.18	36.38	26	£612697.77	£8602918.41
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	19	11.5	0.3	1.62	1.2	£30221.08	£331934.55
<i>Betula utilis</i>	19	1.41	0.1	0.61	0.1	£9186.80	£61898.70
Tilia Total	301	401.67	5.14	74.52	57	£1454067.34	£16162882.33
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	8	6.08	0.13	1.73	1.4	£28084.61	£254828.69
<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	124	179.64	1.76	24.66	19.3	£553374.33	£5684136.75
<i>Tilia tomentosa</i>	2	0.55	0.02	0.25	0.2	£3787.63	£27705.91
<i>Tilia x europaea</i>	167	215.4	3.23	47.88	36.1	£868820.77	£10196210.99
Chamaecyparis Total	274	118.19	2.78	37.59	24.5	£545567.80	£5982966.09
<i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>	264	112.43	2.71	36.59	23.9	£522188.33	£5792485.80
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i>	1	0.18	0.01	0.03	0	£844.98	£8243.37
<i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i>	9	5.58	0.07	0.97	0.6	£22534.49	£182236.91
Salix Total	264	186.35	4.82	35.03	27.4	£463462.95	£9905191.14

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Salix</i>	170	99.83	3.4	20.16	15.4	£292813.90	£6671248.29
<i>Salix alba</i>	79	78.7	1.33	13.87	11.1	£156642.84	£3064746.91
<i>Salix caprea</i>	7	1.07	0.04	0.46	0.5	£4411.65	£31061.62
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	5	1.44	0.03	0.24	0.1	£3919.93	£38958.47
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	2	5.21	0.01	0.19	0.2	£5112.71	£95367.02
<i>Salix pentandra</i>	1	0.11	0.01	0.11	0.1	£561.92	£3808.82
<i>Alnus Total</i>	263	72	2.25	27.1	19.1	£459511.26	£5431685.89
<i>Alnus</i>	81	27.28	0.75	10.85	7	£192955.69	£2775765.56
<i>Alnus cordata</i>	15	6.89	0.15	2.53	2	£39941.56	£488685.19
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	167	37.83	1.35	13.72	10.1	£226614.01	£2167235.14
<i>Prunus Total</i>	261	153.52	1.96	18.86	12.9	£327991.74	£4865866.56
<i>Prunus</i>	103	97.42	0.63	13.22	9.6	£208008.38	£3719225.42
<i>Prunus avium</i>	63	23.24	0.38	2.76	1.6	£52000.28	£580751.61
<i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	10	1.13	0.06	0.27	0.1	£4998.84	£45522.40

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Prunus domestica</i>	2	0.38	0.02	0.07	0.1	£960.75	£13949.04
<i>Prunus kanzan</i>	23	13.1	0.32	0.79	0.5	£19926.84	£147161.39
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	9	3.62	0.11	0.54	0.2	£8100.73	£84204.06
<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>	12	9.07	0.23	0.67	0.4	£14382.94	£149498.24
<i>Prunus padus</i>	2	1.13	0.01	0.14	0.1	£2147.66	£11604.59
<i>Prunus serrula</i>	2	0.29	0.03	0.05	0	£907.27	£6910.86
<i>Prunus serrulata</i>	35	4.14	0.16	0.35	0.3	£16558.05	£107038.95
Populus Total	182	127	3.71	26.16	20.4	£261972.57	£5711382.64
<i>Populus</i>	3	0.74	0.03	0.45	0.4	£2679.09	£50197.40
<i>Populus alba</i>	27	14.93	0.43	2.41	1.9	£31562.77	£426636.56
<i>Populus balsamifera</i>	2	1.49	0.03	0.35	0.3	£3067.93	£66190.04
<i>Populus nigra</i>	107	63.89	2.38	15.52	12.2	£153864.53	£3965647.31
<i>Populus tremula</i>	12	2.2	0.12	1.32	0.9	£8323.66	£118640.37
<i>Populus x canadensis</i>	21	41.45	0.62	5.69	4.5	£55575.59	£995299.64

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Populus x canescens</i>	10	2.29	0.09	0.42	0.2	£6899.00	£88771.31
Picea Total	182	69.61	1.32	20.25	12.6	£303823.20	£2660629.11
<i>Picea</i>	23	8.58	0.22	2.06	1.5	£44633.53	£393810.05
<i>Picea abies</i>	152	54.75	1.04	17.1	10.3	£234312.47	£2033754.44
<i>Picea breweriana</i>	1	0.01	0	0	0	£57.38	£166.81
<i>Picea obovata</i>	2	1.17	0.02	0.13	0.1	£5533.62	£65485.60
<i>Picea pungens</i>	3	2.94	0.03	0.53	0.4	£12205.20	£89561.78
<i>Picea smithiana</i>	1	2.17	0.01	0.43	0.3	£7081.00	£77850.43
Aesculus Total	180	252.05	4.51	37.62	30	£545410.15	£6306545.10
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	177	245.93	4.44	37.24	29.7	£531820.40	£6148202.32
<i>Aesculus x carnea</i>	3	6.12	0.07	0.38	0.3	£13589.75	£158342.78
Carpinus Total	151	22.3	0.91	6.87	5	£93888.49	£882520.49
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	148	21.71	0.89	6.51	4.7	£91270.64	£850103.92
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	3	0.59	0.02	0.36	0.3	£2617.85	£32416.57

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
Sorbus Total	122	49.46	1.02	6.35	4.5	£147919.12	£1398472.84
<i>Sorbus aria</i>	80	42.26	0.62	5.1	3.8	£115358.40	£1160354.60
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	30	4.56	0.31	0.84	0.6	£21493.60	£151495.54
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>	12	2.63	0.1	0.41	0.1	£11067.12	£86622.70
Crataegus Total	117	27.67	0.6	4.36	2.3	£95842.20	£703725.55
<i>Crataegus</i>	3	0.32	0.02	0.06	0	£1938.21	£12043.00
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	105	26.82	0.56	4.23	2.3	£89441.23	£670039.97
<i>Crataegus x media</i>	9	0.53	0.03	0.07	0	£4462.76	£21642.58
Pyrus Total	74	5.15	0.3	0.69	0.1	£30014.04	£247394.90
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	72	3.14	0.29	0.56	0	£24946.85	£186065.39
<i>Pyrus communis</i>	1	1.3	0	0.09	0.1	£3037.77	£39163.71
<i>Pyrus salicifolia</i>	1	0.71	0	0.05	0	£2029.42	£22165.80
Larix Total	65	31.4	0.71	7.44	5.9	£161411.27	£1464057.11
<i>Larix</i>	1	0.26	0.01	0.08	0.1	£1691.81	£9291.35

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Larix decidua</i>	64	31.13	0.7	7.36	5.8	£159719.46	£1454765.77
Cupressus Total	46	171.31	0.09	13.37	10.9	£494879.14	£7493754.48
<i>Cupressus</i>	2	0.38	0.01	0.06	0	£1534.83	£18416.34
<i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	44	170.93	0.08	13.31	10.9	£493344.31	£7475338.14
Castanea Total	34	61.56	0.6	6.38	5.2	£113370.95	£2019261.30
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	34	61.56	0.6	6.38	5.2	£113370.95	£2019261.30
Ulmus Total	34	6.66	0.3	2.49	2.1	£30326.44	£247621.88
<i>Ulmus</i>	16	3.48	0.14	1.23	1.1	£15417.23	£137175.84
<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	10	1.09	0.08	0.62	0.5	£6310.21	£39253.01
<i>Ulmus laevis</i>	3	0.89	0.03	0.31	0.3	£3444.05	£39489.31
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	1	0.11	0.01	0.03	0	£650.67	£3808.82
<i>Ulmus procera</i>	4	1.1	0.05	0.29	0.2	£4504.28	£27894.90
Taxus Total	29	47.75	0.19	4.41	3.6	£150574.47	£2106370.99
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	29	47.75	0.19	4.41	3.6	£150574.47	£2106370.99

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Cedrus Total</i>	29	28.68	0.37	3.28	2.6	£96728.46	£1172649.14
<i>Cedrus</i>	1	0.23	0.01	0.09	0.1	£1037.30	£8243.37
<i>Cedrus atlantica</i>	7	2.65	0.05	0.48	0.4	£11211.88	£90207.33
<i>Cedrus deodara</i>	17	18.76	0.28	2.11	1.7	£59187.52	£828373.86
<i>Cedrus libani</i>	4	7.05	0.03	0.6	0.4	£25291.76	£245824.58
<i>Hesperotropsis Total</i>	27	31.86	0.68	2.54	2	£52739.51	£553084.13
<i>x Hesperotropsis leylandii</i>	27	31.86	0.68	2.54	2	£52739.51	£553084.13
<i>Sambucus Total</i>	21	3.36	0.08	1.19	1.2	£20057.17	£157352.72
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	21	3.36	0.08	1.19	1.2	£20057.17	£157352.72
<i>Sequoiadendron Total</i>	17	119.21	0.23	7.1	5.8	£217677.70	£3197853.55
<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>	17	119.21	0.23	7.1	5.8	£217677.70	£3197853.55
<i>Thuja Total</i>	16	4.21	0.04	2.37	1.9	£52220.83	£661081.03
<i>Thuja plicata</i>	16	4.21	0.04	2.37	1.9	£52220.83	£661081.03
<i>Rhododendron Total</i>	10	3.33	0.07	0.5	0.4	£11626.09	£105230.07

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Rhododendron</i>	10	3.33	0.07	0.5	0.4	£11626.09	£105230.07
Malus Total	9	2.4	0.08	0.42	0.4	£8911.36	£87143.93
<i>Malus</i>	4	1.26	0.03	0.25	0.3	£4377.82	£47370.49
<i>Malus sieboldii</i> ssp. <i>sieboldii</i>	1	0.02	0	0	0	£348.84	£835.57
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	4	1.12	0.05	0.17	0.1	£4184.70	£38937.86
Sequoia Total	8	37.01	0.07	3.04	2.4	£114595.66	£1659126.11
<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>	8	37.01	0.07	3.04	2.4	£114595.66	£1659126.11
Abies Total	8	17.7	0.05	2.56	2	£67166.37	£928025.24
<i>Abies</i>	1	2.21	0.01	0.18	0.1	£10584.80	£125579.58
<i>Abies cephalonica</i>	2	2.29	0.01	0.34	0.3	£11411.26	£165174.43
<i>Abies grandis</i>	4	8.04	0.03	1.26	1	£28815.51	£393733.88
<i>Abies procera</i>	1	5.15	0	0.79	0.6	£16354.80	£243537.35
Phoenix Total	8	0.13	0	0.05	0	£3477.85	£36789.82
<i>Phoenix</i>	8	0.13	0	0.05	0	£3477.85	£36789.82

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
Myrtus Total	7	4.82	0.08	0.28	0.2	£8148.47	£80689.18
<i>Myrtus</i>	6	4.65	0.07	0.26	0.2	£7611.66	£78367.08
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	1	0.16	0.01	0.02	0	£536.81	£2322.10
Griselinia Total	7	10.84	0.01	0.61	0.5	£24916.44	£275009.58
<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>	7	10.84	0.01	0.61	0.5	£24916.44	£275009.58
Cordyline Total	7	1.98	0.06	0.05	0	£3237.77	£83626.26
<i>Cordyline australis</i>	7	1.98	0.06	0.05	0	£3237.77	£83626.26
Magnolia Total	5	0.85	0.03	0.16	0.1	£3770.06	£36261.85
<i>Magnolia</i>	3	0.07	0.01	0.03	0	£906.55	£4442.70
<i>Magnolia campbellii</i>	1	0.31	0.01	0.04	0	£917.29	£9653.35
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	1	0.47	0.01	0.09	0.1	£1946.22	£22165.80
Laurus Total	4	1.48	0.05	0.15	0.1	£2897.25	£21639.43
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	4	1.48	0.05	0.15	0.1	£2897.25	£21639.43
Platanus Total	4	2.69	0.06	0.7	0.5	£12426.11	£123835.06

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Platanus</i>	1	0.12	0.01	0.12	0.1	£1005.23	£9789.01
<i>Platanus x hybrida</i>	3	2.57	0.05	0.58	0.4	£11420.88	£114046.05
<i>Cryptomeria Total</i>	4	10.28	0.04	0.94	0.8	£33434.35	£569394.55
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	4	10.28	0.04	0.94	0.8	£33434.35	£569394.55
<i>Eucryphia Total</i>	3	1.11	0.01	0.1	0.1	£3443.79	£36672.82
<i>Eucryphia</i>	2	0.1	0.01	0.02	0	£892.14	£3692.85
<i>Eucryphia x nymansensis</i>	1	1	0	0.08	0.1	£2551.65	£32979.97
<i>Tsuga Total</i>	3	0.76	0.01	0.39	0.3	£6424.19	£81534.29
<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>	2	0.3	0.01	0.25	0.2	£3224.16	£42370.57
<i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>	1	0.46	0.01	0.13	0.1	£3200.03	£39163.71
<i>Liriodendron Total</i>	3	0.63	0.03	0.25	0.2	£3705.40	£32535.44
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	3	0.63	0.03	0.25	0.2	£3705.40	£32535.44
<i>Eucalyptus Total</i>	3	19.89	0.09	1.44	1.1	£30219.15	£597673.16
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	3	19.89	0.09	1.44	1.1	£30219.15	£597673.16

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Pittosporum Total</i>	3	3.44	0.01	0.35	0.2	£7616.08	£82745.99
<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>	2	2.09	0.01	0.2	0.1	£4875.53	£49766.02
<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>	1	1.35	0	0.15	0.1	£2740.55	£32979.97
<i>Parrotia Total</i>	3	0.19	0.01	0.06	0	£1421.55	£6966.31
<i>Parrotia persica</i>	3	0.19	0.01	0.06	0	£1421.55	£6966.31
<i>Davidia Total</i>	3	0.38	0.02	0.09	0	£2252.10	£24966.40
<i>Davidia involucrata</i>	3	0.38	0.02	0.09	0	£2252.10	£24966.40
<i>Juglans Total</i>	2	0.25	0.02	0.09	0.1	£1132.04	£8677.73
<i>Juglans regia</i>	2	0.25	0.02	0.09	0.1	£1132.04	£8677.73
<i>Araucaria Total</i>	2	0.23	0.01	0.05	0	£1484.97	£13157.75
<i>Araucaria araucana</i>	2	0.23	0.01	0.05	0	£1484.97	£13157.75
<i>Cornus Total</i>	2	0.13	0.01	0.03	0	£978.25	£6755.21
<i>Cornus</i>	2	0.13	0.01	0.03	0	£978.25	£6755.21
<i>Laburnum Total</i>	2	0.81	0.04	0.07	0	£2207.89	£14857.01

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Laburnum anagyroides</i>	2	0.81	0.04	0.07	0	£2207.89	£14857.01
Osmanthus Total	2	0.28	0.01	0.07	0	£1307.88	£10565.48
<i>Osmanthus delavayi</i>	2	0.28	0.01	0.07	0	£1307.88	£10565.48
Euonymus Total	2	0.27	0.02	0.04	0	£1461.76	£12801.19
<i>Euonymus</i>	1	0.1	0.01	0.02	0	£685.92	£4342.63
<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	1	0.17	0.01	0.03	0	£775.84	£8458.56
Ligustrum Total	2	0.14	0.01	0.06	0	£1000.47	£8946.53
<i>Ligustrum</i>	2	0.14	0.01	0.06	0	£1000.47	£8946.53
Taxodium Total	1	0.03	0	0.01	0	£420.08	£1993.82
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	1	0.03	0	0.01	0	£420.08	£1993.82
Ostrya Total	1	0.24	0.01	0.12	0.1	£1184.97	£16048.69
<i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i>	1	0.24	0.01	0.12	0.1	£1184.97	£16048.69
Robinia Total	1	0.35	0.02	0.12	0.1	£994.53	£16048.69
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	1	0.35	0.02	0.12	0.1	£994.53	£16048.69

Taxa	Trees	Carbon Storage (tonnes)	Carbon Sequestration (tonnes/yr)	Pollution Removal (kg/yr)	Avoided Runoff (m3/yr)	Replacement Value (£)	CAVAT Value (£)
<i>Pseudotsuga Total</i>	1	1.28	0.01	0.15	0.1	£12466.93	£193432.60
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	1	1.28	0.01	0.15	0.1	£12466.93	£193432.60
<i>Liquidambar Total</i>	1	0.71	0	0.15	0.1	£3945.84	£32979.97
<i>Liquidambar orientalis</i>	1	0.71	0	0.15	0.1	£3945.84	£32979.97
Total							

Appendix II - Notes on the Methodology

i-Tree Eco Software

i-Tree is a suite of computer software tools developed through a collaborative public/private partnership. These tools are designed to engage urban and rural populations in assessing and valuing their forest resource, understanding forest risk, and developing sustainable forest management plans to improve environmental quality and human health. The tools can assess individual trees and forests in both urban and rural areas.

Eco uses sample or inventory data collected in the field along with local hourly air pollution and meteorological data to assess forest structure, health, threats and ecosystem services and values for a tree population. Information provided to the user includes number of trees, diameter distribution, species diversity, potential pest risk, invasive species, air pollution removal and health effects, carbon storage and sequestration, storm water runoff reduction, VOC emissions and effects on buildings' energy use.

Structure is the basic information on the physical forest resource (e.g. number of trees, species composition, tree sizes and locations, leaf area, etc.). The attributes are directly measured by users or estimated (e.g. leaf area) by i-Tree based on direct measures of structure. From the structure data, along with local environmental data (e.g. weather data), various tree functions (e.g. gas exchange, tree growth) are estimated. These functions are then converted to various services (e.g. pollution removal) based on other local data (e.g. pollution concentrations). These services are then converted to benefits (e.g. cleaner air, impacts on human health) based on other data (e.g. local

atmospheric conditions, human population data). Finally, the benefits are converted to values based on various economic procedures.

At a minimum, i-Tree Eco requires only tree species and DBH data, however additional data such as tree height, canopy spread, condition, etc. allow for more accurate assessments of structural and functional features.

Data Processing Manipulations and Assumptions

Data provided by Ards and North Down Borough Council to Treeconomics for this assessment was a tree inventory of the council owned trees across Ards and North Down. Trees on private land were not included.

The raw inventory supplied to Treeconomics contained 6391 records. After processing and expanding group records, 10749 trees were processed by Treeconomics using i-Tree Eco software and other tools.

Given the requirements of i-Tree and the format of the data provided, some data manipulation was required. Assumptions are detailed below in tables 1 - 5.

CAVAT assumptions

Data used for the CAVAT assessment was the same processed inventory data used for the i-Tree analysis. CAVAT requires at a

minimum DBH, condition, and life expectancy, though accessibility and special factors can be added for a more specific estimation.

The Unit Value Factor (UVF) represents the full cost of a newly planted tree on the basis of per unit of trunk cross-sectional area (i.e. £ per cm²). Specifically, the unit area cost is the average cost per square centimetre of stem area determined as the cost, at trade prices, of the top 10 mostly commonly purchased species/varieties as 12–14 cm diameter standard containerised trees. The UVF used in this report was £24.59 for 2024.

The Community Tree Index (CTI) is a multiplier used to account for the locations’ population density. For Ards and North Down, the CTI value used was 100%.

Other Notes

Values and costs are subject to change due to government guidance updates and annual inflation assumptions, and are not necessarily comparable from year to year between Treconomics reports.

DBH and Height estimates have been compiled from various sources including Barcham²² and Haynes Manual²³ guides and are averages for all tree species to provide a general assumption (See table 5).

Reason for Removal	Number of records removed
Tree felled/stump/removed	189
Dead	69
No Height or DBH	33
	291

Table 1: Inventory Records removed for use in Eco

²² Sacre

²³ Rogers and Kirkham, 2019

Supplied data	Methodology for assumptions	Number of records affected
Tree count: No column in the supplied dataset provided explicit tree count data	No. stems copied as base for tree count. Where there are blanks or 0's in stems, tree count is assumed to be 1. Where species is listed in comments for groups, tree count is assumed to equal the number of species (1 tree per species). Where species was not given, count was given 3 trees per group	10,749
Species: Out of 10,749 trees, 1089 have no species specified	The 10 most common species within dataset were identified. These 10 species were then proportionally and randomly assigned to fill the 1,089 blank species records (See table 3)	1,089
Group Data: 4799 rows of tree data referenced groups of trees	Rows containing group tree data were expanded. Data cleaned and analysed for species data, assumptions made accordingly. Where the treecount is not equally divisible by the number of species, the remaining treecount is evenly distributed among species by priority of 'first listed'	4,799
Height and DBH: 7/10749 trees were missing height data. 93/10749 trees were missing DBH data	See table 5	100
Crown clearance (m): 5220/10749 trees were missing crown clearance data	Crown clearance was assumed to be 25% of total height	5,220
Live top height (m): No data was provided for live top height	Live top height assumed to be equal to tree height	10,749

Supplied data	Methodology for assumptions	Number of records affected
Crown NS and EW: Data missing in some or all North, South, East and West dimensions	For tree records with no crown dimensions given, crown dimensions were assumed using tree records with same species and closest DBH. Where there were no same species trees to base assumptions off, most similar tree used on a judgement basis across genus and family taxonomic levels	2,122
% Crown missing: No data supplied for % Crown missing	All trees assumed to have 15% crown missing	10,749
Condition: Condition provided in 2 metrics: physiological condition and structural condition. For i-Tree data processing, an average must be calculated to amalgamate these into 1	Average taken of conditions. Where either physiological condition or structural condition is missing, condition for i-Tree is assumed to be the same as the individual condition supplied.	10,749
Condition: 3,113/10,749 trees were missing condition data	Condition assumed to be 'Fair'	3,113

Table 2: Assumptions for missing or corrected data

Top 10 most common species	% of total population	% used for species assumptions	Tree count before species assumptions	Treecount after species assumption
Acer pseudoplatanus			1,018	1,227

Top 10 most common species	% of total population	% used for species assumptions	Tree count before species assumptions	Treecount after species assumption
Fagus sylvatica			874	1,053
Ilex aquifolium			608	733
Fraxinus excelsior			567	683
Corylus avellana			545	657
Pinus sylvestris			496	598
Quercus robur			478	576
Betula pendula			255	307
Pinus nigra			239	288
Acer platanoides			236	283

Table 3: Proportional distribution of top 10 most common species amongst unknown/missing tree records.

Data	Assumption
Accessibility	All trees are treated as having 100% accessibility in line with standard CAVAT assumptions for street trees and parks.
Community Tree Index	Reference level for Ards and North Down applied of 100%
Amenity Value (Species, Habitat, Setting, Heritage)	Assumed no uplift and no reduction on any parameter
Unit Value Factor	Assumed to be £24.59 for 2024

Table 4: CAVAT Assumptions

Height Given (m)	DBH Assumption (cm)
1	1
2-3	7
4-6	14
7-9	21
10-14	28
15-19	35
20-24	42

DBH Given (cm)	Height Assumption (m)
1	1
2-9	3
10-18	5
19-24	8
25-31	12
32-38	17
39-45	22

Table 5: DBH and Height Assumptions for Missing Data

These estimates have been compiled from various sources including Barcham and Haynes Manual guides and are averages for all tree species to provide a general assumption.

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Unclassified

451

ITEM 26**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	27 January 2025
File Reference	FIN45
Legislation	Section 5 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Report for information
Subject	Community & Wellbeing Directorate Budgetary Control Report - December 2024
Attachments	None

The Community & Wellbeing Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covers the 9-month period 1 April to 31 December 2024. The net cost of the Directorate is showing an underspend of £1,451k (15.7%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

Community & Wellbeing's budget performance is further analysed on page 4 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£611k favourable	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£122k favourable	3
Report 4	Income	£718k favourable	3

Not Applicable

452

Explanation of Variance

The Community & Wellbeing Directorate's overall variance can be summarised by the following table (variances over £15k): -

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	(611)	Payroll underspends throughout the Directorate mainly due to vacant posts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health (£186k). • Community & Culture (£136k). • Parks & Cemeteries (£98k). • Leisure (£191k).
Goods & Services		
Environmental Health	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal case which involved a judicial review.
Leisure	(106)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions for Football Development (£14k), Leisure Insourcing (£26k), Aurora LOI (£13k) plus range of small underspends within Leisure
Community & Culture	(54)	Small underspends within: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Development (£19k) • Arts and Museums (£34k)
Income		
Parks & Cemeteries	(112)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cemeteries income (£82k) • Franchise income (£17k) • Memorial Benches (£17k)
Community & Culture	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externally Funded Programs (£35k) and Arts & Museums (£13k) – offset by underspends in payroll and goods & services.
Environmental Health	(16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise, PPC and H&S income
Leisure	(637)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure Centres & Londonderry Park – (£299k) • NCLT Contract – (£255k) – not budgeted • Community Centres – (£44k).

Not Applicable

453

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 9 - December 2024					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	172,312	165,300	7,012	221,000	4.2
110 Environmental Health	1,661,776	1,831,800	(170,024)	2,333,500	(9.3)
120 Community and Culture	1,787,583	1,930,600	(143,017)	2,529,800	(7.4)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	3,442,347	3,652,400	(210,053)	5,246,800	(5.8)
150 Leisure Services	705,816	1,640,600	(934,784)	2,567,300	(57.0)
Total	7,769,834	9,220,700	A (1,450,866)	12,898,400	(15.7)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing - Payroll					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	130,895	130,800	95	174,300	0.1
110 Environmental Health	1,838,750	2,025,100	(186,350)	2,692,500	(9.2)
120 Community and Culture	1,313,742	1,449,800	(136,058)	1,946,800	(9.4)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	3,003,935	3,101,800	(97,865)	4,142,900	(3.2)
150 Leisure	3,659,410	3,850,300	(190,890)	5,225,900	(5.0)
Total	9,946,732	10,557,800	(611,068)	14,182,400	(5.8)
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing - Goods & Services					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	43,055	36,200	6,855	48,400	18.9
110 Environmental Health	202,498	170,600	31,898	290,700	18.7
120 Community and Culture	922,686	976,500	(53,814)	1,859,400	(5.5)
140 Parks & Cemeteries	975,983	976,400	(417)	1,632,600	(0.0)
150 Leisure	406,329	512,800	(106,471)	1,008,100	(20.8)
Total	2,550,550	2,672,500	(121,950)	4,839,200	(4.6)
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing - Income					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	(1,638)	(1,700)	62	(1,700)	3.7
110 Environmental Health	(379,472)	(363,900)	(15,572)	(649,700)	(4.3)
120 Community and Culture	(448,845)	(495,700)	46,855	(1,276,400)	9.5
140 Parks & Cemeteries	(537,570)	(425,800)	(111,770)	(528,700)	(26.2)
150 Leisure	(3,359,923)	(2,722,500)	(637,423)	(3,666,700)	(23.4)
Totals	(4,727,448)	(4,009,600)	(717,848)	(6,123,200)	(17.9)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

Unclassified

454

ITEM 27**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Community and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Meeting	12 February 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	28 January 2025
File Reference	CW159
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not Applicable. For information.
Subject	Hardship Funding 2024-2025
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Hardship Funding Further Response

At the Council meeting held on 28th August 2024 it was agreed that Council writes to the Department for Communities to highlight our disappointment at their failure to provide Hardship Funding this financial year. Furthermore, that Council asks The Department for Communities to commit to use funding in future monitoring rounds to provide hardship funding in 2024-2025. A letter was sent to this effect on 17th September, 2024,

A response dated 24th September 2024 was received from Colum Boyle, Permanent Secretary of Department for Communities stating that due to the financial constraints on the Department's budget the Department is currently unable to provide any hardship funding for 2024-2025, and due to the continuing uncertainty in funding, it would not be possible to consider a recurrent funding model at this time.

At the October Council meeting, Council agreed to write again to the Department in response, expressing disappointment to that response making it clear that the ask is for DFC to commit to seeking funding in future monitoring rounds should funding

Not Applicable

455

become available during 2024-25, to provide hardship funding. A response to this letter was received in December and is attached for Member's information.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the report.



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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Department for
Commonities

456

From: Colum Boyle
Permanent Secretary

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1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 823301
E-mail: Colum.Boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: PSC0354.24
Date: 19th November 2024

Ms Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall
The Castle
BANGOR
BT20 4BT

Via email: Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Dear

HARDSHIP FUNDING 2024/25

Thank you for your further correspondence of 12th November 2024 requesting that my Department commits to seek funding in future monitoring rounds and that should funding become available during 2024-25, it should allocate this to future hardship funding.

As noted in my previous correspondence, the funding available to the Department for 2024/25 was set within the context of a constrained financial position, and the overall Departmental budget position was considered against competing priorities. When DoF formally commissions the January Monitoring Round exercise we will consider hardship funding for 2024/25 as part of this process.



It should be noted that the funding provided by the Department in the 2022/23 financial year (March 2023) was non-recurrent, but Accounts Directions from my Department allowed use of the funding in both 2023/24 and 2024/25.

I should also add that the Department provides funding directly to the vulnerable through the benefits system and, indeed, we secured an additional £17m to help alleviate the impact of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel payments.

I am sorry that I cannot be of more help at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colum Boyle'.

Colum Boyle
Permanent Secretary