

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

03 February 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place and Prosperity Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards on **Thursday, 9 February 2023**, commencing at **7.00pm**.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Donaghadee Commons Masterplan (report attached)
4. Minutes of Portaferry Steering Group 8 November 2022 (copy attached)
5. Devolution of Regeneration Powers and Budget (report and letter from Permanent Secretary attached)
6. Rural Regeneration – Overview of Funding and Projects (report attached)
7. Ards and Bangor Business awards (report attached)
8. 4C UR Future Event (report attached)
9. Independent Review of Invest NI Report (report attached)
10. Experience AND and AND Walks and Tours Programme Update Report 2022/23 (report attached)
11. Travel and Tourism Expos 22/23 Update and 2023/24 attendance (report attached)
12. Regeneration and Development Budgetary Control Report – December 2022 (report attached)

13. Notice of Motion

13.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund

That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern that the provision of a footpath at Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not considered a priority by the Department following the completion of a feasibility study which demonstrated need. That the Council highlights the road safety concerns raised by residents for pedestrians using the Shore Road from the village to the residential developments including Park Homes and St Andrew's. That Council requests that the Department for Infrastructure makes the installation of a footpath a priority and commits to deliver the scheme as a matter of urgency.

14. Any Other Notified Business

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

15. Annual Evaluation Report Open House Festival 2022 (report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE

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

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	10 January 2023
File Reference	RDP72
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Donaghadee Commons Masterplan
Attachments	Appendix One - Donaghdee Commons Masterplan

Background

Members will be aware that the Council agreed to appoint Consultants to undertake consultations to assist with the development of a Masterplan for the Commons in Donaghadee. Aecom was appointed and after a period of extensive internal and external consultation have finalised a Masterplan for the Commons.

As reported to the Regeneration and Development Committee on 9 June 2022, the finalised Plan gave a vision for a premium urban coastal park with enhanced features. The Commons is to be sensitively reimaged into a high-quality coastal parkland destination with activities, indoor and outdoor, and welcoming to everyone. A new network of trails to reach out across the foreshore, will aid with the integration of the Commons into the urban fabric of the Town. A destination with appeal for both locals and visitors alike, which will help leverage the public and private investment to support future development of the area.

Consultation results

As requested by the Council in June 2022, a further public consultation took place on 18th October 2022 with 50 attendees over 4 sessions held from 4.00pm – 8.00pm. Comments were also invited through the Council's website and via questionnaires, with 19 on-line responses received.

In line with the original consultation a significant number of positive views expressed with 78% of respondents supporting the Masterplan. In all of the sessions undertaken only one respondent raised the issue of the recycling centre relocation but was satisfied that there would be further consultation on the issue if/when this project was brought forward.

The consultation did not reveal any major changes to the existing draft Masterplan and several specific comments will be useful when progressing individual projects in the future. These projects will require further consultation as they are developed for suitable funding streams.

It is important to remember that the Commons Masterplan is a concept plan only. Projects coming from the Masterplan will require further detailed design, business cases and further internal and public consultation. If funding becomes available for any element of the Masterplan, Officers will bring back a report to the Committee prior to making any application.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council agrees:

1. the Donaghadee Commons Masterplan; and
2. that Officers commence seeking funding opportunities to deliver the Masterplan.

Concept Design Report

Donaghadee Commons Masterplan

Concept Stage

60668704

March 2022

Quality information

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

Revision history

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

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



1.0 Introduction

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

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

1.1 Project Benefits

Benefits of a reimagined Commons include:

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

2.0 Site Context

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

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

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

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





3.0 Site Analysis

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

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

S_trengths

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

W_eaknesses

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

O_pportunities

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

T_hreats

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



Existing playground under refurbishment

Recycling centre inhibits potential pedestrian links

Potential development site

Car parking bisects open greenspace

No sense of arrival

Unwelcoming park entrance

Wide pedestrian path frequently used

No connection with historic railway

Steep, uneven, narrow footpath

Isolated playpark location

Unwelcoming shelters

Lack of gateway to Commons

Frequently used sports facilities

Underutilised putting green

Harbour and lighthouse proximity

Poor pedestrian connections. No footway

Site exposed to the elements

Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat to be repositioned

Boatyard positioning and transparency

Hidden marina

Unsightly sewage treatment

Potential access to rocks and sea

Open landscaped areas

Motorhome aire de service

- Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Opportunities
 - Threats
- ① Harbour and Company Wood Fired Kitchen
 - ② RNLI Charity Shop
 - ③ Pier 36
 - ④ Meadowbank Social & Rec Club
 - ⑤ Donaghadee Lifeboat Station
 - ⑥ The Copeland Distillery
 - ⑦ Donaghadee Community Centre
 - ⑧ Amenity Building
 - ⑨ Historic Lighthouse
- P** Existing Carpark
 - Existing Tennis Courts
 - Existing Bowling Green
 - Dog walking route
 - Running route
 - Disability access route
 - Viewpoint
 - Line of historic railway

4.0 Proposed Park Redevelopment

4.1 Commons Link

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

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



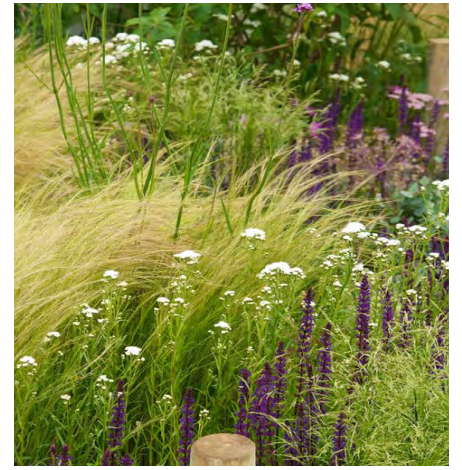
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IMAGE
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Tree planting in civic Space



Coastal planting - perennials and grass mix



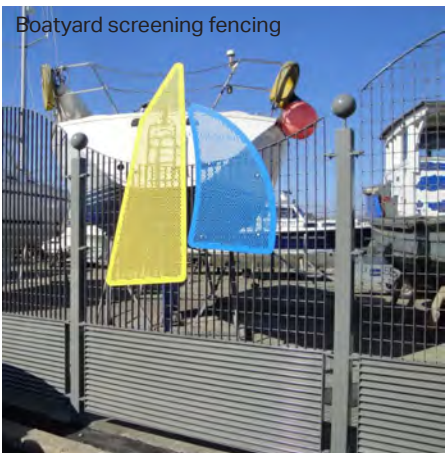
Biodiversity rich wildflower planting



Natural stone wall between pedestrian path and car park



Tree lined avenue at community centre car park



Boatyard screening fencing



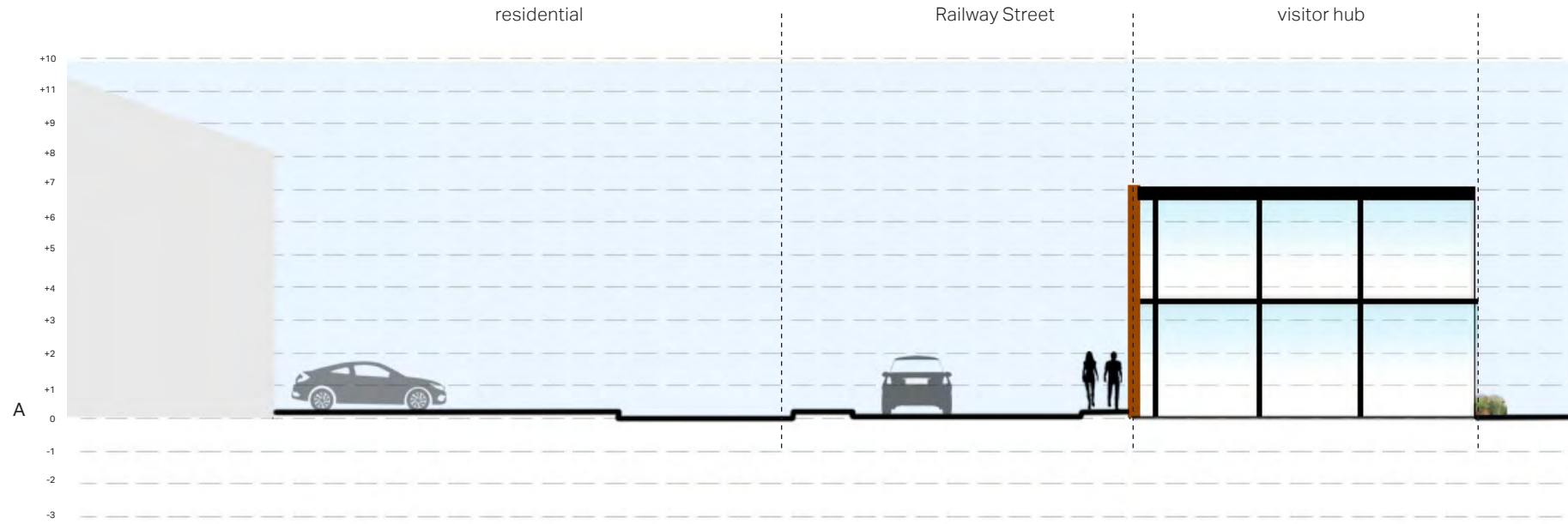
Two story visitor hub



Pedestrian link

4.2 Section A-A'

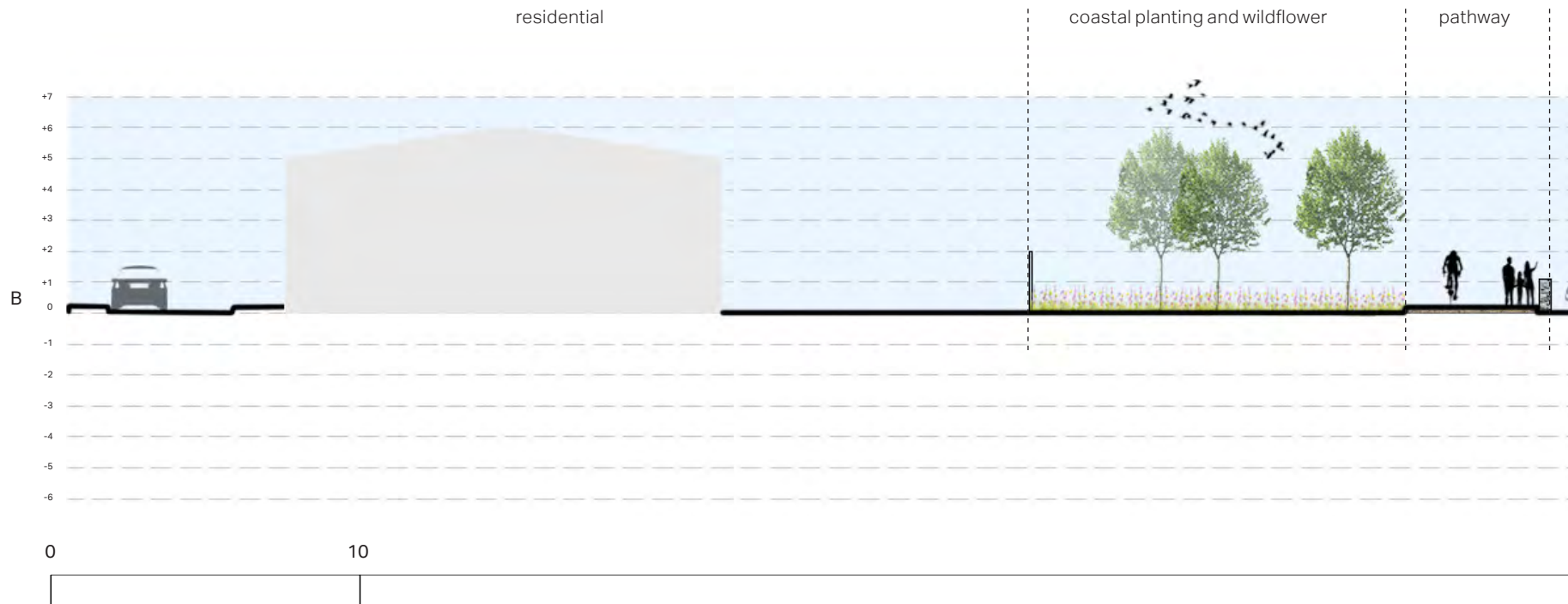
Proposed Visitor Hub located next to the Sir Samuel Kelly Square and Community Centre encourages pedestrian movement to the commons via the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat located to the southern end of the building



4.3 Section B-B'

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

Boatyard fencing replaced with new attractive panelling



pathway

community centre and carpark

carpark access road

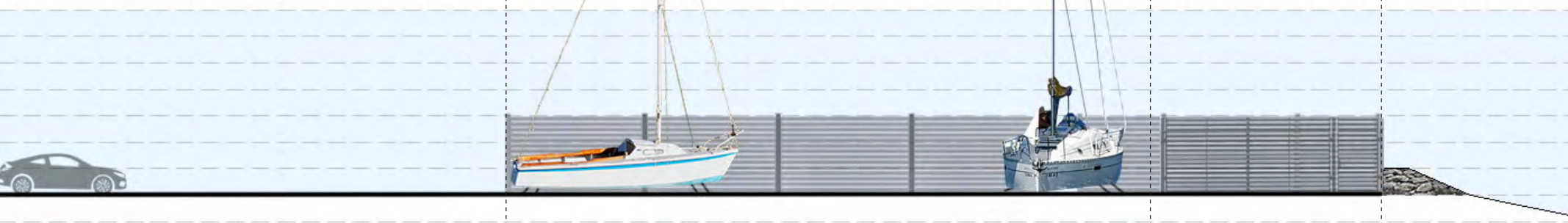


A'

carpark

screened relocated boatyard

boatyard access gate



B'



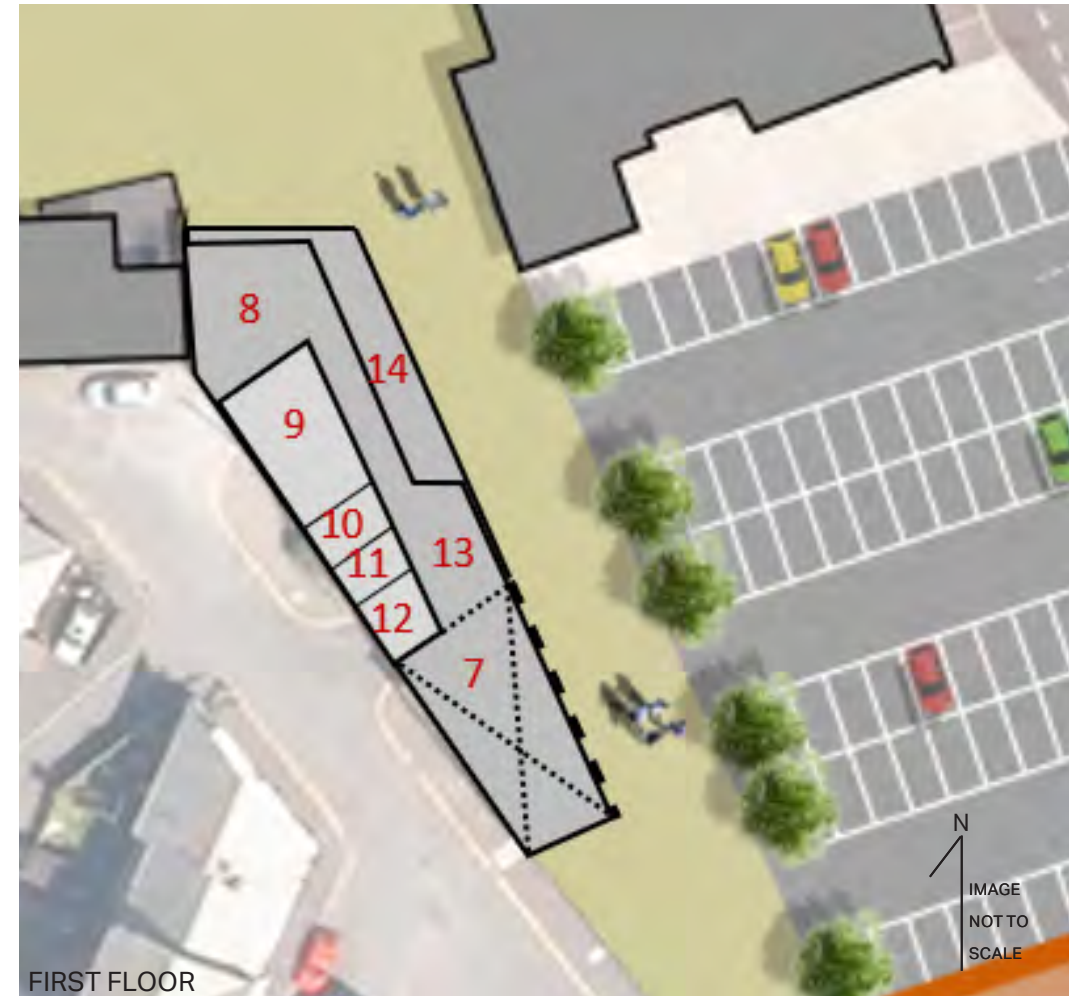
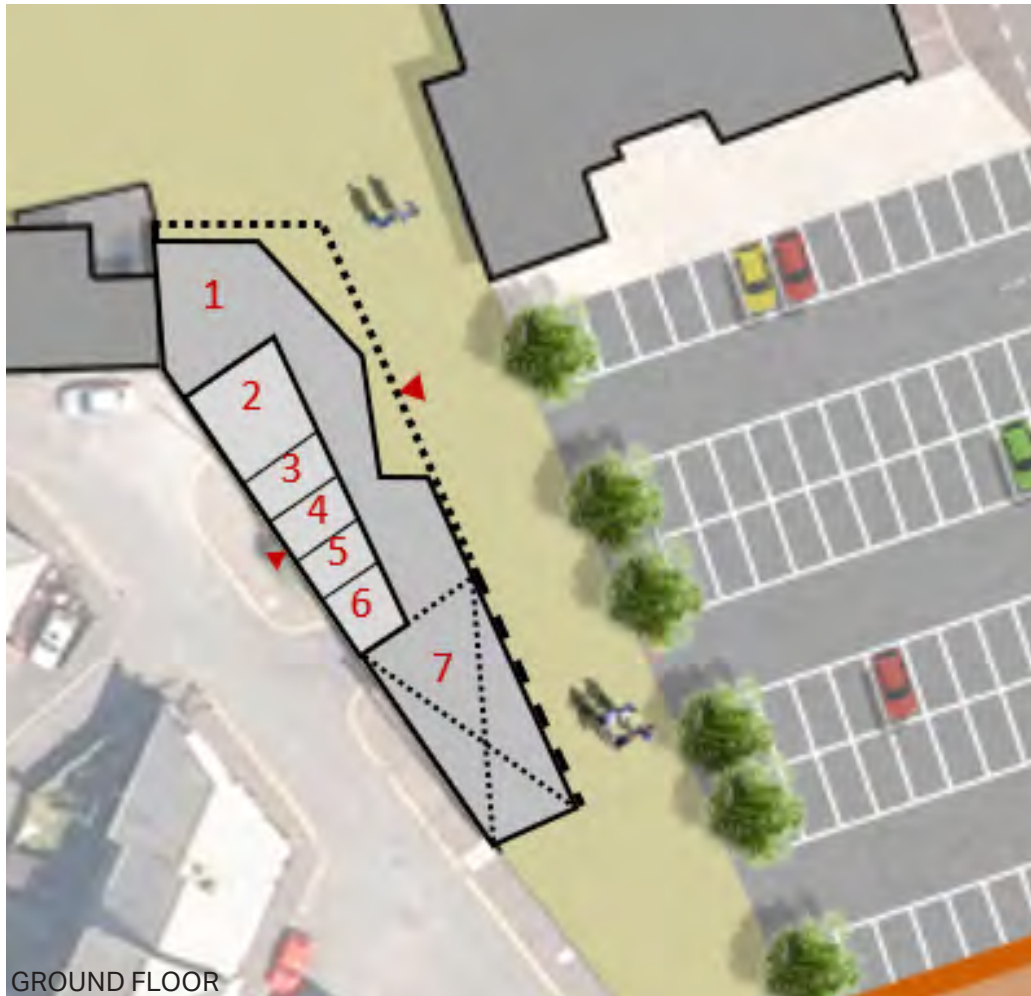
4.4 Visitor Hub Concept Design

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

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

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

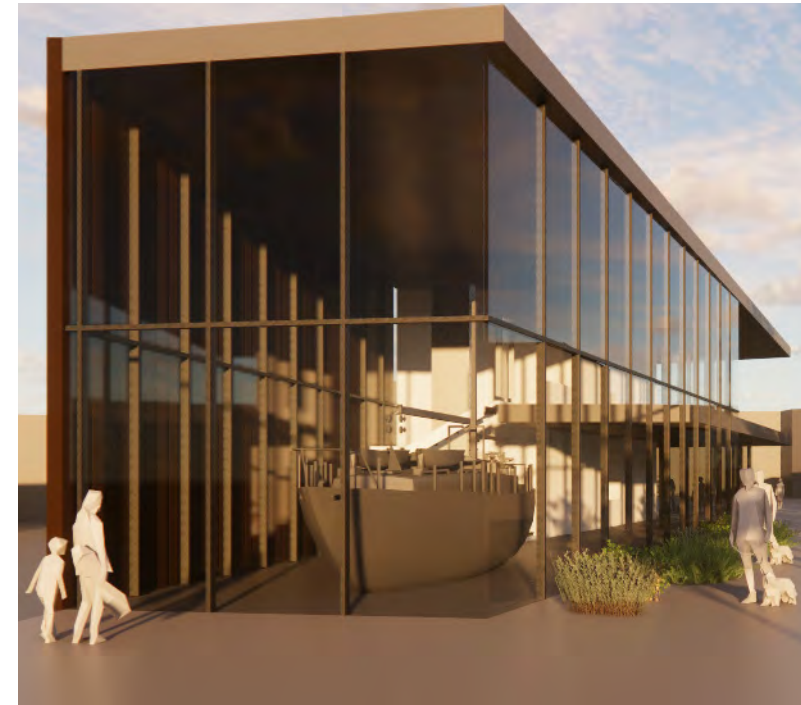
The 1st floor will provide gallery/exhibition spaces; Co-working space with outdoor terraced seating area.



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



Visualisations of proposed Visitor Hub



Pop-up weekend market stalls



Maritime memorabilia



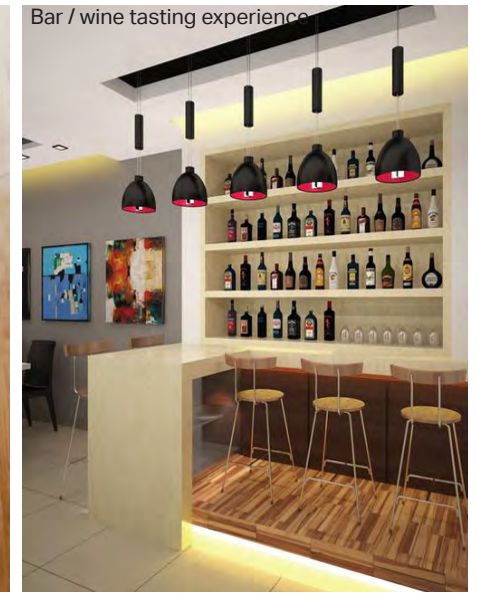
Arts and crafts events



Pop-up coffee stalls



Collaborative work spaces



Bar / wine tasting experience

4.5 Precedent images

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



4.6 Commons Park

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

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



Existing views and character retained



Potential for coastal boardwalk that allows accessible coastal exploration



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



Boardwalk platforms



Landscape terracing

Enhanced biodiversity



Shared path networks



Public art focal point

Rewilding coastal planting

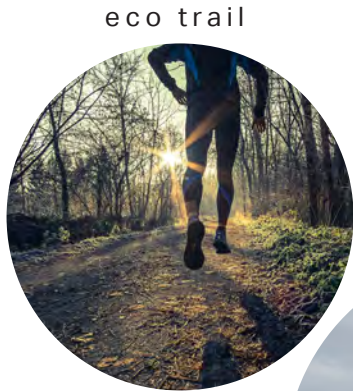


4.7 Section C-C'

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

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

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



eco trail



viewpoint pathway



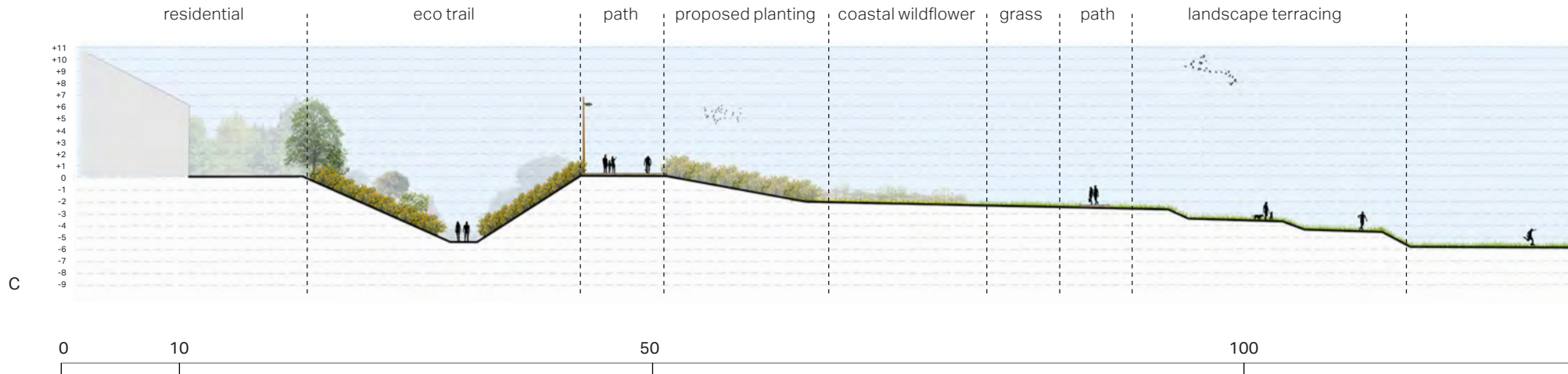
coastal planting



wildflower planting



landscape terracing



coastal path



coastal education



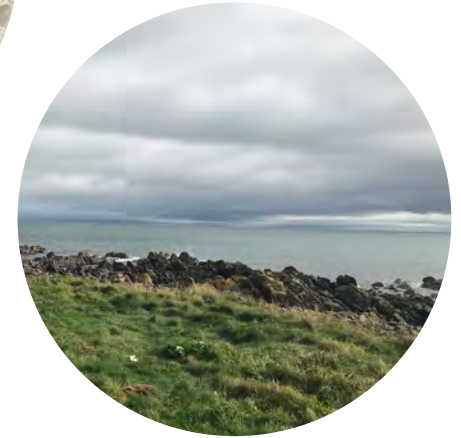
events green space



public art



coastal interface

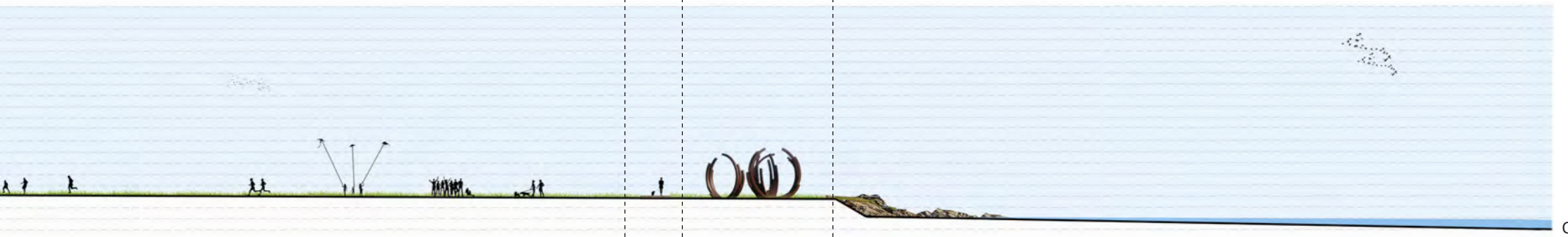


events space

path

public art

shore



200m

C'

4.8 Activity Hub

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

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



Coastal edge and character retained



Active play zone

Sunken cycle / skate track



Outdoor exercise zone

Sculptural gateway feature



Architectural shelter



RV site



Park run 5k



Cycle rental hub

illuminated pathway



eco trail



recreational grassland

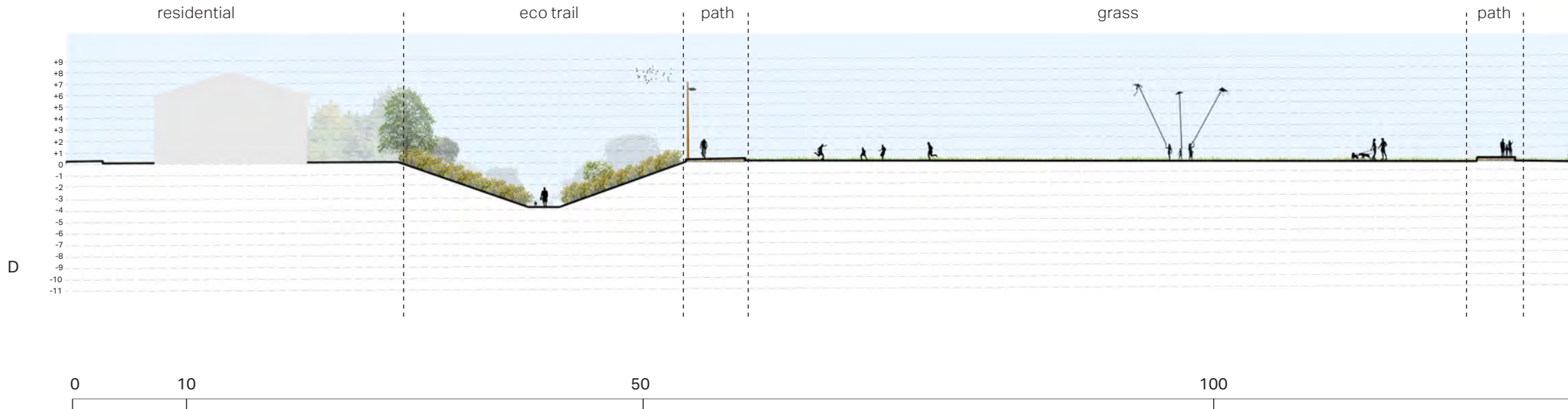


4.9 Section D-D'

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

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

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



coastal
planting



wildflower
planting



low level
lighting



play zone



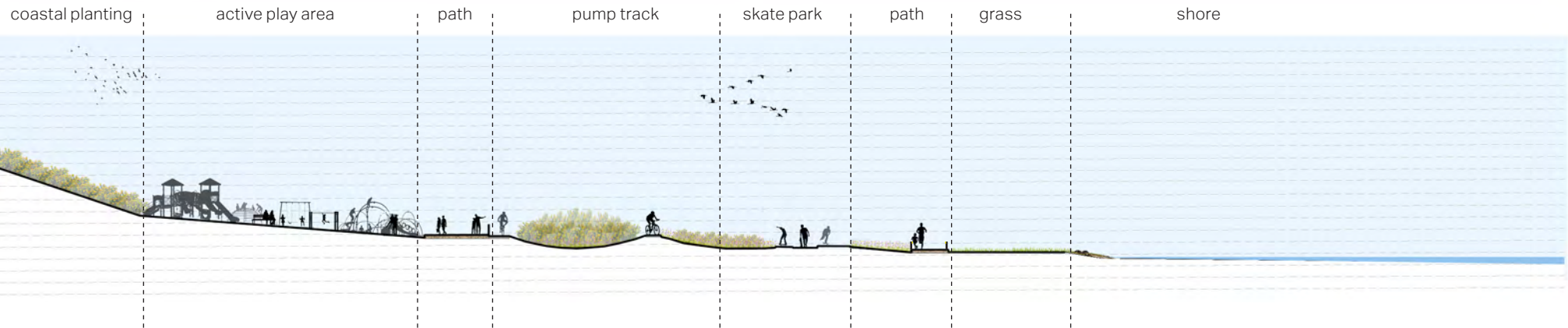
sunken
pump track



sunken
skate park



coastal
interface



Hunt's Park access



park entrance feature



pavilion cafe



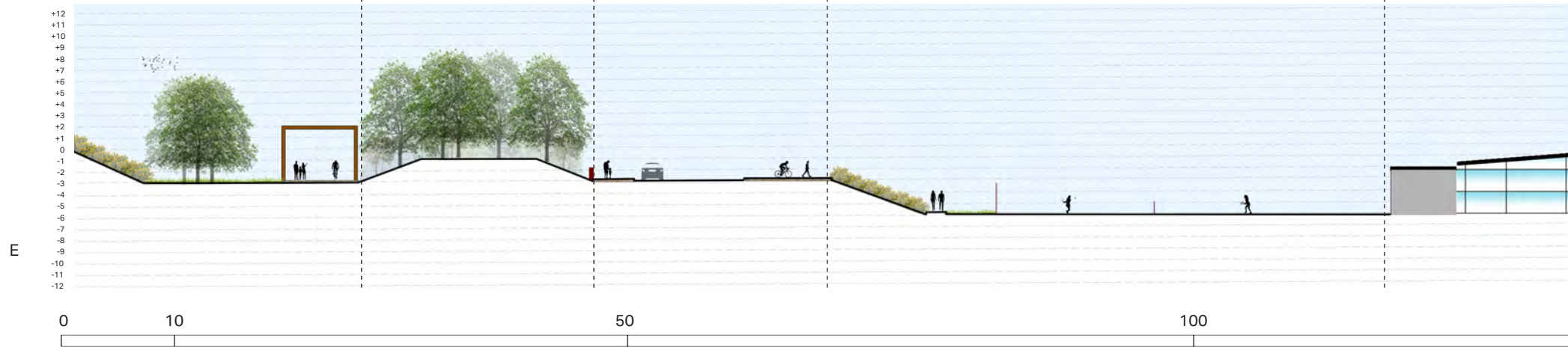
Hunt's Park gateway

existing vegetation retained

public realm improvements

existing tennis courts

renovated pavilion with cafe extension



outdoor seating area



coastal interface

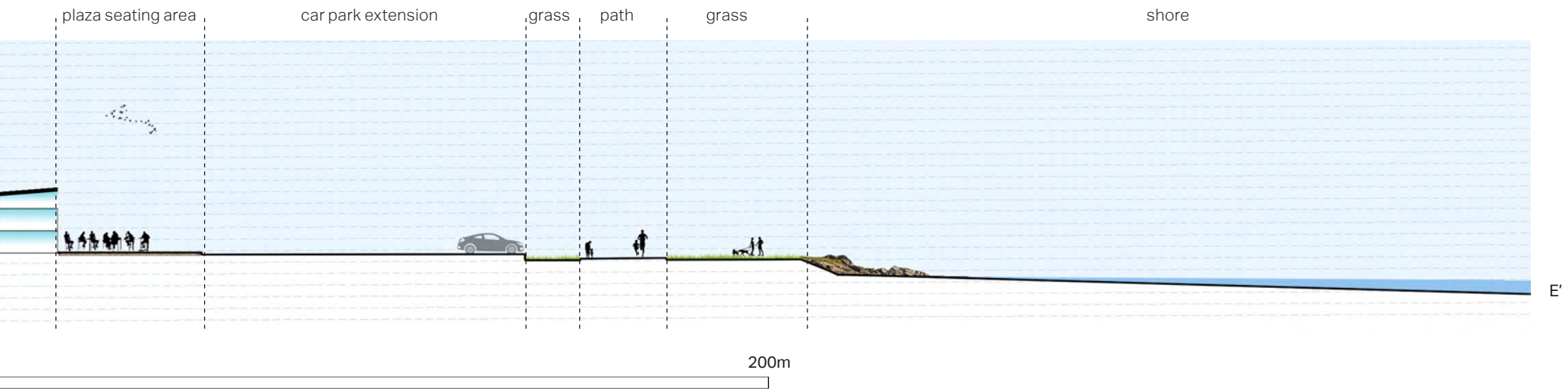


4.10 Section E-E'

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

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

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



5.0 Phasing Programme

5.1 Strategy

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

Phase 1 - *Paths and Planting*

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

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

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

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

Phase 2 - *Activity Area*

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

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

Phase 3 - *Development and Urban Wellness*

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

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

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

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

Phase 1

Primary signage

Visitor hub

Development site

Entrance archways

Secondary signage

New path network

Eco trail

Landscape terracing

Existing shelters refurbished

Proposed rewilding planting

Proposed wildflower planting

Millisle road entrance improvements

Carpark extension

Pavilion extension

Jetty

RV site

Widened access road



Phase 2

Pump track

Skate park

Play zone

Outdoor gym



Phase 3

Sir Samuel Kelly Plaza

Reconfigured carpark

Coastal path extension

Pedestrian link path

Natural stone low wall

Boatyard relocation and screening

Environmental improvements



6.0 Materials Palette

6.1 Seating

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



6.4 Picnic Table

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



6.2 Feature Lighting

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



6.5 Path Lighting

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



6.3 Low level lighting

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



6.6 Finger Post Signage

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



6.7 Paving

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



6.8 Exposed Aggregate Concrete

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



7.0 Public Consultation Analysis

7.1 The Purpose

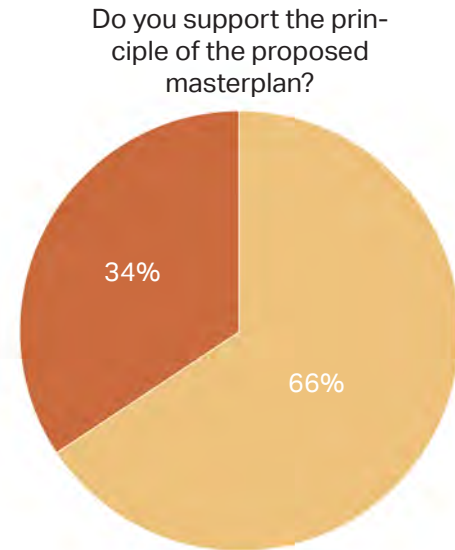
The purpose of the public consultations were to tailor concept design proposals which derived from stakeholder meetings during the analysis stage of the project. They involved local residents and traders in providing opinions and feedback on a draft masterplan which allowed for refinement of the subsequent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

7.2 The Process

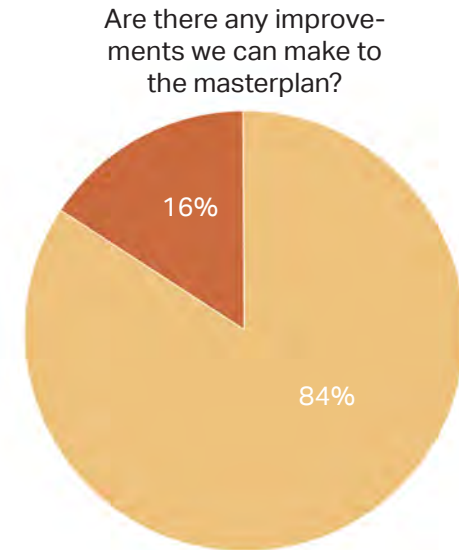
ANDBC and AECOM carried out two online public consultation events on the evenings of January 27th 2022 and February 24th 2022. The process involved an introduction by ANDBC to the background of the project and progress to date. AECOM then explained the design proposal through a power point presentation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

7.3 The Outcome

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



● Yes
● No



● Yes
● No

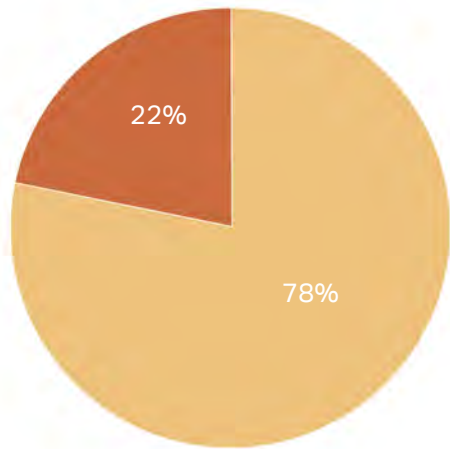
"Any improvements to Donaghadee, particularly The Commons, would be very welcomed"

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

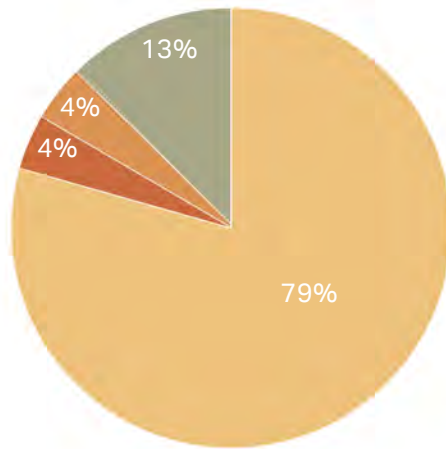
"We love going to the commons to walk the dog and let the kids play in the park. It would be great to have more things to do"

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

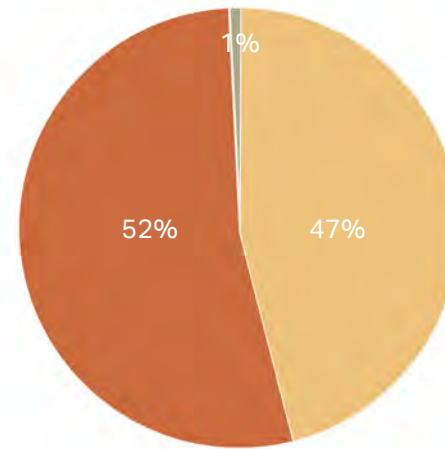
Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed masterplan?



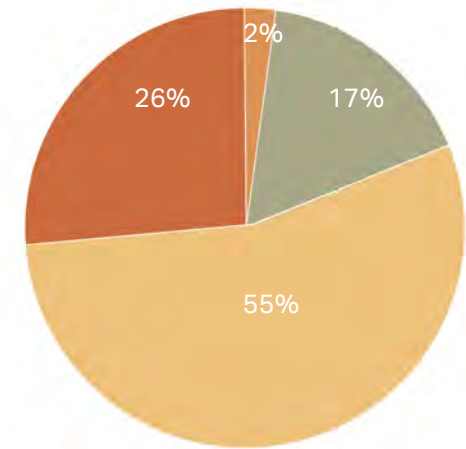
In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?



Please tell us your gender



Please tell us your age



- Yes
- No

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

- Male
- Female
- Other

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

8.0 Executive Summary

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

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

8.1 A MARKET OPPORTUNITY EXISTS

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

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

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

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

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

- The large area of brownfield land currently used as free car parking presents a significant opportunity cost. It presents a superb opportunity to be Donaghadee’s urban regeneration and development project to drive more critical mass for the town centre and accommodate contemporary uses. Crucially with large areas in public sector ownership it presents an opportunity for the Council to capture value from its ownership. Through development the Council should seek a capital and/or income receipt that will contribute to the capital cost to deliver the Commons masterplan and provide ongoing financial support for operations

- This commercial development is likely to comprise a hotel (est 40 key) and spa & wellness facility, business space (co-working/serviced office space), appropriate retail, food & beverage, leisure and multifamily residential

- Non-commercial development opportunity exists for a visitor centre hub to tell the many stories of Donaghadee and offering high quality visitor services.

8.2 EMERGING PROPOSITION

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

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

There will be three zones of activity

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

Points of differentiation will include:

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

8.3 STRATEGIC ACTIONS TOWARDS DELIVERY

Improvement & Development

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

Branding and marketing

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

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

Management

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

A Business Plan for the reimagined Commons

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

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

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

Funding sources are likely to include

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

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

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

8.4 BUSINESS CASE FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMONS

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



Portaferry Steering Group Meeting		
<u>TIME</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
6PM	Tuesday 8th November	Market House, The Square, Portaferry
Attendees	Councillor Joe Boyle - Chair Councillor Eddie Thompson Councillor Lorna McAlpine Mary Mageean Maureen Mahon John Dumigan, Portaferry Regeneration Ryan O'Neill - DfC Ricky Martin - AECOM James McAtasney - AECOM Julia Kane – Capital Projects- ANDBC Jamie MacDonald – Capital Projects-ANDBC Brian Dorrian - Head of Regeneration, ANDBC David Shivers - Urban Development Manager, ANDBC Glynis Poots - Administrative Officer ANDBC	
Item 1	Welcome	
	The Chair welcomed the Committee members.	
Item 2	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from: Alderman Angus Carson Councillor Adair Councillor McAlpine for lateness	

Item 3	Declarations of Interest
	No Declarations of Interest were received.
Item 4	Update on Procurement
Action	Brian Dorrian Informed the group that once a contractor was appointed a timeline would be issued to the group and the contractor could attend the next TAG meeting to explain how they would communicate with the TAG and traders
Action	David Shivers informed the group the letter of offer would be sent out in Mar 2023 and that once a program was in place they would engage with the traders with a fortnightly newsletter.
	Joe Boyle enquired what would happen if the build went over the March 2024 deadline. Brian Dorrian advised he would explain the situation to the DFC and apply for an extension.
Item 5	Final design Update - Presentation by AECOM
	<p>Aecom presented a recap of the scheme and explained that the extent of scheme remained the same and the following comments were made.</p> <p>Market square – fixing points incorporated</p> <p>Access in and out of the Spar doable and safe</p> <p>Road safety at Stage 5</p> <p>Castle Street – Hand digging to protect Weighbridge/Cobbles</p> <p>Ferry Street – alignment of footpath</p> <p>Request to DFI for extension to footway on Shore Road for pedestrian visibility for drivers.</p> <p>Meeting House Street – footways added in</p>

<p>Action</p>	<p>Jamie advised there was a two-month embargo in the program.</p> <p>Brian asked if this could be shortened.</p> <p>Mary referred for the need for 2 weeks in July</p> <p>Jamie responded that there also had to be negotiations with NI Water and Openreach to develop the timeline going forward.</p> <p>Electrics:</p> <p>Ricky Martin from Aecom noted after a meeting with Ryan Marshall the lightings and controls could not be and operated from Market House. The group was informed that there would be a feeder pillar at end of parking bay similar to Redburn Square.</p> <p>David Shivers advised the one in Holywood was wrapped in old images of the town and Regen could work with Groups to choose old images.</p> <p>Aecom decided to go with bollards close to the building, within 3 meters of the building façade plus single-phase bollards between benches, ample connection on all sides of the Square. 3 Bollards with 3 connections in each.</p> <p>Aecom noted that the speakers were taken out of scheme on advice of maintenance and past users.</p> <p>Signage:</p> <p>Aecom explained that the contractor would work toward getting signage signed off with DFI in the latter part of the scheme.</p> <p>The Chair discussed ownership of the signage</p>
<p>Action</p>	<p>Aecom explained that a document was sent after site walk. Julia Kane asked that we forward the response to the committee. Brian said the scheme covered directional signs around the Square and confirmed that the response would be forwarded to the Group.</p>

Action	<p>Julia Kane suggested that in the past other public realm works had got the contractor to do directional signage and it could be done at the end of the scheme as part of the revitalization.</p> <p>John Dumigan said it was important to track how Aecom were getting on with signage as it was very cluttered and out of date.</p> <p>Ferry Street Derelict Property:</p> <p>Members enquired about an update; Aecom had contacted landowner but no reply. John Dumigan said it was a danger to the public</p> <p>Brian explained that he had met with Environmental Health and Building Control in relation to the property and he would update the committee when they get back with the assessment. Brian will chase up with an email.</p> <p>Public Telephone:</p> <p>The committee asked about the public telephone. Aecom informed the meeting it would be refurbished and relocated to outside the Spar. The chair explained that he had been working with the Spar in relation to the entrance and pedestrian access.</p>
Item 6	Steering Group Membership
Action	<p>The Chair suggested that he contacted Francis McCormick to suggest replacement for representatives for traders and Church & Youth</p>
Item 7	Any Other Business
	<p>No other business</p>
Item 8	Date & Time of Next Meeting
Action	<p>David Shivers suggested meeting after ITT appointment</p>

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	17 January 2023
File Reference	RDP14
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Devolution of Regeneration Powers and Budget
Attachments	Appendix one - response from the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities.

At a recent meeting of the Council, Members were reminded that following the formation of the new Councils in 2015, the transfer of the Regeneration function and budgets was deferred and subsequently removed from the transferring functions. To date this position remains.

It was agreed that in the absence of a Minister for the Department for Communities that the Council should write to the Permanent Secretary of that Department highlighting its disappointment that this matter had not been resolved and enquiring if there was a process by which the transfer could be progressed.

The Council has received the attached correspondence from Mr Colum Boyle advising that the former Minister commenced some discussions concerning the transfer of the Regeneration functions and that SOLACE was undertaking some assessment of this. However, he confirmed that as any transfer would require new primary legislation, this could not be advanced without a functioning Executive and Assembly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that that the Council notes the report and letter attached.



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Department for
Commonities

From: Colum Boyle
Permanent Secretary

Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 823301
E-mail: Colum.Boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: PSC 0052.23
Date: 16 January 2023

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Town Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Via email: stephen.reid@northdownandards.gov.uk

Dear Stephen,

REF: TRANSFER OF REGENERATION POWERS AND BUDGETS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd of January 2023 advising that the Council had discussed the transfer of regeneration powers and associated budgets at a recent meeting and requested that I consider commencing the transfer of regeneration powers from Central to Local Government.

I am aware that there continues to be calls for the legislation that will transfer regeneration powers to Local Government to be reintroduced so I will set out the Department's current position on this matter.

The Department has a range of powers that can be used for taking forward regeneration and community development activities. As part of the last Reform of Local Government, certain regeneration responsibilities and the associated resources were to transfer from the Department to Local Government. To give effect to that decision, a draft Regeneration Bill was prepared, and several attempts were made to put the necessary legislation in place in 2011, 2015 and 2016. On each occasion, the Bill did not progress due to a lack of political consensus.

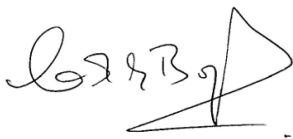
Since then, the Department continues to work closely with councils in the delivery of regeneration programmes. Local Government already plays a significant role in ensuring the successful implementation of the Department's regeneration programmes. As you have acknowledged the relationship was strengthened further in our joint response to Covid-19 where the Department collaborated with councils and other stakeholders to develop locally designed recovery plans funded through the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme and Small Settlement Programme.

The transfer of regeneration powers was discussed at the last meeting of the Partnership Panel on the 2nd of August 2022 with the then Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey MLA, indicating that she was content to have a conversation about the scope of future regeneration functions, what that would look like and how we continue working collaboratively. SOLACE is currently undertaking background work on this matter. Once complete this will form the basis of discussion with the Department.

However, where the implementation of a decision will require new primary legislation to be enacted, then such decisions will need Ministerial endorsement, Executive approval, and access to a legislature to enact the new primary legislation.

I trust that this clarifies the Department's position on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colum Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

COLUM BOYLE
PERMANENT SECRETARY

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	09 January 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Rural Regeneration - Overview of Funding and Projects
Attachments	AND Rural Development Project Directory

Background

As Members will be aware, in recent years the Council has been involved in the administration and delivery of funding under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme and the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. In addition, the Council received grant aid for projects from the Coastal Communities Fund and SEAFLAG. The following gives an overview of the outcomes and achievements of these funds in improving the quality of life for rural dwellers across the Ards and North Down area.

1. Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020Background

In 2015 Ards and North Down Rural Partnership was formed to deliver the LEADER element of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme via its Local Development Strategy.

The Programme provided funding for projects across four different themes as follows:

- Rural Business Investment Scheme - To support and encourage the development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas for all micro and small enterprises. The programme's primary objective is to create new jobs.
- Rural Basic Services Scheme - To support the provision of improvements in social infrastructure that will provide access to basic services which are an integral part of and in line with the Council Community Plan and emerging priorities.
- Rural Village Renewal Scheme - To support the drafting and updating of integrated village plans and for the renewal of villages via capital investment to implement actions identified in village plans.
- Cooperation Scheme - To promote support for co-operation projects with other Local Action Groups which bring benefits to all areas.

The Council was allocated £3,150,000 of funding initially, and in 2019 received a further award of £1,088,769 from the Department. The Programme was completed in November 2022.

Summary of Programme Outcomes

- 78 projects completed across the four themes, which surpasses the original target of 65 as set out in the Strategy. 96 applications were received and processed by Programme staff.
- £3,862,087 of grant aid has been awarded to date, with one more project to complete in February 2023, which will take the total spend to £4,085,212. This is more than the original project budget of £3,150,000 as the Rural Partnership availed of additional funding offered by DAERA.
- Total investment in the area equates to £6,858,081, which includes the £2,772,869 of match funding provided for projects by individuals, limited companies, community groups and Ards and North Down Borough Council.
- To date, 45 Full Time Equivalent Jobs have been created, an increase of five more than the original target set. As businesses continue to grow, more jobs will be created. In addition, many more jobs have been safeguarded because of the funding provided.

Summary of Programme Benefits and Impacts

Scheme	Number of projects funded	Summary Impact
Rural Business Investment Scheme	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivered £2,065,164 of investment (£769,709 of grant aid and £1,295,455 of match funding) - Helped to create at least 34 Full Time and 23 Part Time jobs - Supported the creation of seven new businesses - Enabled 23 existing businesses to develop, expand and recruit

		- Supported five business to start exporting
Rural Basic Services Scheme	13	- Delivered £1,496,536 of investment (£888,787 of grant aid and £607,749 of match funding) - Seven capital projects completed - which have impacted on a potential number of 12,225 people to date - These seven projects have provided much needed basic services to rural areas, such as improvements to physical and mental health, provision of enhanced community space, creation of community hubs and general improvement to quality of life
Rural Village Renewal Scheme	30	- Delivered £2,849,840 of investment (£2,089,537 grant and £760,303 of match funding) - 15 capital projects completed which impact on a population of 27,970 - These 15 projects include a wide range of themes such as improvements to community halls, play parks and community park enhancements, improved landscapes and infrastructure, and provision of more recreational opportunities for communities
Cooperation Scheme	4	- Delivered £446,541 of investment (£337,179 grant and £109,362 of match funding) - Collaboration with the Inishowen Rural Partnership

2. Rural Business Development Grant Scheme

Background

In 2018 the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) approached the Council to run a pilot Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2019/2020. The scheme was funded under DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI), which aims to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived rural areas. This is a capital grant scheme which provides funding support for micro rural businesses from £500 up to a maximum of £4,999, at a 50% grant rate. The scheme has now operated successfully over the past four years, and it is anticipated it will continue to run on an ongoing basis.

Summary of Scheme Outcomes

84 Letters of Offer have been issued across the Borough under the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme to date. This includes support for a wide range of businesses sectors, such as manufacturing, engineering, tourism, arts and crafts, personal training, horticulture, café's, graphic design, childcare and many more. The funding allows these micro rural businesses to become sustainable and grow at a time when such businesses would struggle to do so without grant support.

The table below summarises the outcomes from the schemes which have operated annually from 2019-2022.

Year	Number of Applications	Letters of Offer Issued	Value of Letters of Offer Issued	Grant Aid Paid / To Be Paid
2019	14	8	£23,599	£17,715
2020	42	26	£74,456	£60,533
2021	27	25	£60,978	£51,802
2022	32	25	£65,003	£54,462
Total	115	84	£224,036	£184,512

3. Coastal Communities Fund

Background

In December 2018 the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) announced that Round 5 of the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) in Northern Ireland would open for applications. After considering several projects, the Council approved an application to the Coastal Communities Fund for the Ballywalter Lime Kilns Environmental Improvement Scheme.

Ballywalter Lime Kilns – Project Outputs

The Council was awarded £100,000 of funding from the Coastal Communities Fund towards the delivery of an Environmental Improvement Scheme at the Lime Kilns. This total investment in this project was £227,346. This was delivered via a cocktail of funding support, to include the Rural Development Programme’s Village Renewal Scheme and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The scheme included the following elements of work:

- New regraded asphalt path to the sea front
- New seating areas, paving and picnic areas
- New shrub and tree planting
- Cladding to the toilet block
- Lime Kiln: New glass balustrade on the upper level, seating, and resin bonded paving
- Lime Kiln: New interpretation panels to the recesses and an information panel at the lookout at the upper level
- Minor restoration works to the Lime Kiln

This project completed in mid-2021 and has provided enhanced facilities for local people and visitors and improved the accessibility and understanding of the space through interpretation.

4. SEAFLAG

Portavogie Promenade – Environmental Improvement Scheme

The Council was successful in securing a grant of £87,602.42 from SEAFLAG for a small environmental improvement scheme at Portavogie Promenade. The total investment in this project was £156,321.62, with match funding requirements being met from existing Council budgets and the Small Settlements Fund.

Project Outputs and Benefits

The scheme completed in November 2022. It involved the following elements of work on and around the Promenade and car park area:

- Environmental improvements to include the installation of new column lighting at Anchor car park leading onto the Promenade, a new pathway surface and improved access onto the beach
- Environmental improvements at Princess Anne Square creation of an entrance feature at Princess Anne Square including a new pathway to provide access, new trees, 'Welcome to Portavogie Promenade' entrance signage
- Design and installation of 3no. interpretative signs to be located at the slipway and on the path to the beach which will focus on the maritime history, environment and heritage of Portavogie

The scheme aims to reconnect Portavogie Promenade with the Harbour and coastline back into the village through Princess Anne Square. This will generate a greater feeling of connectivity across the entire village and increasing footfall into the village centre, thus encouraging greater economic activity. The interpretation elements of the project increase awareness of, and appreciation for, the maritime heritage of Portavogie in the context of its natural environment at Anchor Car park.

Portavogie Harbour – Environmental Improvement Scheme

In November 2020 SEAFLAG reported an expected underspend of £483,818 which, if not allocated, would be returned to the Department. Therefore, the Board agreed to run a further and final call for applications from January to March 2021. The Council agreed that an application should be submitted to SEAFLAG for an Environmental Improvement Scheme at the Harbour in Portavogie.

Subsequently, the application was successful, and a Letter of Offer was issued to the Council for £209,641.87 in July 2022 for the delivery of the following works:

- artwork to the shed wall
- new low-maintenance open space around the memorial
- planters and bench seating,
- harbour signage, defined parking spaces, pedestrian crossing,
- feature light columns and
- rendering to the existing wall

Expected total project investment on completion is circa £326,000.

Project Outputs and Benefits

Northstone NI Ltd commenced work on this project in October 2022 and the works are progressing at pace. Completion is scheduled for March 2023, apart from the resin bonding surfacing which will be slightly delayed due to seasonality.

- Enhancing and protecting an environmental asset, while encouraging appropriate economic and recreational activity

- Provision of more aesthetically pleasing area for people arriving at the Harbour from both sea and land, which will enhance a sense of community
- Provision of an inclusive, safe and pleasant place for the local community and visitors to observe, thus giving the village a heart
- Promotion of health and wellbeing and a reduction in social exclusion by providing a local space for people to meet and engage, also an increased opportunity within a rural fishing community to celebrate their maritime and aquacultural heritage
- Establishment of collaborative partnerships within the fishing community in terms of heritage

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

Rural Partners



Ards and North Down

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014–2020

PROJECT DIRECTORY



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



'The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas'.




**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

Foreword



I want to congratulate the members of the Ards and North Down Rural Partnership (ANDRP) for their work in delivering Priority 6 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development 'LEADER' Programme across the Ards and North Down Council area. The LEADER programme has provided much needed financial support to rural areas and has resulted in funding of just over £4.08m being invested across the district. This investment has levered in a further £2.77m in match funding. These very significant sums of money have improved rural people's lives by creating new jobs, supporting village renewal and through the development of rural infrastructure.

I was delighted to visit several of the funded projects, and to learn of the vast and diverse range of projects that have been successfully delivered by the ANDRP Local Action Group across the Council area. Through my visits, I know that the benefits from the programme have most certainly helped make the area a more attractive and prosperous place to live, work and invest. In total, 78 projects have received funding and 45 new full time equivalent jobs have been created in rural areas. In addition, 22 community facilities have either been developed or upgraded, and over 27,000 people have benefited from support under the programme's village renewal measure.

In closing, I commend all involved in the successful rollout and delivery of the Rural Development Programme.

EDWIN POOTS MLA
Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Message from the Chair



I am delighted to reflect on the achievements of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme [2014-2020] in the Ards and North Down Borough area. 78 projects were supported, representing a total investment of almost £7M. That is a significant figure that makes a big difference to the rural economy and the quality of life for rural dwellers.

This investment has aided the creation of new rural businesses, along with supporting existing ones, and part funded improvements to community facilities and services. I am confident that the Ards and North Down Rural Partnership Programme has achieved what we intended it to do and, indeed, much more.

Its impact is clearly visible on the ground and will benefit the area for many years to come. I hope the next Rural Development Programme, whatever form that will take, will build on the success of this current Programme and I look forward to seeing rural communities continue to develop and prosper with the support of these vital funding opportunities.

I would like to thank the Vice Chair, Councillor Lorna McAlpine, for her support during my time as Chair of the Partnership and all of the previous LAG Board members who have undertaken the role. These are Councillor Robert Adair, David Kirkpatrick, Councillor Nigel Edmund, Margaret Finlay, and Councillor Joe Boyle. I would also like to thank the LAG Board Members and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for their support over the last 6 years, and of course the Council staff team who provided the essential administrative support required to enable the LAG to deliver the Programme.

This Project Directory will give you a flavour of the projects supported under each of the 4 funding schemes.

Bill Megraw
Chair of Local Action Group

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Rural Business Investment Scheme

The aim of the Rural Business Investment Scheme (RBIS) was to increase economic activity and employment rates in the Ards and North Down rural area through encouraging and supporting the creation and development of micro and small enterprises, including on-farm diversification into non-agricultural activities and private tourism provision.

With an investment of almost £770,000 of grant aid through the scheme, and over £1.4M in match funding from project promoters' own resources, this scheme was able to support 31 projects, which has already led to the creation of 45 new full time equivalent jobs in the area, with more to be created in due course.

Successful projects came from a wide variety of sectors, including manufacturing, engineering, specialist security glass, food and hospitality, flight simulator training, childcare, nursing home care, advanced composites and many more.

This investment will continue to benefit the local community by creating more jobs and inviting further investment as the businesses thrive and expand.

Applicant: **Hamilton Erskine Limited**
Project 1: **EVA Laminating Capability**
Project 2: **Capacity Growth**
Location: **Ballygowan**
Total Project Cost: **£248,619 (Across 2 x RDP projects)**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£100,000 (2 x £50,000)**



Hamilton Erskine Ltd staff with the new EVA Laminating Equipment



New Glass Washing Machine, part of the Capacity Growth project

Hamilton Erskine Ltd is a company based at 17 Moss Road, Ballygowan (located in the same factory as CCP Gransden). They provide niche specialist security glass solutions primarily to the custodial, mental health, high value jewellery and high-end residential sectors.

The business completed two Rural Business Investment Scheme projects receiving £100,000 of grant funding in total and creating two new full-time jobs for each project;

- 1** The purchase and installation of an EVA Laminating Machine – This new piece of machinery - costing £123,214 in total - allows Hamilton Erskine to manufacture ‘Smart’ and ‘Switchable’ glass. This glass uses electrical currents to change from clear to opaque at the flick of a switch. It is not currently manufactured anywhere in Northern Ireland (NI) and there are only three competitors across the UK and the Republic of Ireland (RoI). The machine also allows them to manufacture their own bullet resistant glass components, multi-coloured glass, and other specialist glass pieces.
- 2** The purchase and installation of a glass washing machine and a glass laser marking machine to improve their glass cleaning and marking processes. Previously these activities were done by hand, and as a result were slow and inconsistent. The new equipment will ensure that the glass meets this consistency requirement as will the laser marking machine, as marking the glass, especially to itemize it for the specific orders is also time consuming and difficult to record by hand.

The purchase of a glass washing machine (£94,000) and a laser marking system (£31,405) greatly expedited the glass washing and marking aspects of the process. This in turn allowed the business to obtain contracts through the UK Prison Estate Transformation Project (PETP).

Mike McNeill, Director of Hamilton Erskine Ltd commented:

“In terms of the Rural Business Investment Scheme support we have received, on both occasions we found the process straightforward and the support from the Council personnel very helpful. The financial support allowed us to accelerate our investment plans through the acquisition of glass processing equipment, which has allowed us to expand our capability at an earlier stage than we otherwise might have done. This has allowed us to look to other market opportunities and offer a wider range of products.”

Applicant: **Beechvale Nursing Home Limited**
Project: **Nursing Home Extension**
Location: **Killinchy**
Total Project Cost: **£615,641**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£90,000**



DAERA Minister Edwin Poots visiting Beechvale Nursing Home's new extension

Beechvale Nursing Home is located just outside Killinchy and is in a unique setting across 10 acres of gardens, woodland and surrounding fields with views towards Strangford Lough. The Nursing Home has been in operation for over 30 years and has been managed by the current Directors since 2014.

Over recent years the home has been extended and refurbished with the latest equipment and aids to make life as easy and comfortable as possible for the residents. This included additional bedrooms (13) and improved day space and kitchen facilities.

At application stage, the home had 39 bedrooms, 15 of which were ensuite and it had 39 FTE staff members. It could cater for up to 42 residents as three of the bedrooms were doubles. As they were operating to almost full capacity the business applied to the RBIS for funding to expand further to allow them to create an additional eleven bedrooms, all of which are ensuite rooms. They also converted the three shared rooms into singles so they are now able to provide nursing care to 50 residents in single rooms.

The extension has also provided an enlarged day space along with new office space, treatment and medicine rooms and stores, and the works included increasing the size of the lift to allow for easier movement between floors by staff and residents.

The target job creation for this project was four FT and seven PT. To date eight FT and five PT posts have been created and the home is working at 98% occupancy.

Richard Porter, Director of Beechvale Nursing Home said:

"The support we received from the Rural Partnership was most welcome. It has helped us expand further to meet the ever-increasing need for elderly care within our community. We are now fully occupied with a waiting list and our new staff have settled in well."

Applicant: **Maxemoo Ltd**
Project: **Farmyard Café**
Location: **Millisle**
Total Project Cost: **£31,433**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£15,716**



The new Maxemoo Café shop front on Main Street, Millisle

Maxemoo Café is a unique family orientated farmyard café located on Main Street in Millisle. The café sells breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with a range of award-winning home-made desserts.

The Millisle 2024 Village Plan includes a recommendation to develop the vacant and derelict shops on Main Street and indeed, the premises developed as part of this project are featured in the Village Plan. The Village Plan consultation also alluded to the need for a café in Millisle, so this business clearly meets several of the Villages' needs.

The project has led to the regeneration of two vacant derelict buildings on Main Street and the RBIS Funding has helped with the building refurbishment costs, marketing including a website, signage, and some outside seating.

The café provides employment opportunities for full time, part time and seasonal staff, particularly during the busy holiday season in the village.

Heather Jenkins, Director of Maxemoo Ltd said:

"The funding programme enabled us to refurbish a derelict building, which had been empty for 13 years, and to turn it into a profitable business venture again, bringing life to the village of Millisle."

Applicant: **Premier Print & Embroidery Ltd (Tribal Branding)**
Project: **Expansion 2019**
Location: **Comber**
Total Project Cost: **£78,771**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£39,385**



The 6 head embroidery machine purchased as part of this project

Premier Print & Embroidery Ltd was set up in 2015 and provides garment decoration services, in the form of embroidery and single colour vinyl printing, to a range of small businesses and local organisations.

The Company applied to the Rural Business Investment Scheme to expand its product range by purchasing additional pieces of equipment to enable it to produce more garments more efficiently and tender for orders that they previously could not have fulfilled. The equipment purchased for this expansion includes a new six head embroidery machine, embroidery software, a semi-automatic transfer press (the only one in Northern Ireland), printer/cutter, hot laminator, guillotine/bench, desktop engraver, sublimation equipment and two desktop computers.

The new equipment has also enabled the business to introduce a range of new products. These additional services/products include:

- Additional embroidery capacity (additional six heads so now 12 in total)
- Additional printing capacity (increase from 60 per hour to 180 per hour)
- New printing technology that will allow multi-coloured work
- Engraving service for trophies and plates
- Engraving on personal gift items such as pens, hip flasks, watches, and USB sticks
- Glass engraving for corporate awards
- Sublimation technology that will allow for individual personalisation such as photos on t-shirts, phone cases and mugs
- Ability to print on over 20 different materials and can now manufacture shop signs, car graphics, posters/flyers, and specialist wallpaper.

This expansion has helped to create three new full-time jobs.

Applicant: **Graeme Warden Engineering**
Project: **Business Expansion**
Location: **Loughries**
Total Project Cost: **£68,000**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£34,000**



A silage trailer made by Graeme Warden Engineering using the press brake machine and plasma cutting equipment purchased with the support of the Rural Business Investment Scheme

Graeme Warden Engineering, which started trading in 2011, is a sole trader based just outside Newtownards. The business repairs agricultural machinery and makes agricultural equipment, gates and bespoke ornamental ironwork items.

Graeme applied to the RBIS to help him expand by purchasing two additional pieces of equipment, which were a press brake machine and a plasma cutter. This has helped Graeme to take on a new full-time member of staff.

The press brake machine allows the applicant to bend sheet metal and the plasma cutter allows the proprietor to precision cut metal. The addition of these two machines has enabled the applicant to expand his product range and to undertake all works on site rather than having to out-source the bending and cutting of metal. This means he can now make the following additional items of equipment:

- Bale trailers with sliding bale rack – this product has been designed by the proprietor and avoids the necessity of securing loads by strapping, makes trailer loads safer and is a more efficient use of the trailer
- Buck rakes – these are tractor attachments that help to shift loads of grass
- Lifters for half ton bags of fertilizer and seeds
- Silage trailers and weight blocks

Graeme Warden commented:

“Since availing of the grant, I have been able to manufacture larger pieces of agricultural equipment such as trailers. With the addition of the two pieces of machinery, I am now able to keep all the cutting and folding work in house, allowing me to keep lead times to a minimum. The grant has been extremely helpful as I have been able to design and manufacture a wider range of equipment, this has led to an increase in business, and I have since employed more people.”

Applicant: **Rory Martin**
Project: **Strangford Lough Activity Centre**
Location: **Whiterock**
Total Project Cost: **£56,018**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£28,009**



Archery equipment and climbing wall, both purchased as part of this application

Strangford Lough and Activity Centre is a new business set up by Rory Martin. The company offers mobile outdoor activities and has future plans to offer quirky accommodation in close proximity to Strangford Lough. Rory has vast experience in coaching and directing groups in a range of outdoor activities and was keen to build upon his experience with this business and offer services and accommodation to wider range of customers.

He applied to the Rural Business Investment Scheme to grow his product range by purchasing a mobile climbing wall, laser tag equipment and archery equipment. This has allowed the business to increase the services it offers. Rory also purchased a geo desic dome, bell tents and tipis, and a yurt, which have allowed him to introduce a mobile accommodation service that complements the outdoor activities.

The business employs two full time employees, however its impact on the Borough is much greater as due to the nature of this offering, it also provides support for 10 seasonal or self-employed workers.

Rory Martin commented:

“The grant has significantly helped my business to grow. Whilst water activities have been our main focus during the Covid-19 pandemic, the land-based activities provide alternative product offerings for repeat customers who want to try something new and more activities for our Summer Schemes. We think the scheme is fantastic, with great advice and additional business development support from the Council, which has allowed us to identify growth potential with a focus and strategy to grow further once the covid-19 pandemic becomes history”.

Applicant: **Nieske Cully – The Beauty Boutique**
Project: **Expansion to New Premises**
Location: **Portavogie**
Total Project Cost: **£14,560**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£7,280**



The inside of the new Beauty Boutique premises in Portavogie

The Beauty Boutique, established in 2013, provides a wide range of cosmetic treatments, including facials, eyebrow and eyelash extensions and tints, waxing, and tanning and offers complementary therapies such as massage. It was originally operated from the owner's home in a converted garage so there was limited space to carry out these various treatments.

The business had been growing from strength to strength and got to the point where client demand for the services on offer increased beyond the available capacity. So Nieske Cully applied to the RBIS to help to refurbish a property in Portavogie, which she had purchased with the intention of converting to a dedicated salon. She also received grant support to help with the purchase of nail stations, nail curing lamps, a spray tan booth and salon equipment.

The completed project is an impressive beauty salon with staff kitchen and toilet facilities. This has enabled Nieske to meet the increased demand and she no longer has to turn customers away. She has been able to expand the business and the treatments it offers, including new treatments like hot stone massage. She has also employed two part-time staff members to help with the additional demand.

Nieske Cully commented:

"The grant support was vital in helping The Beauty Boutique expand into our new premises on Harbour Road, Portavogie. We would recommend any business hoping to expand to apply for this or similar grants."

Applicant: **William Brown – Ards Containers Skip Hire**
Project: **Expansion of Skip Hire Business**
Location: **Donaghadee**
Total Project Cost: **£136,948**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£68,474**



The horizontal baler installed at William Brown's new recycling centre near Donaghadee

Ards Containers Skip Hire has been operating for over 20 years and provides skip hire services along with comprehensive waste recycling.

This project supported the purchase of new equipment that would allow for additional waste recycling opportunities, whilst also creating a more organised and safer environment for staff and customers at the new premises near Donaghadee. It has enabled the business to process waste more thoroughly, by segregating more types of waste and recyclables in an efficient manner.

The equipment includes a barrel screen trommel (which separates materials), new skips, concrete lego blocks (to allow for segregation of the yard), a horizontal baler (this tightly packs the materials), a telehandler, a weighbridge (to weigh material loads), fuel station and perimeter fencing and gates.

This equipment is essential to manage the new yard into the required zones to allow different materials to be efficiently recycled.

It has also allowed the business to carry out additional works to include compactor servicing and roll-on haulage, services that are not available at any of the local competitors. Four new Full-Time posts have been created thanks to this investment.

William Brown commented:

"The rural grant was a massive benefit to us. We had bought new premises which absorbed most of our finances and so the grant funding enabled us to purchase essential equipment quicker than we had planned and some which we simply could not have been able to purchase at all. This has allowed us to process waste more thoroughly and extract more materials for recycling."

"We have taken on extra staff to cope with the greater amounts of waste we are now collecting for processing. All in all we have a much better facility and more efficient ways of processing waste."

Summary of Rural Business Investment Scheme Projects

Applicant Name	Project Title	Total Grant Paid
Deborah Anderson	Broomcottage hand crafted soaps and cosmetics	£2,261.40
SFITA (NI) Ltd	Development of website	£600.00
Dave Vincent	Development of diving Cylinder Service, testing and filling facilities	£20,879.00
The Boys' Brigade (Belfast Battalion)	GAN PODS	£23,602.41
CCP Gransden Ltd	Manufacturing growth – Extension of existing building	£87,623.36
Harrisons of Greyabbey	Bistro Room	£64,350.00
Ards Peninsula Tours	Guided walking and sightseeing tours in County Down	£1,105.00
Bat Authority	Bat Box Project	£7,423.21
The Beauty Boutique	The Beauty Boutique – expansion to new premises	£7,279.92
Hamilton Erskine Limited	EVA Laminating Capability	£50,000.00
Susan Lawther	Personal Assistant at Home and Cleaning services	£648.00
Conor Matthews	Build Extend PodSpace	£27,106.19
Cara Chandler	Physio Plus Studios	£19,824.50
PM Training Solutions	PM Training	£675.00
Maxemoo Ltd - Heather Jenkins	Maxemoo Farmyard Cafe	£15,716.48
Alpha XRay Aviation Ltd	Professional Pilot APS MCC Courses	£15,313.83
Graeme Warden	Graeme Warden Engineering – Business Expansion	£34,000.00
AG Electrical NI Ltd	Equipment	£5,194.02
Premier Print & Embroidery Ltd	Expansion 2019	£39,385.36
James Stewart T/A Stewart Engineering	Modernise machinery	£5,546.20
Winnie Magee	Business development	£7,891.66
We Are Tiger Tots Ltd	After School Project	£23,250.00
Michael Long	Cosmetic Dentistry Promotion	£4,680.00
Rory Martin	Strangford Lough Activity Centre and Glamp site	£28,008.78
Sea Grassy Ltd	Speciality Ice Manufacturing Plant	£23,488.00
William Brown	Expansion of Skip Hire Business	£68,474.15
Hamilton Erskine Limited	Capacity Growth	£50,000.00
Rhonda Morrison	Business expansion	£5,755.20
Beechvale Nursing Home Limited	Nursing Home Extension	£90,000.00
EVOLVE Engagement & Management Solutions Ltd	Marketing/IT Branding	£1,137.50
Traffic Signs & Equipment Ltd	Upgrade of printing equipment	£38,490.56

Applicant: **Portaferry Community Services Ltd**
Project: **Portaferry Recreation Hub**
Location: **Portaferry**
Total Project Cost: **£371,047**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£200,000**



Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal at the official opening of Portaferry Recreation Hub

Portaferry Recreation Hub is a three-storey refurbished building that includes a reception/information area, muster room where people can be briefed on the activity they are going to participate in, training room (which can hold up to 15), toilets and changing facilities, an office, a multi-purpose function room (which can hold up to 70), storage, a lift, and a turnkey function room or exhibition area.

It is a fully accessible low-cost hub with a focus on health and wellbeing that can be used by the local community and provides a focal point within the area where visitors and locals alike can gain information regarding recreational activity, cultural and social development.

It can facilitate local recreational groups and providers by making available a professionally equipped environment for coaches, leaders, and users.

It supports the natural resources of Portaferry by creating space to grow outdoor sports infrastructure with a particular focus on water sports and maritime activity.

Portaferry Community Services Ltd commented:

“The scheme involved the setting up of a Recreational Hub in Portaferry, providing a low-cost environment for recreation providers and voluntary groups to provide direct services to the local community. The hub provides changing, showering and toilet facilities for people pursuing outdoor activities. It provides private meeting and office space to local groups and businesses. It also has a large meeting area that can be used for classes, meetings and events.”

“The Recreation Hub is a buzz with community entities who until the hub was opened had no place to call their own. Now, as a shared space, the hub offers opportunities for support, networking, and shared information. Each group and programme contribute to the growth of community engagement and cohesion, health and well-being, and self-development.”

“The hub faced into the headwinds of the Covid-19 pandemic, providing community meals for people during the lockdown and holding a summer scheme for children as we came out the other side. None of this would have been possible without the funding provided.”

Applicant: **Ballygalget GAC**
Project: **Ballygalget Community Health & Wellbeing Centre**
Location: **Cloughey**
Total Project Cost: **£302,334**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£200,000**



The new Community Health & Wellbeing Centre at Ballygalget

Ballygalget GAC was formed and affiliated in 1939 and is located on the Ballygalget Road about four miles from Portaferry on the Southern tip of the Ards Peninsula. The club is committed to promoting health and fitness and that led it to apply to the Rural Basic Services Scheme for grant funding to support the building of a Community Health & Wellbeing Centre.

This centre, which is a new two storey building and has its own entrance separate to the club pavilion, includes male and female changing rooms and shower facilities on the bottom floor along with storage and a lift. On the top floor is a fitness suite, storage and a health and wellbeing room. The facility provides informal gym access and is open 24/7 - members are given a fob so they can access the gym at any time which is proving attractive to those who would rather not enter a formal gym facility.

The wellbeing room enables the local community to partake in educational, health and wellbeing meetings, conferences, workshops, and programmes with the aim of improving both physical and mental health. The new facility already has over 250 members and 71% of those are not members of the GAC.

Paul Coulter, Committee Member, said:

“As with all community facilities, Covid-19 impacted our centre greatly over the past two years. However, as restrictions have relaxed, we have seen the demand for our Centre steadily increase with members returning from within our club and from the wider community. Our centre is now very well established as a community hub, providing a focal point for the health and wellbeing of all within our community”.

“We have been overwhelmed by its impact and are delighted by the continued positive feedback received from our users. We have no doubt that the physical and mental health of our community has benefitted greatly”.

Applicant: **Killinchy Parish Community Interest Company**
Project: **Killinchy Community & Enterprise Hub**
Location: **Killinchy**
Total Project Cost: **£359,853**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£200,000**



Minister Edwin Poots and guests visiting Killinchy Community & Enterprise Hub

Killinchy Parish Community Interest Company was set up in 2018 as a company limited by guarantee to pursue the development of the Killinchy Community & Enterprise Hub project. The project is located at 5 Church Hill, Killinchy.

Killinchy Community & Enterprise Hub is a new 650 sq ft build that includes an office, toilets, disabled access, and large multi-use room on the top floor, whilst on the bottom floor there is a dedicated exhibition space that can also be rented out for community use. It is called The Livingston Centre.

This project has created a community service, which will focus on extending the existing after-schools club, introducing a range of mental health services, delivering new community education initiatives and creating a social and recreational space. The large main room will also be used as a community café between 8am and 2pm Monday to Saturday. This community café will provide a much-needed area for people to get together. The café will have wi-fi and the applicants expect several locals to avail of this space to work from home, as there are limited opportunities to do so elsewhere in the area.

Dr Stanley Gamble speaking on behalf of the Directors, said:

“The funding of the Livingston Centre through the Rural Development Programme was instrumental in delivering the project. Quite simply, without it, we would not have been able to get it off the ground. The new community hub has really benefited the local community with various age-groups using the centre for a whole range of different activities. It has also attracted considerable interest from abroad with tourists visiting the Centre and discovering the transatlantic story between here and the United States of America.”

Applicant: **Ballycran GAC**
Project: **Multi-Purpose Community Facility**
Location: **Kircubbin**
Total Project Cost: **£344,713**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£200,000**



The new multi-use community facility at Ballycran GAC grounds

Ballycran GAC was formed and affiliated in 1939 and is located on the McKenna Road, about 1.5 miles from Kircubbin, in the Ards Peninsula.

The Club applied to the Rural Basic Services Scheme to build a multi-purpose indoor community space at the club's grounds. This building includes a multi-purpose indoor hall, gymnasium, dance studio and changing rooms.

The indoor hall is used for sports and recreation/play opportunities, in addition to the provision of a space where an after schools' facility could be run. The hall is also available for non-GAA groups and individuals to book to run events, parties, clinics, health initiatives, education, and training.

The 3G surfaced hall is 32.5m x 25m in size. For comparison, a full size 3G pitch would be approx. 100m x 65m so this facility cannot not be used for competitive matches. Instead, it will be used for training senior and junior teams and competitions for junior teams and schools/groups who wish to hire the facility.

The building offers opportunities to help improve both the physical and mental health of the local and wider community.

Seamus Ennis, Ballycran GAC commented:

"We are now starting to see tangible benefits for both club and community. For the club, the development is a great source of pride for young and old. The indoor pitch has been great for our adults in their skill development and the biggest winners have been our juvenile members who can play and develop year-round regardless of weather conditions."

"From the community perspective we have over 200 gym members, the majority of whom are non-players and it's particularly pleasing that we have some 40 members in the gym who have no affiliation with our club. The gender balance is 50/50 which is fantastic. We have spin and fitness classes for gym members of all age groups. We provide various leisure activities for over 40s [inc over 50s and 60s] and we now have a range of other sports clubs and community groups regularly using the indoor pitch as well as recreational users."

Summary of Rural Basic Services Scheme Projects

Applicant Name	Project Title	Total Grant Paid
Cloughey & District Community Association	The Expansion of Cloughey Pavilion to allow it to function fully as a community hub	£4,311.00
Friends of Portaferry Presbyterian Church	Enhancement of Staging at Portico	£5,683.50
John Mitchel's Ballygalget GAA Club	Ballygalget Community Health and Well-Being Centre	£200,000.00
Portaferry Community Services Ltd	Portaferry Recreation Hub	£199,845.51
Millisle Youth Forum	Feasibility Study on the viability of purchasing and developing leased property	£4,860.00
Trustees for and on behalf of St Joseph's GAA Club, Ballycran	Multi-Purpose Community Facility	£200,000.00
Ballygowan Community Association	Feasibility study for community health hub in Ballygowan	£4,687.50
Ballygowan Regeneration Group	Feasibility study to enhance the provision of the council site on the Moss Road	£4,499.25
Outdoor Recreation (N.Ireland)	Trail development at Cloughey Warren, Cloughey	£29,649.78
Kilcooley Women's Centre	Feasibility Study - Ards & North Down Rural Women's Centre	£4,590.00
Killinchy Parish Community Interest Company	Creation of Killinchy Community & Enterprise Hub	£200,000.00
Trustees for and on behalf of St Patrick's GAA Club, Portaferry	Injury Recovery and Rehabilitation Unit	£25,785.00
Ballygowan Ulster Scots Association	Feasibility Study	£4,875.00

Rural Village Renewal Scheme

The aim of the Rural Village Renewal Scheme was to regenerate Ards and North Down's villages and their surrounding areas by improving their economic prospects and quality of life.

A total of 30 projects were completed under this Scheme and with total project costs of £2.85M and grant aid paid of just under £2.1M, the scheme has had a significant positive impact on the Borough's village settlements.

15 capital projects were delivered under the Village Renewal Scheme including play parks, a community park with the only pump track of its like in Northern Ireland, walking paths, community hall works, car park improvements and environmental improvement schemes. These projects naturally help to improve the physical and mental health of residents and will act as a catalyst for further village improvements in future.

Susie McCullough, Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning at Ards and North Down Borough Council commented:

"The Village Renewal Scheme really has made significant, visible improvements to many villages across the Borough. Council Departments have worked closely together to deliver these projects to ensure they improve the lives of our local residents and also strengthen the economic potential of the area."

"I would like to thank the Ards and North Down Rural Partnership LAG and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for their help in allocating this much needed funding which I'm sure will bring benefits to our communities for many years."

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Killinchy Community Park**
Location: **Killinchy**
Total Project Cost: **£574,268**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£430,701**



Minister Edwin Poots and guests visit Killinchy Community Park

In 2018 Ards and North Down Borough Council completed an Integrated Village Plan 2018-2023 for Killinchy. The plan was developed working in partnership with the community via a comprehensive consultation process.

The Killinchy Integrated Village Plan has identified a range of regeneration initiatives that present substantial opportunities for the village to sustainably grow in line with the overarching aims and shared vision. One of these actions was an environmental improvement scheme around Killinchy Community Hall.

This project includes an extension to the existing car park (creating an additional 26 spaces), installation of outdoor gym equipment, a new adventure play area, a new general play area with seating, fencing and hedging, dog agility park, nature area including seating and picnic benches, a wildflower meadow and native planting, an informal kickabout space with improved drainage and the installation of a pump track.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Ballygowan Village Hall Improvements**
Location: **Ballygowan**
Total Project Cost: **£240,999**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£180,749**



Minister Edwin Poots visits Ballygowan Community Centre along with three LAG Board Members who have held the position of Chair [Bill Megraw, Councillor Robert Adair, Councillor Joe Boyle]

In September 2017, funding was secured under the NIRDP (and Housing Executive) to update eight village plans, including Ballygowan. Consultation with the community identified a range of regeneration projects to help the village achieve its overarching aims and shared vision.

The improvement works to the community centre were identified as a priority project.

Ards and North Down Borough Council applied to the Village Renewal Scheme to complete capital build works as itemised below:

- Opening access to existing toilets from main corridor
- Adding an additional corridor to access a new extension
- An extension to provide a modern kitchen
- Extension to provide a multi-purpose room
- Additional storage space
- Access to the side elevation of the building
- CCTV
- Provision of blinds, furniture, and equipment.

The facility has been modernised to meet the needs of a growing population by providing space for residents to gather for community, recreational and leisure purposes.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Kircubbin Green Environmental Improvement Scheme**
Location: **Kircubbin**
Total Project Cost: **£110,232**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£82,674**



Kircubbin Green Environmental Improvement Scheme

In 2015 Ards and North Down Borough Council developed an integrated village plan for Kircubbin. The plan was developed working in partnership with the community via a comprehensive consultation process.

Kircubbin's Integrated Village Plan has identified a range of regeneration initiatives that present substantial opportunities for the village to sustainably grow in line with its overarching aims and shared vision and one of these initiatives was the reorganisation of The Green.

Thanks to a grant of £82,674 from the Village Renewal Scheme, and match funding of £8,290 from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, works progressed to include perimeter tree planting, installation of seating, a range of planters and other landscaping works to create a central civic space in the village.

These works have helped to revitalise and enhance the area by utilising the green space at the front of the site and converting it into a multipurpose civic amenity. This space will be used as an open area for markets, fairs, small festivals, and community events.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Crawfordsburn Glen Improvement Works**
Location: **Crawfordsburn**
Total Project Cost: **£429,630**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£322,223**



The new play area at Crawfordsburn Glen

In September 2017, Ards and North Down Borough Council secured funding from the Rural Development Programme and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to review and update eight village plans. Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn was one of these (these two villages have a combined village plan due to their relatively small size).

The proposed project came from discussions held at the village planning consultation exercises, where the need for an overarching plan that set out a programme of works for Crawfordsburn play park, nature area and river walks was requested. The playpark was outdated, and the equipment was suited only to younger children; this was evident from the consultation with the local primary school who highlighted it as one of the aspects that they felt needed much improvement in the village.

Council applied to the Rural Village Renewal Scheme to complete capital build works at the site to update it with a play offering that would cater to a wider age group. The new playpark has a woodland theme to make in fit into the natural environment of Crawfordsburn Glen. Further works included regrading pathways to make them easier for all to walk on, extending the car park and new seating, bins, signage, fencing and landscaping works to create an enjoyable place for locals and visitors alike to spend time.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Improvements to Greyabbey Car Park**
Location: **Greyabbey**
Total Project Cost: **£94,328**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£70,746**



The new signage and completed surfacing at Greyabbey Car Park

The current village plan for Greyabbey included the development of the Lough Shore Car Park as one of its priority projects to help encourage more residents and visitors to park at the site and explore the surrounding landscape, alleviating parking in the Village.

Improvements included in the application to the Village Renewal Scheme were for the enlargement of the site, resurfacing and reorganising spaces and included the following works:

- Surfacing of the car park and marking out of all spaces (38no. spaces)
- The addition of coach parking (2no. spaces)
- Provision of disabled parking spaces (3no. spaces)
- Provision of 4no. picnic benches, 2no. seats and 2no. litter bins
- 2no. directional signage panels
- 3no. interpretive signage panels
- The provision of an oil separator.

Lack of car parking was a major concern identified as part of the village plan consultation so this project has helped to improve the parking provision for those wanting to shop and spend time in Greyabbey.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Improvement Works to Ballywalter Lime Kilns**
Location: **Ballywalter**
Total Project Cost: **£265,292**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£116,185**



The Ballywalter Integrated Village Plan identified a range of regeneration initiatives that present substantial opportunities for the village to sustainably grow in line with its overarching aims and shared vision. Following the findings from the consultation process one of the key actions was dedicated to ‘Restoration of the Lime Kilns’.

This project sought to implement and improve several services/facilities in this part of the village to benefit local residents and visitors alike, as follows:

- Sympathetic restoration of the existing Lime Kilns using lime mortars and historic working methods
- New access paths to the shore from the main road, toilet block and Lime Kilns
- Installation of street furniture and interpretive signage at the Lime Kilns
- Installation of a stainless-steel balustrade to the top of the Lime Kilns
- New fibre cement cladding to the public access side of the existing toilet block enhancing the aesthetics.

The project benefitted from an award of £116,185 from the Village Renewal Scheme and also availed of match funding of £100,000 from the Coastal Communities Fund. These improvement works can be enjoyed by the local community and visitors who will be encouraged to return to Ballywalter having enjoyed the stunning views on offer from the Lime Kilns site.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
Project: **Improvement Works to Portavogie Community Centre**
Location: **Portavogie**
Total Project Cost: **£74,738**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£55,952**



New kitchen facilities installed at Portavogie Community Centre

It was identified from the consultations in the village plan process for Portavogie that several improvement works were required to make better use of Portavogie Community Centre as its previous design and layout was restrictive. During the engagement process people commented that improved facilities might encourage more local groups to be established and support better use of the community space through, for example, drama, theatre, or film nights.

The Council applied for funding under the Village Renewal Scheme for a capital improvement project that included the provision of full kitchen facilities in the hall. The existing committee room in the hall was also improved to create a more useable space, for example, to hold smaller meetings.

The Main Hall had acoustic panelling installed to make it less echoey and to restrict any noise entering other parts of the building when it was in use. CCTV was also installed to increase security at the centre.

Finally, toilets were added to the rear of the hall, which can be accessed by people using the external sports and recreation facilities. These improvements have helped the community centre become a hub for the local community, maximising its use and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Summary of Rural Village Renewal Scheme Projects

Applicant Name	Project Title	Total Grant Paid
ANDBC	Reviewing and Updating of 8 No. Village Plans	£29,736.75
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Scheme – Technical Design Stage - The Green, Kircubbin	£4,977.00
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Scheme – Technical Design Stage - Main Street, Carrowdore	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Scheme – Technical Design Stage - High Street, Ballyhalbert	£4,977.00
ANDBC	Masterplan for the Lagoon Millisle, County Down	£4,905.00
ANDBC	Feasibility Study for the Restoration of the Lime Kilns, Ballywalter	£4,988.25
ANDBC	Further develop Portaferry's Heritage Trail	£4,912.50
ANDBC	Technical Study for the Improvement Works Warren Car Park Cloughey	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Village Entrance/Gateway Signage – Design Stage	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Scheme, Station Square Helen's Bay	£4,496.25
ANDBC	Masterplan, The Glen Crawfordsburn	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Development of Laneway and Environmental Improvements Groomsport	£16,492.50
ANDBC	Improvement Works to Ballywalter Harbour Area	£66,259.98
ANDBC	Killinchy Environmental Improvement Scheme - Technical Design Work	£4,608.75
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Study Ballywalter	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Phase 2 Millisle Lagoon and Beach Park Master Plan	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Environmental Improvements Works Study Portavogie	£5,000.00
ANDBC	Improvement works to Portavogie Community Centre	£55,951.50
ANDBC	The Redevelopment of Carrowdore Playpark	£59,727.43
ANDBC	Carrowdore Environmental Improvement Scheme	£16,600.71
ANDBC	Improvement Works to Ballywalter Lime Kilns	£116,184.75
ANDBC	Environmental Improvement Scheme The Green, Kircubbin	£82,673.80
ANDBC	Improvements to Warren Car Park Cloughey	£213,036.07
ANDBC	Portaferry Heritage Trail	£30,988.65
ANDBC	Killinchy Community Park	£430,700.93
ANDBC	Improvement work Conlig Community Centre	£105,476.13
ANDBC	Improvements to Greyabbey Car Park	£70,746.31
ANDBC	Ballygowan Village Hall Improvements	£180,749.30
ANDBC	Crawfordsburn Glen Improvement Works	£322,222.77
ANDBC	Improvement works to the playgrounds at Castle Park Portaferry and Cloughey	£223,125.00

ANDBC – Ards and North Down Borough Council

Cooperation Scheme

A Cooperation project is one that takes place as a joint action between two or more LAGs and which provides mutual benefit for each partner. Cooperation of a LAG area with other geographical areas was a key component of the LEADER local development strategy (LDS).

Within the NIRDP, there was a specific strand focusing on Cooperation between LAGs in Northern Ireland and those in Republic of Ireland. This is known as the All-Island LEADER Cooperation Scheme. Each NI LAG was expected to participate in a minimum of two full Cooperation projects delivered under this Scheme. These projects may also involve LAGs from other Member States but as a minimum should have involved at least one LAG from NI and one LAG from Republic of Ireland.

Four projects were completed under the ANDRP Programme including one capital project (Enhancement of Visitor Experience at Grey Point Fort) which was completed in partnership with Innishowen Development Partnership.

The total investment under the Scheme was £446,451 with grant aid of £337,179 paid.

Applicant: **Ards and North Down Borough Council/Ards and North Down Rural Partnership**
Project: **Enhancement of Visitor Experience at Grey Point Fort**
Location: **Helen's Bay**
Total Project Cost: **£437,450**
RDP Grant Amount Paid: **£328,088**



One of the 3 refurbished searchlight emplacements

This project has been delivered in Partnership between Historic Environment Division (Department for Communities), Ards and North Down Borough Council and the LAG (Ards and North Down Rural Partnership).

The Cooperation aspect comes from a project at Fort Dunree in Co Donegal that has also received LEADER grant funding. That project was delivered by Innishowen Development Partnership through the Leader Programme.

The works at Grey Point Fort includes the following:

- Refurbishment of three Searchlight Emplacements
- Repair and improvements to pathway access
- Restoration to section of Existing WW1 Trenches
- Interpretation to include panels and signage at each of the searchlight emplacements, the trench, and external wall, north of the Fort. It also includes 'set-dressing' within the E searchlight and within the WW1 practice trenches.

Summary of Cooperation Scheme Projects

Applicant Name	Project Title	Total Grant Paid
Ards and North Down Borough Council/ Ards and North Down Rural Partnership	Coastal Regeneration	£2,136.67
Ards and North Down Borough Council/ Ards and North Down Rural Partnership	Access to Strangford Lough	£2,143.75
Ards and North Down Borough Council/ Ards and North Down Rural Partnership	Coastal Forts	£4,810.75
Ards and North Down Borough Council/ Ards and North Down Rural Partnership	Enhancement of Visitor Experience at Grey Point Fort	£328,087.75



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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	17 January 2023
File Reference	160094
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Ards and Bangor Business Awards
Attachments	

Background

Members will be aware that Council officers have been working with the Chambers of Commerce in Bangor and Newtownards with a view to supporting the Business Awards.

Both Chambers had proposed that Council hosted their annual Business Awards in 2022-23. These events celebrate the work and successes of local businesses in the area.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is the principal sponsor for each event and attended the successful Bangor Awards ceremony held on Thursday 3 November at the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor.

Ards Business Awards

Officers have been in contact with Ards Chamber in order to further develop the work on this year's proposed awards. The Council has now been informed that this year's Business Awards ceremony will not be held before March 2023 as initially planned.

The Chamber has delayed planning and organising this event due to a member's personal circumstances.

Unclassified

Ards Chamber intends to host an event however, this will likely be in the spring/summer of 2023, following a decision by its Board.

Contact is ongoing and the Economic Development section will update the Council in due time.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	17 January 2023
File Reference	ED125
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	4C UR Future Event
Attachments	Appendix 1: 4C UR Future Full Feedback Report

Background

As agreed by Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council hosted a pilot careers inspiration event for over 700 Year 9 pupils called 4C UR Future LIVE on 7th June 2022 at the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex in Newtownards. The event was considered as one of the interventions to help prepare young people early on, for future jobs and careers.

In September 2022 the Economic Development Service reported details of the event to Committee along with the events marketing and participant outputs. It was suggested in the report, that an update, highlighting the feedback from the Ards and North Down participants (School staff, Volunteers and pupils) would be brought back to Committee for information.

4C UR Future has since provided officers with further feedback and updates on the Ards and North Down LIVE 2022 Event. A feedback survey was carried out resulting in a final report detailing the teachers', volunteers' and pupils' comments and opportunities for improvement, as summarised below.

Participants were as follows:

Pupils	Teachers & School Staff	Volunteers
711 Total	60	95
102 - Movilla High School		
110 - Priory Integrated College		
243 - Regent House Grammar		
125 - St Columbanus College		
131 - Strangford Integrated College		

Teacher feedback survey results indicated the following:

%	Feedback
53%	Event was very good
24%	Event was exciting and fun
59%	Innovative and different
30%	Engaging and relevant
24%	Increased confidence in pupils' own capabilities
71%	Improved pupil interaction/communication with others
41%	Increased pupil awareness of different job types and local employers

Teacher comments were as follows:

- Challenging the pupils to use skills that they were unaware they had.
- The interactive element was fantastic, kids engaged well, schools came together.
- The range and variety of activities and tasks for the students.
- The opportunity to engage with local employers and get students to have an interactive experience applying the skills that we have spoken about in the classroom.
- Some individual stations were great like Race To Net Zero and Chop Chop. Pupils really enjoyed the chance to engage in hands on activities particularly after all the covid restrictions.
- Well organised event that gave pupils the opportunity to develop skills and attributes.
- It brought a lot of children together and helped them build relationships with people in their own school.
- The interactive nature of the event and awareness pupils gained of job skills.
- The opportunity for pupils to engage with activities and pupils from other schools.
- Inviting, various businesses took part, engaging, good space, very accommodating, lunch was nice for staff.
- It was just great to see the students enjoying a different and new experience.
- One pupil had a severe anxiety attack the night before the event with the thought of the school trip. He was in two minds on the morning of the event whether to attend or not. From the minute he entered the complex he smiled and took part in every task. Staff noticed a big difference in him, there has been a big improvement in his confidence.
- The concentration on their faces when completing an activity.

Volunteer feedback survey results indicated the following:

%	Feedback
95%	Positive experience
86%	Would like to volunteer for a \$C UR Future LIVE event in the future
72%	Felt taking part helped their employer support the local community
90%	Believed 4C UR Future LIVE played positive role in bringing individuals from different background and cultures together
63%	Felt event raised awareness of their employer and sector

Volunteer comments:

- It was something different.
- I loved watching the kids enjoy the games.
- It was a great opportunity to work with young people.
- Enjoyed getting an insight into tech skills at secondary education level.
- Helped raise the confidence of my team and helped me to identify certain skills that my team members have.
- I got to work with some inspirational children.
- Good to make new connections and share knowledge.
- Discovering a new way to engage young people about careers.
- Giving something back to the community.
- I got to use my coaching skills in a different way.
- The events raised awareness of Net Zero with a wide audience.
- It remotivated employees when describing positive aspects of their job/employer.
- PR via press and social media increased awareness amongst the public.
- Participating helped make us more known to the other member companies.
- It was a chance for businesses to have a positive impact on people's lives, and to help bridge the gap into technology.

Pupil feedback survey results indicated the following:

%	Feedback
28%	Met companies or learned of new jobs they'd never heard of before
67%	Positive experience, meeting company volunteers
73%	Positive experience ('loved it', 'really good', 'ok')
77%	Discovered or confirmed things they were good at

Pupils were also asked about their future:

1/3 pupils were positive (have a plan, or can't wait)

2/3 pupils were not sure (too many positions, don't know where to start or don't want to think about it)

2/3 of pupils needed more help

Pupil comments:

- Bigger events / more events / hold it more often
- Positive experience with volunteers
- Positive experience mixing with other schools

Unclassified

- Even more information on careers
- I was happy with the experience. A bit of everything and the people were so nice, I couldn't ask for more.
- Nothing to improve, it really taught me how the job works and it is really useful.
- It was really fun and I would think about different jobs and different options that are available in the future.
- I would consider going back and seeing it again.
- It was really fun as is. The only thing I would do differently is add a bit more of an "escape" feel to the Escape Room. Other than that, it was a great experience
- Negative experience / did not enjoy it
- Negative experience mixing with other schools
- More time at each game
- Suggestions / recommendations for lunch / lunchtime
- Be with your friends / let pupils pick their own teams / group suggestions
- More types of jobs/careers/companies shown
- More games/suggestions for games and/or careers to include
- More challenging games/make the games harder

Appendix 1 provides the full feedback report with survey feedback results and comments.

A feedback video was produced with comments from what employers, teachers, and stakeholders thought of the event, the video shows how the young people participated in a day of work-based games and skills challenges. [4C UR Future LIVE 2022 - Ards & North Down - YouTube](#)

The event provided a good introduction for pupils on areas of work as well as introducing them to start considering their skills and what might be needed to prepare them for their future career paths.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the content of the report.

**ARDS & NORTH DOWN
LIVE 2022 EVENT
FEEDBACK**



LIVE 2022 PILOT - OBJECTIVES

2019 Proof of Concept (Phase 1)

6 Schools

1,200
Year 9 Pupils

Manual Data
Collection

Over 30
Supporters

Over 120
Volunteers

No Follow-On
Engagement

1 Council Area

Reach more schools - In one week, **110 schools registered interest** to attend, with 52 accommodated using pre-determined Equality of Opportunity Selection Criteria.

Reach as many whole Year 9 groups as possible to prove out that the events can be successfully delivered at-scale approx. **25% of the Year 9 population** attended an event.

Develop **App based Direct Data Capture System** to be capable of processing data at volume, connected to a pupil's unique C2K email address, to create Positive Feedback Profiles.

Increase **engagement with cross-sectoral employers** and supporting organisations, to increase the diversity of sector representation and industry/education links.

Increase the number of **industry volunteers** ('Career Heroes') facilitating the delivery of the regional events across Northern Ireland.

Develop **a relevant, accessible, and engaging digital platform** to enable ongoing communication, signposting, and support with relevant stakeholder groups, including young people.

Deliver **events in every NI Council area**; ensuring a consistent and joined-up approach, access to opportunity (particularly in rural and coastal areas), and opportunities that are not 'Belfast-centric'.

2022 At-Scale Pilot (Phase 2)

52 Schools

6,500
Year 9 Pupils

Digital (App)
Data Collection

Over 80
Supporters

Over 550
Volunteers

4C UR Future
CAREERS PORTAL

11 Council Areas



LIVE 2022 - Campaign Totals

52 Schools
6,357 Pupils
523 Teachers





LIVE 2022 Campaign Totals

80+ Employers
551 Career Heroes

8,000+
volunteer hours



Total Pupils – 711

Total Teachers & School Staff – 60

Total Volunteers – 95



LIVE 2022 – Ards & North Down

“It’s innovative and it’s great to see the private and public sectors coming together for this event. Everybody is so energetic. Some pupils said they were put out of their comfort zone, but they were given the chance to do things they’d never done before. There’s a real wow factor.”

- Mayor of Ards & North Down, Cllr Karen Douglas.

“It’s not just your usual event where you go up to stands and chat to staff. Just seeing the smiles on pupil faces, how interactive they’ve been, their team building skills and hearing what they’ve really enjoyed is amazing.”

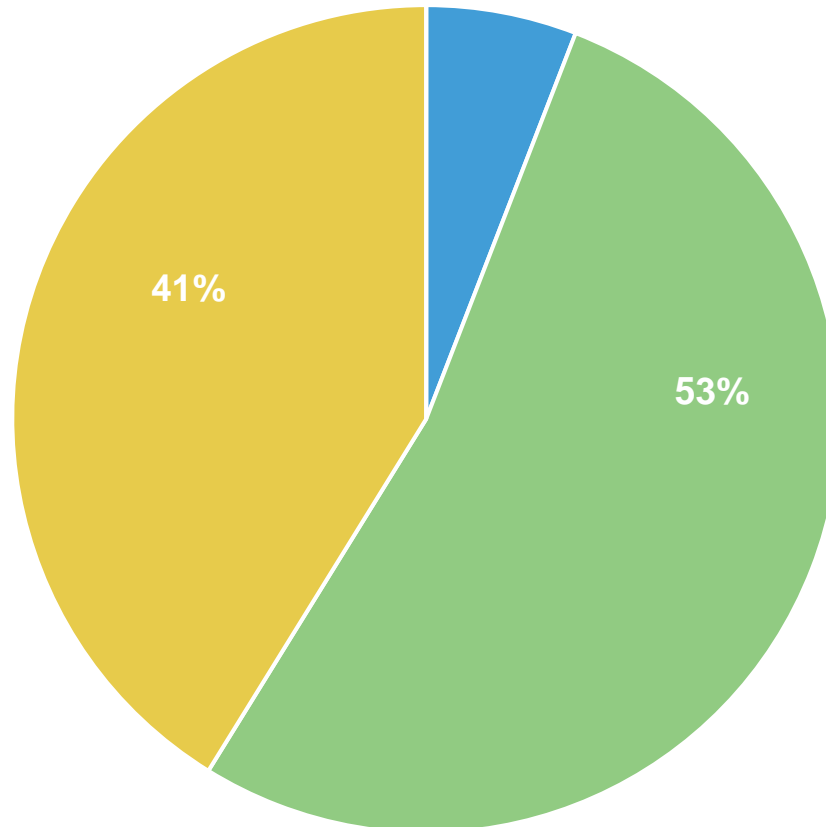
- Caroline McNeice, Head of Careers, Regent House School.



SCHOOL / TEACHER FEEDBACK

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

**Did your pupils enjoy their experience at the
4C UR Future LIVE pilot?**



- They loved it!
- They thought it was very good
- They thought it was OK
- They didn't enjoy it



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

How would you describe the 4C UR Future LIVE pilot?

24% OF TEACHERS
DESCRIBED 4C UR FUTURE
LIVE AS **EXCITING & FUN**

60% OF TEACHERS
DESCRIBED 4C UR FUTURE
LIVE AS **INTERESTING
& USEFUL**

59% OF TEACHERS
DESCRIBED 4C UR FUTURE
LIVE AS **INNOVATIVE
& DIFFERENT**

30% OF TEACHERS
DESCRIBED 4C UR FUTURE
LIVE AS **ENGAGING
& RELEVANT**



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

24% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN
THEIR OWN CAPABILITIES

71% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
IMPROVED THEIR
COMMUNICATION BY
INTERACTING
WITH OTHERS

53% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
IMPROVED THEIR
TEAMWORK BY
COLLABORATING WITH
OTHER PUPILS

30% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
INCREASED THEIR
AWARENESS OF SKILLS &
ATTRIBUTES IN DEMAND
BY EMPLOYERS

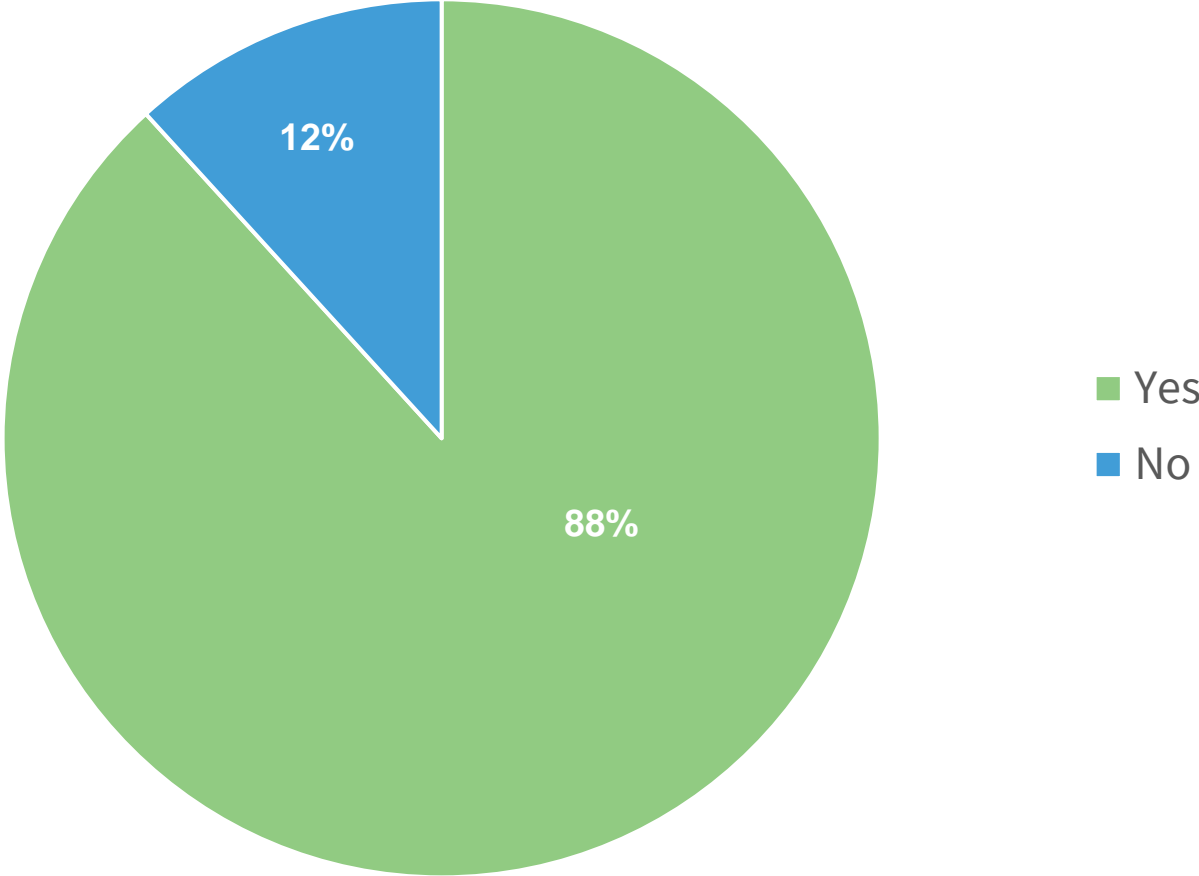
47% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
INCREASED THEIR
AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT
TYPES OF JOBS AND
LOCAL EMPLOYERS

30% OF TEACHERS
THOUGHT PUPILS
DISCOVERED SKILLS &
ATTRIBUTES THEY DIDN'T
KNOW THEY HAD BEFORE
ATTENDING THE EVENT



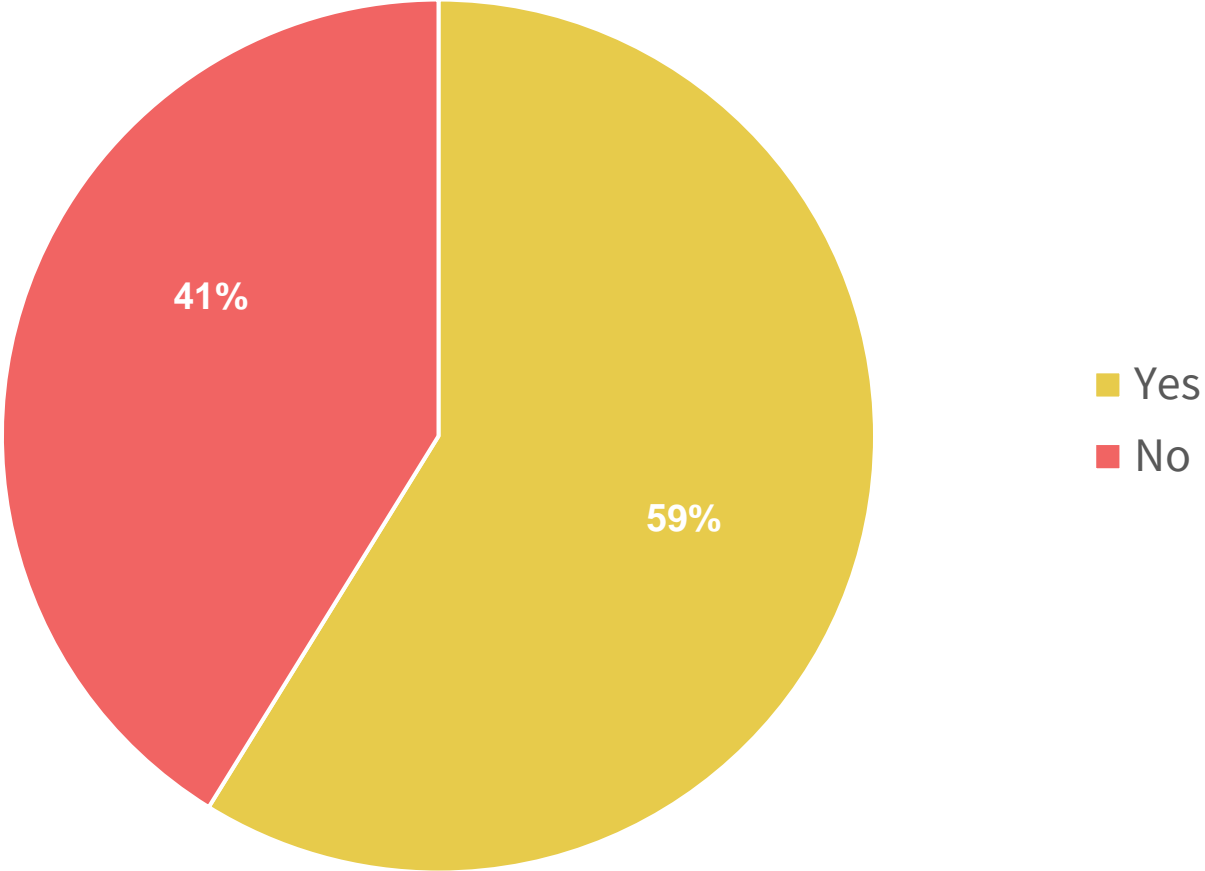
4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

Do you feel the 4C UR Future LIVE pilot event played a positive role in bringing individuals from different backgrounds and cultures together?



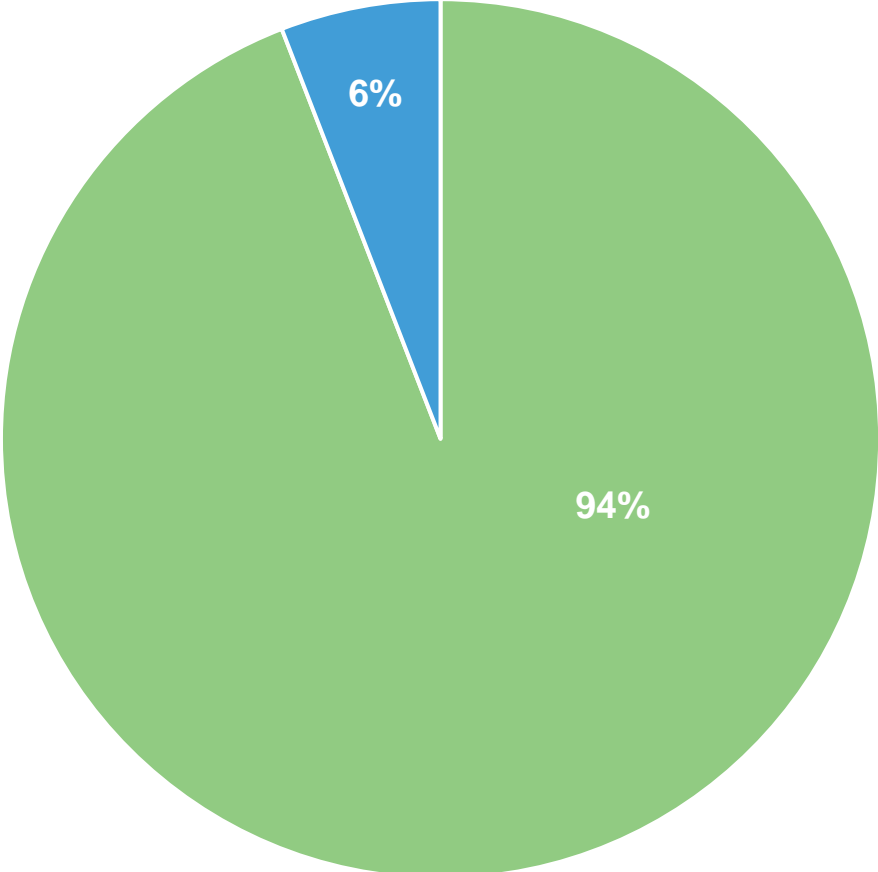
4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

Did you engage with employers at the 4C UR Future LIVE pilot event that you had not heard of or engaged with before?



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

Would your school be interested in attending a 4C UR Future LIVE event again?



■ Yes
■ No



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT

A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Challenging the pupils to use skills that they were unaware they had.
- The interactive element was fantastic, kids engaged well, schools came together.
- The range and variety of activities and tasks for the students.
- The opportunity to engage with local employers and get students to have an interactive experience applying the skills that we have spoken about in the classroom.
- Some individual stations were great like Race To Net Zero and Chop Chop. Pupils really enjoyed the chance to engage in hands on activities particularly after all the covid restrictions.
- Well organised event that gave pupils the opportunity to develop skills and attributes.
- It brought a lot of children together and helped them build relationships with people in their own school.
- The interactive nature of the event and awareness pupils gained of job skills.
- The opportunity for pupils to engage with activities and pupils from other schools.
- Inviting, various businesses took part, engaging, good space, very accommodating, lunch was nice for staff.
- It was just great to see the students enjoying a different and new experience.
- One pupil had a severe anxiety attack the night before the event with the thought of the school trip. He was in two minds on the morning of the event whether to attend or not. From the minute he entered the complex he smiled and took part in every task. Staff noticed a big difference in him, there has been a big improvement in his confidence.
- The concentration on their faces when completing an activity.

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT A&ND TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Smaller numbers. The majority of pupils were fantastic but I felt not all schools monitored their kids well enough.
- Bring more employers (x3).
- More communication about what you wanted the teachers to do. There should have been a big announcement at the start to explain to the kids what was going to happen and how the day was going to run.
- There needs to be very clear direction about not starting activities until the specified time as too many students had finished early and were not kept at a particular activity.
- I think there was a bit too much time at each station. I think a slightly shorter event would have been ideal.
- Nothing, the event at the Blair Mayne Centre in Newtownards was excellent.
- Shorten the event to a half day, include a break mid-morning, and reduce the number of pupils attending each session. This would enable employers to engage more fully with pupils, helping the pupils stay on task.
- I felt the music was too loud at times especially when instructions were being given to kids
- Some school staff didn't know how the system worked, the layout could've had more direction, organisers should have had coloured t-shirts (difficult to identify).

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

4C UR FUTURE *LIVE* 2022 PILOT

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK - HIGHLIGHTS

95.1% of volunteers had a **positive experience** facilitating 4C UR Future *LIVE*.

Volunteers commented most about:

- Collaborating with others (104).
- Positive experience informing and inspiring young people (24).
- Having an impact (22).
- The buzz/atmosphere (61).
- Engaging & interacting with young people (91).
- The engagement level of the young people (64).

86.2% of volunteers said they would like to volunteer for a 4C UR Future *LIVE* event in the future.

72% of volunteers felt taking part in 4C UR Future *LIVE* helps their employer support the local community.

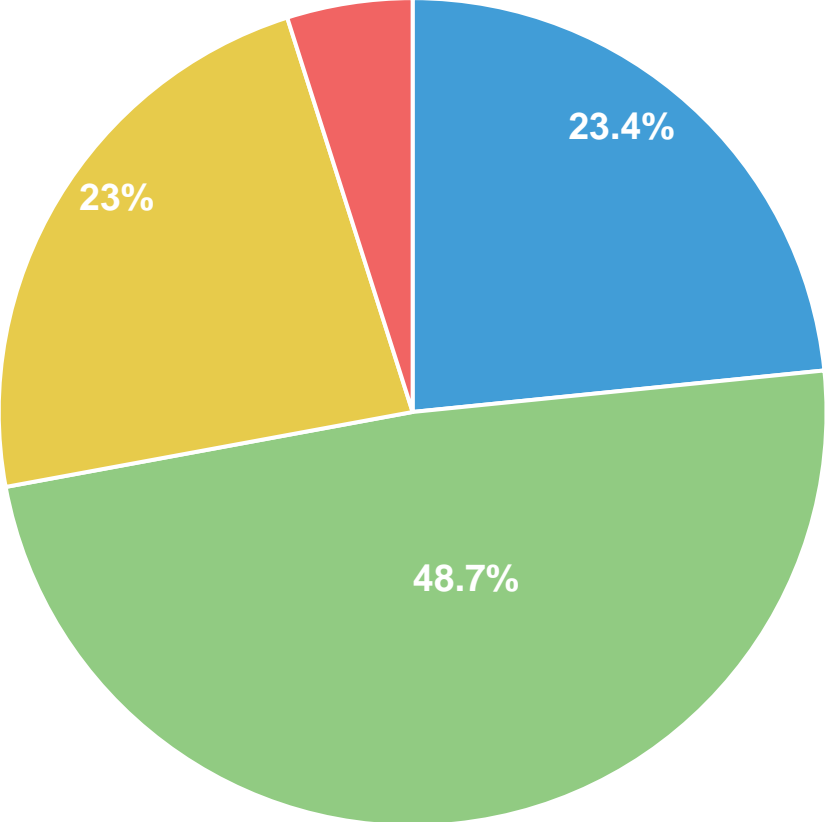
Over 63% of volunteers felt 4C UR Future *LIVE* **raised awareness** of their employer and sector.

90.5% of volunteers believe 4C UR Future *LIVE* plays a **positive role** in bringing individuals from different backgrounds and cultures together.



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

Did you enjoy your experience volunteering at 4C UR Future LIVE?



- Loved it!
- It was really rewarding
- It was OK
- I'd rather have been at work



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK



304 responses

33% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
**INCREASED THEIR
CONFIDENCE**

19% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED THEM **DEVELOP
RESILIENCE**

39% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED **DEVELOP THEIR
COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

30% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED **DEVELOP THEIR
TEAMWORK SKILLS**

17% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED **DEVELOP THEIR
TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

26% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED **DEVELOP THEIR
LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

62% OF CAREER HEROES
FELT VOLUNTEERING
HELPED THEM BENEFIT
FROM **NETWORKING
OPPORTUNITIES**

16 VOLUNTEERS ADDED
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS
GAINED FROM
VOLUNTEERING –
SEE NEXT SLIDE

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK



“It was something different.”

“I loved watching the kids enjoy the games.”

“It was a great opportunity to work with young people.”

“Enjoyed getting an insight into tech skills at secondary education level.”

“Helped raise the confidence of my team and helped me to identify certain skills that my team members have.”

“I got to work with some inspirational children.”

“Good to make new connections and share knowledge.”

“Discovering a new way to engage young people about careers.”

“Giving something back to the community.”

“I got to use my coaching skills in a different way.”

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK



304 responses

58% OF CAREER HEROES FELT EMPLOYERS ENABLING THEM TO VOLUNTEER INCREASES EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

72% OF CAREER HEROES FELT VOLUNTEERING TAKING PART HELPS THEIR EMPLOYER SUPPORT & GIVE BACK TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

66% OF CAREER HEROES FELT TAKING PART RAISED AWARENESS OF THEIR EMPLOYER AMONST YOUNG PEOPLE

46% OF CAREER HEROES FELT TAKING PART RAISED AWARENESS OF THEIR EMPLOYER AMONGST TEACHERS

63% OF CAREER HEROES FELT TAKING PART RAISED AWARENESS OF THEIR SECTOR AS A FUTURE CAREER PATH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

“The events raised awareness of Net Zero with a wide audience.”

“It remotivated employees when describing positive aspects of their job/employer.”

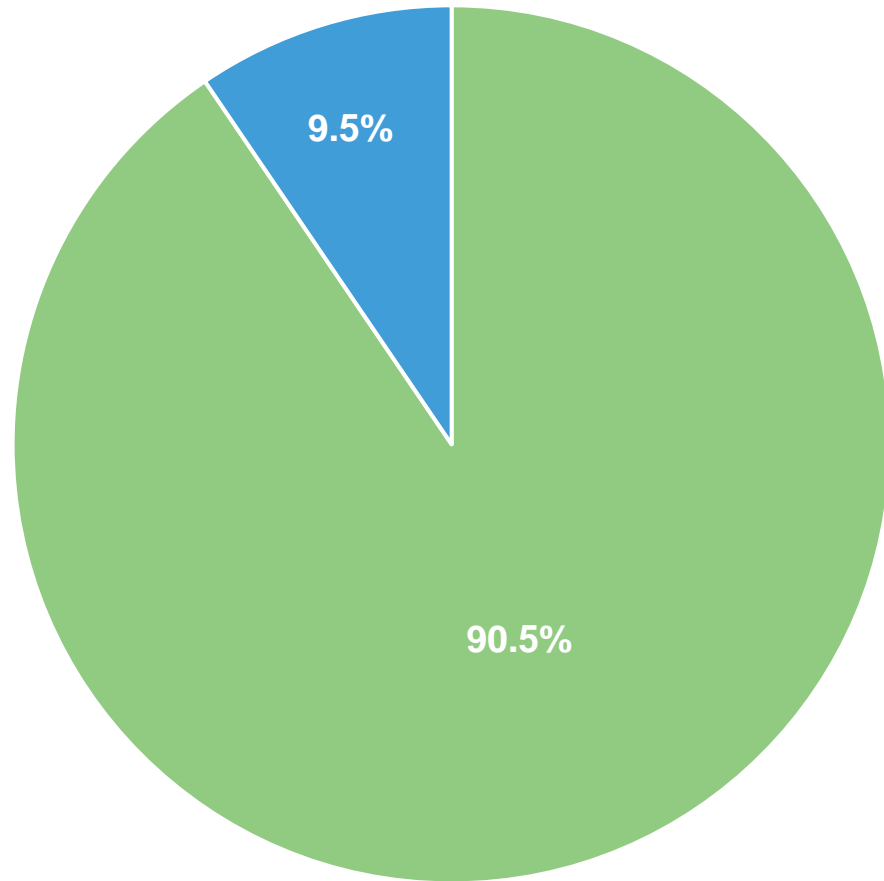
“PR via press and social media increased awareness amongst the public.”

“Participating helped make us more known to the other member companies.”

“It was a chance for businesses to have a positive impact on people’s lives, and to help bridge the gap into technology.”

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

Do you feel the 4C UR Future LIVE pilot events played a positive role in bringing individuals from different backgrounds and cultures together?

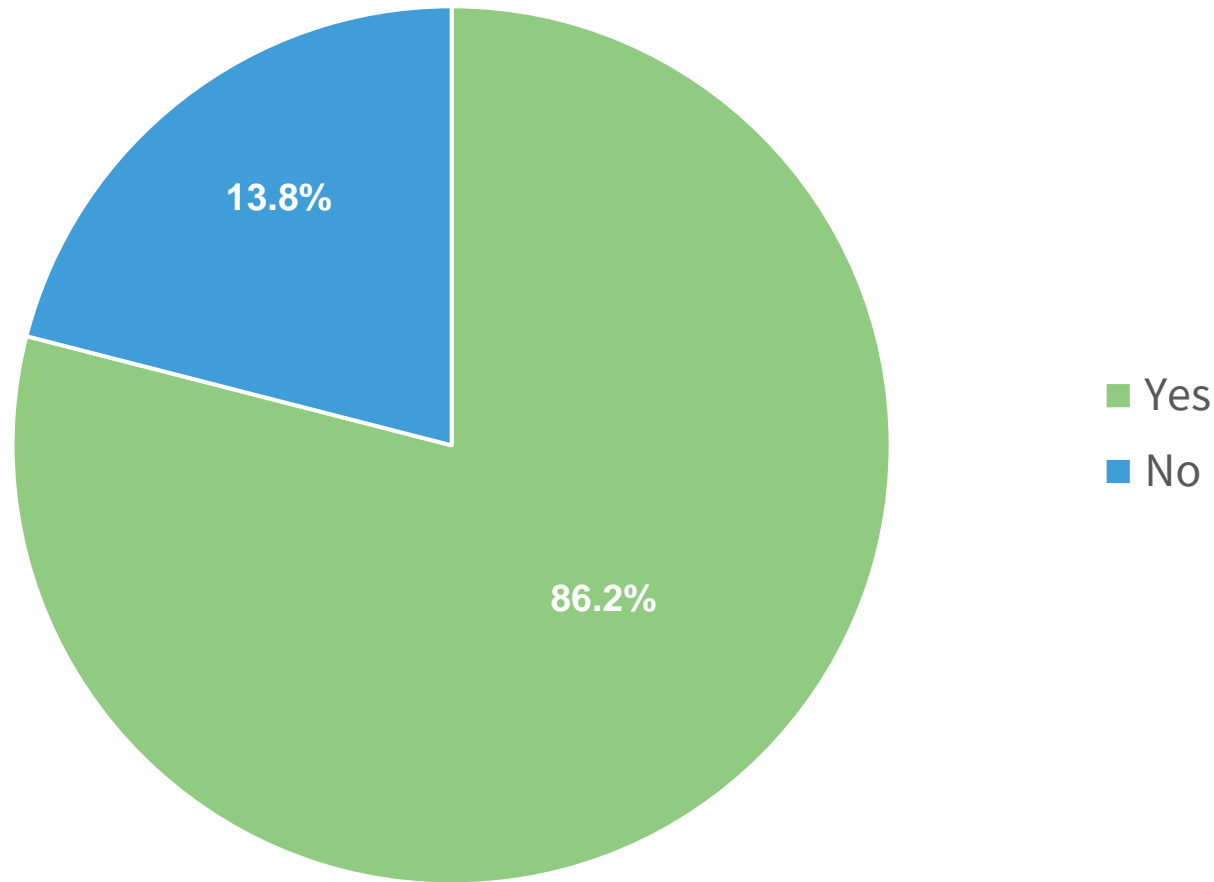


- Yes
- No



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

Would you volunteer for a 4C UR Future LIVE event again?



PUPIL
FEEDBACK

When asked how they feel about their future, approx.:

1/3 pupils are positive (“have a plan” or “can’t wait”).

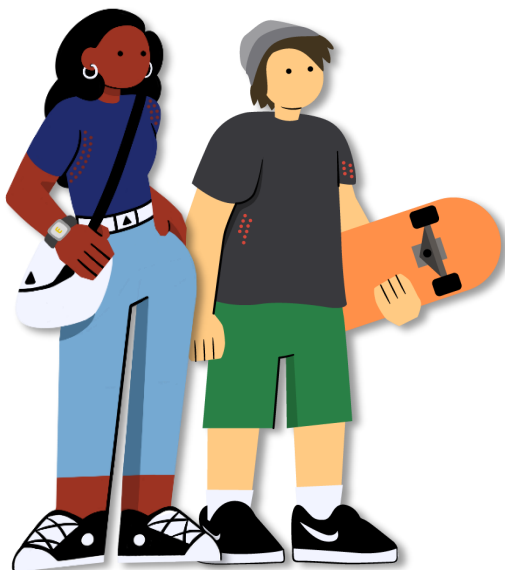
2/3 pupils are “not sure; too many options, don’t know where to start”, or “don’t want to think about it”.

This means 2/3 of pupils need *MORE* help!

28% of pupils said they met companies or learned about new jobs they’d never heard of before.

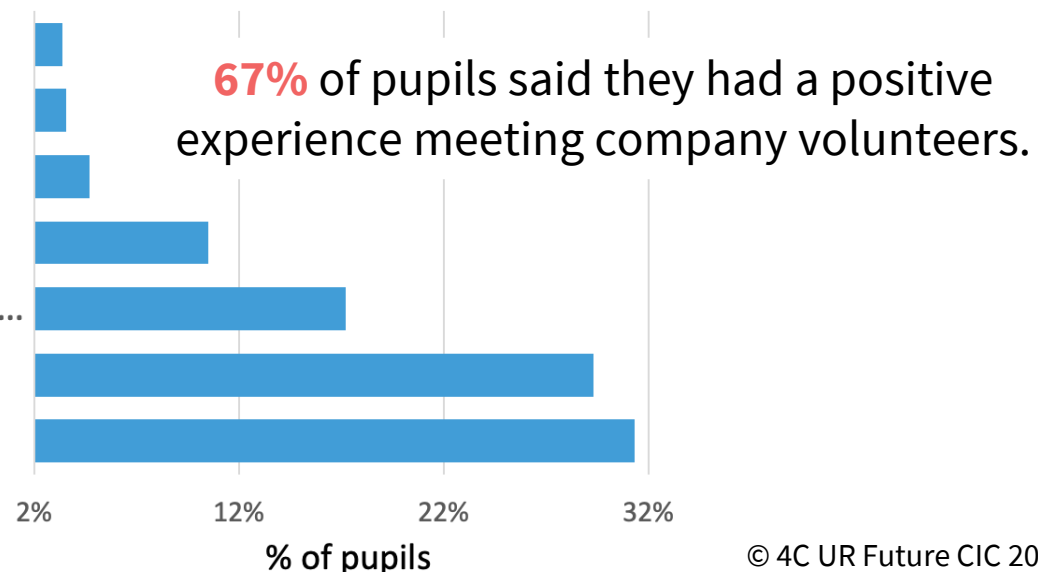
73% of pupils had a **positive experience** (loved it, really good, OK) at 4C UR Future *LIVE*.

77% of pupils said they discovered or confirmed things they’re good at.



DESCRIBING VOLUNTEERS

- They were just like me.
- They were inspiring.
- They were impressive.
- I met people with jobs I hadn't heard of before.
- I met people from companies I'd never heard of...
- They were very helpful.
- They were fun and entertaining.

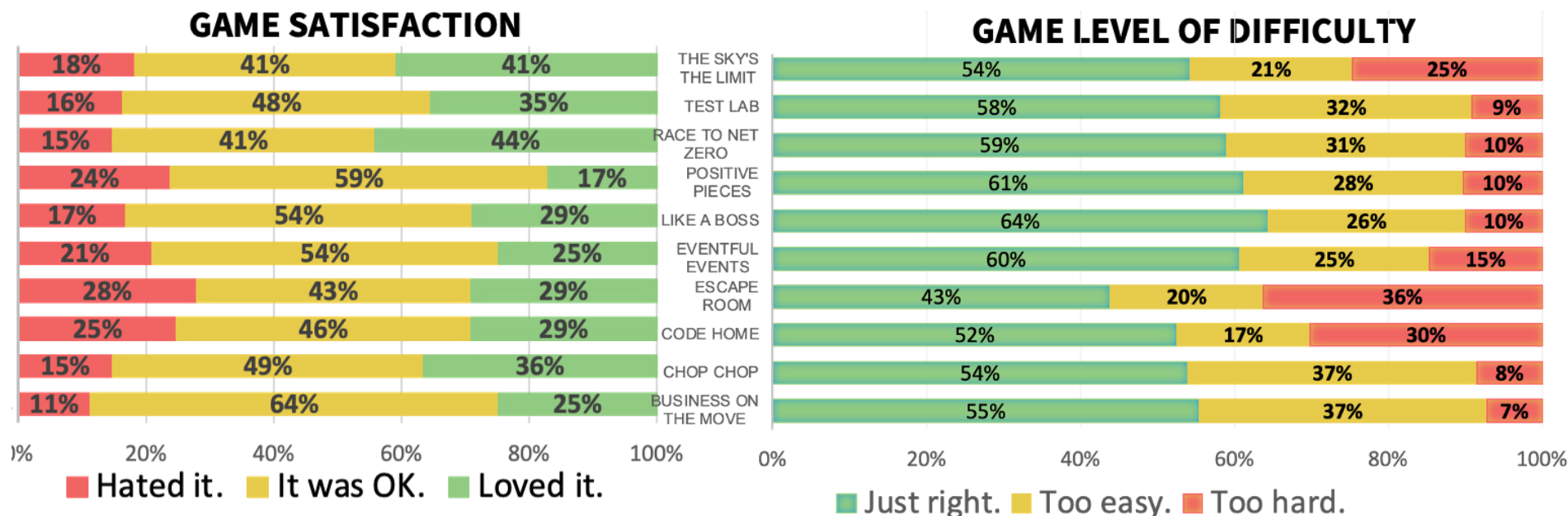




4C UR FUTURE *LIVE* 2022 PILOT

PUPIL FEEDBACK - HIGHLIGHTS

Every game was someone's favourite



Almost **5,000** game plays were recorded by our data system.

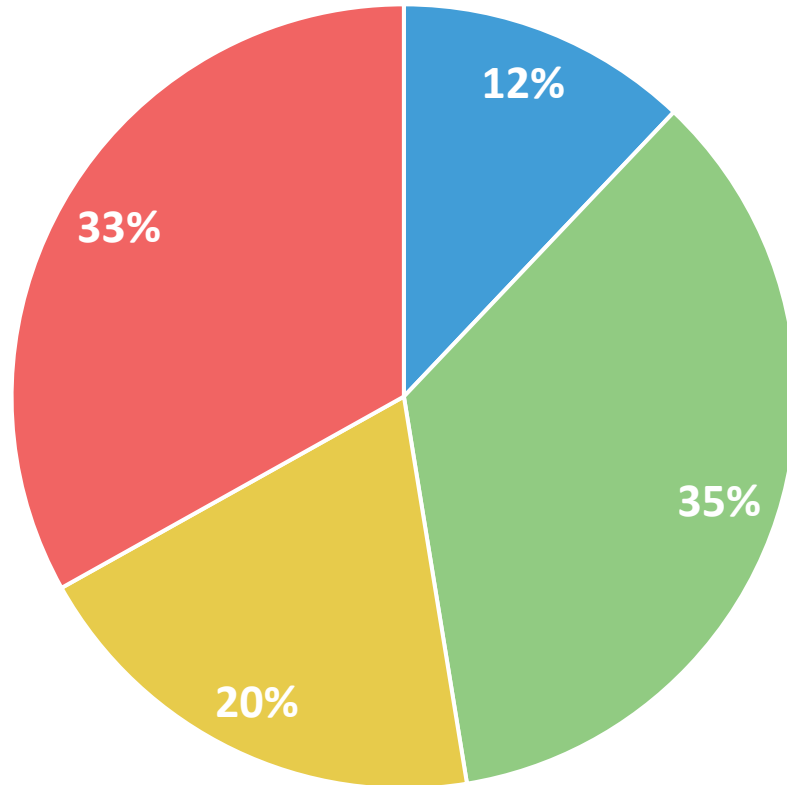
During these games, **19,206** 'star' attributes were recorded for 42 future of work employability criteria.

The range of "loved it" (green), "it was OK" (yellow), and "hated it" (red) for game enjoyment, and "just right" (green), "too easy" (yellow), and "too hard" for game difficulty, is exactly the desired outcome – reflective of different strengths, interests, and preferences in the population.

131 pupil suggestions for more games and/or careers to include and more fun/interactive/exciting games.

4C UR FUTURE *LIVE* 2022 PILOT PUPIL FEEDBACK - HIGHLIGHTS

Did you find something you're good at doing that you didn't know before?



447 responses

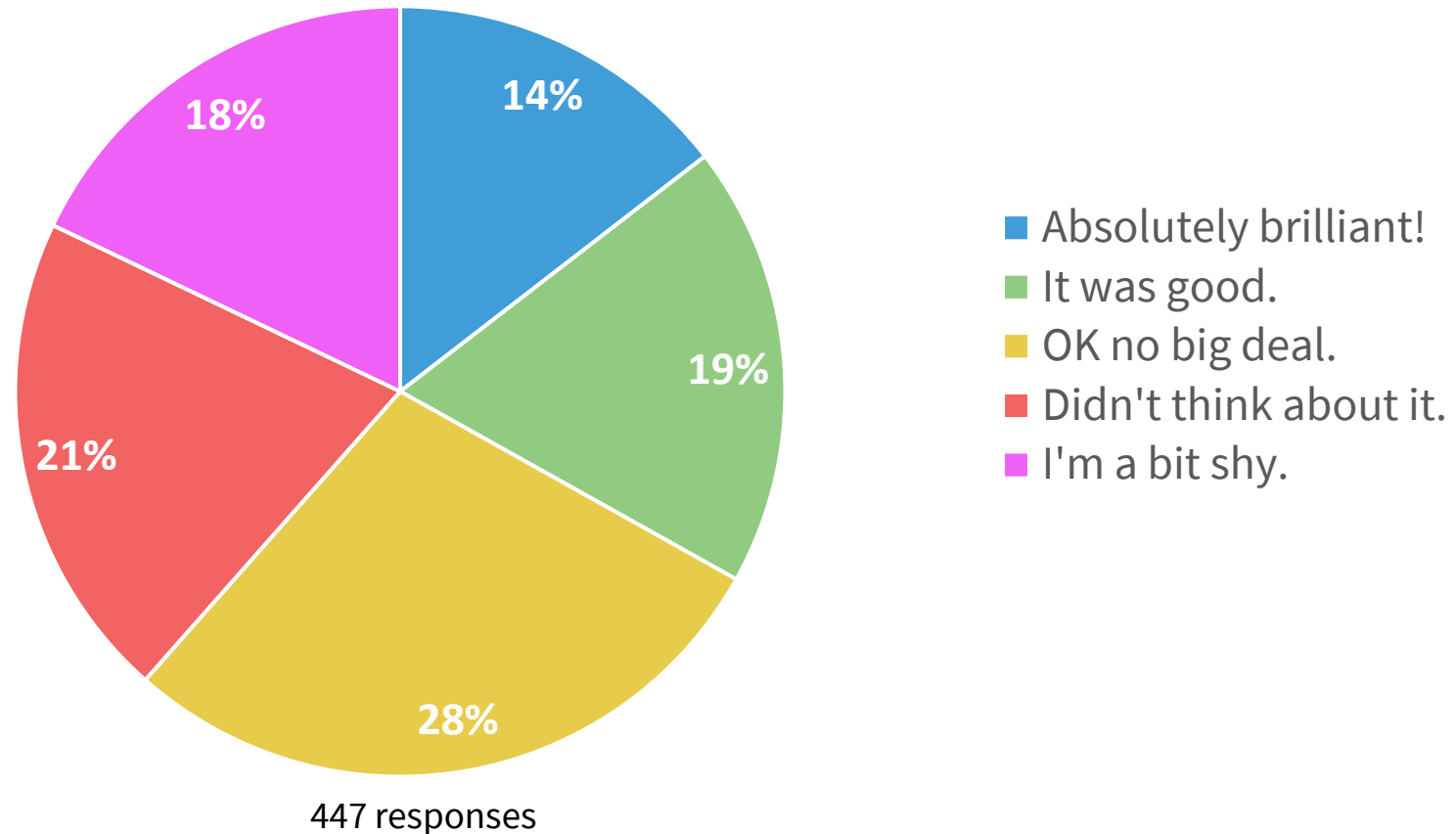
- Yes loads!
- Some things.
- Confirmed stuff I already knew.
- No nothing at all.



4C UR FUTURE *LIVE* 2022 PILOT

PUPIL FEEDBACK - HIGHLIGHTS

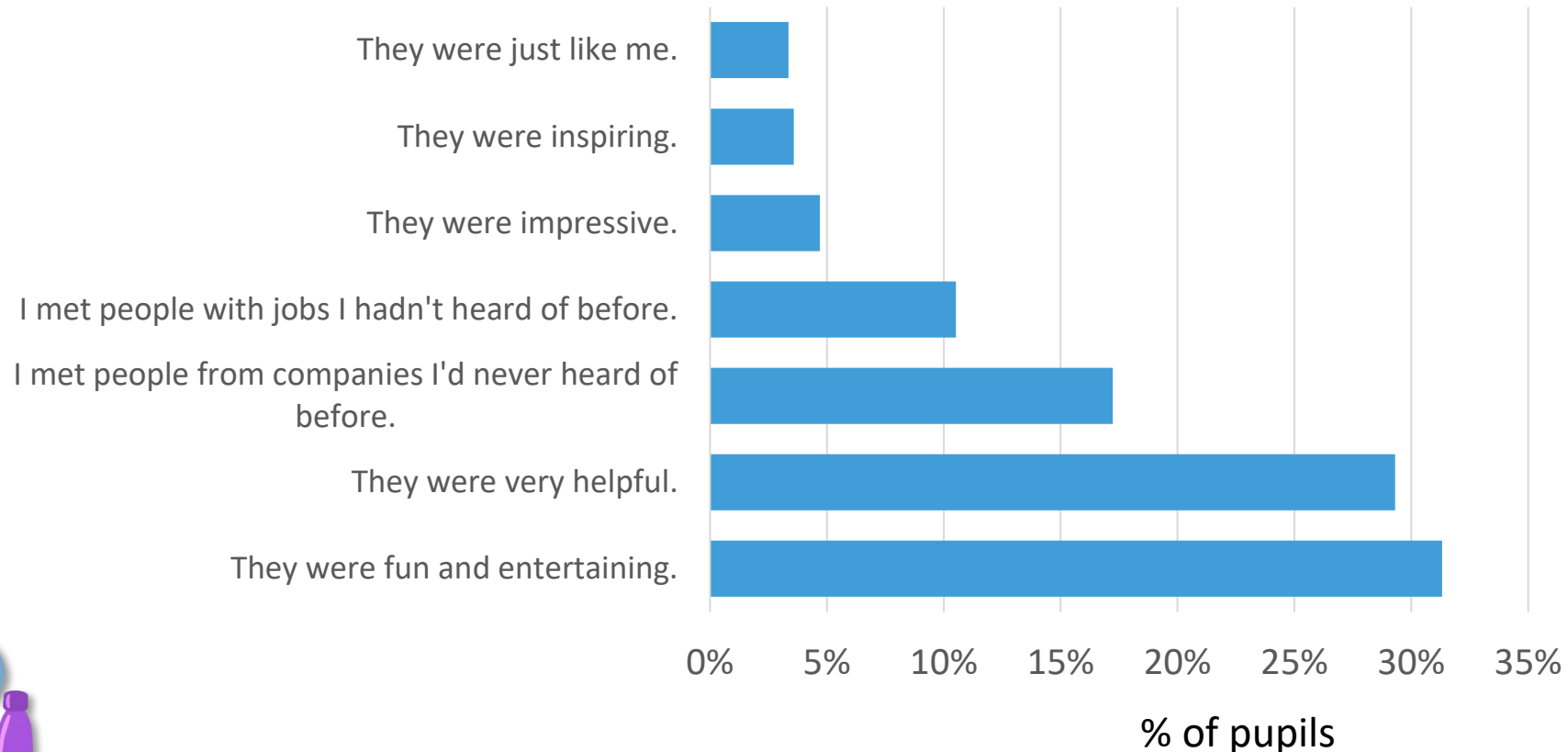
How did you get on mixing with students from other schools?



4C UR FUTURE *LIVE* 2022 PILOT

PUPIL FEEDBACK - HIGHLIGHTS

What did you think of the company volunteers you met at 4C UR Future *LIVE*?



4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT PUPIL FEEDBACK SURVEY



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- No recommendations for improvement (x118).
- Bigger events / more events / hold it more often (x8).
- Positive experience with volunteers (x4).
- Positive experience mixing with other schools (x7).
- Even more information on careers (x16).
- I was happy with the experience. A bit of everything and the people were so nice, I couldn't ask for more.
- Nothing to improve, it really taught me how the job works and it is really useful.
- It was really fun and I would think about different jobs and different options that are available in the future. I would consider going back and seeing it again.
- It was really fun as is. The only thing I would do different is add a bit more of an “escape” feel to the Escape Room. Other than that, it was a great experience :)

4C UR FUTURE LIVE 2022 PILOT PUPIL FEEDBACK SURVEY



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Negative experience / did not enjoy it (x16).
- Negative experience mixing with other schools (x2).
- More time at each game (x18).
- Suggestions / recommendations for lunch / lunchtime (x10).
- Be with your friends / let pupils pick their own teams / group suggestions (x33).
- More types of jobs/careers/companies shown (x24).
- More games/suggestions for games and/or careers to include (x61).
- More challenging games/make the games harder (x23).

LIVE EVENT SUPPORTERS



Belfast City Council



Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh Mid Ulster District Council



PLATINUM MEMBERS



GOLD MEMBERS



SILVER MEMBERS

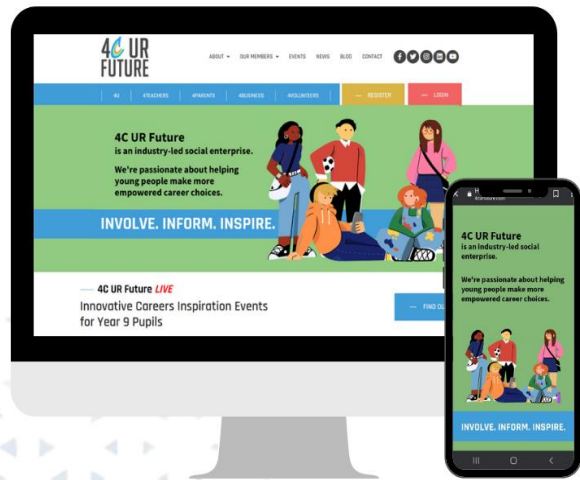


SUPPORTERS



What's Next?

- Launch first generation **4C UR Future CAREERS PORTAL** to complete the delivery of the at-scale pilot project, including completion of data analysis.
- Collect feedback/evaluations from Member companies.
- Complete final evaluation/impact report of the at-scale pilot **4C UR Future LIVE** events and **4C UR Future CAREERS PORTAL**.
- Determine future direction/model of 4C UR Future initiatives based on final evaluation/report.
- Investigate sustainable funding options for future initiatives.



The first-gen **CAREERS PORTAL** offers unparalleled engagement potential via an independently facilitated and NI-centric digital platform.

Containing approx. 60 Employer Profiles, 120 Career Hero Profiles, 42 Skills & Attributes & 20 Sector Briefings; there are currently over 7,000 Year 10 pupils, 300+ teachers, and 80+ employers registered.



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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	23 January 2023
File Reference	RDP155
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Independent Review of Invest NI Report
Attachments	

Background

Members will know that Invest NI (INI) is Northern Ireland's key economic development agency, and is a Non-Departmental Body, known as an Arm's Length Body, which feeds into the Department for the Economy (DfE).

In 2022, Sir Michael Lyons and a panel of experts were commissioned by the DfE to undertake a review of INI, to explore its recent performance and whether it was fit for purpose to deliver the 10X Vision.

Sir Michael Lyons and his team consulted with over 300 stakeholders, including local council officers. It was originally anticipated that the review would be complete by September 2022 but due to the range and complexity of issues, publication was delayed until January 2023. Below is a summary of the report's recommendations and findings which are relevant to local government.

INI has a headcount of 647 staff, most of whom work from its Belfast headquarters. Over the four years 2016-2020 it was allocated an annual budget of £138m. In 2020 and 2021 the Organisation processed additional sums to support business grants related to Covid-19.

Scope of Review

The review considered various areas from the strategic context in which INI operates, its leadership and governance, portfolio of programmes, range of activities which it supports and how it communicates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the consultations and work that was completed, the report proposes 17 recommendations across the areas reviewed. These are summarised below:

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Area	Finding	Recommendation
Invest NI Board and Senior Leadership	<p>Finding 1a: There appear to be profound divisions at Board and senior leadership level in Invest NI, which are having a detrimental effect on the organisation. This offers a serious threat to the future trust that can be placed in the organisation to deliver strategic priorities and requires urgent action.</p> <p>Finding 1b: Although laid out in various published documents, the roles and remit of the Invest NI Board, Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Team are not clear to some members of staff, including at a very senior level, and require formal clarification and reinforcement to remove ambiguity.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1a: The Department should further build on the actions taken so far to address issues with Invest NI Board and senior leadership by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Taking such actions as are necessary to ensure strong and confident leadership by the Invest NI Board and clarity as to its roles and responsibilities, especially in terms of oversight of the use of public monies. The respective roles of the Board Chair and Members, the Chief Executive/ Accounting Officer and other senior executives need to be clearly defined and included in the forthcoming Partnership Agreement to be drawn up by DfE. (ii) Taking early steps to progress the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive with appropriate skills and experience to be able to restore full confidence in the agency and deliver significant change. This should be done with the participation of current Board members but not left to the Board alone to progress. It is critical that the Department is involved in this process. (iii) Ensuring that the permanent Chief Executive is tasked with the urgent reshaping of the most senior levels of executive management and given the necessary support to make the changes agreed by Board and Department; and (iv) Urgently completing the ‘Raising Concerns’ investigations and ensuring that any conclusions educate steps (i) to (iii) above. <p>Recommendation 1b: The organisational structure should be revised to align with strategic priorities and be easier for both internal staff and external stakeholders to understand and navigate. When revising the</p>

structure consideration should be given to reducing the number of senior management posts and ensuring these are aligned with future strategy.

Recommendation 1c: The Board of Invest NI should undertake an annual effectiveness review (this should be carried out externally every three years) and an annual performance review of senior executive leadership, which should be reviewed by the Remuneration Committee. The Board should also assess the effectiveness of the relationship between the two parties.

Recommendation 1d: Consideration should be given to the appointment of an experienced Board Secretary position to provide authoritative advice and support to the Chair and Board.

DfE Governance and Oversight

Finding 2a: Strategy, Policy, and Guidance from DfE is unclear and not communicated to Invest NI in a manner that takes account of the business planning cycle.

Finding 2b: There is a need for greater formal clarity between DfE and Invest NI, outlining expectations and responsibilities on both parties, but that allows for an agile and responsive Economic Development Agency with proportionate control mechanisms in place.

Recommendation 2a: DfE needs to set clear policy and guidance and communicate this to Invest NI in a formal manner within a new Partnership Agreement as soon as possible. This should be reported on, and reviewed, on a regular basis.

Recommendation 2b: A formal agreement should be established between DfE and Invest NI that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both parties but allows for an agile and responsive economic development agency. Appropriate proportionate control measures, including strong post hoc scrutiny, should be included in the agreement.

Recommendation 2c: DfE should look to strengthen its policy development and monitoring capability and resources across the Department.

Client Company Model

Finding 3a: The current “client company” model is inflexible, the criteria are not widely understood by businesses, and it may lead to missed investment opportunities and/ or ‘deadweight’.

Finding 3b: There is a high level of ongoing or repeat, non-repayable support to a number of existing clients.

Finding 3c: We heard evidence internally and externally that there are insufficient and inconsistent skill levels within the Client Executive cohort.

Recommendation 3a: Invest NI should review the emphasis and resource given to the client company model to facilitate greater flexibility and support for the wider NI business base. There should be less emphasis on curating established relationships with companies and greater emphasis on diversifying the client base to meet the needs of 10X. Invest NI must ensure greater emphasis on demonstrating the impact of public support and greater transparency as to which companies are receiving ongoing subvention and whether that should continue.

Recommendation 3b: There is a need to rethink the type of support provided,

particularly in such a challenging public sector financing backdrop with greater emphasis on loan and equity rather than grant support as well as fuller utilisation of alternative sources of funding. Invest NI should strengthen its role and expertise as a guide to alternative sources of finance and work with DfE and DoF to ensure that it maximises its own use of available loan/equity finance.

Recommendation 3c: Client Executives and client facing staff should undergo continuous professional development and training relevant to their sectors. The Client Executive role should also be developed to ensure that it is focused on delivering the objectives of the 10x Vision. External expertise should be used where internal skills are not sufficient.

Portfolio of Programmes

Finding 4a: The portfolio of programmes that Invest NI offers to companies is too large and unwieldy, with the organisation, including at the most senior level, struggling to clearly define the exact number available. This makes it difficult for companies and staff to understand what is on offer and questions the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme offering.

Finding 4b: There appears to be very little consideration of what is offered by other delivery organisations when designing new programmes or reviewing current ones. Reviews of programmes appear to be sporadic and non-strategic. Some evaluation frameworks are in operation, but these appear to only be on individual programme level, and not across the portfolio.

Recommendation 4a: Invest NI needs to ensure a streamlined portfolio of programmes is offered to align with the growth ambitions for the NI economy and deliver additionality and value for money. A strategic audit of all Invest NI programmes should take place, in conjunction with DfE, to assess economic impact, ensure they are based on current priorities, meet Key Performance Indicators and eliminate duplicate provision (including taking account of external provision).

Recommendation 4b: Invest NI should ensure that an agile framework is in place to appoint external organisations to deliver programmes, especially in regard to the latest and emerging technologies.

Green Growth

Finding 5a: Whilst a dedicated unit within Invest NI has been established to support the development of the green economy, it is immature in its development and has insufficient resources.

Finding 5b: Despite the strategic importance of the Net Zero agenda, the Panel heard evidence from DfE that Invest NI had been slow to recognise the significance of the green economy and has been slow to respond to the development of new schemes to support the delivery of DfE's Energy Strategy.

Recommendation 5: Invest NI should urgently engage with DfE and DAERA to agree the policy priorities in relation to the green economy. Invest NI should develop a clear and ambitious plan to determine the appropriate financial and human resources required to deliver upon these priorities.

Unclassified

Tourism

Finding 6: There appear to be inefficiencies in the split of responsibilities for the delivery of tourism support between Invest NI and Tourism NI.

Recommendation 6: Support for Tourism should be led by TNI and, in keeping with the IREP recommendation, responsibilities related to tourist accommodation capital schemes should be delivered by TNI.

Skills

Finding 7: We heard significant evidence regarding the importance of skills, however there is a perception that the NI skills ecosystem is somewhat cluttered, uncoordinated and involves duplicated efforts.

Recommendation 7: DfE should lead on a review all of skills programmes that it provides funding for, including the offer of Invest NI, to ensure focus, reduce duplication and eliminate wasteful provision. Consideration should be given to widening the scope of this review to take account of the entirety of the regional skills offering.

Performance Metrics

Finding 8a: The current outward facing metrics do not allow Invest NI to demonstrate the impact of its interventions. They are not wide enough to capture the full range of activity and in some cases better reflect how clients perform rather than what difference financial assistance has made.

Recommendation 8: A well-defined set of SMART performance metrics should be set, and evaluated, by DfE in close coordination with Invest NI. They should focus on demonstrating where the organisation adds value to the NI economy and be better aligned to the 10X Vision and any future policy priorities of the NI Executive.

Finding 8b: The current emphasis of metrics unduly focuses on outputs, particularly job promotion rather than outcomes and should be widened to include higher productivity, job quality and innovation impacts.

Finding 8c: Existing KPIs do not tell the full story of Invest NI's work, and this contributes to suboptimal external communication.

Finding 8d: The 10X Vision provides an opportunity for DfE and Invest NI to establish a new set of KPIs that will provide a much more focused approach to how Invest NI leads and supports economic development in NI.

Sub Regional Partnerships

Finding 9a: There is insufficient focus on the development of sub regional economies. Regional offices are under-utilised with staff and decision-making too centralised in Belfast. While we acknowledge that regional development is not the sole responsibility of Invest NI it does have a key role to play.

Recommendation 9a: There is a need for a more co-ordinated, partnership approach at a local level especially on employability, skills and land and premises issues. DfE working where appropriate with DfC should consider how best to strengthen and promote a strong sub regional economic ecosystem and ensure they have effective leadership. Invest NI should strengthen its contribution with increased enthusiasm, a stronger focus on the local, the encouragement of entrepreneurship and more effective cooperation with partners.

Finding 9b: There is inconsistency in how Invest NI engage with external partners, including the Department for the Economy, other parts of central government, local government, UK Government and the private sector in NI.

Recommendation 9b: Invest NI Regional Offices should have a more

Land and Property

Finding 10a: Invest NI's involvement in land acquisition and disposal has been limited over the last decade.

Finding 10b: There is evidence of market failure in the provision of industrial land in a number of areas in NI.

strategic role and be more clearly influential within the agency including at ELT level. The staff, resources and powers allocated to them should be reviewed.

Recommendation 10: Invest NI should bring forward a strategy for the development of industrial land and property in partnership with other key stakeholders, in particular the local councils. This should consider respective roles of each partner in improving the supply of land and premises for growing businesses

Internationalisation – Inward Investment and Trade Support

Finding 11a: Attracting and supporting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and inward investment is widely recognised as playing a key role in Invest NI's portfolio of support but there is lack of clarity as to the organisation's strategy on FDI and how it supports the 10X Vision.

Finding 11b: A perception and concern has built up that Invest NI is too focused on attracting FDI while data indicates that FDI companies account for less than one third of Invest NI funding over the last 5 years (2017-2021).

Finding 11c: Stakeholders were largely positive on the quality and value of market intelligence and services provided by Invest NI overseas offices although their role is not well enough understood and articulated inside and outside the organisation.

Finding 11d: There are clearly defined metrics that demonstrate Invest NI's activity in supporting trade and investment, however they are largely input driven. There is no clear metric to demonstrate how the agency will increase the quality of new inward investment.

Finding 11e: The value and impact of inward investment, both Great Britain and FDI, is not sufficiently monitored, evaluated and understood.

Recommendation 11a: Invest NI's approach to inward investment should be driven by what type of inward investment NI should seek to attract and what supports are needed to secure their location in NI. This should build on 10X and its supporting strategies on trade, investment and skills and more fully involve a wide range of stakeholders including existing companies and universities in defining future priorities.

Recommendation 11b: Trade, FDI and wider Invest NI support teams need to work more effectively together to ensure that trade and investment supports are visible, targeted and flexible to maximise impact.

Recommendation 11c: There should be a clearer strategy setting out how existing and potentially new overseas offices align with the future focus of expanding trade opportunities for local businesses and targeting inward investment/FDI support for NI. This should involve clear prioritisation, planning and delivery objectives for each overseas office ensuring that they are adequately resourced. Invest NI should secure sustainable funding for all new offices.

Recommendation 11d: Clearer KPIs should be set and stronger monitoring, evaluation and reporting on for Inward Investment/ FDI projects is required to demonstrate impact and added value.

Financial & Human Resources

Finding 12a: Invest NI is well resourced compared to similar organisations although it has a larger remit. Despite advances in technology since the previous IREP review, there remains an imbalance between back office / support resources and business facing staff within the organisation.

Recommendation 12a: Invest NI should revise its organisational structure to align with strategic priorities and to be easier for both internal staff and external stakeholders to understand and navigate. When revising the structure consideration should be given to reducing the number of ELT posts. It

Unclassified

Finding 12b: The loss of EU funding has required Invest NI to consider significant budget re-prioritisation. However, the extent to which DfE and DoF have resolved the immediate loss of ERDF funding is also unclear.

Finding 12c: Single year budget allocations seriously undermine Invest NI's ability to strategically plan interventions and supports.

Finding 12d: Invest NI's current organisational structure does not align with Invest NI's strategic priorities and main function as a delivery body. This structure can be confusing for external stakeholders and staff to navigate and limits efficient and effective use of resource.

Finding 12e: There are significant concerns regarding the value and the timing of Invest NI's Evolve programme.

Finding 12f: Invest NI appears to have a top-heavy workforce. There is also likely to be a large number of retirees within Invest NI over the next ten years and there is currently no resource succession plan in place.

should also take full account of the benefits of digitalisation.

Recommendation 12b: The Invest NI board should establish a Strategic Resources Committee, to strengthen financial monitoring and prioritisation and give greater oversight of personnel and skills issues.

Recommendation 12c: Invest NI should take urgent steps to review the shape and skills of its workforce in line with the organisational changes we propose. This should include:

- A rebalancing of the organisation's structure in favour of client facing activity;
- A stronger emphasis on performance review and continuing professional development of staff;
- The urgent acceleration of work on succession planning given the age profile of the organisation;
- A programme of regular inward and outward secondments to strengthen expertise and business experience within the organisation; and
- Suspension of the current Evolve Programme pending the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive.

Recommendation 12d: DfE and DoF should clarify the extent to which Invest NI's loss of ERDF funding has been resolved and the quantum of funding that will be provided to replace it.

Recommendation 12e: Invest NI should be confident in its future budget allocations. DfE, with support from DoF, should therefore consider the scope for Invest NI to be given three-year budget allocations to enable a more strategic and effective approach to interventions planning.

Recommendation 13: In light of the changing funding arrangements, Invest NI must actively develop, and maintain, a detailed understanding of all sources of funding available for economic development in NI; share that understanding with NI businesses and other agencies and work closely with DfE, other depts and relevant agencies to maximise the benefits for NI through a coordinated and strategic approach.

Alternative Funding Streams

Finding 13: The introduction of new schemes from the UK Government, following EU Exit, means there is now a range of funding streams potentially available for economic development activities.

Unclassified

Intelligence & Digitisation

Finding 14a: There are weaknesses and inconsistencies in the way Invest NI records and uses data. This presents risk and limitations to efficient monitoring and evaluation and leads to a lack of confidence in any data held.

Finding 14b: Invest NI internal systems require digital transformation to improve efficiency and effectiveness, for internal reporting purposes and for external use to support an improved digital customer journey.

Finding 14c: Invest NI does not fully utilise learning from programme evaluations. Monitoring and evaluation are important steps in delivering value for money.

Finding 14d: Invest NI does not fully collect or share intelligence. This is a lost opportunity to inform policy and provide advice to DfE, other Departments and stakeholders.

Recommendation 14a: Invest NI must urgently review its information technology infrastructure with a view to accelerating digitisation, improving the capture of information on all transactions, and thus enabling customer facing staff to focus on programme delivery. Ease of access to appropriate information should be improved for all Invest NI Staff and for existing and potential client companies.

Recommendation 14b: Invest NI needs to develop a strategy for the proactive sharing of economic and market intelligence to policy makers and key stakeholders in NI.

Communications

Finding 15a: Invest NI does not have a strategic communications and engagement strategy that articulates the breadth of its activities or impact that these have.

Finding 15b: Invest NI provides a wide array of support and assistance over and above bringing Foreign Direct Investment into NI, but it does not appear to communicate its other achievements to the same degree, giving the perception to many that it is predominantly an Inward Investment and job promotion agency.

Finding 15c: We did not find substantive evidence that the Board's stated ambassadorial role, outlined in the Board Operating Framework, is fulfilled.

Finding 15d: We were informed that the Invest NI brand has strong recognition overseas, however, the name of the organisation undersells the range of activity undertaken with indigenous business.

Recommendation 15a: Invest NI needs to develop a comprehensive strategic communications and engagement strategy recognising the needs of different audiences. The Invest NI Board needs to take a more active role in delivering this strategy by making full use of its ambassadorial role.

Recommendation 15b: Invest NI should monitor and communicate the impact and value of the overseas offices more clearly and regularly as part of a wider strategic communications and engagement plan.

Risk and Control

Finding 16a: There are some areas of strength in the control environment but clear areas of weakness in the overall framework. Further improvements are required to the current risk and control structure to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

Finding 16b: Incomplete or inaccurate information has been provided to

Recommendation 16a: The creation of a centralised key compliance and business assurance team which will help strengthen the second line of defence in risk management and control at an operational level.

Recommendation 16b: Invest NI should consider commissioning an Enterprise Risk Management Framework Review to

Unclassified

casework approval committees. There have been instances where documentation was either not available or could not be located, controls and procedures were not adhered to, and prior conditions were either overlooked or not met.

Finding 16c: The creation of the Governance and Compliance Council (GOCC), was in response to investment in a failed project and does not easily integrate to the current structures. As a result, responsibilities and reporting lines between the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), GOCC and Internal Audit Committee (IAC) are unclear. Board governance responsibilities cannot be replaced by executive arrangements.

Finding 16d: The current arrangements for Post Project Evaluations are not satisfactory, with project owners carrying out evaluations in some areas.

Invest NI and a New Economic Vision

Finding 17a: 10X has been positively received as an ambitious vision but clear endorsement from the NI Executive and inclusion in a future Programme for Government would strengthen its status and further encourage cross departmental work.

Finding 17b: Slow progress in developing detailed implementation plans is having a direct impact on Invest NI's own ability to plan for the long term.

Finding 17c: 'A 10X Economy' was not publicly consulted upon and we found limited evidence of it being co-designed with Invest NI. It has also been suggested that DfE did not fully use the agency's expertise in the development of the 10X Vision.

Finding 17d: Invest NI is key to the delivery of 10X, its current priorities and programmes broadly align with the Vision, but the organisation will have to be more flexible to deliver on the Vision as it is developed.

identify potential weaknesses in the control environment including systems.

Recommendation 16c: Invest NI should consider how oversight mechanisms for the large number of lower value projects, not assessed by the Invest NI Appraisal Team, can be strengthened to ensure delivery against objectives and value for money.

Recommendation 16d: A review of the implementation of Invest NI's raising concerns policy should be undertaken in conjunction with DfE, with a view to strengthening the requirement for timely investigation of any concerns raised, improving information sharing with the Department and encouraging those staff who have identified issues for concern to actively raise these.

Recommendation 17a: DfE must ensure that the 10X Vision and subsequent action plans are tangibly linked to future NI Executive strategies, particularly the Programme for Government.

Recommendation 17b: DfE should provide clear written policy direction on the 10X Vision and its implications for its further activities to Invest NI and other relevant delivery bodies as soon as possible.

DfE should ensure Invest NI is fully engaged in the co-design of applicable elements of the 10X action plan.

Many of the report's findings and recommendations relate to the internal working of INI however, several of them may affect how local government authorities work with the Organisation, as well as how businesses can be better served.

Findings and Recommendations №: 2b, 3a, 3c,4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, 8, and especially 9a, 9b, 10a 10b 11a, 11b, 11c, 12b, 13, 14b,17c are of particular relevance to councils and ongoing contact with the INI, at the right level, should be maintained to ensure

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councils' influence in shaping policies, work streams and supports that best meet local need and the wider business base, going forward.

A full copy of the Review Report can be found at:

[Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland \(InvestNI\) | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/independent-review-of-invest-northern-ireland)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	16 January 2023
File Reference	TO/EV92
Legislation	
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	Experience AND and AND Walks and Tours Programme Update Report 2022/23
Attachments	Appendix 1: Summary Table - Experience AND and AND Walks and Tours Programme 2022/23 Appendix 2: List of participating businesses in Experience AND 2023/24

Background

Since 2015, the Tourism Service Unit has delivered AND Walks and Tours annually across the borough from April to New Year's Day. In addition to this, the Experience AND programme is now in its fourth year of operation. The Experience programme began in 2019 as a pilot initiative and further developed during Covid restrictions. It assisted local businesses at a time of 'need' when their normal operating models were not deliverable. Assistance was provided by officers to deliver primarily safe outdoor experiences. Its success has been demonstrated by its growing programme annually.

AND Walks and Tours Programme 2022/23

25 walks and tours were delivered in 2022/23 beginning with an Easter themed minibeasts children's nature trail, in Castle Park, through to the popular walking tour

of Newtownards and a new historical walking tour of Donaghadee both on New Year's Day 2023.

A total of 523 tickets were available with 453 sold, equating to 87% of tickets sold. Of these tickets sold, 54% were outside of borough (OoB) purchases. Ticket prices ranged from £5 to £42 per person with income approximately £4000.

The programme included a diverse range of tours for all age groups and a variety of themes including horticultural, historical, Queen's Platinum Jubilee, children's nature trails, summer solstice and an opportunity to 'welcome back' the Brent Geese to Strangford Lough. Locations ranged from Portaferry, Millisle, Ballywalter, Donaghadee, Newtownards, Helen's Bay and Comber. This year's walks and tours complemented the two main food festivals in summer and autumn (See Appendix 1 for full listing).

A number of private tour guides have now become established in the borough with assistance and support from officers. The AND Walks and Tours programme is therefore mindful of their specialisms and areas of interest. Each year, the programme is designed to complement/support such activity. Council intervention is therefore reduced in the number of tours planned for 23/24 and will likely continue to reduce in coming years.

Experience AND Programme 2022/23

The Tourism Development Officers work with local tourism providers throughout the year, to deliver new or enhanced saleable AND Experiences for visitors.

At the start of the season, 30 experiences were programmed for May – October 2022; however, due to mainly adverse weather conditions, where re-scheduling was not an option, coupled with unforeseen personal circumstances for some businesses, not all were delivered. Some experiences were cancelled due to businesses failing to deliver on their initial commitment. Officers have adapted the participation criteria in the 2023/24 programme, ensuring roles and responsibilities are duly allocated. By the end of the season a total of 18 experiences, ranging from 'on the water' activity to craft and wellbeing took place at the following locations: Bangor, Helen's Bay, Holywood, Ballywater, Kircubbin, Whiterock and Killinchy.

From 18 AND Experiences delivered; 263 tickets were available with 235 tickets sold, equating to 89% of available tickets sold. Of these tickets sold, 59% were OoB purchases including Canada, GB, ROI as well as rest of NI. Feedback was incredibly positive for each Experience. The budget attached to the development and delivery of the tours is £6000 annually. This allows for seed funding and de-risking the development of the Experience for the tourism provider. The programme in 2022/23 had a net actual spend of £2215. Ticket prices ranged from £10 to £110 per person.

The AND Experience programme provides industry with an opportunity to gain more experience in the tourism sector or 'pilot' initiatives. An Industry Day was held at Clandeboye Lodge Hotel held on 4 October 2022 which showcased the programme's success to date and encouraged new and more varied participants for 2023/24. Presentations were made by Tourism Northern Ireland on Experience Development and Mark Rodgers, Dalriada Tours, on how developing experiences

has grown his business. The event ended with a speed networking session allowing business collaboration.

50 business attended the event with very positive feedback, both in terms of information gathering and the opportunity to network and make connections. It has resulted in a number of new collaborative experience development relationships.

Historic Environment Division (HED) Sites - Nendrum Monastic Site and Grey Point Fort

The Tourism Service was approached by HED in March 2022, to seek assistance with operational delivery for one 'exceptional year' due to resource limitations, at Nendrum Monastic Site and Grey Point Fort. Further to a Service Level Agreement, the Tourism Service sourced and managed tour guides to deliver site opening on Saturdays; June to start of September. The opening days were promoted by ANDBC and HED through digital and social channels. As a result, Nendrum Monastic Site had 272 visitors and Grey Point Fort 362 visitors on these days.

AND Walks and Tours Programme 2023/24

The programme will begin in May and finish on New Year's Day 2024. This year the programme will complement monthly food activities/events happening within the borough. It is anticipated that once the programme is finalised it will contain approximately 12 walks and tours.

Experience AND Programme 2023/34

Further to the Industry Day in October, an Expression of Interest was advertised via Council ezines and social media. It accepted applications from local businesses or businesses delivering experiences in the borough. As a result, 44 applications were submitted.

Following panel assessment, 26 experiences were successful in meeting the criteria and will be included in the programme for 2023/24. Two have subsequently been removed due to reallocation of funding from the TNI Market Led Experience Programme, meaning they will be delivered within the current financial year. The Council EOI experiences will run from May – September taking place across the borough including Bangor, Ballyholme, Holywood, Kircubbin, Millisle, Whiterock, Portaferry, Comber and Groomsport. The themes include creative, wellbeing, 'on the water' and food. Businesses participating in the 2023/24 programme are included in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

Appendix 1: 2022/23 Summary Table

AND Walks and Tours Programme	Date	Location
Minibeasts kiddies walk	April	Bangor
Garden escape x2	May	Helen's Bay
Bat talk & walk	May	Crawfordsburn
*Jubilee Jaunt Back in Time	June	Bangor
Bangor Castle Walled Garden	June	Bangor
*Paws for Gin	June	Donaghadee
*Midsummer Mayhem	June	Newtownards
Historical Guided walk Comber	June	Comber
Sea Creatures Coastal Kids Trail	July	Millisle
Historical guided walking tour Portaferry	July	Portaferry
*Jenny Watt's Boat tour	July	Bangor
*Gothic Abbey and Physic Garden tour	August	Greyabbey
Bangor Castle Walled Garden	August	Bangor
*Gardener's delight	September	Ballywalter Park, Walled Garden
Historical Guided Walk Portaferry	September	Portaferry
*You Rang my Lady	October	Ballywalter Park, House
Winter waders and friends	October	Newtownards
Halloween tour	October	Donaghadee
Halloween tours x 2	October	Newtownards
*Halloween Late Night tour 18+	October	Bangor
*New Year's Day Walk	January	Donaghadee
New Year's Day Walk	January	Newtownards

* Denotes a new tour

Experience AND Programme	Month	Location
Easter SUP	April	Ballyholme
Weaving with Nature	April	Portaferry
High Tea at Sea	May	Whiterock
Kneading Yoga	May	Killinchy
SUPaoke	June	Bangor
Guided Family Kayak Tour	June	Ballyholme
Celebrate the Seasons with NI Silver	June	Holywood
Paddle Back in Time	June	Whiterock
Summer Colours at Kiri Cottage	June	Portaferry
Photography Workshop	July	Helen's Bay
Secret surprise Club	July	North Down
Paddle Back in Time	July	Whiterock
Art in the Garden	August	Helen's Bay
Silver Jewellery Making Workshop	August	Holywood
Boards Beach and Brunch	August	Helen's Bay
Doggy Paddle	August	Ballyholme
SUPaoke	September	Donaghadee
Surf and SUP	September	Holywood

Appendix 2: List of participating businesses in Experience AND 2023/24

Unclassified

SUPhubNI	The Mallow Maker	National Museums NI
Mount Stewart House and Gardens	Mrs R'ganics	Lightfoot Refill Market
Strangford Lough Activity Centre	Kiri Cottage Crafts	NI Silver
Copeland Distillery	Lake and Oak	The Walled Garden, Helen's Bay
Castle Espie Wetland Centre	Sharon Regan Art	Maxemoo
Ultimate SUP	The Boathouse	Exploris Aquarium
Echlinville Distillery	Indie Fude	The Cultured Club

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	16 January 2023
File Reference	170871
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Travel and Tourism Expos 2022/23 update and 2023/24 attendance
Attachments	Appendix 1 - List of Expos (at end of report)

Background

The Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy 2018-2030 sets challenging targets to increase the share of overnight trips to 10% and increase visitor expenditure to £82m. One of the thematic priorities is 'Promote to Invest'. To raise awareness of the destination in the ROI, GB, European and world markets, it is becoming increasingly necessary for officers to increase and develop relationships with tourism operators on an in-person basis.

Following ANDBC's first attendance at World Travel Market (WTM) London, pre-pandemic 2018 and 2019, officers sought and gained approval from Council in December 2021 to attend this event plus additional Expos and buyer events as appropriate in 2022/23. This was subject to successful application and/or the event being deemed suitable and from within existing budgets. See Appendix 1 for previously approved listing of events for 2022/23 and requested for approval for future attendance.

The Expo platforms are used to sell experiences and products on offer in the Borough, with the intended outcome to increase bed nights and income to local businesses. This is primarily via incoming trade operators' itineraries, although some expos also offer 'public consumer days' where this segment can also be targeted.

Throughout the year, Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) and Tourism Ireland (TI) inform the local Tourism industry of the various opportunities to attend Expos/Buyer Meetings. Opportunities include within Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, UK, Europe, USA, and other overseas destinations. An online application portal is used to submit an Expression of Interest, subsequently to be assessed by the organiser. If successful, many of the opportunities are subsidised with the attendee responsible for flights and accommodation (on some occasions these are also subsidised). This keeps costs at a minimum.

For note, the Expos listed in Appendix 1, plus additional trans-Atlantic and European events, are traditionally attended by a large number of local councils from NI including Newry, Mourne and Down, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid and East Antrim, Fermanagh and Omagh and Belfast, highlighting the need for ANDBC's attendance to ensure the destination is profiled along with other NI destinations.

2022/23 Expos/ Buyer Meeting Attendance

Throughout the year, officers attended eight events, as listed below. Three were virtual and five were in person events with a total of 126 individual appointments. The number of meetings at each event was dependent on the variety of formats used by each organiser and its duration.

Event	Location	Month	Appointments
Meet the Industry	Virtual	January	21
Expo GB	Virtual	March	9
Meet the Buyer *	ICC, Belfast	March	25
Italy Virtual	Virtual	May	13
Coach & Group *	City Hotel Derry/Londonderry	September	13
Flavours of Ireland *	Guildhall, London	October	8
World Travel Market*	Excel, London	November	20
ITOA (Irish Tour Operator Association)	Manor House Hotel, Enniskillen	November	17
			Total 126

*Networking Opportunities: These events provide informal 'down time' activity post event day to network with trade representatives. This is an additional and invaluable opportunity to speak with Tour Operators who have not been secured on the appointment schedule throughout the day.

At the time of writing the report officers are due to attend Holiday World Dublin as part of the Visit Belfast stand 27-29 January 2023. Whilst trade buyers are in attendance,

this tends to be primarily a public consumer event and will be staffed by visitor servicing officers.

A further virtual TNI “Meet the industry” is also scheduled for February 1 and 2 with a place secured for officers to participate on both days.

Feedback from Trade

Attendance at the above events has highlighted the demand from inbound operators for new destinations within the island of Ireland; something beyond the ‘known’ such as Giant’s Causeway, Game of Thrones, Belfast, and Derry/Londonderry. New demand includes opportunities to escape the city, enjoy the natural environment and meet genuine local people. Feedback from the trade at the appointments was highly positive with many wishing to arrange follow up calls/visits post event.

Developing and secured opportunities

Follow up with all those contacts established in 2022 is scheduled for January / February 2023. The aim is to further develop relationships and attempt to secure either an online familiarisation visit, or where possible, in-person visits during 2023 ultimately leading to bookings.

It should be noted that most operators work with a 2-3 year lead time in itinerary creation, although some can adapt more quickly. In person familiarisation visits are also mostly required prior to any inclusion in an itinerary. One confirmation of an in-person familiarisation trip, which originated from World Travel Market (WTM), is confirmed for February 2023 with EI Travel Group. The initial contact was made with their representative in 2019; a minimum of five further contacts in person and virtual meetings with officers has ultimately led to this visit. The continual building and development of relationships with operators is key.

Another example is EBZ Ireland, who officers initially met in 2018. They began visits to the area once lockdown was lifted and now schedule an annual tour in the Borough as part of their NI offering for approximately 20 passengers. This tour includes Strangford Lough and attractions such as Mount Stewart.

Excursions Ireland carried out familiarisation visits in 2017 and 2018 following officer engagement at Expos. They started scheduling AND in 2021 to include visits to Bangor Castle Walled Garden. This delivered two group visits and 62 passengers in 2021 and increased in 2022 with 10 group visits and in excess of 200 passengers, generating over £1,800 for the Walled Garden. At the time of writing the report, a further six dates are confirmed for 2023/24, with potential for additional tours. Furthermore, Excursions Ireland attended a familiarisation visit to an officer organised Ballywalter Park Estate tour, and due to its success, it is now included within their portfolio for 2023/24 with a confirmed booking date being discussed at time of writing. Further discussions are currently being held with the Estate for additional development opportunities. In addition to this, tours to Echlinville Distillery by the company are also in discussion between both parties following officer introduction and visit.

At WTM in 2021, officers met with a representative whose umbrella company deals in high end visits, Vesperience and group tours, Veenus. This meeting was followed up with an online familiarisation trip. As a result, the company met officers again at WTM in 2022. At the event they advised officers that they are now including AND in their Veenus portfolio. This itinerary includes Mount Stewart, Echlinville Distillery and Tracey's Farmhouse Kitchen. Further discussions have identified additional opportunities for other parts of their business which could be included in the future. They have indicated that they are still working on regaining their full operational strength and market post pandemic.

2023-25 Expo attendance

Opportunities exist for the Tourism service to personally attend trade/consumer Expos, as listed in Appendix 1, both under an ANDBC banner or, where appropriate, in conjunction with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland or Visit Belfast to promote the Borough's tourism offering. Dependent on the specific event, attendance by one or two officers will be evaluated at the time of booking.

It should be noted that several shows have limited places available for attendance via pre-application and presence cannot be guaranteed. A number operate on a first-come, first-served basis and those requiring travel and accommodation are best booked as early as possible to secure efficiencies on travel and accommodation. Pre-approval by Council to attend some of these, others of similar nature, or all of these Expos allow for immediate submission of Expressions of Interest and the earliest booking of flights and accommodation which reduces the overall costs.

Attendance at Expos in 2022/23 totaled approximately £1,600. It is assumed in 2023-2025 a budget of circa £3,000 from existing tourism budgets will be appropriate to facilitate attendance at listed events. The indicative increase accounts for events post Covid, as included in Appendix 1, that were not back in full operation / in person in 2022. The allocated budget is included in existing planned tourism budgets as business-as-usual activity.

Other councils within NI, as listed in the report, have been contacted in relation to plans for 2023/24-25, and whilst in similar positions with budget restraints for the foreseeable future, their plans are to attend as many as possible, subject to budgets. Work of this nature continues to profile NI destinations and engage trade interest for future bookings.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves that

1. The Tourism Service Unit can apply, and subject to successful applications, up to two officers can attend some or all the listed tourism Expos in Appendix 1, plus any further/replacement bespoke opportunities of similar platform/market, under an ANDBC banner, in conjunction with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast dependent upon budget availability.

-
2. The budget for attendance, travel and accommodation is funded from existing planned tourism development and destination marketing budgets subject to the Rates setting process.

Appendix 1 - List of Expos

The following trade/consumer shows represent key opportunities to showcase the borough and engage with both inbound tour operators and prospective visitors. All event dates listed are subject to change and in some cases location TBC. Further opportunities may arise throughout the year.

Dublin Holiday World (January, Trade and Consumer)

- Dublin Holiday World is a key consumer platform for attracting visitors from the ROI market. With over 41,000 people visiting the show it provides an ideal opportunity to market the borough's key product to a captive audience within a close to home market and with attendees that are in the main interested in the short break market.

Britain & Ireland Marketplace (London – January, Trade)

- BIM is a one full-day B2B workshop for international tour operators and travel buyers that want to meet tourism product providers from across the UK/ROI.

Celtic Connections (February, Scotland, Trade)

- This event includes a B2B workshop providing an opportunity for approximately 25 industry partners to engage with 25 GB trade at 10-minute meetings.

ITB Berlin Travel Show (March, Trade)

- ITB Berlin is the leading business platform for global tourism. It is the world's largest travel industry convention – it has established itself as the industry's central knowledge platform.

Explore GB & NI (March, Trade)

- This event offers UK and Irish suppliers the opportunity to promote their business or destination to hundreds of international buyers through pre-scheduled one-to-one meetings over two days.

Flavours of Ireland (London - October, Trade)

- Flavours of Ireland brings together industry from the island and global travel trade to showcase the Island of Ireland with a programme of 10-minute 1-2-1 meetings.

GEM (London - October, Trade)

- GEM (Global European Marketplace) is a full-day workshop for global tour operators and travel buyers that want to meet the best European product in the most influential contracting event of the year. Over 800 attendees from member companies attend the event, with a personalised agenda of pre-scheduled meetings.

World Travel Market (London – November, Trade)

- World Travel Market (WTM) is the leading global event for the travel industry to meet industry professionals and conduct business deals.

ITOA (date and location TBC, Trade)

- Incoming Tour Operators Association (Dublin & Belfast) workshop is an opportunity to meet Ireland's largest and long-established Tour Operating/Handling Agents/DMC's. This event offers an opportunity to meet and sell our destination experiences to all members of ITOA.

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	09 February 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	27 January 2023
File Reference	FIN45
Legislation	Section 5 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Regeneration & Development Directorate Budgetary Control Report – December 2022
Attachments	

The Regeneration & Development Directorate's Budgetary Control Report covers the 9-month period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022. The net cost of the Directorate is showing an underspend of £244k (8.2%) – box A on page 3.

Explanation of Variance

Environment's budget performance is further analysed on pages 4-6 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll Expenditure	£77k adverse	3
Report 3	Goods & Services Expenditure	£213k favourable	3
Report 4	Income	£108k favourable	3

Explanation of Variance

The Regeneration & Development Directorate's overall variance can be summarised by the following table:-

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll	77	The National & Local Pay Agreements were greater than budgeted increase. This impacts all Council Services.
Goods & Services		
Regeneration	(178)	Mainly due to projects not progressing as planned. Head of Regeneration – (£124k) – Project 24 (£46k); Kinnegar project (£45k). Urban Development – (£30k) – Vacant Commercial Property project. Rural Development – (£24k) – range of small project underspends.
Tourism	(55)	Tourism Events – (£40k) – proposed car event did not take place.
Income		
Tourism	(55)	Grant relating to 21/22 received this year (£41k).

Unclassified

REPORT 1 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 9 - December 2022					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Regeneration & Development					
300 Regen, Dev & Planning HQ	215,723	227,600	(11,877)	292,500	(5.2)
310 Regeneration	562,187	753,300	(191,113)	1,291,700	(25.4)
320 Economic Development	848,428	859,100	(10,672)	1,313,800	(1.2)
340 Tourism	1,100,871	1,131,300	(30,429)	1,589,700	(2.7)
Total	2,727,209	2,971,300	A (244,091)	4,487,700	(8.2)
REPORT 2 PAYROLL REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Regeneration & Development - Payroll					
300 Regen, Dev & Planning HQ	116,186	116,700	(514)	155,400	(0.4)
310 Regeneration	424,910	431,100	(6,190)	581,100	(1.4)
320 Economic Development	514,357	510,200	4,157	683,300	0.8
340 Tourism	734,581	654,600	79,981	871,000	12.2
Total	1,790,034	1,712,600	77,434	2,290,800	4.5
REPORT 3 GOODS & SERVICES REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Regeneration & Development - Goods & Services					
300 Regen, Dev & Planning HQ	124,537	110,900	13,637	137,100	12.3
310 Regeneration	147,809	325,800	(177,991)	715,400	(54.6)
320 Economic Development	596,425	590,000	6,425	1,093,800	1.1
340 Tourism	587,839	642,900	(55,061)	894,700	(8.6)
Total	1,456,609	1,669,600	(212,991)	2,841,000	(12.8)
REPORT 4 INCOME REPORT					
	£	£	£	£	%
Regeneration & Development - Income					
300 Regen, Dev & Planning HQ	(25,000)	-	(25,000)	-	
310 Regeneration	(10,531)	(3,600)	(6,931)	(4,800)	(192.5)
320 Economic Development	(262,353)	(241,100)	(21,253)	(463,300)	(8.8)
340 Tourism	(221,550)	(166,200)	(55,350)	(176,000)	(33.3)
Totals	(519,434)	(410,900)	(108,534)	(644,100)	(26.4)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.