Ards and North Down: Connectivity

- 10 miles to Belfast City Airport
  - 35 minutes flight to Glasgow
  - 45 minutes flight to Manchester/Liverpool

- Stranraer 2h 15m, Holyhead 3h 30m

- 2h 15m to Dublin
Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this Integrated Strategy for Ards and North Down, setting out a vision for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development in a Planning context. It builds on extensive work by the Council and its partners to date and takes its lead from the Community Plan for Ards and North Down.

This represents the latest in a series of innovative steps that we have taken to drive the Borough forward to create an even better ‘Place’.

In commissioning this strategy, a decision was taken by Council to innovate by adopting a fully integrated approach to these important yet highly inter-related themes. This has resulted in a strategic direction and series of outcomes for us all, in partnership, to pursue in continued and enhanced collaboration.

I would like to thank all who have taken time to contribute to the development of this important strategy and look forward to working with all who share an interest in setting Ards and North Down on the path towards even greater economic growth and prosperity.

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Introducing The Integrated Strategy

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough of Ards and North Down.

It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Community Plan for the area and is to be used as the common point of reference for all those contributing to the growth of our economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of our places, both urban and rural.

The strategy was researched and developed through a highly collaborative process involving stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors.

It is built on an evidence base that identifies the key assets of the Borough, as well as economic and environmental challenges faced at local and regional level. While uncertainties continue in the wider political and economic context, this strategy presents a confident and ambitious plan for the future.

Blue:Green, Creatively Connected

Ards and North Down has three particular strengths:

- **The natural landscape of sea, loughs and land – a blue green space.**
- **The creativity of our people, from earliest times to present day producers, artisans, designers and engineers.**
- **Our proximity to places of opportunity – to Belfast, neighbouring districts, to the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, to Europe and the world beyond.**

Our distinctiveness is derived in a large part from these three assets and the synergies between them.

We are a place of opportunity.

Blue:Green, Creatively Connected describes the ethos for our Borough and is an exciting opportunity to drive it forward. It combines these core strengths to convey a fresh approach to how we look after, develop, promote and celebrate Ards and North Down as a place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

Over its 12 year life time, the strategy will aim to create jobs, increase economic productivity and increase visitor overnight trips and expenditure. This will be achieved by the delivery of 19 Integrated Actions by the Council and its many partners. These are designed to fulfil multiple outcomes for the Borough, complementing existing initiatives and introducing new ideas.

This is not just a Council strategy it is a Borough Strategy and while the implementation process will be led by Ards and North Down Borough Council, success will only be achieved by partnership working with the public, private and community sectors.
INTEGRATION
TOURISM
REGENERATION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION
BLUE:GREEN
A natural asset of loughs, land and sea
CREATIVELY
enterprise, skilled workforce, arts and the creative sector
CONNECTED
geographic proximities, infrastructure and collaboration

PROPOSITIONS
PLACE
VISITOR
INVESTMENT

TARGETS
JOBS CREATED
ECOOMIC PRODUCTIVITY
VISITOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS
VISITOR EXPENDITURE
This illustration provides a summary profile of the Borough, drawing upon available data and the findings of the research process. Not only does this enable the identification of key issues that are required to be addressed by the strategy but, as importantly, it highlights core assets that will form the building blocks for prosperity in the Borough.

* Local Government Districts
Strategy Propositions

**PLACE**

The quality of Ards and North Down as a place, both natural and manmade, is its greatest asset and must be enhanced.

**VALUE PROPOSITION**
Consistently working to enhance our quality of place, connections and creativity. Realising positive opportunities for growth and prosperity that add value to our places.

**KEY ELEMENTS**
Sustainable Planning and Design. Place Based Approach.

**AUDIENCE**
Local Communities and Businesses. Potential Investors. Develop and Construct Sector. Policy and Decision Makers.

**LOCATIONS**
Upholding and increasing the quality of all locations in the Borough. Placing value on town and village centres, special buildings and landscapes.

**IMPACT**
Enhancing the environmental, social and economic value of our Borough, its landscapes, towns and villages.

**VISITOR**

**VALUE PROPOSITION**
A destination marked by water, steeped in history and characterised by creative endeavour where encounters with the place and its people leave an indelible impression.

**KEY ELEMENTS**
The proposition is substantiated by a suite of experiences – Water’s Edge, Time Depth, Creative, A Taste of Place – and is supported by a range of visitor facilities and services.

**AUDIENCE**
Great Escapers, Culturally Curious, Time Together, Domestic, Niche.

**LOCATIONS**
Routes: Coastal Route, supported by a coherent network of greenways and blueways. Hubs: Gateways, Food, Service Portals: Key locations of interest, Clusters: partnering to deliver experiences.

**IMPACT**
Raise awareness and generate stand-out, Link and add depth to the offer, Make it easy for visitors to experience its many dimensions.

**INVESTMENT**

**VALUE PROPOSITION**
Location and connectedness, Skilled and creative people [Education /Skills], Quality of life and environment

**KEY ELEMENTS**
ICT; Professional, Scientific and Technical; Financial and Insurance; Administration and Support, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Accommodation and Food Manufacturing and Agri-food production.

**AUDIENCE**
Existing indigenous businesses, Prospective entrepreneurs; Inward investment organisations; and The Ards and North Down diaspora.

**LOCATIONS**
Improve the quality of infrastructure, helping to increase the geographic spread of economic activity and investment; Reduce the environmental and social impact of commuting.

**IMPACT**
Increased number of local businesses operating in high-value added/high-growth sectors; Increased Investment in Ards and North Down by businesses /organisations from outside the area; Increased number of local employee jobs within high-value added sectors; Increased Economic productivity.
THE PLACE PROPOSITION

Ards and North Down, its constituent towns, villages and rural locations, all have distinctive qualities that reinforce their and the Borough’s unique identity and sense of place. In order to retain and attract residents, visitors and investors, the underlying character of these places must be very well understood, so that new interventions are appropriate and contextual.

This calls for a continued and increased commitment to spatial planning, which takes into account these factors, unlike earlier approaches of zone led planning. It also requires greater attention be paid to the quality of landscape and urban design. This moves away from notions of designing isolated objects in space, to that of placemaking, whereby the relationships between developments, their settings and the quality of the open spaces that connect them are given full attention. In doing so, quality planning and design become key tools by which to increase and sustain physical, social and economic vitality.

THE VISITOR PROPOSITION

The key theme of the proposition has been developed from the essence of this place as ‘watermarked’ – a destination shaped by water. It suggests an opportunity to experience tranquility, creativity, great quality food and a place steeped in history.

Experience development will seek to substantiate the destination proposition, whilst also addressing the challenge of meeting the needs of the destination’s key segments; nurturing the growth of emerging niche markets and responding to more specific consumer trends. The creation of a suite of experiences – activities, products and programmes that showcase the unique characteristics of the destination – supported by a range of visitor facilities and services will seek to spread the benefits of tourism throughout the destination. Key experiences will include:

- Water’s Edge Encounters – feeding the spirit
- Time Depth Encounters – feeding the mind
- Creative Encounters – feeding the imagination
- Great Food Encounters – feeding body and soul.

THE INVESTMENT PROPOSITION

The investment proposition will support further growth and development of existing sectors of strength within Ards and North Down (ie Agri-Food, Manufacturing and Tourism), as well as the development of critical mass within emerging sectors. In doing so, it will promote the development of businesses and initiatives that are aligned with the areas Blue Green credentials. Examples of such activity include, but are not limited to: food/seafood production; marine and renewable energy; waste management and reduction; marine research, science and technology; coastal/marine tourism.

Economic development activities supported by the strategy and the communication of the investment proposition will involve targeting of/engagement with the following key audiences:

- Indigenous business
- Prospective entrepreneurs
- Inward investment organisations.
Outcomes and targets

In order to realise the vision set by this strategy, a series of outcomes and targets have been identified. Effective delivery against the identified targets will require focussed and collaborative effort by all relevant stakeholders and delivery organisations. More detailed targets are likely to be identified against the implementation of specific actions and agreed with partners.

By 2030...

**ECONOMIC**

To grow the number of jobs and business productivity within the Borough

7,500 JOBS CREATED | GVA* ACHIEVE MIN NI AVERAGE

**TOURISM**

To grow visitor spend and overnight stay within the Borough

INCREASE SHARE OF OVERNIGHT NI TRIPS TO 10% | £82m VISITOR EXPENDITURE

**Key Markets**

• Arts and Entertainment
• Professional, Scientific and Technical
• Information and Communication Technologies

*Gross Value Added

Key Markets

• The Domestic Market
• Non-Domestic Markets
• The Republic of Ireland Market
Vision

Proposition

PLACE

VISITOR

INVESTMENT

BLUE:GREEN
CREATIVELY
CONNECTED

TARGETS

JOBS CREATED

ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY

VISITOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS

VISITOR EXPENDITURE

INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR ARDS AND NORTH DOWN
Thematic Priorities

- PROMOTE TO INVEST
- CONNECT PLACES AND PEOPLE
- EQUIP WITH SKILLS AND SPACES
- EXCEL IN QUALITY AND VALUE
- NURTURE OUR ASSETS
- UNDERSTAND OUR PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL

Integrated Actions

- BOROUGH MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
- INWARD INVESTMENT AND DIASPORA PROGRAMME
- ENTERPRISE PROMOTION AND SUPPORT
- BOROUGH EVENTS STRATEGY
- BLUE AND GREENWAY NETWORK
- CONTINUOUS COASTAL ROUTE
- SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND ADVOCACY
- DIGITAL NETWORK
- COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS
- BLUE GREEN ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT
- SKILLS, APPRENTICESHIP AND VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME
- QUEEN’S PARADE AND INVESTMENT ZONES
- TOWN AND VILLAGE FLEXI SPACES
- BLUE GREEN VISITOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT
- TOWN AND VILLAGE PUBLIC REALM AND PLACEMAKING
- BLUE GREEN ACTION INITIATIVE
- CARBON REDUCTION STRATEGY
- BUILT HERITAGE PROGRAMME
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM
## Implications for Key Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>PRIORITY SECTORS</th>
<th>RELEVANT ACTIONS</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **ATTRACT/ESTABLISH INCREASED NUMBERS OF HIGH ADDED VALUE AND HIGH GROWTH BUSINESSES** | • ICT  
• Professional, Scientific and Technical  
• Financial/Insurance  
• Administration/Support sectors |  
Investment promotion  
• Marketing and Communications Strategy  
• Inward Investment and Diaspora Programme  
Business support  
• General and targeted enterprise promotion  
• Pre-enterprise support  
• Start-up and business growth support  
Infrastructure development  
• Development ofInvestment Zone*  
• Development of flexible workspace of towns and villages  
• Digital network development  
Private sector engagement/partnership development  
• Establishment of EDF to support effective engagement with private sector |
| **SUPPORT EXISTING SECTORS OF STRENGTH THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPORT/NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND HIGH PRODUCTIVITY** | • Manufacturing  
• Agri-food |  
Business Support  
• Development of sector collaborative networks  
• Skills, apprenticeship and volunteering programme  
• Horizon Scanning and Research Network to support RDI activity  
Infrastructure development  
• General and targeted enterprise promotion  
• Pre-enterprise support  
• Start-up and business growth support  
Private sector engagement/partnership development  
• EDF providing effective engagement on private sector support needs |
| **INCREASE BUSINESS START-UP AND GROWTH OF LOCAL BUSINESSES SUPPORTING ENHANCED TOURISM PERFORMANCE** | • Arts, Entertainment and Recreation  
• Accommodation/Food |  
As above (except *) and development of Queen’s Parade |
### Integrated Action Plan

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Promote to Invest</th>
<th>Connect Places and People</th>
<th>Equip with Skills and Spaces</th>
<th>Excel in Value and Quality</th>
<th>Nurture Our Assets</th>
<th>Understand Our Progress and Potential</th>
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Integrated Actions – Steps to Delivery

1. Identify and agree partners and stakeholders.
2. Establish project specific baseline data.
3. Develop detailed strategic approach.
4. Agree, prioritise, resource and deliver sub actions.
5. Monitor progress against baseline.
In Summary

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough of Ards and North Down. It is built on a base of firm evidence and shaped by a process of extensive consultation with local and regional stakeholders. The strategy’s six Thematic Priorities and 19 Integrated Actions now provide a tangible means by which the strategy outcomes will be realised.

This strategy and the targets it sets are ambitious. This reflects the vision and high degree of confidence placed in the Borough by Ards and North Down Borough Council and its many partner organisations, businesses and communities. We are fortunate to have many considerable assets and strengths across the Borough and it is these that form the building blocks for our future prosperity. Significant challenges undoubtedly lie ahead, not least those influenced by uncertainties of the current regional political and economic climate. It will therefore be incumbent upon all with an interest in the prosperity of the Borough to work together as closely as possible to realise these shared goals and to respond to new issues and opportunities as they arise.

The Strategy will be reviewed at three year intervals and further shaped through an ongoing process of collaboration with local residents, communities and businesses.
The Council extends its thanks to all who have contributed to this strategy and looks forward to continued collaboration through the course of its delivery.

A full copy of the strategy is available at [www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)