

February 7th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Tuesday, 13th February 2024** at **8:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall, Bangor & via Zoom**.

Agenda

Agenda

[AGENDA February 2024.pdf](#)

Page 1

Virtual Meeting Guidance

[Guidance for virtual Council meetings.pdf](#)

Not included

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of interest

Reports for Approval

3. Request for a Civic Event - Glastry Methodist Church

Report attached

[Item 3 - Request for a Civic Event - Glastry Methodist Church.pdf](#)

Page 4

4. Request for a Civic Reception - 2nd Comber Boys Brigade

Report attached

[Item 4 - Request for a Civic Reception - 2nd Comber Boys Brigade.pdf](#)

Page 6

Reports for Noting

5. Responses to Notices of Motion

5a. NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all

Report attached

[Item 5a - Response to NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all.pdf](#)

Page 8

[Item 5a - Appendix 1 - NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all - Reply from Mike Nesbitt MLA.pdf](#)

Page 10

[Item 5a - Appendix 2 - NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all - Joint reply Alliance Party MLAs.pdf](#)

Page 11

[Item 5a - Appendix 3 - NOM 185 - Education accessible to all - Reply Femanagh and Omagh Council.pdf](#)

Page 13

5b. NOM 189 - Strangford Lough Ferry Service Fare Increase

Report attached

Item 5b - Response to NOM 189 - Strangford Lough Ferry Service-Fare increase.pdf

Page 15

Item 5b - Appendix 1 - NOM 189-Strangford Lough Ferry Service-Fare increase - DfI
Perm Sec Response.pdf

Page 16

6. Notices of Motion

6a. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor McKimm

That this Council writes to the Secretary of State to voice its objection to the NIO consultation on Water Charges and any attempt to introduce Water Charges to Northern Ireland.

6b. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Alderman P Smith

That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DfI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20ml from the current 50ml in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.

7. Any Other Notified Business

ITEMS 8 – 20 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

8. Renewal of Lease - premises at 100 Ward Avenue, Bangor

Report attached

📎 *Item 8 - Renewal of Lease - premises at 100 Ward Avenue.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 8 - Appendix 1 - map- renewal of Lease 100 Ward Avenue.jpg* **Not included**

9. Potential acquisition of land at Ambleside, Bangor

Report attached

📎 *Item 9 - Potential acquisition of land at Ambleside Bangorv2.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 9 - Appendix 1 - Map of Ambleside land.pdf* **Not included**

10. Renewal of 2 licences to North Down Hockey Club of land at Comber Leisure Centre

Report attached

📎 *Item 10 - Renewal of 2 licences to North Down Hockey Club of land at Comber Leisure Centre.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 10 - Appendix 1 - map - renewal of licences to North Down Hockey Club.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 10 - Appendix 2 - Image of scaffolding tower - renewal of licences to North Down Hockey Club.pdfv2.pdf* **Not included**

11. Request from Curry's Amusements to use McKee Clock Arena Bangor for an Easter Funfair 2024

Report attached

📎 *Item 11 - Request from Curry's Amusements to use McKee Clock Arena, Bangor for Easter Funfair.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 11 - Appendix 1 - Proposed layout of Funfair.png* **Not included**

12. Request from Market Place Europe Limited to hold an International Market at Conway Square - May 2024




Report attached

📎 *Item 12 - Request from Market Place Europe Limited to hold an International Market at Conway Square.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *Item 12 - Appendix 1 - proposed layout Conway Square.pdf* **Not included**



13. Request from NIE for a Wayleave over land at Greyabbey cemetery

Report attached

-  *Item 13 - Request from NIE for a Wayleave over land at Greyabbey Cemetery.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 13 - Appendix 1 - Wayleave agreement - request from NIE for a wayleave.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 13 - Appendix 2 - sketch pole 691A - Request from NIE for a wayleave.png* *Not included*




14. Request to renew the licence for the use of the pitch at Islandview, Greyabbey

Report attached

-  *Item 14 - Request to renew the licence for the use of the pitch at Islandview, Greyabbey.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 14 - Appendix 1 - map - renewal of licence pitch at Islandview.pdf* *Not included*




15. Request for a storage container at Seapark, Holywood

Report attached

-  *Item 15 - Holywood Cricket Club- request for a storage container at Seapark.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 15 - Appendix 1 - photographs - request for a storage container at Seapark.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 15 - Appendix 2 - Council minute - request for a storage container at Seapark.pdf* *Not included*

16. Request from NI Water for Rectification of Title of land at Clanbrassil (Seapark) and a temporary working area at Clanbrassil

Report attached

-  *Item 16 - Request from NI Water for Rectification of Title of land at Clanbrassil (Seapark).pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 16 - Appendix 1 - location map - request from NI Water.pdf* *Not included*
-  *Item 16 - Appendix 2 - NI Water map scale 1-500- request from NI Water.pdf* *Not included*

- 📄 *Item 16 - Appendix 3 - NI Water map scale 1-1250- request from NI Water.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 16 - Appendix 4 - Transfer of Functions Doc- request from NI Water.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 16 - Appendix 5 - Working Area Map - request from NI Water.pdf* *Not included*

17. Asserted public right of way from Killinchy Road part way to Ballydrain Road, Comber

Report attached

- 📄 *Item 17 - Asserted public right of way from Killinchy Rd part way to Ballydrain Rd Comber.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 17 - Appendix 1 - Map of Asserted PRow annotated.png* *Not included*

18. Greyabbey Village Hall

Report attached

- 📄 *Item 18 - Greyabbey Village Hall.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 18 - Appendix 1 - map - Greyabbey Village Hall.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 18 - Appendix 2 - Council minute- Greyabbey Village Hall.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 18 - Appendix 3 - letter of financial assistance - Greyabbey Village Hall.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 18 - Appendix 4 - form of acceptance - Greyabbey Village Hall.pdf* *Not included*

19. Blair Mayne Bursary Awards

Report attached

- 📄 *Item 19 - Blair Mayne Bursary Awards 2024.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 19 - Appendix 1 Minutes Blair Mayne Bursary 141123.pdf* *Not included*
- 📄 *Item 19 - Appendix 2 Minutes Blair Mayne Bursary 230124.pdf* *Not included*

Report for Noting (In Confidence)

20. Absence Management Report

Report attached

- Item 20 - Absence Management Update.pdf** **Not included**
- Item 20 - Appendix 1 - Absence Dashboard Q3.pdf** **Not included**
- Item 20 - Appendix 2 - Review of LT Absence.pdf** **Not included**
- Item 20 - Appendix 3- LGA Report Extract.pdf** **Not included**
- Item 20 - Appendix 4 Absence Action Plan with update for members Q3.pdf** **Not included**

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

7 February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee of Ards and North Down Borough which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Tuesday 13 February 2024 commencing after the conclusion of the Special Council meeting.**

Yours faithfully
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval:

3. Request for a Civic Event – Glastry Methodist Church (Report attached)
4. Request for a Civic Reception - 2nd Comber Boys Brigade (Report attached)

Reports for Noting:

5. Response to Notices of Motion:
 - (a) NOM 185 – Education should be accessible to all (Report attached)
 - (b) NOM 189 Strangford Lough Ferry Service-Fare increase (Report attached)
6. Notices of Motion:
 - (a.) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor McKimm:

That this Council writes to the Secretary of State to voice its objection to the NIO consultation on Water Charges and any attempt to introduce Water Charges to Northern Ireland.
 - (b.) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Alderman P Smith:

That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DFI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20ml from the current 50ml in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.

7. Any other notified business

ITEMS 8 – 20 *IN CONFIDENCE*****

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9. Potential acquisition of land at Ambleside, Bangor (Report attached)
10. Renewal of 2 licences to North Down Hockey Club of land at Comber Leisure Centre (Report attached)
11. Request from Curry's Amusements to use McKee Clock Arena Bangor for an Easter Funfair 2024 (Report attached)
12. Request from Market Place Europe Limited to hold an International Market at Conway Square - May 2024 (Report attached)
13. Request from NIE for a Wayleave over land at Greyabbey cemetery (Report attached)
14. Request to renew the licence for the use of the pitch at Islandview, Greyabbey (Report attached)
15. Request for a storage container at Seapark, Holywood (Report attached)
16. Request from NI Water for Rectification of Title of land at Clanbrassil (Seapark) and a temporary working area at Clanbrassil (Report attached)

17. Asserted public right of way from Killinchy Road part way to Ballydrain Road, Comber (Report attached)
18. Greyabbey Village Hall (Report attached)
19. Blair Mayne Bursary Awards (Report attached)

Reports for Noting (In Confidence):

20. Absence Management Update (Report attached)

Alderman Brooks	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Graham	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor Irwin
Alderman Smith	Councillor MacArthur (Vice Chair)
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Moore (Chairman)

Unclassified

4

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	13 February 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	06 December 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Request for Civic Reception - Glastry Methodist Church
Attachments	

Background

A letter has been received from Alderman Adair, Councillor Kerr and Councillor Edmund requesting that Glastry Methodist Church be considered for a civic reception to acknowledge its 175th anniversary.

The Church contributes to the religious and spiritual wellbeing of the community of Glastry and the wider Rural area. The Church is at the heart of Glastry, and its volunteers provide services for children, young people, and the elderly. The Church involves itself with the local community group reaching out and supporting the local farming community.

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

The Council's Policy for Civic Receptions requires requests to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive and signed by at least three Elected Members. The request, once received, is assessed against set criteria and an officer's report, with an appropriate recommendation, is prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Not Applicable

5

Assessment Criteria

The subject of requests needs one of the two criteria outlined below: -

1. Demonstrate exceptional service to the Borough/Local Community and have a significant anniversary (the exceptional service should be in the areas of voluntary or charitable work. The Anniversary should be a milestone of 25, 50 or 100 years.)

OR

2. Mark a very significant or unique achievement. (Defined as an achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient has a strong association within the Borough).

This request has been submitted in line with the agreed procedures and while it does not meet the criteria for a civic reception as stated in point 1 above – milestone of 25, 50 or 100 years – 175 years is considered to be very significant and therefore the view would be that the request should be acceded to. The cost could be met from the 2023/24 civic budget.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that that the Council proceeds to offer Glastry Methodist Church a Civic Reception to acknowledge 175 years since the formation of the Church and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

Unclassified

6

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	13 February 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	15 January 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Request for Civic Reception - 2 nd Comber Boys Brigade
Attachments	

Background

A letter has been received from Councillor Douglas, Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Adair requesting that 2nd Comber Boys Brigade be considered for a civic reception to acknowledge its 125th anniversary.

The Boys Brigade leaders have been working alongside boys and young men from the town for 125 years and hope to celebrate and promote the organisation with special events this year. It is a voluntary organisation run by locally trained, dedicated and caring church volunteers who are committed to creating a safe and fun environment for every child and young person. Its aim is to help all age groups to grow in confidence, gain a sense of belonging and develop new skills.

The Company is made up of approximately 147 boys/young men ranging from the age of 4 to 18. They meet on a weekly basis and partake in a variety of activities such as crafts, outdoor pursuits, music, bible study, sports, and Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Unclassified

7

Council Policy on Civic Receptions

The Council's Policy for Civic Receptions requires requests to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive and signed by at least three Elected Members. The request, once received, is assessed against set criteria and an officer's report, with an appropriate recommendation, is prepared for consideration by the Corporate Services Committee.

Assessment Criteria

The subject of requests needs one of the two criteria outlined below: -

1. Demonstrate exceptional service to the Borough/Local Community and have a significant anniversary (the exceptional service should be in the areas of voluntary or charitable work. The Anniversary should be a milestone of 25, 50 or 100 years.)

OR

2. Mark a very significant or unique achievement. (Defined as an achievement which would be recognised throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and the recipient has a strong association within the Borough).

This request has been submitted in line with the agreed procedures and meets the criteria set out in point one above. The cost could be met from the 2024/25 civic budget.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that that the Council proceeds to offer 2nd Comber Boys Brigade a Civic Reception to acknowledge 125 years since its formation and should the offer be accepted, proceeds to arrange same on a date to be agreed by relevant parties.

Unclassified

8

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	13 February 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	.
Date of Report	22 November 2023
File Reference	NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all
Legislation	'-
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NOM 185 - Education should be accessible to all
Attachments	* email from M Nesbitt, MLA for Strangford *Letter from the Alliance Party MLA's for Strangford and North Down *Letter from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council *Letter from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon

A Notice of Motion was debated at Corporate Committee in October 2023 and subsequently ratified by Council which stated:

“This Council believes:

- Education should be accessible to all who seek it and embedding a culture of lifelong learning in our society is essential to enabling people to realise their potential.
- Part-time flexible learning is crucial to meeting the skills needed to build a modern, inclusive and green economy.

Not Applicable

- Part-time students are a unique demographic, they are more likely to have disabilities, come from disadvantaged backgrounds, have caring responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives, and in general, be part of a 'hard to reach' group who missed out on full-time study.
- Lifelong learning, including non-formal education, addresses social issues, strengthens communities and builds civic engagement. It is the most effective tool for meeting social policy objectives and creating positive social change.
- Recognises that lifelong learning must become a meaningful and developed policy area with tangible actions and outcomes, underpinned by the wealth of best practice and innovation from across the UK and Ireland.

This Council therefore resolves to:

To assist in the promotion, through the dissemination of material in support of a Lifelong Learning campaign, to inform and raise public awareness of how lifelong learning transforms lives and communities.

Write to Strangford and North Down MLAs and MPs to prioritise funding for formal and informal part-time education when the Executive is formed.

Encourage Strangford and North Down MLAs to form an All-Party Group on Lifelong Learning to support and evidence and best-practice informed approach to policy making, in collaboration with adult education bodies and other stakeholders to form a voice for Lifelong Learning in the Assembly when an Executive is formed.

To write to other Councils in Northern Ireland to take similar action and to write to MPs and MLAs for their respective areas in a similar manner."

Letters were sent from the Chief Executive to the other 10 Councils, and the 2 MP's and the 9 MLA's covering Strangford and North Down on 20 November 2023. A reply was received by email on 21 November 2023 from M Nesbitt, MLA for Strangford and a copy is attached. A letter was received on 29 November 2023 from the 4 Alliance MLA's representing Strangford and North Down and a copy is attached. A letter was received on 15 December 2023 from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and a copy is attached. A letter was received on 21 December 2023 from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council and a copy is attached. Acknowledgement emails have also been received from a number of Councils and Michelle McIlveen, MLA, Strangford.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the responses.

From: Nesbitt, Mike <mike.nesbitt@mla.niassembly.gov.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 12:59 PM
To: Reid, Stephen <Stephen.Reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Access to Education

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

Dear Stephen

I am in agreement that education is an essential element in achieving my ambition of a Prosperity Agenda for All, where everyone fulfils their potential.

I am happy also to support an exploration of the benefits of a new All Party Group. My only caution is wishing to satisfy myself it would not duplicate the work of others.

Best wishes

Mike Nesbitt
MLA for Strangford
Sent from my iPhone



Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Bangor Town Hall
Castle Park Road
Bangor
BT20 4BT

28th November 2023

Dear Stephen

Thank-you for your letter dated 21st November 2023 which was sent to all the MLA's in Strangford and North Down constituencies.

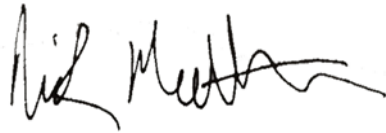
We write to confirm we welcome Council's support for Lifelong Learning and look forward to seeing the campaign to promote it locally take shape. We will all be glad to support its development any way we can.

Alliance supports the promotion of Lifelong Learning in Northern Ireland and included a policy in our 2022 Assembly Manifesto relating to a 'Lifelong Learning Guarantee' whereby access to Level 3 study would be free of charge. We see Lifelong Learning as a key part of tackling educational inequality and should form part of any skills strategy going forward.

To this end, we would support any policies brought forward by an incoming Executive to support and grow access to Lifelong Learning and would do all we could to ensure appropriate funding is allocated to support access to both formal and informal part-time education. However, we are all acutely aware of the funding pressures in our public finances at this time and this would of course need to be balanced against other competing priorities in the educational and skills field.

Concerning the formation of an APG on Lifelong Learning, there is currently no facility to establish a new APG given the ongoing stalemate at Stormont. However, we would be willing to engage with colleagues from other parties interested in taking this forward should the institutions be restored. We would further urge those currently vetoing the formation of an Executive and Assembly to end their boycott so those elected to serve the people of Northern Ireland can start delivering on this and all the other issues facing our constituents.

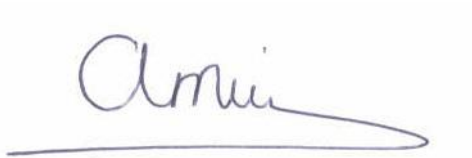
Best regards



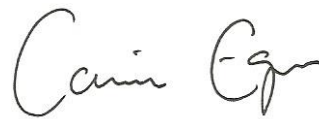
Nick Mathison MLA
Alliance Party MLA for Strangford



Kellie Armstrong MLA
Alliance Party MLA for Strangford



Andrew Muir MLA
Alliance Party MLA for North Down



Connie Egan MLA
Alliance Party MLA for North Down

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

13

Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 14 December 2023

Email: democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com

Mr Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Townhall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Dear Mr Reid,

Re: Access to Education

At the Council meeting on 5 December 2023, Members noted your correspondence dated 20 November 2023 and asked me to write to you to convey their support for your Motion on Access to Education.

As requested in your correspondence, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will make representations to the MPs and MLAs for the District to request that they support the recommendations of this motion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh".

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

Roger Wilson
Chief Executive



**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon**
Borough Council

14



11 December 2023

Mr Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall
The Castle
BANGOR
BT20 4BT

Dear Stephen

LIFELONG LEARNING

The Council at its meeting held on 27 November 2023 considered and noted your letter in connection with the above.

Yours sincerely

Roger Wilson
Chief Executive

Armagh Office
The Palace Demesne
Friary Road
Armagh
BT60 4EL

Banbridge Office
Civic Building
Downshire Road
Banbridge
BT32 3JY

Craigavon Office
Craigavon Civic &
Conference Centre
Lakeview Road
Craigavon
BT64 1AL

☎ 0300 0300 900

✉ info@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk
🌐 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Unclassified

15

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	13 February 2024
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	.
Date of Report	10 January 2024
File Reference	NOM 189-Strangford Lough Ferry Service-Fare increase
Legislation	'-
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	NOM 189 - Strangford Lough Ferry Service-Fare increase
Attachments	*Letter from the Permanent Secretary, Department of Infrastructure

A Notice of Motion was debated at Council in December 2023 which stated:

“That this Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) objecting to the significant proposed percentage increases to charges involving the structures along with pedestrian and various vehicle usage, availing of the Strangford Ferry Services.”

A letter was sent from the Chief Executive to The Permanent Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure on 21 December 2023 and a reply on 9 January 2024 which is attached.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the response.

From the Permanent Secretary
Dr Denis McMahon

Your Reference: NOM 189
Our Reference: SCORR-0537-2023

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall
The Castle
BANGOR
BT20 4BT
Via email:
Stephen.reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Room 701
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB
Telephone (028) 9054 1175
Email: perm.sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

9 January 2024

Dear Mr. Reid

STRANGFORD FERRY PROPOSED FARE INCREASES

Thank you for your email of 21 December 2023 advising of the motion passed by Ards and North Down Borough Council in relation to the Proposed Fare Increase on Strangford Ferry. I note the objections to the proposed percentage increases of between 30-32%, which the Council believes will negatively impact tourism, education and the local businesses who rely upon the service, and the Council proposals that the rises should be more in line with the current falling rate of inflation which is now 3.9%.

On 20 September 2023, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris MP wrote to NICS Departments, directing them to launch public consultations on measures to support budget sustainability and raise additional revenue.

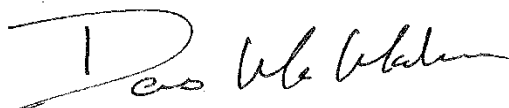
Fares for the ferry service have remained at the same level since the last increase which was implemented in November 2009. An uplift is therefore now needed to address current budgetary pressures and to reflect the increased running costs of the ferry service since November 2009. Were the proposed fare increase not to be introduced, the Department would need to make significant savings from the current ferry operation, which is likely to result in a reduced service for customers.

To assist with the proposed fare uplift, current percentage discounts available on fares for children and Strangford Ferry SmartCard holders will however remain in place.

I have passed on the Council's thanks to the management and staff of the Strangford Ferry, and the acknowledgement that they go above and beyond to provide an excellent service for their local communities.

The Department for Infrastructure remains committed to enabling educational, social, and business links between the Ards Peninsula and South Down, through the delivery of a sustainable Strangford Ferry service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Denis McMahon', written in a cursive style.

DR DENIS McMAHON
DfI Permanent Secretary

cc: Julie Thompson
Judith Andrews
Phillip Wilson
Ann-Marie Cunningham
Ptddso@Infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
Maurarose Gruhn