

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

6 June 2025

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 12 June 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Bangor Marine and Harbour Port Marine Safety Code Audit - presentation by Alexandra Thomson from Orcades Marine Management Consultants (Report and copy presentation attached)

Reports for Approval

4. Pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 2025/26 (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

5. Tourism Half Yearly Unit Plan Report (Report attached)
6. AND Events and Festivals Fund 24/25 Summary and AND Tourism Events and Festival Fun Update Report 2025/26 (Report attached)
7. Visitor Information Centres Annual Report (Report attached)
8. Economic Development Half Yearly Unit Plan Report (Report attached)
9. Go Succeed Update (Report attached)
10. Regeneration Half Yearly Unit Plan Report (Report attached)
11. Feasibility Study Comber Enterprise Hub (Report attached)

- 12. Response to Notice of Motion - Vacancy and Dereliction Studies (Report attached)
- 13. Completion of Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024 - 2025 (Report attached)
- 14. Ballygowan Play AND Explore Park (Small Settlements Programme) (Report attached)
- 15. Chamber Grant Assistance Programme (Report attached)
- 16. Capital Projects Half Yearly Unit Plan Report (Report attached)
- 17. Notices of Motion referred to Committee by Council 28 May 2025
- 17.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCollum

"Given the market failure and severe shortage of Business Accommodation in the Borough, as highlighted by the reduction of the non-domestic Rates base, that this Council urgently prepares a report detailing potential plans to develop different types of Business Accommodation in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber, Donaghadee and Portaferry. This Business Accommodation would be to encourage start-up businesses, to help business to grow and to attract new business to the Borough"

- 18. Any Other Notified Business

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

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

- 19. Tender Extension for Academy for People with Disabilities (Report attached)
- 20. Tender Extension for Transport Academy (Report attached)
- 21. Local Economic Partnership – Sub-Regional Economic Plan (Report attached)

Reports for Noting (In Confidence)

- 22. Bangor Marina Q4 2024-2025 (Report attached)
- 23. Pickie Fun Park Period 2 2024-2025 (Report attached)
- 24. Exploris Period 2 2024-2025 (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)

Alderman Adair (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McDowell	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken (Chair)
Councillor Brady	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Smart
Councillor Hennessy	Councillor Thompson

Unclassified

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ITEM 3

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Interim Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	18 April 2025
File Reference	DEVP
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Bangor Marina and Harbour - Port Marine Safety Code Audit
Attachments	Appendix 1: Designated Person Audit Findings Bangor

Background

As previously agreed by the Council, following a Harbours Safety Update report, a new 'Designated Person' had been appointed to provide oversight and audit of the Council's compliance with its duties under the Port Marine Safety Code.

Orcades Marine conducted an independent Port Marine Safety Code Audit in February 2025 at the five Council run harbours including Bangor Harbour which is operated on behalf of Council by Boatfolk Ltd.

The Bangor Harbour Master was in attendance to assist the auditor on 13 February 2025 and provided a tour of the facilities and allowed access to relevant documentation.

The report attached at Appendix 1 details the findings of the audit.

Not Applicable

Summary of Findings

Good practices were observed across the operations during the auditor's visit and a comprehensive Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) is in place with records meeting the requirements of the PMSC, with some sections requiring updating as detailed following recommendations:

- The MSMS should be updated to include the correct committee, update the organogram accordingly and include details of the Duty Holder.
- Section 3.3.1 should include a statement that the duty holder cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the grounds that they do not have particular skills.
- It is recommended that the Key Performance indicators and objective performance are noted on the Boatfolk website.
- Minutes are taken for at the internal safety meetings for reference purpose.
- A section included in the MSMS summarising the legislative framework for general/special directions.
- The various methods which the Harbour Master promulgates information such as such as harbour assist, text message, email, social media, this should be documented in MSMS.
- The importance of the review of relevant MAIB reports when conducting risk assessments should be documented in the risk assessment section of the MSMS.
- The responsibility of ANDBC to report defects of Aids to Navigation should be documented in the MSMS.
- All Harbour craft should be coded to the relevant MCA Commercial Vessel Code.
- The Marine Safety Policy should be reviewed to ensure relevance.

The Designated Person, Alexandra Thompson, will present the audit findings directly to the Place and Prosperity Committee, as the 'Duty Holder' under the Port Marine Safety Code and in compliance with the guidance contained therein.

The recommended changes will soon be implemented and a further update report brought before Members in due course.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the Designated Person Audit findings.



Port Marine Safety Code Audit

Bangor Marina



OP-587

boatfolk

Commercial in Confidence

This report is issued to:	
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	Bangor, Northern Ireland
	BT20 5ED
Contact Name	Kevin Baird
Position	Harbour Master & Marina Manager
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This report was issued by:	
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Prepared by	Checked by	Authorised by	Date
Alexandra Thomson	David Thomson	David Thomson	17/02/2025
Revision Number	Issue Date	Revision Details	Distribution List Index Number
1.0	17/02/2025	First Issue	1,2,3
2.0	25/04/2025	Final re-issue	4,5

Distribution List Key		
Company	Responsible Person	Distribution List Index Number
ANDBC	William Angus	1
ANDBC	Peter Cauldwell	2
ANDBC	Chrissy Henderson	3
ANDBC	Alison Stobie	4
ANDBC	Taylor Jayne	5

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1. Introduction

An independent Port Marine Safety Code Audit was carried out by Orcades Marine Management Consultants Ltd. on the 13th February 2025 at Bangor Marina, Northern Ireland. The Harbour Master was in attendance to assist the Auditor over a 1.5 day period and was happy to provide a tour of the facilities and allow access to relevant documentation. The following report details the findings of the audit.

2. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an independent assessment of Bangor Marinas compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). Overall good practises were observed across the operations during the visit. The Marina effectively utilizes various software tools to enhance safety and performance such as harbour assist for operational efficiency, safety culture to streamline safety processes, and ihasco for personnel training and Continued Professional Development (CPD). The Marine Safety Management System is concise and meets the requirements of the PMSC, some sections require updating as detailed in the summary of recommendations, to ensure all processes are suitably documented. Overall Bangor Harbour has demonstrated a strong commitment to the PMSC and implementing the recommended improvements will strengthen the Marine Safety Management System and its processes.

2.1 Summary of Recommendations

- ⚙️ Duty holder for Bangor Marina is ANDBC, the department assigned roles of Duty Holder is not clearly understood or documented. Confirm with ANDBC and update organogram for clarity. Named Duty Holders should be listed in the MSMS.
- ⚙️ Section 3.3.1 should include a statement that the duty holder cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the grounds that they do not have particular skills.
- ⚙️ There is no record for publicly reporting performance against PMSC, recommend posting KPIs and objective performance on website.
- ⚙️ A list of internal safety meetings held throughout the year have been provided, recommend that minutes are taken for these meetings for reference purposes.
- ⚙️ Recommend including a section summarising the legislative framework for general/special directions.
- ⚙️ There are various means that the Harbour Master promulgates information such as harbour assist, text message, email, social media, this should be documented in the MSMS.
- ⚙️ Reference to the importance of the review of relevant MAIB reports when conducting risk assessments should be documented in the risk assessment section of the MSMS.
- ⚙️ The responsibility of ANDBC to report defects of Aids to Navigation should be documented in the MSMS.
- ⚙️ Harbour craft should be coded to the relevant MCA Commercial Vessel Code.
- ⚙️ Recommend reviewing Marine Safety Policy (Last signed 2018) to ensure relevance.

3. Port Details

3.1 Bangor Harbour

Bangor Marina is located in the centre of Bangor City and has over 500 marina berths, commercial berths for fishing vessels and a range of offered amenities as follows:

- ⚙ Toilets and showers
- ⚙ Waste removal for grey and black water
- ⚙ Laundry
- ⚙ Trolleys
- ⚙ WiFi
- ⚙ Recycling
- ⚙ Fuel
- ⚙ Chandlery nearby
- ⚙ Parking



Figure 1 Bangor Marina Entrance

3.2 Organogram

Please see the below organogram (extract from Bangor Marina Marine Safety Management System – Duty Holder requires updating) showing the management structure of the Marina along with clear lines of communication.

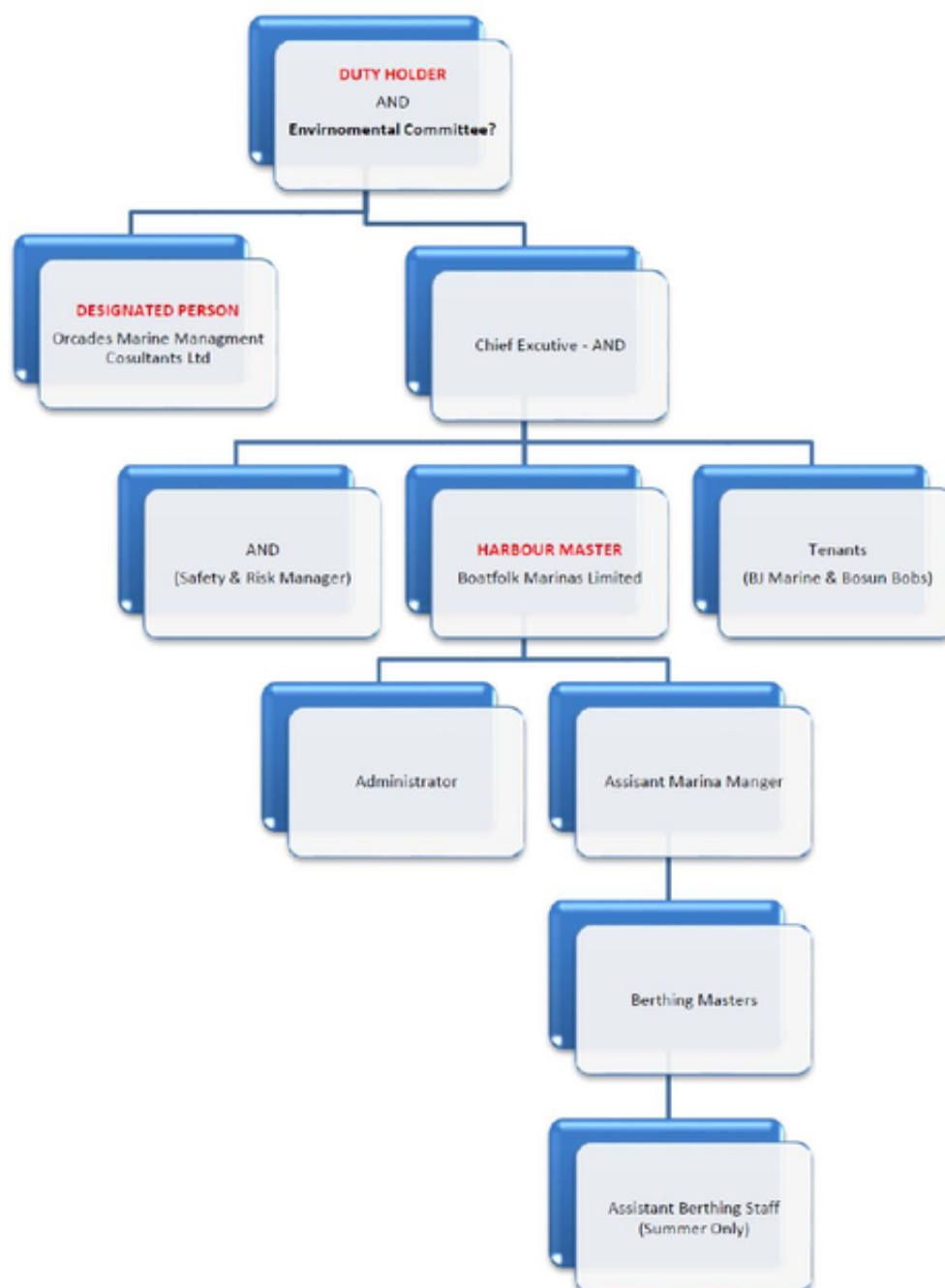


Figure 2 Organogram

4. Audit Details

The following sections provide the checklist and responses as per the Port Marine Safety Code, Guide to Good Practise 'Aide Memoire'

4.1 Designated Person

1.1	Who has been appointed DP and when was the appointment
SMS Ref	3.1.5 Designated Person
	The designated person has recently been appointed as Orcades Marine Management Consultants Ltd. and this has been included in the MSMS (<i>Contents of MSMS to be updated to reflect</i>)
1.2	Is the DP Role outside of any management function within the Harbour Authority
SMS Ref	3.1.5 Designated Person
	Yes – Third Party Marine Consultants
1.3	Does the DP provide “Independent” assurance about the operation of the Port Marine Safety Management System, how is this undertaken?
SMS Ref	3.1.5 Designated Person
	Bi-annual PMSC Audits.
1.4	Does the DP have direct access to the highest level of authority (Duty Holder)
SMS Ref	3.2 Organisation Structure
	As per structure in above SMS section.
1.5	When did the DP last audit compliance with the Code:
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour PMSC Document review
	July 2024
1.6	Was the audit report formally presented to the governing body at the first opportunity? Provide the minutes when the report was presented to the board:
Doc Ref	Quarterly Report to ANDBC
	Yes as per above report.
1.7	If so, when
Doc Ref	Quarterly Report to ANDBC
	September 2024
1.8	What port management group meetings does the DP attend
Doc Ref	N/A
	BPA where practical, Scottish Maritime Cluster, other various conferences.
1.9	How closely do the competencies of the DP match the competencies recommended by the GTGP
Doc Ref	N/A
	Competency checks of the newly appointed Designated Person have been reviewed by the Duty Holder during quotation / procurement process.

4.2 Duty Holders

2.1	Are the Duty Holders clearly identified and published?
SMS Ref	3.2 Functional Structure for Harbours Management
	<i>Duty holder for Bangor Marina is ANDBC, the department assigned roles of Duty Holder is not clearly understood by the Harbour Master. Confirm with ANDBC and update organogram for clarity. Named Duty Holders should be listed in the MSMS.</i>
2.2	Is it stated that they are collectively and individually responsible
SMS Ref	3.3.1 AND – Duty Holder
	Responsibilities highlighted in the above-mentioned section in the MSMS.
2.3	..and that they cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the Code on the grounds they do not have particular skills
SMS Ref	3.3.1 AND – Duty Holder
	<i>Section should include a statement that they cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the grounds they do not have particular skills</i>
2.4	Are there clear lines of communications from the ports professional staff to the governing body and vice versa
SMS Ref	3.2 Organisation Structure
	Lines of communications defined in structure.
2.5	Are the roles and functions of staff clear and formal
SMS Ref	3.3 Responsibilities
	Yes – Responsibilities for key personnel provided.
2.6	Has the governing body published their commitment to the code
Doc Ref	Declaration of Conformity
	1 st December 2021 – Port Marine Safety Code Statement of Compliance
2.7	Publicly reported their performance against the PMSC on an annual basis?
Doc Ref	N/A
	<i>No record of publicly reporting performance against PMSC, recommend posting KPI and objective performance on website.</i>
2.8	Published plans and assessments against their performance in meeting the obligations against the code at least once every three years?
Doc Ref	Bangor Safety Pan 2022 to 2024 and Bangor Safety Plan 2025 to 2027
	Safety plan in place as above, no record of publishing - recommend as above in question 2.7.
2.9	If so, when
Doc Ref	N/A
	N/A

2.10	Is PMSC a standing agenda on board meetings
Doc Ref	Quarterly Report to Council
Yes	
2.11	Is there a standing safety committee meeting. Provide the minutes of the last two safety committee meetings
Doc Ref	2025 Safety Meetings
<i>A list of internal safety meetings has been provided – recommend minutes are recorded.</i>	
Health and Safety review carried out by third party consultant Omega Consulting in July 2024.	

4.3 Duties and Powers

3.1	Is the legislation, including all local legislation, available and up to date:
SMS Ref	6.6 Enforcement
Relevant legislation is held on file for reference and reviewed during MSMS review.	
3.2	When was the legislation last reviewed:
SMS Ref	N/A
January 2025	
3.3	Does the Harbour Authority have the ability to make General Directions:
SMS Ref	N/A
<i>Yes, recommend including a section detailing legislative framework.</i>	
3.4	If so, have General Directions been formally given to regulate marine operations
SMS Ref	N/A
<i>Yes, recommend including a section detailing legislative framework.</i>	
3.5	Has the Harbour Authority made Byelaws:
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour Byelaws
Yes	
3.6	If so, when were they last updated
SMS Ref	Bangor Harbour Byelaws
2005	
3.7	Has a statement been included in the Harbour Authority's plan about their legal duties & power
SMS Ref	N/A
<i>No – statement to be added – as per recommendation above, include section detailing legislative framework.</i>	
3.8	Is the jurisdiction of the Harbour Authority clearly defined and known
Doc Ref	

4.4 Consultation & Information Dissemination

4.1	How does the Harbour Authority formally consult with its employee forum, health and safety committees
SMS Ref	N/A
4.2	How does the Harbour Authority consult with contractors or related service providers: How are the contractors obliged to conform to the safety requirements of the Ports SMS
SMS Ref	5.1.2 Contractors
	Signed contractor's agreement, to comply with Bangor Contractors Responsibilities and Requirements.
4.3	How does the Harbour Authority consult with its stakeholders?
SMS Ref	N/A
	There are various means to promulgate information through Harbour Assist, text message, email, website, social media. <i>Recommend documenting this in the MSMS.</i>
4.4	How is information publicly disseminated by the Harbour Authority
SMS Ref	N/A
	As above
4.5	Is the current list of local notices or information notes up to date and how are they published?
Ref	N/A
	As above

4.5 Risk Assessment

5.1	Have all routine and non-routine risks associated with marine operations been formally assessed?
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour – Navigational Risk Assessment
	A comprehensive navigational risk assessment has been carried out to include potential risk associated with the marine operations within Bangor Harbour.
5.2	Have the environmental consequences to the Safety Management System and consequent risk control measures been assessed and implemented:
Doc Ref	Sustainability & Environmental Policy Jan 2025
	Yes – Boatfolk have a standalone policy for sustainability & environmental
5.3	Have past events and accidents/MAIB reports been analysed in preparing the risk assessments:
SMS Ref	N/A
	A comprehensive navigation risk assessment has been completed and is regularly review. <i>Recommend including reference to MAIB reports and their importance in the marine operations risk assessment process.</i>
5.4	Have the risk assessments been completed by competent people
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour – Navigational Risk Assessment
	All risk assessments either completed or signed off by the acting Harbour Master.
5.5	Do the risk assessments clearly identify those risks that are not ALARP (as low as reasonably practicable)
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour – Navigational Risk Assessment
	As per Navigational Risk Assessment
5.6	Are the risk assessments continuously re-assessed with new hazards and changed risks, properly identified
SMS Ref	Risk Assessment & Control
	Yes – as per above mentioned procedure with MSMS
5.7	When were the risk assessments last reviewed:
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour – Navigational Risk Assessment
	January 2025.
5.8	How does the port help employees understand the risk they will encounter from the risk assessments? How does the port help them dynamically assess each situation on the day
SMS Ref	7.2 Promulgation of Risk Assessments
	Regular toolbox talks and ongoing training

4.6 Safety Management System

6.	Have the port developed a Safety Management System that
6.1	Defines the Safety Policy
SMS Ref	11 Marine Safety Policy
	Signed marine safety policy. <i>Recommend review for relevance (last reviewed 2018)</i>
6.2	States the procedure to implement those policy (s)
SMS Ref	Bangor Marine Safety Management System and Safety Plan 2022-2024
	Continual monitoring with KPIs and Objectives.
6.3	Produces instructions and checklist to comply with the procedures
SMS Ref	Bangor Marine Safety Management System
	Procedure and instructions noted throughout the MSMS.
5.4	Generates accident and incident reports
SMS Ref	6.5 Incident Reporting & Investigation
	Incidents listed on Quarterly Reports – <i>Close out of incidents and accidents should be documented</i>
5.5	Defines the organisation and personnel roles
SMS Ref	3.3 Responsibilities
	Yes – as per the above-mentioned Section of the MSMS
5.6	Sets standards and levels of qualifications for various employees and contractors
SMS Ref	5.1 Training and Competence
	Qualification requirements/responsibilities are defined within the MSMS, training matrix also maintained – Bangor Marina – Overview of Staff Training Matrix. Various training courses are taken via the online training platform ihasco.
5.7	Develops performance measuring methods
Doc Ref	Marine Safety Plan
	Marine Safety Plan includes measurable objectives and KPIs
5.8	Generates plans and assessments against the ports performance (3 yearly)
Doc Ref	Marine Safety Plan 2022-2024 and 2025 – 2027
	Yes
5.9	Does the SMS deal with preparedness for emergencies
SMS Ref	9 – Contingency & Emergency Planning and Bangor Marina Emergency Plan
	As per above mentioned MSMS Section, Boatfolk has established emergency response plans and procedure to address specific marine emergency incidents.
5.10	Does the SMS establish a formal procedure for notification of various publications (MAIB reports etc)
SMS Ref	N/A
	<i>Stakeholder engagement section required in MSMS to include procedures for notification of publications.</i>

5.11	Does the SMS require the provision of aids to navigation to be based on formal risk assessment
SMS Ref	N/A
	<i>ANDBC are responsible for reporting to Irish Lights, this should be documented in the MSMS.</i>
5.12	Does the SMS provide for works in the harbour, especially dredging operations, liable to interfere with navigation
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	As per above mentioned section of the MSMS, last hydrographic survey carried out in 2019. Minimal silt issues within the harbour.
5.13	Does the SMS identify safe pilot boarding and disembarkation areas and incorporate the latest statutory requirements and codes of practise
SMS Ref	N/A
	N/A
5.14	Does the SMS cover the use of harbour craft and the provision of moorings
SMS Ref	4.4.2 Workboats and 4.4.3 Mooring
	<i>Recommend the workboat is coded by the appropriate MCA Workboat Code.</i>
5.15	Does the SMS govern the use of the power to regulate the mooring of vessels in the harbour
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour Byelaws 2005
	Part III Berthing and Mooring
5.16	Does the SMS provide procedures for reporting deficiencies on visiting ships to an appropriate manager including arrangement for deficiencies to be reported to the MCA
SMS Ref	6.5 Incident Reporting & Investigation
	<i>Recommend including in above section procedures for reporting deficiencies on visiting vessel.</i>
5.17	Who wrote the SMS and when was it last updated /amended
SMS Ref	Document Revision
	Kevin Baird created June 2015 and reviewed regularly, last review 2025.
5.18	Are the employees required to read and sign the SMS
SMS Ref	All
	Yes – signed MSMS sighted
5.19	How does port management test that the SMS is working
Doc Ref	Marine Safety Plans
	Continuous monitoring of Objectives and KPIs as defined in the marine safety plans.
5.20	Has the Harbour Authority kept under review their powers and the extent of their jurisdiction
SMS Ref	3.3.4 Harbour Master
	Yes – note the responsibility for the Harbour Master to keep under review powers, bye-laws and directions is documented within the MSMS.

5.21	Are available powers to direct vessels used to ensure the safety of navigation
SMS Ref	4.1 Management of Navigation
	Harbours have the powers to regulate the entry and movement of boats to ensure safety of navigation as per Byelaws.
5.22	Is there a policy on enforcement and prosecution
SMS Ref	6.6 Enforcement
	Yes
5.23	When was the policy last practised
SMS Ref	7.1.2 Enforcement
	Not recorded
5.24	Has the Harbour Authority ever prosecuted an offender
SMS Ref	7.1.2 Enforcement
	There has not been a requirement for the Harbour Master to Prosecute.
5.25	Are the Harbour Masters powers determined in *byelaws and *Directions
Doc Ref	Bangor Harbour Byelaws
	Yes
5.26	Does the Harbour Authority provide a pilotage service
SMS Ref	4.2 Pilotage
	No pilotage services are provided at Bangor Marina.
5.27	Has the Harbour Authority risk assessed whether and what pilotage service they must provide
Doc Ref	Bangor Navigational Risk Assessment
	Yes and it has not been found to be necessary at this time.
5.28	Has the Harbour Authority risk assessed to determine whether pilotage should be compulsory
SMS Ref	
	N/A
5.29	If pilotage is compulsory have pilotage directions been issued:
SMS Ref	
	N/A
5.30	Does the SMS address the duty to keep the need for pilotage under review
SMS Ref	4.2 Pilotage
	Yes
5.32	Does the SMS address the authorisation of pilots
SMS Ref	
	N/A
5.33	Does the SMS address the arrangement under which its authorised pilots are engaged direct employment
SMS Ref	
	N/A
5.34	Does the SMS address the approval of pilot launches
SMS Ref	

N/A	
5.35	Does the SMS address the issue of exemption certificates
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.36	Is there a system in place to ensure pilots are properly rested before duty
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.37	Is proper time allocated for the development of the pilotage passage plan
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.38	Has a formal risk assessment been used to identify when more than one pilot would be needed
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.39	Do pilot boats meet statutory requirements and appropriate codes
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.40	Does the Harbour Authority have formal procedures for assessing applicants for pilot exemption certificates and issue of subsequent certificates and revalidations
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.41	Does the Harbour Authority have formal written agreements with Pilot Exemption Certificate holders and their employers to regulate the use of certificates
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.42	Does the Harbour Authority ensure pilots and PEC holders are appropriately trained and that their authorisation are re-validated every 5 year
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.43	Does the Harbour Authority formally require the use of passage plans (e.g. in the pilots directions)
SMS Ref	4.1 Management of Navigation
No	
5.44	Do they publish up to date guidance or general passage plans adopted by the port
SMS Ref	N/A
Charts and entrance positions available in the MSMS or online	
5.45	Does the Safety Management System cover the use of harbour craft including tugs and the provision of moorings
SMS Ref	4.4.3 Mooring
As per above-mentioned procedures	
5.46	Have the risks associated with the use of harbour tugs been formally assessed?
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.47	Has the harbour authority developed towage guidelines including operations in restricted visibility
SMS Ref	

N/A	
5.48	Have the towage guidelines been reflected in the directions
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.49	Has the Harbour Authority ensured that harbour craft including tugs are fit for purpose and that the crew are appropriately trained and qualified
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.50	Has the Harbour Authority ensured that harbour craft including tugs are fit for purpose and that the crew are appropriately trained and qualified.
SMS Ref	
N/A	
5.51	Do all small commercial craft operated by the Harbour Authority possess a valid small commercial vessel certificate
SMS Ref	4.4.2 Workboats
No – recommend appropriate MCA code certification	
5.52	What qualifications do the Coxswains have, are they appropriate and in date
Doc Ref	Bangor Marina – Overview of Staff Training Matrix
As per training schedule.	

4.7 Conservancy Observations

7.1	Are properly maintained aids to navigation provided
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Responsibilities for inspecting and maintaining Aids to Navigation is documented in the MSMS Inspected daily and reported in duty log book. Irish Lights portal used to report defects.
7.2	Are aids to navigation subject to periodic review by relevant General Lighthouse Authority (GLA)
Doc Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Yes – Commissioners of Irish Lights.
7.3	If so, when was the last audit completed by the GLA and what were the findings
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Local Lighthouse Authority Audit Report – Ards and North Down BC (Bangor) 2017
7.4	Have any changes to navigation aids been advised to the GLA and properly recorded
SMS Ref	7.2 Aids to Navigation
	All aids to navigation are established and maintained in accordance with the availability criteria laid down by the commissioners of Irish Lights. Defects are reported via the online portal for Irish Light.
7.5	Are hydrographic surveys completed, in accordance with any risk assessments, if so when was the last?
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Hydrographic surveys were carried out in 2019.
7.6	Are the results of the surveys assessed and actioned properly
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Dredging is carried out when a survey identifies a 20% reduction in the published harbour depths.
7.7	Are the results published and disseminated to stakeholders
SMS Ref	4.3 Conservancy
	Yes – through Harbour Assist.

4.8 Directions

8.1	Does the Harbour Authority have a procedure of how General Directions should be given
SMS Ref	N/A
Recommend including in the MSMS	
8.2	Does the Harbour Authority have a procedure of how a Special Direction should be given
SMS Ref	N/A
Recommend including in the MSMS	

4.9 Training

9.1	Does the Harbour Authority have a stated training policy
SMS Ref	5.1 Training and Competence
	Yes
9.2	Is there a training programme
Doc Ref	Bangor Marina – Overview of Staff Training Matrix
	Yes
9.3	Are training records maintained
SMS Ref	Bangor Marina – Overview of Staff Training Matrix
	Physical copies of training records held in the main office.
9.4	Do persons appointed to positions with responsibility for the safety of marine operations possess appropriate competencies, for example, DP, Harbour Master, Assistant Harbour Master, Marine Operatives, Pilots, Pilot boat crew, VTS Operator, Tug skippers and crews
SMS Ref	Section3 – Organisation
	Competencies are defined in job descriptions, roles and responsibilities in the MSMS.

4.10 Vessel Traffic Services

10.1	Has the need to VTS been identified by risk assessment
Doc Ref	Bangor Navigational Risk Assessment
	Marine Operations have been thoroughly risk assessed with no requirement for VTS identified.
10.2	Does the Harbour Authority provide VTS or information service, navigational service, traffic organisation service, local port services (LPS)
SMS Ref	
	N/A
10.3	If VTS is considered excessive or inappropriate by the Harbour Authority is other "Port Information" provided, describe that port information
Doc Ref	N/A
	Port information is provided through visit harbour assist, website, email/text messaging, social media.
10.4	When was the VTS or provision of port information last audited and reviewed
SMS Ref	
	N/A
10.5	During this audit and review was the effectiveness of the equipment, manning and procedures evaluated
SMS Ref	
	N/A
10.6	Have all VTS or Port Information personnel been appropriately trained
SMS Ref	
	N/A

4.11 Published Documents

	Has the Harbour Authority published;
11.1	Its Safety Management System
SMS Ref	Bangor Marine Safety Management System
	Yes
11.2	A clear commitment to comply with the code
Doc Ref	Declaration of Compliance
	Issued 1 st December 2023
11.3	A safety plan for marine operations
SMS Ref	Bangor Harbour Safety Plan
	Yes
11.4	An assessment of performance against the safety plan
SMS Ref	
11.5	A safety policy for marine operations
SMS Ref	

5. Final Checks

12.1	Is the Harbour Authority aware of their existing powers and duties	X
12.2	Appoint someone as an 'independent 'DP' with direct access to the board	X
12.3	Develop an effective marine safety management system, which employs formal risk assessment techniques	X
12.4	Employ people who are competent and qualified for the positions they hold	X
12.5	Publish a comprehensive safety plan, along with regular assessment showing the authorities performance measured against the code	X

boatfolk

Ards and North Down Borough Council – Bangor Marina

Port Marine Safety Code Audit 2025
Presentation of Findings to Duty Holder
Place and Prosperity Committee



Orcades Marine Introduction



Orcades Marine is a specialist marine consultancy, established in 2010, with extensive experience in ports, renewable energy, and the offshore sector. With a pool of expert consultants, we support port authorities, offshore developers, and energy operators worldwide, delivering practical solutions to maritime challenges.



Now established Designated Person for Bangor Marina, consultant Alexandra Thomson will conduct the PMSC audits for Bangor Marina, on behalf of Orcades Marine.

Revised issue of the PMSC

- The Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) and associated Guide to Good Practice, was revised in April 2025 and has been renamed The Ports and Marine Facilities Code (PMSC).
- In this latest update, the Government has increased to emphasis on third party operated marine terminals and facilities either within or outside a port authority.



Ports & Marine Facilities Safety Code

Guidance for all ports, harbours, marine facilities, berths and terminals

April 2025

Purpose of PMSC Audit

- Verify compliance – ensuring that the marina adheres to the Port Marine Safety Code.
- Assess/Audit the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) – Evaluate the effectiveness of the MSMS.
- Identify any gaps or improvements to the MSMS.
- Ensure legal and regulatory compliance.
- Improve accountability and oversight – providing assurance to the Duty Holder that risks are being managed effectively.
- Promote Continuous Improvement – ensuring a proactive approach to marine safety, risk management and best practises in port operations.

PMSC Audit Details

- An independent Port Marine Safety Code Audit was carried out by Orcades Marine Management Consultants Ltd. on the 13th February 2025 at Bangor Marina. The Harbour Master was in attendance to assist the Auditor over a 2-day period and was happy to provide a tour of the facilities and allow access to relevant documentation.
- Review of documentation and records on site with the Harbour Master.
- Closing meeting held with the Harbour Master before departure to discuss any potential findings.

Finding No.1

Finding:	The Duty holder for Bangor Marina is ANDBC (Place and Prosperity Committee), this is not documented in the MSMS (Environmental Committee is referenced on Bangor Marina MSMS organogram)
Action:	The MSMS should be updated to include the correct committee, update the organogram accordingly and include details of individual duty holders.
Details:	To ensure transparency and accountability the Duty Holder (s) should be clearly identified in the MSMS.

Finding No. 2

Finding:	No statement of accountability.
Action:	Section 3.3.1 of the MSMS should include a statement that the duty holder cannot assign or delegate their accountability for compliance with the code on the ground that they do not have particular skills.
Details:	The above statement is documented with the Port Marine Safety Code and is recommended by the MCA in the PMSC Guide to Good Practice 'Aide Memoire' that it should be included in the PMSC. Including this statement in the MSMS ensures that Duty Holders acknowledge their non-transferable accountability for compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC), regardless of their personal expertise, reinforcing proactive governance and safety oversight.

Finding No.3

Finding:	No record of publicly reporting performance against PMSC.
Action:	It is recommended that Key Performance Indicators and objective performance on boatfolk website.
Details:	It is recommended to publicly publish its performance against the Port Marine Safety Code to demonstrate transparency, accountability and a strong commitment to marine safety. This reflects proactive engagement by the Duty Holder and highlights the effectiveness of the MSMS in place. Public reporting also supports continuous improvement by identifying trends and promoting best practises.

Finding No.4

Finding:	A list of internal safety meetings held is documented but no minutes have been taken at the meetings.
Action:	Take minutes of safety meetings.
Details:	Safety meetings should be documented so there is a record for monitoring of performance and KPIs.

Finding No.5

Finding:	No summary for the legislative framework for general/special directions in the MSMS.
Action:	Recommend including a section summarising the legislative framework for general/special directions.
Details:	To reinforce the marina's role in enforcing navigational safety, managing traffic, and protecting the environment, while demonstrating that decisions are made within a recognised legal and regulatory context.

Finding No.6

Finding:	Stakeholder communications not documented in the MSMS.
Action:	There are various means that the Harbour Master promulgates information such as harbour assist, text message, email, social media, this should be documented in the MSMS.
Details:	By formally recoding these channels in the MSMS, the marina demonstrates that it has a structured and proactive approach to information sharing, inline with the Port Marine Safety Code.

Finding No.7

Finding:	No reference to the reviewing of MAIB reports or other safety bulletins when undertaking risk assessment.
Action:	Document within the risk assessment section of the MSMS that MAIB reports and other relevant safety information is cross referenced when carrying out risk assessments.
Details:	Referencing MAIB (Marine Accident Investigation Branch) reports and other published safety information/bulletins when conducting risk assessments is best practise to ground your assessment in real-world evidence and helps ensure that lessons learned from past incidents are not overlooked.

Finding No.8

Finding:	No reference to ANDBC Harbours being responsible to report defects of Aids to Navigation.
Action:	Document the procedures for reporting defects to Aids to Navigation to the Commissioners of Irish Lights and how this responsibility lies with ANDBC and not Boatfolk.
Details:	Reporting responsibilities should be clearly documented within the MSMS.

Finding No.10

Finding:	Harbour Craft not coded to the relevant MCA Commercial Vessel Code.
Action:	Have the vessel coded appropriately with an approved Certifying Authority.
Details:	Vessels should be coded under the MCA (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) Workboat Code if operating commercially. This ensures the vessel is compliant with safety standards specific for its purpose.

Finding No.11

Finding:	Marine Safety Policy last revised 2018.
Action:	Recommend reviewing the Marine Safety Policy to ensure relevance.
Details:	Marine Safety Policy should be reviewed on a regular review cycle (usually every 3 years) or when any changes are made to maritime laws, safety regulations, operational and risk management updates, organisational changes or when the findings of internal/external audits dictate.

Observed Good Practice

Overall good practises were observed across the operations during the audit. The Marina effectively utilizes various software tools to enhance safety and performance such as harbour assist for operational efficiency, safety culture to streamline safety processes, and ihasco for personnel training and Continued Professional Development (CPD).

Bangor Harbour has demonstrated a strong commitment to the PMSC and implementing the recommended improvements will strengthen the Marine Safety Management System and its processes.

Next steps



The Designated Person will continue to be available to the Harbour Master should he require any assistance regarding safe marine operations.



Conduct another PMSC audit as per the agreed schedule. (6 monthly)

THANK YOU



I APPRECIATE YOUR TIME
THIS EVENING!



ANY QUESTIONS ?

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	27 May 2025
File Reference	TO/TD188
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 2025/26
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Application Form Appendix 2 - Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Guidance Notes

Background

The Council's Tourism Service recognises the importance of assisting residents to become ambassadors for their local area. This can be achieved through the promotion of their city, towns and villages by sharing knowledge and telling local stories to visitors. Tourism NI, through its Embrace a Giant Spirit campaign believes that what makes NI stand out is the people – it lies in the warmth of the welcome and passion that locals offer visitors. The introduction of the pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund aims to support communities to develop capacity to deliver on this requirement.

Neighbourhood Tourism Grant Fund 2025

A business case seeking £20,000 was submitted during the rates setting process for 2025/26 to develop Neighbourhood Tourism through the implementation of a small

Not Applicable

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pilot grant fund and training programme. Ten thousand pounds was approved with an additional £10,000 to make up the shortfall of the original budget requested being reallocated from another budget within Tourism to enable the pilot to proceed.

The fund will allow eligible groups and associations, based in Ards and North Down area, with an interest in developing the tourism offering to apply for small grants to provide an enhanced Neighbourhood Tourism initiative or offering. An award of up to £2,000 at 100% grant aid, for eligible items per application, will be available. Should the fund not be fully expended, officers will arrange and deliver training within this sector.

The Application Form and Guidance for Applicants are attached for Council approval in line with the Grants Policy approved by Council in September 2024.

It is anticipated applications will open in late summer 2025 and will be open for a period of one month.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the introduction of the pilot Neighbourhood Tourism Fund and further that it approves the:

1. The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Scheme Application Form; and
2. The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund Scheme Guidance.

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Neighbourhood Tourism Fund
Small Grant 2025/26**

APPLICATION FORM

Please read the guidance notes carefully before completing this form and remember to keep a copy of the completed application form for your own records.

INTRODUCTION

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Tourism Service has secured a limited budget in 2025/26 to deliver a pilot grant scheme for eligible organisations to support small *Neighbourhood Tourism initiatives. It will be open for one call only in 2025/26.

The Council recognises the importance of assisting residents to become ambassadors for their local area through the promotion of their city, towns and villages by sharing knowledge and telling local stories to visitors. Tourism NI, through its Embrace a Giant Spirit campaign believes that what makes NI stand out is the people – it lies in the warmth of the welcome and passion that locals offer visitors*. This grant's intention is to support communities to develop capacity to deliver on this requirement.

Aim of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund

The aim of the Fund is to offer small grants to eligible groups/organisations to support the delivery of neighbourhood tourism initiatives within their community which can attract visitors or add to the existing tourism offering, thereby increasing dwell time and spend in their city, town or village whilst supporting local volunteers and increasing civic pride and a sense of belonging.

This will help us meet outcome 4 of the Big Plan that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy and the Council Corporate Plan economic priority of attracting more businesses and jobs.

*Definitions

Neighbourhood Tourism Initiatives – tourism products/experiences that support social and economic development of local neighbourhoods and communities.

Visitor – someone from outside the Borough.

Objectives of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26

1. To enhance the sustainable visitor experience of the Borough.
2. To increase local tourism spend by attracting attendees and participants, especially those from outside the Borough.
3. To build the capacity of local groups interested in supporting local tourism.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Organisers may apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2000 up to 100% funded. This may decrease where the amount of the grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget. All successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications are welcome from groups and associations based in Ards and North Down with an interest in developing the tourism offering in ANDBC.

Only **one** application per group / association is permitted.

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26 is not a core funder.

Eligibility Criteria

Applications will be accepted from

- Appropriately constituted not for profit organisations and Charities (a constituted organisation is one that has a simple set of rules to help make it clear to everyone involved what you intend to do and how you intend to operate).
- Must operate in the Borough of Ards and North Down.
- Application must meet the necessary criteria detailed below.
- Suggested neighbourhood tourism initiative must be open to the public.
- Must be in the position to submit all claim documentation by 31 March 2026.

We require all applicants to enclose the following documents with your application. If not included the application **will not be scored**.

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association
- Most recent AGM Minutes / Inaugural minutes
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts / Most recent Bank Statement as appropriate

Should your organisation be recently formed or not been operational for long enough to have a set of accounts, please indicate this within the declaration within the application. In this instance, we require to see a bank statement showing the organisation name or proof of the account being opened.

Organisations/groups can only apply for funding through **one** application. This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit and need.

Ineligible Applications

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

- Individuals or sole traders.
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions.
- Organisations not legally established in the UK.
- Associations/groups not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs.
- Retrospective activity undertaken, or items purchased outside the specified award period, or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed.

- Activity or any aspects relating to the grant outside of the Borough.
- Activity which conflicts with any Council run activity or project.
- Activity that does not foster Section 75, promote positive attitudes, equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group.
- Activity that is substantially a fundraising vehicle, whether for the association/group or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

Please see guidance notes for full eligibility guidance.

Only one application per group/association is permitted.

WHAT THE GRANT WILL FUND

- Promotional literature e.g. village map, pop-up information panels.
 - Electronic equipment up to a value of £X* microphone systems for tour guiding.
 - Uniform for volunteers.
- *Please note, finance to confirm max. grant for electronic equipment pre-release of grant.

WHAT THE GRANT WILL NOT FUND

- General running costs.
- Events/Festivals.
- Projects.
- Purchase of machinery.
- Electronic equipment with a value in excess of £X
- Events, projects or activities which conflict with any Council run project, event or activity and or are not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.
- Organisations not legally established in the UK.

FUNDING INFORMATION

- Up to 50% of grant can be paid in advance*
- The full grant will be paid upon return of receipts and proof of payment are complete**

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

**Subsequent payments will only be made following satisfactory verification of interim claims.

Council grants are awarded following a competitive application process, whereby applications are assessed against set criteria.

In the event of the fund being oversubscribed a percentage reduction to all successful applicants may be necessary.

YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION

Name of your Organisation, as it appears on your governing document or set of rules.

Please indicate your organisation type

☐ **Constituted Community Group (Please see Guidelines for a definition)**

☐ **Charity**

Please give Company/Charity Registration No.

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

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

The neighbourhood tourism initiative is open to the public - please tick to confirm

☐

1.1 Association/group information

Provide a brief description of your group, its history, structure and membership. (This section is not scored, Max 200 words.

SECTION 1 – THE DETAIL OF REQUEST

1.2 Please detail the current activity delivered by your association/group which is of interest to visitors. This should include, but not be limited to, any current activity/initiative embracing the theme of Neighbourhood Tourism, the types of customers/visitors currently engaged, how frequent and when it happens, location of activity/initiative and how it may increase spend locally. **(Scored 0-4, Max. 300 words)**

1.3 A: How will the funding be spent – detail what you will purchase, list itemised costs in the table 2.1 below. B: Detail how the purchase will develop and support your group/organisation in enhancing your offering and the local tourism experience? (**Scored 0- 4, Max 300 words**)

Table 2.1 – Expenditure.

Please provide an itemised listing and forecasted costs for funding applied for:

Itemised Expenditure	Expenditure	Income	Where is your income coming from
<i>E.g., Uniforms</i>	<i>£200.00</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>E.g., Tours Advertising</i>	<i>£200.00</i>	<i>£300</i>	<i>Tickets</i>
Total grant applied for	£	£	

DECLARATION

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE

Please refer to Guidance Notes for information on the Government Funding Database

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

We require all applicants to enclose the following documents with your application (unless you have already provided them in the last 3 months). Otherwise, if documents are not included the application will not progress.

Essential documentation

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association ☐
- Most recent AGM Minutes / Inaugural minutes ☐
- List of Office Bearers ☐
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts/Most recent Bank Statement ☐

Please tick to confirm that you have the following insurances/policies and procedures in place. If your application is successful, we will require evidence of these.

- Details of relevant Insurance relating to the application (were appropriate) ☐
- Risk assessments (were appropriate)
- Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy/ Statement (were appropriate) ☐

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

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

Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

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

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

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

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

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

☐
Fundraising Declaration

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

I confirm the funding applied for is not to operate fundraising activity as defined in the guidelines. ☐

Freedom of Information

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

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

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

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

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

Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), ensuring that information is collected fairly and lawfully, is accurate, adequate, secure, up to date and not held any longer than necessary.

For further information our Privacy Statement can be viewed at

<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/privacy-and-cookies>

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

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: 12.00pm on **TBC 2025. Please submit your application as a PDF document.**

Please note: Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Please ensure the correct application form is submitted.

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

Where possible completed applications should be emailed as a pdf with an electronic signature to: tourism.admin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

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

Post:

Neighbourhood Tourism Grant 2025

Tower House, 34 Quay Street

Bangor

BT20 5ED

Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 2025/26 Guidance Notes

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Page 5	The Application – Guidance
Page 6	What Happens Next
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Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26

Closing Date **TBC 2025**

PLEASE NOTE LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Background

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Tourism Service has secured a limited budget in 2025/26 to deliver a pilot grant scheme for eligible organisations to support small *Neighbourhood Tourism initiatives. It will be open for one call only in 2025/26.

The Council recognises the importance of assisting residents to become ambassadors for their local area through the promotion of their city, towns and villages by sharing knowledge and telling local stories to visitors. Tourism NI, through its Embrace a Giant Spirit campaign believes that what makes NI stand out is the people – it lies in the warmth of the welcome and passion that locals offer visitors*. This grant's intention is to support communities to develop capacity to deliver on this requirement.

Aim of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund

The aim of the Fund is to offer small grants to eligible groups/organisations to support the delivery of neighbourhood tourism initiatives within their community which can attract visitors or add to the existing tourism offering, thereby increasing dwell time and spend in their city, town or village whilst supporting local volunteers and increasing civic pride and a sense of belonging.

This will help us meet outcome 4 of the Big Plan that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy and the Council Corporate Plan economic priority of attracting more businesses and jobs.

***Definitions**

Neighbourhood Tourism Initiatives – tourism products/experiences that support social and economic development of local neighbourhoods and communities.

Visitor – someone from outside the Borough.

Objectives of the AND Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26

1. To enhance the sustainable visitor experience of the Borough.
2. To increase local tourism spend by attracting attendees and participants, especially those from outside the Borough.
3. To build the capacity of local groups interested in supporting local tourism.

ELIGIBILITY

Only **one** application per group / association is permitted.

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Neighbourhood Tourism Fund 25/26 is not a core funder.

Eligibility Criteria

Applications will be accepted from

- Appropriately constituted not for profit organisations and charities (a constituted organisation is one that has a simple set of rules to help make it clear to everyone involved what you intend to do and how you intend to operate).
- Must operate in the Borough of Ards and North Down.
- Application must meet the necessary criteria detailed below.
- Suggested neighbourhood tourism initiative must be open to the public.
- Must be in the position to submit all claim documentation by 31 March 2026.

We require all applicants to enclose the following documents with your application. If not included the application **will not be scored**.

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association
- Most recent AGM Minutes / Inaugural minutes
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts / Most recent Bank Statement as appropriate

Should your organisation be recently formed or not been operational for long enough to have a set of accounts, please indicate this within the declaration within the application. In this instance, we require to see a bank statement showing the organisation name or proof of the account being opened.

Organisations/groups can only apply for funding through **one** application. This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit and need.

Ineligible Applications

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

- Individuals or sole traders.
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions.
- Organisations not legally established in the UK.
- Associations/groups not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs.
- Retrospective activity undertaken, or items purchased outside the specified award period, or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed.
- Activity or any aspects relating to the grant outside of the Borough.
- Activity which conflicts with any Council run activity or project.
- Activity that does not foster Section 75, promote positive attitudes, equality of opportunity and good relations including political opinion, religious belief or racial group.

- Activity that is substantially a fundraising vehicle, whether for the association/group or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

General principles which apply to the Neighbourhood Tourism Fund

- Applications to this fund will be open to all associations/groups that can meet the eligibility criteria and aims and objectives of the fund, irrespective of whether they are established or emerging.
- If an application is successful in receiving funding, the award must be spent on eligible related costs and within the stated period.
- Neighbourhood Tourism activity should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of the Borough.
- Organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations regarding the safe delivery of and access to their activity.
- It is a prime responsibility of Government to ensure the proper and efficient use of and the accountability of public monies. To this end, applicants must provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS - GUIDANCE

Ards and North Down Borough Council wish to support the development of Neighbourhood Tourism to positively impact the visitor experience and benefit the local economy.

The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. Please refer to guidance for each question. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of your application. It is important to be realistic and open in your responses as, if successful, some conditions within your Letter of Offer will be based on information in your application. You must include all relevant information within the required word limit.

Only information provided in the answers within the application form will be scored, no other information will be taken into consideration. Scores will be attributed as indicated.

1.1 Provide a brief description of your group, its history, structure and membership. (This section is not scored, max. 200 words.)

1.2 Please detail the current activity delivered by your association/group which is of interest to visitors. This should include, but not be limited to, any current activity/initiative embracing the theme of Neighbourhood Tourism, the types of customers/visitors currently engaged, how frequent and when it happens, location of activity/initiative and how they may increase spend locally. (Scored 0-4, max. 300 words) *e.g. tours of the village for visitors and members of the public who spend locally, running each weekend June and July, which have happened for the previous two summers and have included visitors from USA, Europe and GB.*

1.3 A: How will the funding be spent – detail what you will purchase, itemised cost in the table below. B: Detail how the purchase will develop and support your group/organisation in enhancing your offering and the local tourism experience? (Scored 0- 4, max 300 words)

Please mention what you would spend the grant on – e.g. purchase of branded polo shirts for 10 volunteers who regularly engage with visitors, this would allow them to be identified on site or at activities helping them to assist with enquiries. Purchase of audio equipment will enable an improved tour for those hard of hearing. Pop-up display boards will enable more of the story to be told on site for those not anticipating in a tour etc.

SECTION 2: BUDGET

Organisers may apply for a minimum of grant of £500 and maximum of £2,000 up to 100% funded.

Up to 50% of grant can be paid in advance*

- The full grant will be paid upon return of receipts and proof of payment are complete**

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

**Subsequent payments will only be made following satisfactory verification of interim claims.

Table 2.1 - Expenditure – please list all items funding is being sought for in the table provided. (This section is not scored). Please be as accurate as possible.

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

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Items of uniform	Utility costs
Display Equipment	Insurances
Personal Radio equipment	Fees
Print	Hire fees
Training (not being provided by ANDBC in other activity)	Venue hire
Marketing, advertising, promotional materials	Charges, e.g. banking
	Prizes/awards
	Salaries, staff fees, consultancy fees
	Hospitality
	Cash payments
	Legal fees
	Membership fees
	Charitable donations

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

EVALUATION

Following the closing date, applications will be assessed and scored according to the scoring matrix below.

Evaluation Panel

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

Evaluation Criteria

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 4 using the matrix detailed in the table below.

Oversubscription to the Fund

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

Measure	Score
Excellent response that fully answers the question with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses	4
A good response to the question with good supporting evidence.	3
A response with reservations. Lacks convincing detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

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

Oversubscription to the Fund

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

DEADLINE

The Neighbourhood Tourism Fund will close at on **TBC at 12noon**. Incomplete applications or those received after this time will **NOT** be considered.

Return to

Email (preferable) tourism.admin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

By post to: **Visitor Information Centre, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED** clearly marked **NEIGHBOURHOOD TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION**.

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

TIMETABLE tbc

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

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

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

If your application is successful, we will:

- arrange a meeting with Council officers to discuss and agree the Letter of Offer (LoO) conditions and our requirements for your grant.
- send you a LoO confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within four weeks of the date printed on the LoO.

Monitoring

- Expenditure Sheet
- Proof of purchases / Receipts
- Section 75 monitoring form (where applicable)
- Grant Claim Form
- Report on how the grant has benefited Neighbourhood Tourism activity provided to Council

Annex A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SAFEGUARDING

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

Further information on the Council's Safeguarding policy can be found at the following link: <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Safeguarding>.

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION

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

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

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

SECTION 75 CATEGORIES

Section 75 categories are:

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

CONTACTS

Email tourism.admin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Tourism Development, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED

Unclassified

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ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	6 June 2025
File Reference	TO/MAR4/160127
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other x If other, please add comment below: Evaluation report
Subject	Tourism Half Yearly Performance Report H2 2024-2025
Attachments	n/a

Not applicable

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Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 4 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to two outcomes as follows:

Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Development and training activities have been provided by officers through an independent facilitator to assist progress the Sustainable Giants Tourism Network. Membership has grown by 100% from inception to 18 members and the network is currently developing its own governance arrangements.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

Not applicable

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- Delivery of Taste @ Clandeboye food and drink festival held at Clandeboye Estate, c.9000 attendees showcasing 32 local businesses with an average spend of £31-£60 per attendee.
- The above event hosted a group from the Irish Guild of Food Writers on a two-day familiarisation trip visiting a number of food and drink producers. This received positive social media and press coverage in ROI.
- Attendance at eight trade/consumer shows outside the borough to promote tourism and food and drink businesses and provide 'award entry' support.
- Four familiarisation trips were hosted in the borough for tour operators and local hotel staff. Two companies have indicated that they will now include the area as an option to groups in future itineraries.
- Successful delivery of the pilot Shorelife Celebration event. Positive partnership working with Mount Stewart and Castle Espie, c 4,000 attendees and 88% customer satisfaction. Plans for the event in 2025 are underway.
- Both Tourism Events Food Festivals received grant funding – totalling £20,380 from DAERA.
- Marketing focus on digital content is growing an engaged audience for Visit Ards and North Down as an appealing visitor destination with over 15k followers on social media, annual web traffic of 730k (up 50% on prior year), and sign-ups to receive direct emails increased by 35%, with an average open rate of 36% (versus a tourism industry average of 15%).
- In 2024/25 targeted PR activity has generated 33 pieces of editorial increasing the profile for AND in NI ROI and GB including TV coverage on Ireland AM and features in numerous travel publications.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

Staffing for outreach/VIC staffing purposes became stretched due to reduced numbers. Further staffing is required for the new additional service at the Moat.

Bangor Switch On main programme element was cancelled on the day of the event due to the weather. The team had put as much weather proofing in place as foreseen. This one event cancellation has impacted on meeting related KPIs

- Number of attendees at Tourism Events,
- percentage customer satisfaction at tourism events

Action to be taken:

- Recruitment for increased numbers of casual VIC staff undertaken for all visitor servicing aspects. All new staff are due to start during Q1 2025/26.
- Continual review of weather mitigations and lessons learned specific to Bangor Castle site.

Not applicable

- An additional event in the planning cycle for 2025 in this quarter has led to the Events team and other colleagues operating at maximum capacity. Additional support within the service has been implemented to address this temporarily.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Number of sessions delivered for event capacity building.	The ability to schedule two additional sessions in last quarter.	Implement planning schedule at the start of the year.	Events Manager	July 25
% of OoB ticket sales (experiences and walks and tours).	The correct most successful method of evaluation has not been identified.	Review implementation of data gathering by guides.	Tourism Manager	June 25
% of OoB ticket sales (food and drink).	Data collection from third party delivery has not been possible.	Remove from service plan as KPI is no longer attainable.	Tourism Manager	March 25

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report is noted.

Not applicable











Half yearly Performance Report - Tourism

Generated on: 05 June 2025

Last Update H2 2024/25

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Number of sessions delivered for training/capacity building via Festival Forum. *new KPI – 2023 no. of participants trained	3	4
	Attendance at trade focused shows, tourism and food and drink	8	7
	Attendance at consumer-focused shows - tourism and food and drink	6	4
	No. of sites/events supported by visitor servicing outreach	25	20
	% of Out of Borough (OoB) ticket sales– experiences and walks and tours	39%	50%
	% of OoB ticket sales – food and drink experiences	24%	33%
	Delivery of training seminars (tourism/ food and drink sectors)	4	3
	Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-27 No. of key new outputs for Year 1	2	2
	% of food network members (from total membership) on TASTE FB social media group page	82%	55%
	% increase in followers to Visit AND social media against previous year	27%	20%
	Number of targeted destination awareness AND PR/partnership articles – Food and one other theme to NI and ROI markets	33	15
	Delivery and management of Year 1 of 3-year Growth Events Fund and 1 'Bid for' Event in 24/25	2	2
	% engagement rate of ezines to tourism trade and consumer database	36%	30%
	% increase in followers to VisitStrangford social media against previous year	9%	5%
	Number of attendees at Tourism events	80,407	81,000

Not applicable

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% customer satisfaction at events	84%	85%
	% attendees from OoB at Tourism Events (*2 Switch On events not included in this KPI)	25%	25%
	Average spend per attendee at Tourism Events	£18.52	£10.50
	Number of attendees /participants* at grant-aided events (based on Economic category - from Events and Festivals Fund	73,220	58,000
	Cost per attendee/participant – grant-aided events (as above)	£1.07	£1.40
	% spend against budget	91.51%	100%
	% staff attendance	96.06%	94%
	Guide for Sustainability at Events	1	1
	Accessibility Audit – Tourism Events	1	1
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	15 May 2025
File Reference	TO/EG58
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	AND Events and Festivals Fund 24/25 Tranche 1 Summary and Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 25/26 Update Report
Attachments	Appendix 1 - AND Events and Festivals Fund Tranche 1 24/25 outcomes Appendix 2 - AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 25/26 Grant Awards

AND Events and Festivals Fund 2024/25

In January 2024 the Council approved the awards to the AND Events and Festivals Fund. The AND Events and Festivals Fund was a joint event grants fund for Tourism and Community events with two tranches. As part of the application, organisers were asked to indicate whether the primary aim for their event/festival was:

1. To encourage attendees to the event/festival and enhance local economic benefit or
2. To promote community cohesion/social inclusion.

Not Applicable

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The events that indicated the first aim were administered by Tourism Events and those that indicated the second option were administered by Community Development. The following information refers to the grants administered by Tourism. Tranche 2 is reported to Community and Wellbeing Committee and to the Department for Communities in line with the required monitoring and evaluation process.

AND Events and Festivals Fund Summary 24/25 – Tranche 1

Awards of £81,076.75 were made to 12 events in 24/25. All 12 events were successfully delivered and a total of £78,672.61 was drawn down by the applicants. 73,220 attendees and participants were recorded over the 12 events. Five events did not draw down the full grant awarded due to grant being surplus to requirement. A summary of the outcomes of the 12 successful events is attached at Appendix 1.

AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 2025/26

In September 2024, following an update report by officers, the Council agreed to return to administering events grants via the Tourism Service and the Community Development Service separately. This is to more closely meet each service's primary objectives and to ensure application forms are proportionate to the type of applicant. Further to this, the Council also approved the AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund 25/26 (TEFF) application form and guidance notes in line with the new Grants Policy approved by the Council in September 2024.

The Application Process

The AND TEFF 2025/26 opened on 1 November 2024 following 2 information sessions provided by officers held on 30 October 2024. The information sessions were held jointly with Community Development team to ensure all applicants or potential applicants were made aware of the separation of the funds and to enable questions to be answered by relevant officers from the two services. The AND TEFF closed on Monday 25 November 2024. There were 21 applications received by the closing date, applying for a total of £169,326.92.

The Assessment Panel

A minimum pass mark of 60% was agreed prior to the opening of the TEFF.

The applications were assessed by a panel of three officers comprising the Events Manager and two officers from Sports Development using an agreed scoring matrix as per guidance issued.

Seven applications out of the 21 submitted were unsuccessful as the standard of the application was not sufficient to meet the agreed pass mark. Each unsuccessful applicant received a notification email with feedback on 16 January 2025.

The unsuccessful applicants were offered further feedback if they felt this was beneficial. Two applicants took up the offer and were given further written or verbal feedback. They were also informed about the Festivals Forum and invited to attend. One has expressed interest in attending and is now on the attendee list.

The remaining 14 events proceeded in the grant process and were successful in receiving an award approved by the Panel as per AND Grants Policy.

Not Applicable

75

Budget

The allocation of budget available to the TEFF is £80,000 per annum, however, the successful application grant requests exceeded this by £42,317. To enable support of all events that met or exceeded the pass mark, the assessment panel agreed that by applying a 5% reduction on each eligible requested grant, 95% of the requested grant would be viable by transferring underspend from the Growth Events Fund (GEF) in 25/26 to the TEFF to a total of £106,701.15. As previously reported to the Council in January 2025, no applications were received to the GEF when this grant was advertised in November 2024, which presented some underspend in 2025/26 across the total events grants budget.

The 14 successful events are detailed in Appendix 2. All successful applicants are in receipt of their Letters of Offer and there were no appeals submitted.

Evaluation of AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund

Officers within the Tourism Events Team are preparing a survey to go out to successful and unsuccessful applicants to gauge opinion on the process for this year's TEFF. The feedback provided through this survey will inform any changes or improvements for the application form, guidance or support available for the TEFF in 2026/27 in line with the Council Grants Policy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the above report.

Appendix 1

AND Events and Festivals Fund Summary 24/25

DATE	EVENT	ORGANISER	Grant		Attendee and Participant Numbers	
			Award	Paid Out	Target	Actual
25-27/4/24	Bangor International Choral Festival	Bangor International Choral Festival	£3,825.00	£3,640.00	3,911	3,116
24-26/5/24	Portaferry Plein Air Painting Festival	Portaferry Art Society	£1,000.00	£851.52	76	59
1-2/6/24	Bangor Summer Sizzler	Bangor Swimming Club	£750.00	£651.34	1,833	2,376
6-16/06/24	Columbanus Community Folk Festival	Ards CCE	£7,875.00	£7,875.00	3,035	3,220
12/06/24	Ards Town Centre Races	Ards Cycling Club	£2,887.50	£2,887.50	478	403
27-30/6/24	Bangor Regatta	Royal Ulster Yacht Club	£11,100.00	£10,807.00	698	642
5-8/7/24	Narrows Series Festival Regatta	Portaferry Sailing Club	£4,395.00	£4,395.00	2,410	2,165
07/12/2024	Boyne Pageant and Celebration	Newtownards LOL	£11,250.00	£11,250.00	35,000	45,350
1-4/8/24	Sails and Sounds Maritime Heritage and Sea Shanty Festival	Portaferry Community Services Ltd	£11,250.00	£11,250.00	7,250	6,060
17-24/08/24	Clandeboyne Festival	Camerata Ireland	£8,798.25	£8,798.25	1,570	1,305
26/8/24	Kite Festival	Ards Peninsula Village Partnership	£6,696.00	£5,017.00	5,095	6,834
1-30/3/25	Portico Feelgood Festival	Portico of Ards Ltd	£11,250.00	£11,250.00	2,330	1,690
		TOTAL	£81,076.75	£78,672.61	63,686	73,220

Appendix 2

AND Tourism Events and Festivals Fund Awards 25/26

Name of Organisation	Event	Date	Location	Score (%)	Eligible Ask	Award 95%
Bangor International Choral Festival	Bangor International Choral Festival	3-5/04/25	Bangor	67.86	£3,000	£2,850.00
Hollywood & District Community Council	Hollywood May Day	05/05/2025	Hollywood	60.71	£5,235	£4,973.25
Inspiring Yarns CIC	Gathering Stitches - Yarn & Textiles Festival	16-17/05/25	Castle Espie	83.93	£6,300	£5,985.00
Portaferry Arts Society	Portaferry Plein Air Festival	29/05-1/06/25	Portaferry	66.07	£1,250	£1,187.50
Friends of the Track	Trucks at the Track	15/06/2025	Kirkistown	62.50	£11,244	£10,681.80
Ards Cycling Club	Ards Town Centre Races	18/06/2025	Newtownards	60.71	£3,300	£3,135.00
Hastings Hotels Group Limited	Art in the Garden	11/7-17/8/25	Hollywood	91.07	£15,000	£14,250.00
The Emerald Isle Highland Dance Committee	The Emerald Isle Highland Dance Festival	26-27/7/25	Comber	85.71	£7,500	£7,125.00
Portaferry Community Services Ltd	Sails and Sounds	1-4/08/25	Portaferry	73.21	£14,937	£14,190.15
Ballyholme Yacht Club	ILCA Ireland National Championships	14-17/08/25	Bangor	69.64	£6,170	£5,861.50
Ards Peninsula Villages Partnership	Ards Peninsula Kite Festival	16/08/2025	Ballywalter	66.07	£7,100	£6,745.00
Camerata Ireland	Clandeboyne Festival	16-23/08/25	Bangor	91.07	£14,951	£14,203.45
Bangor & North Down Canine Club	Bangor International & National Championship Dog Shows	6-7/09/25	Newtownards	67.86	£5,080	£4,826.00
Portico of Ards Ltd	Feel Good Festival	1-31/03/26	Portaferry	92.86	£11,250	£10,687.50
			TOTAL		£112,317.00	£106,701.15

Unclassified

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ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	12 June 2025
File Reference	TO/VIC4
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not applicable evaluation report
Subject	Visitor Information Centres Annual Report 2024/2025
Attachments	Appendix 1 - VIC Summary 2024/25

Background

The Tourism unit manages two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in Bangor City centre and Newtownards town centre. Open daily, Monday to Saturday, servicing visitors (pre and during visit) and locals, by facilitating enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time and spend in the Borough, alongside providing a retail offering and ticketing service.

The service also operates a seasonal centre at Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport and facilitates a local information provision, through a SLA, at Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry.

This report provides an overview of the activity at Bangor and Newtownards Visitor Information Centres from April 2024 – March 2025 along with detail on both Cockle Row Cottages and Exploris sites.

Not Applicable

79

Visitors and Enquiries

Within the VICs, the profile of visitors continued to be dominated by the 'Staycation' and 'Day trip' market.

The VIC's are a primary point of contact for tourist information on the region and NI, as well as offering local ticket sales both for internal ANDBC activity and 3rd parties.

90% of VIC customers were in person centre visits, highlighting the continued value of a face-to-face provision and the associated ambassadorial function.

Excluding self-service visitors or "browsers", a total of 21,098 customers were serviced via direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post and email. These enquiries cover a wide range of local topics from what's on in the area, where to stay or eat, directions, local history, activities, attractions and ticket sales across the Borough and NI.

Bangor and Newtownards VIC's	April 24 - March 25
Total footfall to the Centres*	21,530
ENQUIRY TYPE	
Face to face enquiries	18,861
Self-service visitors/browsers	2,669
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	403
ENQUIRIES Phone	1,834
TOTAL SERVICED	23,767

*Combination of face to face and self-service visitors/browsers.

This is an increase of 7.2% from last year demonstrating a positive growth of visitors in the region using the service.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	April 24 – March 25% of total
NI	84%
GB and ROI	9%
Rest of the World	7%
TOTAL	100%

Origin of visitor remains largely on par with the previous year. NI increased by 2%, GB and ROI and the Rest of the World saw a small drop of 1% each.

Income

Whilst visitor information provision is the core function of the VICs, both permanent centres provide a retail space comprising mainly of locally produced/sourced gifts, souvenirs and books, as per customer demand. Both VICs encourage sales via special promotions for residents which would be advertised in local press, for example Christmas, Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, with themed displays, and regular "merchandising" to attract both new and repeat customers.

The VICs actively advertise a box office service allowing third parties e.g. drama/musical productions to be bookable online and via the VisitAND website. In 24/25 new promoters have made use of this service following positive feedback from

Not Applicable

others who have previously used the service. The Box Office service generated an income in excess of £1,700 commission, an increase of 27% from last year.

Retail sales proved challenging, with higher costs of living a likely factor on “non-essential” purchases. Ards VIC, with a larger gift shop, was less impacted with a marginal drop of -1%. Bangor VIC, whilst seeing footfall increase, did not see this reflected in customer spend which was down -17%, likely indicating that visitors came for other service needs. However, those that did spend, spent more per visitor, than those visiting Ards with an average spend per customer of £1.79 in Ards and £2.07 in Bangor.

Income type	April 24 - March 25
Retail sales	£33,664
Ticket sales commission	£1,777
Total income	£35,434 (ex VAT £28,786)

VIC Performance Summary

This year saw a welcomed increase of 5% in level of enquiries which translates to over 1,000 enquiries - broken down there was an increase of 10% at Ards VIC and 2% at Bangor VIC. Aligning with visitor behavioural changes, telephone calls and correspondence continue to slowly drop, serviced by the increasing traffic on the VisitAND website and social channels, but positively in person visits with face-to-face interaction increased by 8% in both centres.

The VIC team continued to engage with local tourism businesses developing effective ‘client’ relationships through trade ezine, telephone calls and when staffing allows site visits.

The team actively support the wider Tourism section with ‘call outs’ to trade for campaigns, experiences and food and events programming, and the ticketing of the walks, tours, and experiences.

The centres also participated in seasonal activity with both Ards Chamber of Trade at Halloween and Bangor Chamber of Commerce at Christmas.

Sadly, the Visitor Servicing team had a bereavement in December with the passing of a longtime member of Council staff and a much-loved colleague.

Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO) – Exploris Aquarium

Located in reception it offers visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Christmas closure). In summer 24 and again in spring an advertisement was installed on the slipway bus shelter highlighting the LVIO. With a high footfall of visitors to Exploris throughout the year, the exposure to visitors is significant.

The provision consists of visitor literature, alongside an interactive touch screen highlighting what there is to explore in the Borough. Exploris staff are trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to address visitor enquiries directly.

Not Applicable

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Council provides additional visitor servicing support at peak periods during July, August and Bank/Public Holidays (11 days outreach).

Exploris LVIO	
ENQUIRY TYPE:	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	6,758
Exploris Phone Enquiries	4
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (14 Peak Days)	2,006
TOTAL SERVICED	8,768

Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport

The Cottages reopened for season 2024 with two visitor servicing staff facilitating information provision, a small gift shop and heritage centre. It opened in June through to August (Thursday–Sunday, 11am–5pm) with a family entertainment programme on Sunday afternoons, 2–4pm. Additional key dates of activity included Easter, May Day and Halloween. Unfortunately poor weather forced cancellation at Christmas.

The VIC team worked with Discover Groomsport and the Ulster-Scots Association for support activity across the season. Educational visits also returned with three visits (96 pupils) and one private group tour. The Cottages participated in the Council 'Leid and Learn' week with a poetry workshop and soda bread demonstration and became a filming location, transformed into a "Cornish chip shop" for 'Art Detectives' a new original TV crime series.

The Cottages attracted over 7,600 visitors, an increase of almost 2,000 on last year and generated over £2,000 income.

Outreach Activity

An additional 2,307 visitor enquiries were serviced at manned pop-up information stands throughout the season over 22 dates. These ranging from Council tourism events to trade shows and "honeypot" sites such as Castle Espie.

Literature

The service continues to produce and distribute VisitAND literature to external sites e.g. visitor guide and map. Outlets include Visit Belfast, Bangor Translink Station, Pickie Fun Park, Aurora, Pier 36 and other key tourism sites. Within AND almost 20,000 pieces of literature were distributed, highlighting the continued demand. The VIC's also provide bedroom packs for the accommodation sector.

Online Activity

Digital communication continues to grow as a source of information for the visitor. This is a trend that is likely to continue and therefore a crucial part of visitor messaging. In relation to "visit" channels (visitardsandnorthdown.com, Facebook and Instagram), the VIC team works with the Corporate Communications and Marketing service to support these channels. For example, provide content for blogs, a regular rolling review of the site for quality assurance purposes and engagement with tourism businesses to ensure they complete the relevant upload procedure for their business profile.

Not Applicable

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NB Figures in relation to user stats are currently reported to Place and Prosperity Committee as part of Service Unit KPI's*

Independently, Ards VIC continues to manage the Visit Strangford Lough Facebook page daily. Through engaging posts, the page has a strong following of 10,704 (an organic increase with no paid promotion of +13%, on the previous year) with regular positive interactions from users.

Summary

While new technology has improved accessibility to information consumers still cite the value of face-to-face interaction with 'welcome and hospitality' rated highly among all aspects of a trip by consumers who had recently visited (Tourism NI, Consumer Sentiment research). The quality of service provision at the VIC and other sites providing the personal experience sought by visitors. The VIC statistics demonstrate that visitors seek the 'trusted' and 'personalised' service offered at VICs with face-to-face enquiries dominant at the centres.

The Council's VICs continually engage with visitors promoting the Ards and North Down offering and has engaged with almost 40,000 customers, via its permanent VICs, Cockle Row, Outreach and LVIO, and showcasing the region's tourism offering for holidays, short breaks, day trips and events.

Activity - 2025/26

In addition to the service's business-as-usual activity, the coming year will see:

- A four-month pilot location for Bangor Visitor Information Centre, from 1 May – 30 August. The VIC is currently operating from The Old Market House on Main Street, Bangor.
- The management of the visitor offering at The Moat and its Camera Obscura is transferring from Regeneration to Tourism.
- Outreach provision at both Bangor Castle Walled Garden and Pickie Fun Park will be trialled during the summer.
- A TasteAND retail offering in Ards VIC for those local producers who offer nonperishable goods is being piloted as a showcase for members of the food and drink network.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

VIC Summary 2024/25

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Ards VIC

Enquiries increased by 10% and sales had a minimal drop of 1% in comparison to 23/24.

NEWTOWNARDS VIC	24/25	23/24	COMPARISON
ENQUIRIES TYPE			
ELECTRONIC EYE	15116	13,598	11%
COUNTER	12600	11,638	8%
NON-ENQUIRIES	2516	1,960	28%
CORRESPONDENCE (post, email)	253	216	17%
PHONE	628	764	-18%
TOTAL	15,997	14,578	10%
INCOME £			
RETAIL SALES	£22,131.84	£22,436.77	-1%
TICKET SALES COMMISSION	£376.64	£324.25	16%
TOTAL	£22,508.48	£22,761.02	-1%
AVERAGE SPEND PER VISITOR	£1.79	£1.96	9%

Bangor VIC

Enquiries had a small increase of 2% and sales were down 17% in comparison to 23/24.

BANGOR VIC	24/25	23/24	COMPARISON
ENQUIRIES TYPE			
ELECTRONIC EYE	6,414	6387	0%
COUNTER	6,261	6,244	0%
NON-ENQUIRIES	153	143	7%
CORRESPONDENCE (post, email)	150	170	-12%
PHONE	1,206	1030	17%
TOTAL	7,770	7,587	2%
INCOME £			
RETAIL SALES	£11,532.56	£13,953.69	-17%
TICKET SALES COMMISSION	£1,400.79	£ 1,115.25	26%
TOTAL	£12,933.35	£15,068.94	-14%
AVERAGE SPEND PER VISITOR	£ 2.07	£ 2.41	-14%

*Figures are rounded.

Unclassified

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ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable.
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee.
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Interim Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	06 June 2025.
File Reference	160127
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Economic Development Annual Performance Report H2 2024-2025
Attachments	N/A

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

Not Applicable.

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to the outcome as follows:

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- The target for job creation through the Go Succeed Service was 123 and has been exceeded.
- The market research function is performing well and the number of research assignments exceeded target.
- The Labour Market Partnership has managed delivered a full suite of interventions that have had an immediate and positive impact on individuals needing support to get into employment.
- Despite the challenging economic climate and steep rises in utility costs, the Operators of our facilities have managed their performance to continue to deliver across all contractual elements, continue to attract visitors and deliver value for Council.
- Successful delivery of DAERA allocated funding for the Seal Sanctuary.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed monthly. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- The Department for Communities has only just confirmed an annual budget allocation for the Labour Market Partnership for 2025-26. The letter of offer was received on 21.05.2025. However, the 2025-26 and 2026-27 action plans have been presented to the Regional LMP and approved. This presents issues in terms of planning and delivery of support.

Not Applicable.

- The Go Succeed Service requires intensive input and resources to deliver and funding has only been confirmed to March 2026. This presents issues in the planning and delivery of all the service elements. It is imperative that the service can continue as envisaged for an additional 2-year period.

Action to be taken:

- Collective action by all the 11 Councils, led by Belfast City Council continue with UKSPF to ensure future funding for Go Succeed.
- The pressure from all 11 Councils must be maintained to secure future funding for the Labour Market Partnership from DfC.
- The DTFF programme to be kept under review, however with ongoing interventions it is anticipated that the total programme target will be met.

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Number of businesses supported through DTFF programme	Digital transformation landscape is complex and communication methods have been adapted throughout the programme.	Ongoing monitoring of upcoming calls.	Head of Economic Development	Sept 2025
% spend against budget	Staff retirement and subsequent staff changes	Ongoing monitoring of budgets	Head of Economic Development	Sept 2025

RECOMMENDATION















It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

Not Applicable.

Half yearly Performance Report - Economic Development

Generated on: 06 June 2025

Last Update H2 2024/25

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Number of Jobs created through the Go Succeed Service	129	123
	Number of people benefitting from the Health and Wellbeing Initiative	27	24
	Number of research assignments	117	75
	Number of surveys to identify needs and values of the ED and business support services	1	1
	% draw down of Seal Sanctuary claim from DAERA	100%	100%
	Appoint an Operator for Bangor Marina and Harbour	1	1
	Appointment of operator for Pickie Funpark	1	1
	Approval of OBC and creation of action plan to progress Innovation Hub concept	1	1
	Number of businesses supported through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) programme	9	17
	Development of PEACE Plus project and funding application through EBR	1	1
	% spend against budget	75.16%	100%
	% staff attendance	97.14%	94%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%
	Number of projects delivered in LMP Action Plan	12	12

Unclassified

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ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Interim Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Interim Head of Economic Development
Date of Report	29 April 2025
File Reference	ED135
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Go Succeed Update
Attachments	N/A

Background

Members will be aware that Go Succeed went live on 1 November 2023 with combined 18-month targets for Engage and Foundation. The delivery agent was Enterprise NI (ENI) and associated Local Enterprise Agency network and Growth and Scaling delivered by Full Circle consortia partners. All aspects of the service are up and running, with the first 18-month cycle now complete.

A one-year extension was granted through the Shared Prosperity Fund from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026 to continue the delivery of Go Succeed in a similar manner. This report highlights the achievements and position of the service as of 31 March 2025 (18 month cycle) as well as the differences between the first 18 months of the service and the year 3 extension.

1. Update of activities as of 31 March 2025

For the Engage and Foundation Pillar the figures are stated below, provided by ENI and the PMO, are the actual number of individuals who received mentoring up to the

Not Applicable

end of March 2025. Both the engage and foundation actual figures allowed the Council to meet its statutory targets.

Go Succeed Participation

Go Succeed Pillar	18 Month Target	YTD Actual
Engage	429	662
Foundation	147	175
Growth	280	339
Scaling	2	2

Go Succeed Grants

The Go Succeed Grant provided funding of up to 70% of costs for capital and/or revenue items up to a maximum grant of £4,000 and minimum of £1,000. Grants were available under the Foundation and Growth pillars and clients were eligible when they had completed at least 50% of their mentoring.

The grants were allocated as follows between the eligible pillars of the support;

Go Succeed Pillar	18 Month Target	Total Awarded
Engage	N/A	-
Foundation	34	15
Growth	63	84
Scaling	N/A	-

Outputs at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target 97)	
Clients invited to apply	163
Letters of Offer issued	99
Amount Awarded to date	£296,170*
Ineligible/Unsuccessful	27
To be assessed	0

*The amount awarded is an estimate as accruals are still being processed.

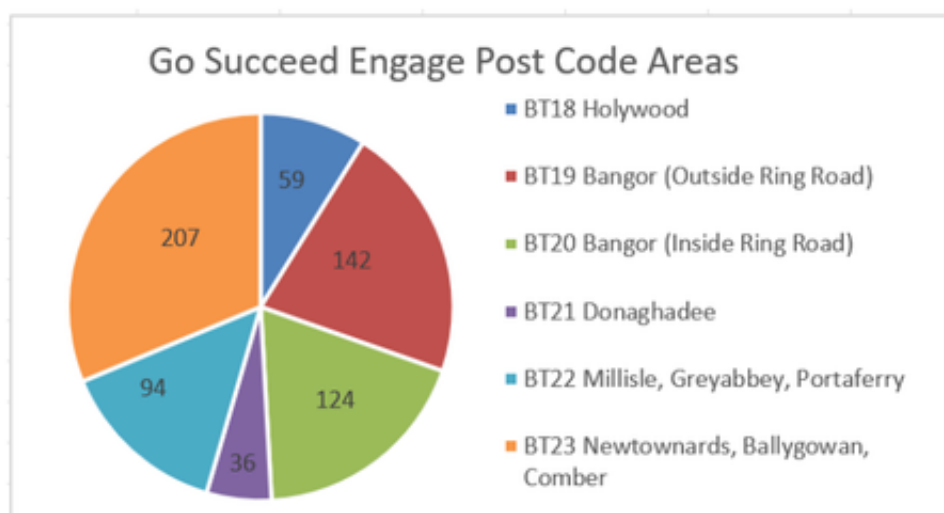
Update on ongoing activities to deliver the service:

Engage

As at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 429)	
Go Succeed clients assigned on Engage Pillar at point of registration	662
Project Sign Off carried out by LEA's *	235
Jobs Created	104

Note: sign-off include Business Plans and Enterprise Action Plans to determine Job Creation

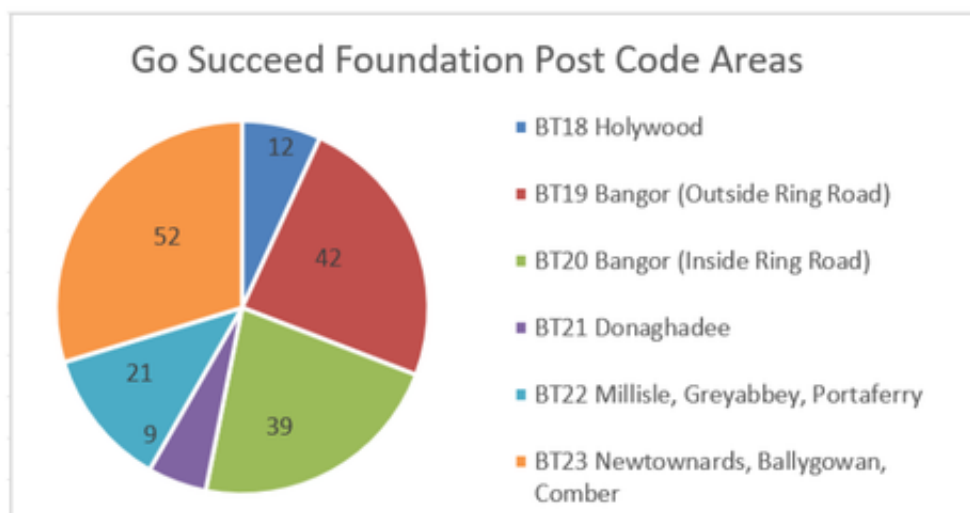
Not Applicable



Foundation

As of 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 147)	
Go Succeed clients assigned on Foundation Pillar at point of registration	175
Project Sign Off carried out by LEA's *	41
Jobs Created	25

Note: sign-off include Business Plans and Enterprise Action Plans to determine Job Creation



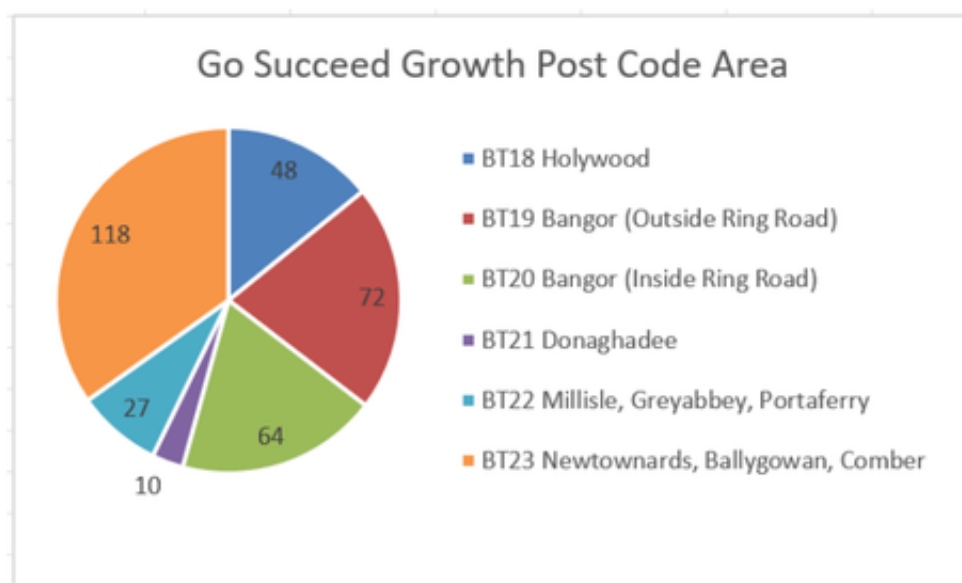
Growth

As at 31 March 2025 (18-Month Target of 280)	
Go Succeed companies registered on Growth Pillar (estimate)	339
ANDBC Officer Diagnostic Approved	334
Mentor Hours Allocated	4,899
Average Mentor Hrs per company	14.60
Jobs created	49.50

Note: budget allows for average of 15hrs support per company

Not Applicable

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Scaling:

The overall target for the scaling pillar is 25 businesses for all 11 Councils, with an average target of 2 scaling companies per individual Council area.

To date, 2 organisations have been signposted to Invest NI as a potential Scaling client from ANDBC.

2. Target Comparison between the first 18 months and Year 3 (2025-2026)

Go Succeed Engage	18 Month Target	Actual	Target 2025-26
Participants	429	662	286
Community Outreach	1469	2198	980
Jobs Created	89	104.4	59
Business Plans created	276	174	183
Masterclasses	429	511	86*

***for the first 18 months, the target was based on the number of participants. In year 3, it is based on the number of masterclasses and is for a period of 12 months.**

Go Succeed Foundation	18 Month Target	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Participants	147	175	53
Job Created	55	25	32
Business Plans created	85	41	50
Masterclasses	147	269	16
Peer Support Networks	5	5	1

Go Succeed Growth	18 Month Target 2024-25	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Participants	280	339	140
Jobs Created	63	49.5	50

Not Applicable

Masterclasses attendees	280	563	42*
Peer Support Networks	5	5	1

***for the first 18 months, the target was based on the number of participants. In year 3, it is based on the number of masterclasses and is for a period of 12 months.**

Go Succeed Grants	18 Month Target	Actual	12 Month Target 2025-26
Grant participants	94	99	42
Value of LoO issued	£320,000	£296,170	£124,914.53

Key differences between the Grants in Year 2 and 3

DIFFERENCES	2024-2025	2025-2026
Maximum grant allowance	£4,000	£3,000
Match funding from Go Succeed	70%	50%
Payment structure	80% advance payment and 20% second payment on receipt of evidence	100% retrospective payment
Funding eligibility	Revenue and capital	Capital only
Level of mentoring required before applying	50%	60%
Type of process	Rolling application process	Open and closed call for applications

Additional element to the Go Succeed Service in Year 3:

In the 2025-2026 period Councils have made a commitment to engaging individuals who are economically inactive and providing them with support to start a business. The purpose of this support is to create a pathway for participants that increases the visibility and accessibility of early enterprise activity and support progression onto Go Succeed Start activity. These services must align and add value to other UKSPF funded activity.

The targets for Ards and North Down Borough Council are as follows:

Number of individuals engaged	Number of businesses started	Average number of mentoring hours	Average grant per business started
24	4	10 hours pp	£750

Conclusion

Go Succeed Year 3 is now fully operational and is available to support our enterprise starts and the local business community. Members will have noticed the very prominent marketing campaign on television, radio, social media and through individual Councils which has resulted in a high interest in the service. Business can

Not Applicable

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be signposted to <https://go-succeed.com> to access the support they need to develop their business.

The budget for Go Succeed in 2025-2026 was reduced by the funders with the total programme funding decreased by £800,000. Therefore, some aspects of the service were amended to reflect this reduction in funding. For example, the number of masterclasses and the grants were reduced to stay within budget. However, an additional element relating to Economic Inactivity, as highlight above, has been added to secure the funding.

The Council contribution for 2025-2026 of £118,921 remains unchanged from the 2024-2025 contribution and will be settled as detailed in the signed Collaboration Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

Unclassified

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ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	06 June 2025
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Regeneration Half Yearly Unit Plan Report
Attachments	

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Not Applicable

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Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for 1st October 2024 – 31st March 2025 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to 4 outcomes as follows.

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Stages One and Two of Village Plans 2025 – 2035

The previous development of the Village Plans was led by an external consultant, however based on resident feedback and officer's aspirations to create new working relationships in addition to enhance existing working relationships with rural communities the decision was taken for officers to lead on the development of the new Village Plans 2025 – 2035. This understandably presented operational challenges, however the feedback received from residents, Rural Partnership groups, Council officers, and Elected Members has been extremely positive.

Stage One – engagement methods provided for residents and businesses by officers included:

- Primary School Engagement Workshops and Competition
- Public Engagement Workshops
- Community Group Engagement
- Attendance at Public Events
- On-street Surveys
- Online Public Survey

Over 1,800 responses were received which evidences a positive impact of the traditional and more innovative engagement methods implemented by officers.

Not Applicable

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Stage Two

An additional opportunity to engage with residents was identified and actioned after officers had collated all the data and drafted emerging themes and priorities for each village. This engagement was provided by in person workshops and online, encouragingly the majority of drafted themes and priorities were endorsed by residents of each village. Those that did ask for amendments have been discussed and agreed and will be reflected in the final Village Plans.

- C/TAG Stakeholder Mapping exercise

As part of the process to reform the existing City and Town Advisory Groups officers were eager to expand the representation on each of the Advisory Groups in terms of demographics and sectors. Extensive engagement has taken place with existing members and the next steps are being considered as to how best engage with those new demographics and sectors.

These expansive engagement methods have proactively increased the opportunities for residents and businesses to influence the delivery of services, plans, and investment within the Borough and will foster positive collaboration between the Council and several of our key stakeholders.

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

The completion of various Regeneration projects in Q3 and Q4 have positively contributed to a thriving and sustainable economy in urban and rural areas of the Borough.

For example:

- Chamber of Commerce Grants 2024/25

Officers have assisted the 5 Chambers of Commerce during the 2024/25 Chamber Grants process to deliver up to £15,000 of grant funding to each Chamber of Commerce to deliver projects under the three following themes:

1. Capacity Building – Initiatives aimed at growing the Chamber of Commerce
2. City/Town Development – Aimed at increasing the city/town profile
3. Administration support for Chamber of Commerce activities

Not Applicable

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- Rural Business Development Grant Scheme

This scheme, the first since 2022/23, was delivered collaboratively by Regeneration officers and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The objective of the scheme is to support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses through the provision of a capital grant for up to 50% of the cost of capital items.

Following submission of the 28 grant claims, the total amount of grant approved for payment in Ards and North Down was £90,085.60. over 50% of the rural businesses had not applied for rural grant funding previously which demonstrates new positive working relationships between officers, DAERA, and rural businesses in the Borough.

- Urban Regeneration Programme

£335,700 funding secured from the Department for Communities to deliver an Urban Regeneration Programme in 2024-2026. The programme is divided into three distinct strands of regeneration initiatives focused on animation, placemaking and connectivity. Projects include car parking enhancements, lamp post banners, animation in town / city centres, signage, and environmental improvement schemes etc. The delivery of this programme commenced Summer 2024 and will complete in March 2026.

Outcome 6

Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

- Kircubbin Coastal Path – planning approval obtained, and additional funding secured to deliver this project in the 2025/26 period, creating a safe space for residents and visitors with improved lighting and resting points.
- Greyabbey Community Park – adjustments to the project specification to meet the needs of the community including the addition of drainage to the green space to make this a functioning area during periods of wet weather. An extension to the completion date secured, with delivery scheduled 2025/26 period.
- Ballygowan Walking Trail – enhancements to the walking trail through collaborative working with our colleagues in Parks, the project will now include a youth play facility, providing a multi-use space for wellbeing, leisure and social purposes. Public engagement complete, extension to completion date secured, with delivery scheduled 2025/26 period.

Not Applicable

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Outcome 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Restructure of the Regeneration Service

A business case was approved by CLT that enabled a progressive restructure to be implemented in response to internal and external challenges and opportunities.

Most notably, a new Service Unit, Strategic Development, was established to enable timely progression on strategic Regeneration projects that would not have been feasible within the existing structure due to the resource requirements. This Service Unit has made progress on projects such as Empty to Energised, BID, Bangor Waterfront Commercial Development and the Estates Development Project Board. This additional resource will positively contribute towards the Council's Economic Priority by increasing the non-domestic rate base.

Included in the restructure was also a streamlining of the previous urban and rural service units within Regeneration. The rationale of these changes has been proven with several operational and strategic benefits.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- The support from external funding providers is hugely beneficial in the delivery of projects across the Borough. However, the uncertainty of funding opportunities and single year budgets presents difficulties in the forward work planning of projects. Equally, 'shovel ready' projects can often need revised costs obtained due to a lack of funding causing significant delays from the design to the delivery phase.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work collaboratively with Departmental officials to explore opportunities to secure multi year funding. Additionally, continue to use Council 'working up' budget to have projects 'shovel ready' in order to avail of funding opportunities at short notice.

Not Applicable

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Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
To oversee the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena	Negotiations on a small number of significant aspects of the agreement require officer and legal representation consideration to ensure good governance of the project to date	Continue the regular communications between partners to secure an agreement	Director, HoS	Ongoing
To develop a master plan and OBC for the former NIE site	Procurement process initiated on schedule however no responses were received	Feedback from potential respondents cited lack of available budget to complete the project as the main barrier. Additional budget will be sought from the Council to enable progression on this strategic project	HoS	*31.8.25 *An opportunity to include recently purchased land on the Comber Road Newtownards as part of this project has been identified. Next steps are to be agreed internally and are dependent on approval of additional budget to include the Comber Road site.
To create new C/TAG Advisory Groups	The stakeholder mapping exercise led by a consultant was not completed on time	Final draft of consultants report received, details and proposals being collated by officers	Sum, HoS	31.9.2025

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report is noted.

Not Applicable

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Half yearly Performance Report - Regeneration

Generated on: 06 June 2025

Last Update H2 2024/25

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	To create new Town/City Advisory Groups following the review that was undertaken	0	5
	To create 2no new village partnership groups - North Down and Strangford (equivalent to the Ards Peninsula Partnership Group)	8	8
	To commence a review of the village plans and agree with the various groups the key priority projects.	8	8
	To develop a master plan and outline business case for the delivery of a business park at the former NIE site on the Balloo Road, Bangor	0%	100%
	To oversee the development works to Marine Gardens and the McKee Clock Arena in keeping with the agreed Quality Specification as part of the Queen's Parade development scheme – anticipated 50% completed by March 2025	0%	50%
	To assess the outputs from the Town Chamber business plans and assist in growing the membership base	0	5
	To complete the delivery of the Portaferry Public Realm using funding secured from the Small Settlements Grant and undertake the PPEs	100%	100%
	To continue to work with the City/Town Advisory Groups by holding a minimum of 4 meetings per year with each group to develop regeneration improvements for the urban areas and act as a conjugate for other Council services	4	4
	To deliver projects using the Covid Recovery Small Settlements' Regeneration Programme	0	4
	% spend against budget	78.02%	100%
	% staff attendance	85.28%	94%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%

Not Applicable

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	To develop Urban/Rural projects to procurement stage to access funding streams	5	5

Not Applicable

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that

Unclassified

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	21 May 2025
File Reference	RDP152
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Feasability Study Comber Enterprise Hub
Attachments	

Background

Members may recall a report presented to the Committee on 13 June 2024, which outlined proposed Regeneration Working Up Projects for 2024/2025. One of the approved projects was a Feasibility Study for a Community Enterprise Hub in Comber.

The project was selected to be initiated as a result of the review process of the Comber Masterplan in 2022/23, which reaffirmed the interest in a potential Enterprise Hub. Additionally, the project aligned with Priority B 'Making the Most of Valuable Space' in the Masterplan.

The Study

In December 2024, Regeneration officers appointed a consultant to conduct the feasibility study for a potential Enterprise Hub.

The design of the study aimed to ascertain the following information:

- Market Demand and Community Support

Not Applicable

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- Existing provision
- Potential suitable locations

The consultants carried out desktop research, in person analysis, and in person and online stakeholder engagement in collaboration with the Comber Town Advisory Group (TAG). Regeneration officers have received the report, and the key points are summarised below. Regeneration Officers have circulated the report to the Comber TAG.

Summary of Findings

Market demand and Community Support

The report noted that although only 17% of the Northern Ireland workforce works remotely, the lowest percentage in the United Kingdom, certain areas of the province have seen an increased demand for flexible working spaces, or Enterprise Hubs, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These Hubs are managed by an operator and usually comprise of office and meeting rooms of various sizes, layouts, and are equipped with extensive office and computer equipment.

Community support for an Enterprise Hub was high, however survey feedback indicated an anticipated low usage percentage of Hubs of various sizes. The number of respondents received to the consultant's survey was very low (16) which might speak to the low interest for a potential Enterprise Hub in Comber. Responses included:

- 8% of respondents said they would consider using a small sized office space on a weekly basis
- 9% of respondents said they would consider using a 'hot desk' on a weekly basis
- 42% of respondents said they would consider using a medium sized office space on a full-time basis
- 36% of respondents said they would consider using a small sized meeting room a few times a year
- 38% of respondents stated they would consider using a medium sized meeting room a few times a year

Existing Provision

There are five Hubs within a ten-minute drive from Comber town centre, three of which are in Newtownards. Office and meeting room spaces range from 100 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft.

24-hour access is available at some of the Hubs and all have access to ample parking, kitchen facilities, high speed internet, computer equipment, and operate on a contract basis.

Potential suitable locations

Four commercial premises in Comber town centre were available at the time of the study ranging from 315 sq. ft. to 12,300 sq. ft.

Not Applicable

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A number of these potential sites were located on upper floors and therefore presented potential access and other issues. Some were vacant properties requiring modernisation and the smaller premises would limit their suitability and financial return. Each premises had very limited parking provision given their location close to the town centre.

Two potential options outside the town centre were identified. Comber Community Centre is owned and managed by the Council and currently facilities bookings from various community groups and sectors, these bookings are relatively low in frequency. The Centre is due to receive over £500,000 from external funding for a conversion to a 'Mini Digi Hub' with modern meeting facilities, this project is being led by Economic Development. This conversion will convert a small 5m x 8m room into a high-tech business space for meetings, hybrid events, mentoring and co working space. The Centre is within walking distance of the town square, has a large car park, and will be equipped with the latest technology.

The second location identified was Enler Mill. This commercial opportunity is limited to the establishment of Class B1 (Call Centre) or B1 (Research and Development) building with car parking. The building has recently been completed to a shell and core specification stage and therefore requires a full fit out. Units are available from 2,646 sq. ft. to 7,938 sq. ft. and are therefore significantly larger than other office spaces in existing Hubs and therefore may not be suitable as an Enterprise Hub in addition to its existing planning permission constraints.

Conclusion

The findings of the Feasibility Study have detailed a lack of market demand and has not identified a need for an Enterprise Hub in Comber. An absence of suitable site locations was an additional identified challenge. If a Hub was to be established, subject to satisfactory Business Case, consideration should be given to the operating model and fit out costs of the facility.

Council, through the Mini Digi Hub, is establishing a space within Comber Community Centre which will host workshops and offer co working space. Should there be any tangible future demand for a Hub in Comber following the roll out of the Comber Digi Hub, consideration could be given further to the potential establishment of larger Enterprise Hub, subject to Business Case. Enler Mill could potentially provide SMEs in industrial style units dependent of existing or revised planning permissions.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the findings of the study.

Unclassified

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ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	23 May 2025
File Reference	RDP14
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Notice of Motion - Vacancy and Dereliction Studies
Attachments	

Context

Members may recall a report presented to the Committee on 13th June 2024, which outlined proposed Regeneration Working Up Projects for 2024/2025. One of the approved projects was a Vacancy and Dereliction study.

Members may recall a report presented to Committee in February 2025 providing an update on Notice of Motion 568 and detailing a vacancy and dereliction study in progress in Bangor and Newtownards. In this report it was detailed that an 'Empty to Energised' grant scheme was being developed by the Regeneration Strategic Development Service Unit. The scheme will provide potential financial assistance by a grant funding scheme to property owners who participate in the scheme to renovate vacant properties and reintroduce commercial use to the premises under stipulated terms and conditions.

Not Applicable

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It was discussed that to ensure an evidence-based approach to the pilot schemes Officers deemed it necessary to acquire the most recent vacancy and dereliction figures in the urban areas of the Borough. The latest DfC vacancy survey (31 October 2024) shows that:

- Bangor City Centre 21.0% of commercial premises were vacant
- Newtownards 21.1% of commercial premises were vacant, the highest number since April 2016
- Comber 12.6% of commercial premises were vacant
- Donaghadee 17.4% of commercial premises were vacant
- Holywood 9.2% of commercial premises were vacant

Based on these percentages and other considered factors, McGarry Consulting was commissioned, in partnership with Queen's University Belfast (QUB). Their remit was to undertake a study into vacancy and dereliction in Bangor and Newtownards given that they have the highest vacancy rate and to support the development of a pilot grant scheme.

Each study was required to meet the following objectives:

1. Identification and mapping of derelict and vacant commercial properties
2. Analysis of patterns of vacancy using historic data
3. Exploration into cases of decline and recommendations of strategies for redevelopment (short, medium, and long-term)
4. Interventions to tackle vacancy and dereliction and ways to increase property values and attract new businesses

Regeneration officers have received the report that details key findings and proposed short, medium, and long-term interventions. The final report will be presented to the Bangor and Newtownards Advisory Groups (C/TAG).

Methodology and Findings

McGarry Consulting conducted analysis into the land uses of all ground floor units within the city centre boundary of Bangor and the Town boundary of Newtownards. Buildings were surveyed as part of this exercise in early 2025. The survey implemented a visual field survey approach, which involved Masters students in Planning from QUB visiting Bangor and Newtownards and identifying all ground floor commercial units that were in use and all ground floor that were vacant.



Building condition

The condition of all vacant buildings identified, were measured on a three-point scale:

Not Applicable

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1. Good condition - properties where all elements, including paintwork, signage, and window frames appear well-maintained.
2. Minor Façade Improvements - properties showing noticeable wear, needing repairs like repainting window frames, updating signage, or fixing cracked tiles and windows. Moderate intervention is needed.
3. Major Works Required - properties in considerable disrepair, potentially boarded up or with extensive visible damage including structural damage. Major repairs or renovation are expected. These ratings were then peer-reviewed for consistency of interpretation purposes when the premises were noted in the Vacant Buildings Glossary.

Upper Floors

When vacant ground floors were noted during the field work, the surveyors noted the number of storeys of the building and sought to identify if the upper floors were in use. In some instances, evidence of upper floor occupation was clear through signage associated with different businesses and signs of residential accommodation such as buzzers for flats and other signs of occupation. The use of the upper floors has been noted in the Vacant Buildings Glossary.

Vacancy terms

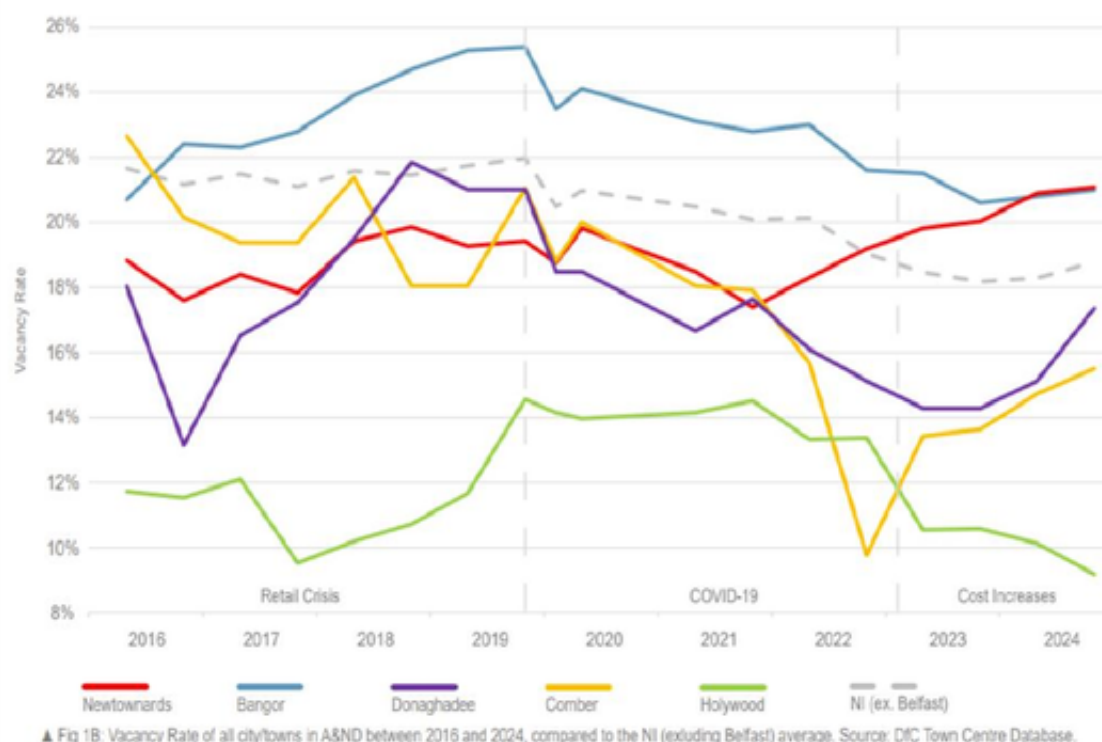
Once vacant ground floor commercial units were identified and added to the Vacant Buildings Glossary, desk-based research was completed to determine the last usage of the building. This research relied upon the use of Google Streetview to determine when the building was last in use. The photographic records for Bangor were detailed with eleven dates photographed from October 2008 to June 2023. Additional online searches of the business were then used to help estimate when the building became vacant. Based on the findings of this research, the vacant premises were classified as either vacant for more than 10 years or less than 10 years.

As part of the report, officers have been provided with a Vacant Buildings Glossary for both Bangor and Newtownards that will provide useful information for the development of the Empty to Energised Grant Scheme and any other interventions that are progressed as a result of the report.

Not Applicable

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A&NDBC Town/City Centre Vacancy Rates



The findings of the Bangor and Newtownards Vacancy and Dereliction Study reinforces the DfC data that these two urban areas have the highest vacancy rates in the Borough, and furthermore are the only urban areas above the NI average vacancy rates (excluding Belfast).

Bangor

The study showed that the overall vacancy rate for Bangor was 20.0% (Jan 2025) against the latest DfC vacancy survey (Oct 2024) which showed the vacancy rate as 21.0%. The findings showed that vacancies are often concentrated in clusters, rather than dispersed evenly across areas. 11 of the 12 vacant properties on Queens Parade are due to be developed as part of the regeneration of the Queens Parade area. If the vacant properties within the Queens Parade development were excluded, the city centre vacancy rate would decrease from 20.0% to 16.5%.

High Street has almost 100 commercial properties, mostly small units, of which 24 are vacant (30.3% of all vacant units). There is a cluster of 8-10 units at the upper end of the street. Gray's Hill has a high vacancy rate of 40.9%. There is a cluster of vacant and derelict units at the junction with Primrose Avenue. These units have laid derelict for over a decade but were animated several years ago which may have, or still does, reduce public consciousness of them as being derelict properties.

Not Applicable

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Newtownards

In Newtownards the vacancy rate was 21.3% against the latest DfC vacancy survey (Oct 2024) which showed the vacancy rate as 21.1%. The largest areas for vacancy in Newtownards are on Movilla Street, Greenwell Street and Castle Street, with vacancy rates of 42.9%, 42.9%, and 40.0% respectively. These areas are on the periphery of the commercial town centre and the residential areas beyond each point. An example of this is demonstrated by the derelict carpet shop, a large building which sits prominently at the end of High Street. High Street had the second highest number of units (58) but the lowest vacancy rate (5.2%) with only 3 units vacant. This is unusual and indicates the strength of High Street as a core shopping area. The report noted that there are some vacant units, just off High St (on Mill St). Additionally, there are many social enterprises, which occupy units on the High Street.

Most of the ground floor vacant units are spread out with the biggest clusters comprising of between 3 and 6 properties, for example Regent Street and Frances Street. The majority of the properties are in good condition – with some needing minor works – and have been vacant for under 10 years. The report noted the importance of targeting these smaller clusters to reduce vacancy whilst yielding the biggest visual impact.

Findings Support the Review of the City and Town Masterplans

The review of the Masterplans in 2022/23 for Bangor and Newtownards identified that tackling vacancy and dereliction was a key priority for each area.

The study has provided a detailed glossary of vacant buildings and recommended that the Empty to Energised pilot grant scheme should focus initially on empty small ground floor units in an evidenced based and systematic manner.

The vacancy and dereliction study further evidences the need to tackle hotspots of dereliction and has identified those potential areas that can be supported through the Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme.

Proposed Interventions

The study details small scale, medium scale, and large-scale interventions. The interventions that have been proposed will be explored by Regeneration officers and considered as part of urban regeneration projects, subject to funding opportunities and/or available budget. A summary of the proposals is provided below.

Small-scale Interventions

- Town/City Centre Business Led Organisations

The existing businesses, community, and creative organisations within the urban centres provide a wealth of knowledge, ideas and awareness of what is positively impacting shopping districts and the streetscape. With administrative support and small budgets, they could collaborate with various Council departments to reduce vacancy and dereliction, enhancing the city or town centres appeal.

- Cultural Plan & Upper Floor Studios

Not Applicable

111

In Bangor, events like Open House and Late Night Art Bangor, along with activities by Boom Studios and Seacourt Print Workshop demonstrate that festivals and immersive events can transform perceptions and attract visitors to city and town centres. Supporting creative organisations to develop more studios, programmes, and events, by the Council's Arts and Tourism departments for example could further enhance this appeal and realise positive impacts for Bangor and Newtownards.

- Empty to Energised pilot scheme

Empty to Energised type schemes have proved successful in various Council districts in Northern Ireland. This study has evidenced a clear requirement for a similar type of intervention in Bangor and Newtownards. The project should focus initially on empty small ground floor units – in targeted areas - that can be brought back to life relatively inexpensively. This will help ensure that the allocated Council budget for this project will create maximum value. The pilot should be targeted on projects that can be enabled with up to circa £25,000 of funding. The pilot, if successful, could enable a future expansion of the scheme albeit previous examples illustrate an approximate two-year timeframe for project design, delivery, and completion.

Medium-scale Interventions

- Pop-up Shops (on an individual or multi-unit basis)

Project 24 in Bangor successfully cultivated local artists, leading to the creation of Boom Studios and other enterprises. Similarly, Belfast's Trade Market fostered many successful businesses. After its closure, Bodega Bagels moved into a vacant unit on Royal Avenue, supported by Belfast City Council's Vacant to Vibrant scheme.

- Shop Front Revitalisation Scheme

A shop front revitalisation could complement a potential Empty to Energised type scheme. This could provide funding for shop owners to improve their shop fronts, façades and the immediate streetscape in order to improve the visual appeal of the urban centres.

- Creative Characters & Urban Trail Pilot

The success of the Paddington statue in Newtownards and the artistic murals in both Bangor and Newtownards could be developed further. Urban trails could be used to guide people around the urban centres to visit these landmarks. Family-friendly trails featuring characters like the Gruffalo or Paddington should be created. These trails, combined with seating for photo opportunities, could be sponsored by local businesses, enhancing business, community, and creative engagement.

- Heritage Buildings

Not Applicable

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Heritage Buildings can offer links to the area's past, but their maintenance or required funding is often outside the scope of a Council led initiative or remit. The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) is currently seeking to extend their village catalyst scheme to larger market towns in Northern Ireland. Along with National Lottery Heritage Funding (NLHF) schemes, the AHF fund appear the most appropriate first call for heritage preservation projects.

- Meanwhile Use

Underused spaces can be utilised temporarily while awaiting development. Belfast's Vacant to Vibrant scheme and Vault Studios show the potential for short-term artistic studios. Collaboration between Council, BID/Business Groups, and local creatives can identify interest and locations for meanwhile use.

- Tourism Animation and Visitor Plan

Quality cultural programmes like Open House, Portaferry Gala, and food festivals attract large crowds and transform perceptions, the International Guitar Festival in Newtownards is a successful example. Developing an animation and events programme, leveraging venues like the new Citizen's Hub in Newtownards or Queens Parade in Bangor could create a year-round schedule with a signature festival in each urban area.

- Growth Units

A survey could be initiated by the Council amongst businesses in urban areas to assess how many may be looking larger premises over the next five years. Based on the results a pilot programme could be set up to map out existing larger units or those units (individually or collectively) that could be reprofiled to meet the business need.

Large-scale Interventions

- Rates Review

A new approach to rates is noted in the report, were commercial premises creating jobs do not pay more than owners of vacant units. Examples from UK Councils show that a sliding scale of rates linked to vacancy, dereliction, or energy efficiency can effectively encourage open units and discourage vacant ones. However this is not in the gift of the Council.

- Co-ordinating & Complementing Investment

Co-ordinated development of Queen's Parade, Bangor Marina, Pickie Park, Bangor Castle, and a potential Council Office building would transform the city centre.

The proposed Ards Citizen's Hub and reprofiled City Hall will attract more visitors to the urban centres. Planned programmes and promotions over the first 2-3 years should ensure they are established and become well used.

Not Applicable

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- Upper Floors

92.4% of upper floors above vacant units in Bangor are also vacant. With 66% of households being 1-2 person, these spaces could be used for residential accommodation or artists' studios. Addressing upper floor vacancy is a much larger scale project which would be dependent on stakeholder collaboration from within and external from the Council. This intervention is beyond the scope of a Vacant to Vibrant scheme in isolation.

85.7% of upper floors above vacant units in Newtownards are also vacant. With two-thirds of households being 1-2 person, these spaces could be used for residential accommodation or creative studios. Addressing upper floor underuse should be a larger scale project.

Conclusion

Regeneration Officers will use the findings from this report to further design and develop the Empty to Energised pilot scheme. Additionally, the findings will be used to design and develop other potential short, medium, and long-term interventions to tackle the issue of vacancy and dereliction in urban areas of the Borough. Further studies could be commissioned for the remaining towns, Comber, Holywood and Donaghadee. In the interim however, Regeneration officers have worked collaboratively with Planning officers to establish baseline data to support a potential expansion of the Empty to Energised scheme in the other three urban areas of the Borough, subject to budget and the successful implementation of the pilot Empty to Energised scheme.

Officers are mindful of the requirement to tackle vacancy and dereliction in rural areas of the Borough, and as such will seek to source potential funding opportunities to be used for similar interventions in rural areas.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report and findings of the vacancy and dereliction study.

Unclassified

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

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	27 May 2025
File Reference	RDP19
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Completion of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024 - 25
Attachments	N/A

Background

As members will be aware the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme opened for applications in October 2024. This is a capital grant scheme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), which provides funding support for rural micro businesses from £500 up to a maximum of £4,999, at a 50% grant rate. The grants help businesses to remain sustainable and, in many cases, grow, innovate, and create rural jobs.

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024/2025 Update

Following eligibility checks and an assessment panel 31 Letters of Offer were issued to successful applicants in Ards and North Down on the 10th January 2025. The total value of grant awarded was £101,736.

Of the 31 businesses awarded a Letter of Offer, 28 completed their projects and three withdrew due to various factors. The three businesses that withdrew from the process were content with the scheme and are keen to apply again in the future.

Not Applicable

115

Following submission of the 28 grant claims, the total amount of grant approved for payment in Ards and North Down was £90,085.60.

Businesses were asked to provide an end of project report submitted alongside their claim and of the 28 submissions, 25 businesses advised that they were 'Very Satisfied' with the support provided, and the other 3 businesses stated they were 'Satisfied'. An example of positive feedback can be evidenced by a rural business noting that as a result of the capital item purchased through the grant scheme they have experienced greater efficiencies, greater ability to become more adaptable, and provide cleaner and safer working environments for their customers. Additionally, it has increased their capacity to undertake more work resulting in business growth and the potential to expand their workforce.

The positive feedback from the businesses who received grant demonstrates the significant impact the scheme has provided. Of the 28 recipients, 16 had not applied for rural grant funding in the past and it is therefore encouraging that businesses are seeking to avail of rural funding opportunities in addition to those who have successfully applied before.

A post project evaluation will be completed within 12 months of completion of the scheme and part of this process will determine if the scheme has led to job creation.

On Thursday 1st May 2025, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir, and the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, visited one of the successful applicant businesses in Ards and North Down (Strangford Lough Activity Centre) to celebrate the completion of the Scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council note the above report.

Unclassified

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ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	27 May 2025
File Reference	RDP236
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ballygowan Play AND Explore Park (Small Settlements Programme)
Attachments	

Introduction

As members will be aware under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Programme a Walking Path at Moss Road Park was proposed and agreed for Ballygowan.

Since the previous update on this project, there have been several progressions and enhancements made.

It was previously agreed that a new older children's play provision for Ballygowan at the same site of the Walking and Running Path. Officers from both departments (Regeneration and Parks) have been working together to create a project that integrates both schemes, aiming to achieve greater outcomes for the residents and visitors of Ballygowan.

Play AND Explore Park

The Play AND Explore Park is an exciting project at Moss Road Park, located directly behind the Recycling Centre in Ballygowan.

Not Applicable

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The Play AND Explore Park will include a walking and running path, and an older children's play provision.

The project will be delivered in two phases:

- Phase 1 - the development of a 1km walking and running path (Regeneration led)
- Phase 2 – the installation of an older children's play provision (Parks led)

Phase 1 – Walking and Running Path

The new walking and running path will surround the football pitches and will weave through existing trees and regain access through areas which are currently overgrown. The new path will create a loop that welcomes users of all ages to enjoy, encouraging outdoor activity, promoting health and wellbeing, whilst promoting an active lifestyle for all.

The path will provide the opportunity for parkrun, inviting individuals and families to engage in regular outdoor exercise and enjoy the benefits of community fitness.



Phase 2 – Older Children's Play Provision

Ards and North Down Play Strategy 2021- 2032 highlighted the need for older children provision in Ballygowan, this is proposed at Moss Road.

There are a range of options to be considered for the older children's play provision such as a MUGA, Skate Park, Pump Track or Parkour.

The Older Children's Play Provision will be managed and delivered by officers in the Parks Department.

In addition to the Walking and Running Path, and the older children's play provision, the site will also include the creation of a car park, which will facilitate 15 car parking spaces, wildflower planting, seating, signage and picnic benches.

Public Engagement

A public engagement event took place on Monday 28th April in Ballygowan Community Centre from 4pm-7pm. Members of the public were invited to come along and review the design for the Walking Trail and have their say on the preferred choice of Older Children's Play Provision. The closing date for responses was Monday 19th May 2025.

Not Applicable

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22 members of the public attended the engagement event, all the responses received were very positive and complimentary of the proposed projects. A minor change to the design of the Walking Trail was implemented following the public engagement, this included the relocation of some of the seating benches to locations with improved views.

Next Steps

The works package for Phase 1 of the project is nearing completion and will be issued to the Council's appointed Minor Works Contractors for cost submission, it is estimated that this will take approximately 3-4 weeks. Following appointment, a start date onsite will be agreed with the successful contractor.

It should be noted that the Habitat Regulations Assessment does not include any time limit conditions.

It is envisaged works will commence onsite Summer 2025 for Phase 1 and 2.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this information.

Unclassified

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ITEM 15

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	26 May 2025
File Reference	RDP60
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Chamber Grant Assistance Programme
Attachments	N/A

Background

As members will be aware the Council agreed an annual grant assistance programme to support each of the City and Town Centre Chambers of Commerce/Trade (the chamber).

The programme offers financial support to the chambers to help them develop in three key areas:

1. Capacity Building – initiatives aimed at growing the chamber
2. City/Town Development – initiatives aimed at increasing the town/ city profile.
3. Administration Support – for chamber activity.

The grant assistance programme funds 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £15,000. The Chamber must cover any further costs exceeding £15,000.

Not Applicable

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Grant Assistance Programme 2024-2025

Each of the chambers are required to submit a monitoring report to detail the outcomes of the grant assistance programme, please see below:

Bangor

The grant assistance programme has assisted Bangor Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	<p>Membership has continued to grow, and is helped and promoted via the Business Awards, coffee mornings, events, and being seen to promote the businesses.</p> <p>Promoting Bangor as a place to do business along with representing the businesses.</p> <p>The increase in membership is a testament to the value placed on the chamber especially when businesses are cross-cutting.</p>
City Development	<p>Representing and being a voice for Bangor is delivered via events, meeting with statutory agents and promoting Bangor.</p> <p>Various initiatives and events delivered including sponsoring the ambassadors from SERC at popular events, Christmas activity, Business Awards and marketing.</p> <p>The Business Awards are pivotal to recognising the hard work and dedication of the business community.</p>
Administration Support	<p>A City Centre office which creates a hub for the chamber and offers a drop-in business support service.</p>

Comber

The grant assistance programme has assisted Comber Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	<p>Comber Chamber had static growth in membership but continued to provide support to active participating members.</p> <p>Skills and training events such Networking Skills, Social Media training, Digital Marketing Masterclasses.</p> <p>Engagement with Comber Regeneration Group with Chamber representatives attending monthly meetings. Chamber supporting Comber Regeneration Group in its bid to win Ulster in Bloom.</p>
Town Development	<p>Promotion of key events such as Comber Earlies Festival (engagement in Passport Scheme).</p> <p>Advertising hoarding contract secured to promote the town and promote 'Love Local Comber', this was also utilised in the lead up to Christmas events.</p> <p>Engaged in wider national promotion, running articles in the Belfast Telegraph, focusing features on local traders.</p> <p>Inclusion in the Ards Business Awards – engagement with the Newtownards Chamber led to the extension of the boundary to include Comber, providing Comber businesses an opportunity to be recognised and allowing the Chamber to support the awards. This should encourage entrants from Comber, and help to showcase the town, and promote the local businesses.</p>

Not Applicable

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Administration Support	Administrative support including data analysis, monthly chamber board meetings, social media account management etc. This support has allowed the chamber to explore funding opportunities such as Go Succeed; it has also allowed the chamber to engage with Newry BID team to discuss the possibility of becoming a BID district.
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Donaghadee

The grant assistance programme has assisted Donaghadee Community Development Association to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	Meet with new businesses and signpost to support agencies (three new businesses opened within the town). Conducting surveys with existing businesses to understand their training and support needs. Up-to-date website and social media platforms. Public Meeting held regarding car parking for business community, very well attended.
Town Development	Events – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop Local • Christmas Activity • Summer Festival (over 20,000 attendees) Engaged in a programme of environmental improvements with Donaghadee winning Ulster in Bloom for the fourth year. Ongoing promotion of the town via local newspaper advertising. Engagement with local government and central government officers for town centre development support. Attendance at Town Advisory Group meetings. Response to public consultations such as Active Travel.
Administration Support	Ongoing membership records. Weekly information reel released on website and social media. Introduced a quarterly newsletter distributed to every home. Established a new group 'Creative Donaghadee' to promote creative arts in the town. Administrative support such as attending meetings, financial reporting, etc.

Holywood

The grant assistance programme has assisted Holywood Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	The President's Awards have greatly increased Chamber recognition and public interaction. Membership has steadily grown. Monthly meetings with speakers have fostered inclusivity, allowing members to participate as their schedule permits. Updated website which features a current business directory, serving as a valuable resource for potential members.
Town Development	Animation – during December entertainment is provided on Saturdays leading up to Christmas and on Christmas Eve to

Not Applicable

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	<p>enhance the festive atmosphere of the town. Feedback from retail and hospitality members has indicated that this initiative encourages more shopping outside city centres.</p> <p>A social media brief was issued to all members to ensure correct branding and promotion of businesses through the chamber's platforms.</p> <p>Support for activities organised by other groups that aim to increase foot traffic in the town.</p>
Administration Support	<p>Social media engagement through videos, interviews etc.</p> <p>Administrative support to ensure clear communication, information dissemination, meetings, networking events.</p> <p>Newsletter template for further promotion of the chamber.</p>

Newtownards

The grant assistance programme has assisted Newtownards Chamber to achieve the following:

Capacity Building	<p>There has been an increase in membership, the board setup recruitment task forces and actively encourages board members to take it in turns to visit local businesses and spread awareness of the chamber.</p> <p>More proactive engagement with businesses with less focus on social media output.</p> <p>Meetings and networking events with local businesses to deliver training and social events, which was very well received from attendees.</p> <p>The chamber also targeted larger producers in the area, notably Mash Direct and Rich Sauces. The relationship has started to build, and the chamber would like to think that they can get more support in the upcoming year.</p>
Town Development	<p>The main areas of progress for the chamber in 2024/25 was the Christmas market which was held on Main Street in Newtownards. This brought a variety of businesses into the town and provided an excellent family fun day for all. It was noted from traders that this was a very busy day for trading, with members in the hospitality end commenting that they were benefiting from the increase in footfall in the town.</p> <p>The Halloween and Christmas passport scheme was again a hit and helped spread the word about the chamber and encouraged businesses to get involved.</p> <p>Social media posts were a hot topic, and the chamber continued to have a good following on Facebook and Instagram.</p> <p>The other focus for the chamber was the business awards which were the first to be held since 2019. The chamber worked very hard to put on an amazing event.</p>
Administration Support	<p>Administration support to deliver the various chamber functions.</p>

The information above clearly demonstrates the support this grant programme offers each chamber and highlights the ongoing need for this continued support.

Not Applicable

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Grant Assistance Programme 2025-2027

As members may be aware the five chambers have recently united to form Ards and North Down Business Forum.

This new Forum is set to provide a unified and powerful voice for businesses across the Borough, promoting action, collaboration, and representation on key issues impacting the local economy.

The creation of the Forum reflects the shared commitment of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Donaghadee, and Comber Chambers to champion the interests of their members and the wider business community. By leveraging their collective influence, the Forum will ensure that the needs and contributions of businesses are recognised and prioritised in decisions that shape the borough's future.

Following discussions with members of the Forum and Council Officers, it is hoped that the grant assistance programme will not only support the individual chamber but also support and facilitate initiatives led by the Forum.

Considering this, it is recommended that the grant assistance programme and submitted Business Plan is extended to a two-year period instead of one whilst maintaining the annual grant claim of £15,000, subject to the normal rate setting process.

A two-year Business Plan submitted by each chamber should encompass larger outcomes and achievements, whilst providing sufficient time to achieve these objectives. It will provide the Forum with sufficient time to establish itself and foster collaboration on shared outcomes. Streamlining the process will promote efficiency and a focus on long-term success.

The grant assistance award of £15,000 per annum will remain the same.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council agrees to proceed with a 2-Year Grant Assistance Programme, subject to the rate setting process, whereby the Business Plan expands over a two-year period, but the level of grant drawn down annually remains the same (£15,000).

Unclassified

ITEM 16

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	
Council/Committee	Place & Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	12 th June 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Capital Developments
Date of Report	27 th May 2025
File Reference	160127
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Strategic Capital Development Performance Report
Attachments	H2 2024/25 SCPU Half Yearly Performance Report

Context

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Quarter 4 (Q4)	October – March	June

The report for H2 2024/2025 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service contributes to all outcomes outlined in our Service & Delivery Framework.

Service Delivery Framework	Outcome Contributed to
Project Prioritisation: Contribute to the achievement of the economic, environmental and social corporate priorities through the prioritisation of capital projects, creating placemaking opportunities to support and attract new businesses increasing footfall in the Borough and secure Best Value for Money (BVfM) for stakeholders.	1,2,3,4,5,6
Structured Project Delivery: Utilising best practice tools and techniques recognised by Central Government, HM Treasury and Project Delivery Professionals, such as the Five Case Model, NEC Contracts, PRINCE 2, the Capital Handbook, MAG Design Reviews, Stakeholder Engagement, Community Participation, Equality and Sustainability Screening, and lessons learned from post project evaluations.	1,2,4,5,6,7
Funding Partnerships: Actively provide support and guidance to	1,2,3,4,7

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Council Directorates and Service Units during and or directly the application process to secure funding from various public sector departments and external sources to deliver our strategic capital projects to drive the economy and attract new visitors, businesses, and residents.	
Innovation & Technology: Strive to become a high-performing organisation by embracing technology, implementing innovative solutions, and ensuring officers are well trained and supplied with the necessary resources to deliver exceptional service.	1,2,3,4,7
Robust Governance: Implementing and promoting robust governance procedures across Council Directorates, emphasising the importance of risk management to effectively manage the complex and challenging situations that arise in the delivery of capital projects within Local Government and the Public Sector.	1,2,3,4,5,7

Outcome 1

An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- **Ward Park:** Contractor procurement for this phase is progressing schedule for release next quarter. Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, fostering co-design elements that ensure the community has a meaningful voice in shaping the redevelopment. In-person consultations have been complemented by the use of Citizen Lab allowing ongoing engagement, feedback, and collaboration with the public. This approach ensures transparency, inclusivity, and a shared vision for the future of Ward Park.
- **Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment:** Significant progress is being made on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment following the appointment of Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for the BYC Watersports Centre and Pickie Fun Park. Stakeholder engagement has been integral to every aspect of the project, involving key stakeholder groups, community organisations, businesses, and environmental advocates to ensure their input shapes a shared vision for the redevelopment. In addition to targeted consultations, we have engaged with residents and the wider community through public information sessions, providing updates on proposals, the project vision, and progress in transforming the waterfront.
- **Bangor Castle:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, fostering co-design elements that ensure the community has a meaningful voice in shaping the redevelopment. In-person consultations are in the process of being planned for the next quarter and likely to take place June/July 2025.
- **Newtownards Citizen Hub:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, with targeted events planned for week commencing 9 June 2025 as the design progresses through to stage 2.
- **Whitespots:** Stakeholder engagement remains an integral part of the programme, with targeted events under developed related to pre planning and planning stages.

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Outcome 2

An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- **Capital Sustainability Policy Draft:** Recognising Council's objective to become more environmentally sustainable and resilient, the Head of Strategic Capital Development has drafted a Capital Sustainability Policy. This policy promotes sustainable practices in project delivery and is set to be adopted by all directorates. By embedding sustainable initiatives such as Passivhaus, PAS2080 and BREEAM standards into capital projects from the early design and tender stages, we align with Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.
- **Newtownards Citizens Hub:** The design team has been appointed and the project has achieved Stage 1 sign off. Council has issued the tender to appoint directly Passivhaus certifier to ensure and sign off the design teams and contractors delivery to ensure Passivhaus compliance.
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** This remains a significantly important project with Passivhaus and net zero carbon targets written in to the established brief specification agreed with our partners DoF

Outcome 3

A thriving and sustainable economy

Key achievements:

- **Bangor Waterfront:** Following the appointment of the Integrated Consultant Teams (ICT) for both BYC Watersports Centre and Pickie Fun Park, momentum is building on the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment. We are currently out to tender for an ICT to deliver the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm which will transform five-character areas along the 2 mile stretch of coastline. This project will play a pivotal role in advancing the strategic objectives of the broader redevelopment programme, aligning with Council and Belfast Region City Deal's goal "to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the whole region and deliver more and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities".
- **Bangor Castle:** This project OBC development has established a preferred option to be developed to convert the castle into a hotel providing significant economic benefits to the borough
- **Civic and Office Rationalisation:** With our partner organisation DoF this remain a major and significant economic regeneration project bring two organising and its combined 800 administration staff into the heart of Bangor City.

Outcome 4

A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and has begun onsite.
- **Whitespots Country Park** – Successful transition to RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design.

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Outcome 5*Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing***Key achievements:**

- **Social Value:** As part of the procurement process, we are integrating social initiatives in our public tenders for construction and design services. These initiatives can help to promote community well-being, enhance social value, and support local development by:
 - Promoting & Creating Local Employment Opportunities
 - Supporting Skills Development through training & apprenticeship programmes
 - Encourage Social Inclusion
 - Enhance Community Benefits by delivering additional benefits such as improved public spaces, community facilities, and services.

Outcome 6*Opportunities for people to be active and healthy***Key achievements:**

- **Greenways Newtownards – Bangor:** Contractor appointed and has begun onsite.
- **Greenway Comber to Newtownards:** The majority of the route has achieved planning permission
- **Portavogie 3G Pitch:** Planning approval progressing.
- **Multi Use 3G Pitch Ards Peninsula:** Design Team appointed.

Outcome 7*Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation***Key achievements:**

- **Cross Directorate Collaboration:** The successful ongoing initiative of the Capital Projects Advisory Group (CPAG), chaired by the Head of Strategic Capital Development, continues to enable comprehensive engagement, sharing best practice and synergy across all Council Services. CPAG facilitates the sharing of information about work at hand, and lessons learned on all current and planned Capital Works.

Emerging issues:

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

1. **Significant delays in project delivery due to challenges posed by the Procurement, Planning, Land Acquisition and Stakeholder Engagement processes e.g. legal challenges and statutory consultee responses.**

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Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Preparation of appropriate project information / documentation based on a clearly defined brief and business case in line with the Structured Project Delivery as detailed in our Service Objectives and Delivery Framework.
- Applying lessons learnt to ensure the planning application prepared by the ICT contains sufficient information to satisfy potential queries posed by Statutory Consultees.
- Actively contribute to stakeholder engagement, transparent communication and community participation at an early stage.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements, processes, and procedures

2. Budget: Significant additional costs (forecast or incurred) above allocated budget with potential impact on project delivery, benefits realisation, and Value for Money.

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Apply internal governance procedures to monitor and report on identified issues.
- Regularly review and maintain Individual Project Risk Registers and Cost Report with regular reporting to the Project Board.
- Test investment decisions via business cases (OBC & FBC) & Implement 5 case model.
- Appropriately test Strategic Need and Economic Viability at an early stage.
- Regularly monitoring budgetary forecasts in conjunction with appointed design teams.
- Review, embed and communicate governance arrangements and incorporate lessons learnt.

3. Unplanned need to support delivery of non-strategic capital projects impacting on delivery of strategic capital programme of works.

Action (Continued Mitigation)

- Increase awareness by participating at forums such as CPAG. Adopt consistent approach to capital delivery across the organisation by implementing best practice and sharing lessons learned.
- Develop and maintain collaborative relationships across all Directorates to review and confirm anticipated pipeline of capital works (irrespective of scale / scope / complexity).

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
No KPI's considered at risk within 2024 - 2025				

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report is noted.

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Half yearly Performance Report - Strategic Capital Development

Generated on: 28 May 2025

Last Update H1 2024/25

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	104.09%	100%

Last Update H2 2024/25

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Support the delivery of the Capital Projects Portfolio	100%	100%
	Greenways - Floodgates Park to Green Road £5m Capital Build Progress on to site	100%	100%
	Greenways - Comber to Newtownards £7m Capital Build Progress through planning, currently been in the planning system for over 5 years	100%	100%
	Design teams appointed by 31st March 2025 to take forward a number of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment projects	100%	100%
	Whitespots Phase 1 £10m Capital Build develop planning application with appointed consultants	100%	100%
	Newtownards Citizen Hub £15m Capital Build appoint design consultants and develop deisng towards a planning application	100%	100%
	Ward Park Redevelopment £5m appoint contractor	75%	100%
	Business case completed by 31st March 2025 to increase cemetery provision within the borough	95%	100%
	% staff attendance	92.63%	94%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period September 2023 to March 2025	100%	100%

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Professional development and accreditation	4	4