

Local Development Plan 2032
Supplementary Document 5C

Economic Development

Employment Land Review Update
2025



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Document Review	4
The Department for the Economy Strategies and Documents	5
Belfast City Region Deal	5
10x Economy – An Economic Vision	7
Department for Infrastructure (Planning) Documents	8
The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)	8
Ards and North Down Borough Council Documents and Strategies	9
Corporate Plan 2024-2028: A Sustainable Borough	9
The Big Plan – Community Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032	9
Neighbouring Councils Local Development Plans	9
Belfast City Council Plan Strategy	9
Lisburn Castlereagh Plan Strategy	10
Newry Mourne and Down District Council	10
3. Socio Economic Assessment	11
Demographic Profile	11
Population change	11
Population Forecasts	12
Place and Quality of Life	12
Health	12
Social and Environmental Deprivation	13
Crime	13
Economy and Business Base	14
GVA and Exports	14
Registered Companies	15
Business Size	16
Entrepreneurship	17
Labour Market and Sectoral Employment	18
Economic Activity	18
Claimant Count	18
Employment Rates	19
Earnings Profile	20

Employment Profile	21
Sectoral Composition.....	21
Rural Economy	22
Education and Skills Profile.....	23
Tourism Performance	25
Visitor Attractions.....	25
Trips and Nights	26
Spend	27
Tourism Employment	28
4. Availability of Land for Industrial and Economic Development Purposes – 2025 Update	29
NS31 – Donaghadee Road, Newtownards (North and South)	29
NS31 JUB – Jubilee Road Industrial Estate	31
BR09 – Greenways Industrial Estate.....	31
BR11 – Clandeboyne Road, Bangor	33
NS30 – Comber Road (East), Newtownards	33
5. Conclusions	34

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2019, as part of the evidence gathering for the draft Plan Strategy, the Council commissioned an Employment Land Review Report (ELRR) for the Borough. The ELRR provided an assessment of the employment need in the Borough and considered how future needs for new and/or additional employment land could be delivered in a sustainable and rational manner through the Local Development Plan.
- 1.2 In 2022, the Council's LDP team carried out a baseline Employment and Economic Development Land Monitor to complement the information provided in the ELRR. Through a combination of desktop and fieldwork surveys, LPS non-domestic rate data and GIS mapping, this exercise provided further insight into the availability of land for industrial use and established a baseline for future monitoring. Further surveys were carried out in 2023 and 2025 and the resulting Geo-Database provides a detailed breakdown of land uses within extant and legacy industrial zonings and sites over 0.5 ha in size which have been substantially developed for industrial/Economic Development uses.
- 1.3 This 2025 Update should be read in conjunction with the full 2019 ELRR report and the 2022 Industrial and Economic Development Land report. Many sections of the original documents remain relevant, and this paper only provides updated information for those parts which are now out of date or for which updates are now available. This includes the introduction of new strategies such as the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028: A Sustainable Borough and updated statistical information on the Borough. The main addendum will be the projected employment land allocation requirement which presently extends to 2030 in the 2019 ELRR but will be adjusted to align with the end of the plan period; 2032.
- 1.4 The final section will provide detail on the key changes to the economic development land supply within the Borough, as recorded by the 2025 Monitor.

2. Document Review

- 2.1 The ELRR carried out an extensive review of any documents of relevance to economic development in the Borough. Many of these documents are still relevant and current, particularly the Regional Development Strategy (RDS)

2035 which provides the spatial framework to deliver economic growth in Northern Ireland. New or updated documents are detailed below:

The Department for the Economy Strategies and Documents

Belfast City Region Deal

- 2.2 The NI Executive and UK Government has committed £1.2 billion capital funding over the next 15 years to four Northern Ireland City and Growth Deals – which are custom packages of funding negotiated between government and local authorities, aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth. The implementation of City and Growth Deals has been deemed a priority for delivery by the NI Executive.
- 2.3 The highly ambitious Belfast City Region Deal (BRCD) was signed in December 2021, to support the shared vision of ‘inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region.’ The ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through the following pillars of investment:
- Innovation and Digital – achieving world leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capacity, facilitating invention, commercialisation and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased well-being;
 - Tourism and Regeneration – boosting tourism and regeneration our region-creating world class towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will stand out in international markets;
 - Infrastructure – connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure; and
 - Employability and skills – putting in place arrangements to enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support emerging job opportunities.
- 2.4 The flagship project for the Council is Bangor Waterfront – an ambitious plan to redevelop a 2 mile stretch of Bangor seafront over the next 10 years, with the intention to reestablish Bangor as a thriving city and prime visitor attraction in Northern Ireland. The programme comprises of 5 projects, starting at Skippingstone in the west and finishing at Banks Lane in the east:

- **Urban Waterfront Public Realm Development:** Bangor's coastline and stunning sea views are some of the city's most significant selling points. The public realm improvements will enhance this area in ways that all ages can enjoy them. Creative signage, pathways and artistic features to encourage more people to use the route and enjoy the journey. Particular attention will be given to Skippingstone Beach (potentially multi-use pods for beach activities, accessibility features, feature lighting and benches) and Ballyholme (water sports opportunities, feature lighting/surfacing);
- **Pickie Family Fun Park:** Pickie holds a host of great memories for families from the Bangor area and beyond and is consistently in the Top 10 Tourist Attractions in Northern Ireland. The giant Pickie pedal swans have become an iconic feature on the waterfront landscape. This redevelopment is a fantastic investment in the future of the Park and will ensure Pickie Fun Park continues to attract and delight families for years to come. The redevelopment proposes new attractions for both children and young adults, and feature landscaping so it better integrates with the new public realm along the coastline.
- **Court House Phase II:** Independent charity, Open House, completed Phase 1 of its ambitious plans to regenerate Bangor Court House in 2022, creating a permanent home for the Open House festival and a much-needed multi-purpose venue serving the city. Having considered a range of options for a music hub as part of the Waterfront Redevelopment, the BRCD funding will allow for further development and build on the Open House plans for Phase 2, which include creating additional capacity for creative events and workspaces further enhancing its reputation as a venue for Bangor and the wider Borough.
- **Bangor Marina:** Bangor Marina, built in 1989, is one of the largest 5 gold anchor accredited marina developments on the island of Ireland and is the largest in Northern Ireland, attracting a considerable number of vessels into the city. Some of its infrastructure is critical to safe and effective operations and cannot be moved, however a level of redesign will enable us to increase the number of seafaring visitors to Bangor and to open up the space, making it easier for people to enjoy the sea views. The redesign will include additional public access with dropped boardwalks, seating and viewing areas and opportunities for food and beverage offerings to be integrated into the Marina.
- **Ballyholme Yacht Club:** The redevelopment of BYC as part of the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment, would provide Bangor and the wider area, with a world class facility for water sports plus the ability to host more international events. The redevelopment will enhance Ballyholme Yacht Club's facilities, creating a state-of-the-art destination for water sports for

the whole local community, and for Northern Ireland. The aspiration is to widen public participation across all ages and abilities. This aligns with Council's objectives under the Belfast Region City Deal to increase community participation in water sports, attract more visitors to the Borough through major events such as this summer's highly successful European Youth Championships, and provide jobs.

- 2.5 The second flagship project in the BRCD is the proposed Creative Innovation Hub in Holywood. The concept is to build an innovation hub (approximately 30,000 sq. ft (2,788 sqm) gross) over a number of floors providing flexible, connected and community-oriented workspace for the growing creative sector in the Holywood area. Working with an industry partner, the Council will be designing the space specifically for individuals involved in film/TV production and digital technologies. It will provide a platform for collaboration and networking within the new and emerging technologies sectors. As such, it will have links directly back to Studio Ulster (BRCD project) and will look to create and inspire talent through skills development relevant to these growing sectors.

10x Economy – An Economic Vision

- 2.6 10x Economy was published in May 2021 (after the date of publication of the ELRR) and is an ambitious vision for the transformation required to support the growth of the Northern Ireland economy over the next decade. The 10x vision is guided by the 10x objectives, grouped into three pillars of activity: innovation inclusive growth and sustainability:

2.7 Innovation

By 2030:

- increase total R&D expenditure by 55%
- increase the number of R&D performing businesses by 450
- increase number of innovation active firms to 55% of NI businesses
- 10% of NI businesses receiving Innovation Accreditation
- Increase proportion of individuals leaving NI HE institutions with first degrees and post-graduate qualifications in narrow STEM subjects from 24% to 27%.

2.8 Inclusive growth

- increase Northern Ireland household disposable income above the SAE average while maintaining NI as one of the top performing SAEs in relation to the Gini-coefficient (a measure of income equality)
- close the employment gap between men and women; people with disabilities and people without; and most deprived area of NI and the least deprived area of NI
- increase the proportion of the working age population with qualifications at level 3 and above from 57.2% (2020) to 70%-75%.

2.9 Sustainability

- 80% electricity consumption from renewable sources
- Greenhouse gas emissions 48% lower than baseline
- double the size of NI's low carbon and renewable energy economy to more than £2bn turnover.

2.10 The current strategic framework for 10x was published in October 2022. This "Next Steps" document set out the objectives for 10x that will guide the department's policy development and implementation, and the approach taken by its partner organisations.

2.11 The department published the 10x Delivery Plan 2023/24 on 6 July 2023. This sets out the actions to be taken by the department and its partner organisations to move towards achievement of the 10x objectives by 2030. The Delivery Plan takes the place of the annual departmental Business Plan for 2023/24.

Department for Infrastructure (Planning) Documents

[The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland \(SPPS\)](#)

2.12 The SPPS is our policy on how we should deal with important planning matters for different land uses and types of development across Northern Ireland. In June 2022, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (CCA) came into force, setting a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with interim targets for 2030 and 2040. It is recognised that the policy framework provided by the SPPS must be fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to support the climate change agenda.

2.13 It is within this context that the Department undertook a 'Call for Evidence' on a potential focussed review of the SPPS on the issue of climate change. The

information gathered through the Call for Evidence will be considered by the Department and will help inform any decision by a future Infrastructure Minister on a review of the SPPS and the options for it. The consultation period for this concluded on 28 March 2024 and the outcome from DfI is awaited. The outworkings of this consultation could have implications for economic development in the Borough.

Ards and North Down Borough Council Documents and Strategies

Corporate Plan 2024-2028: A Sustainable Borough

- 2.14 Since the first publication of the ELRR, the Ards and North Down Corporate Plan 2015-20 has been replaced by the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 'A Sustainable Borough.' The Vision of the new Plan is 'a sustainable Borough where economic, environmental and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well balanced and equitable. The 'Economic' corporate priority is most relevant to the ELRR - 'increasing economic growth by attracting more businesses and jobs.' A number of the 17 strategic actions are connected to economic development such as:

- Supporting the growth of key business sectors;
- Prioritising economic growth within the low carbon sector; and
- Working with businesses and communities to enhance and promote the Borough as a sustainable visitor destination.

The Big Plan – Community Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

- 2.15 Since the publication of the Big Plan in 2017, three Statements of Progress have been published to ensure that Ards and North Downs Strategic Community Planning Partnership is delivering on the outcomes of the Big Plan. The third statement prompted a review of the original document and the Publication of The Big Plan Part II – Our Big Priorities. Outcome 4 remains of most relevance to the ELRR - 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.'

Neighbouring Councils Local Development Plans

Belfast City Council Plan Strategy

- 2.16 The BCC draft Plan Strategy was in draft form when the ELRR was produced but is now formally adopted. The adoption date was 2 May 2023. BCC LDP policy EC3 aims to concentrate light industry, general industry and storage

and distribution in designated Major Employment Locations and Strategic Employment Locations. Zoned employment areas will be retained in employment use and will be the focus of economic regeneration. There is also a dedicated policy EC6 for office development, which aims to focus larger schemes within the city centre boundary.

[Lisburn Castlereagh Plan Strategy](#)

- 2.17 Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council adopted its Local Development Plan 2032 Plan Strategy on 26th September 2023. LCCC draft plan strategy looks to support B1a, b and c uses in designated town centres, district and local centres or business parks. B2, B3 and B4 uses are directed towards zoned employment lands.
- 2.18 Part 1 of the Plan Strategy, which relates to Strategic Policies, designates land at West Lisburn/Blaris and Purdysburn/Knockbracken as Strategic Mixed Use sites, with a number of requirements to be included in masterplans for each site.

[Newry Mourne and Down District Council](#)

- 2.19 The NM&D draft Plan Strategy was published on 27th June 2025. Policy ED1 directs Class B1a, b and c uses to city and town centres unless there are no appropriate sites available. Class B2, B3 and B4 uses are to be located on zoned employment land identified in the LDP. Economic development proposals in villages and small settlements will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- 2.20 Policies ED2 and ED3 allow for the redevelopment or expansion of economic development uses in the countryside. Policy ED4 permits major developments provided they make a significant contribution to the regional economy. Farm diversification and agricultural/forestry development are also addressed via ED6 and ED7.
- 2.21 Strategic Policy EDS1 of the draft Plan Strategy indicates the designation of sites in Newry and Downpatrick as Strategic Employment Locations (SELs). There is a total of 56ha of undeveloped employment lands at these locations. Outside of the SELs, lands are allocated to a range of settlements varying in size from city, main and local towns, villages and small settlements. The remaining land amounts to 103.71 ha.

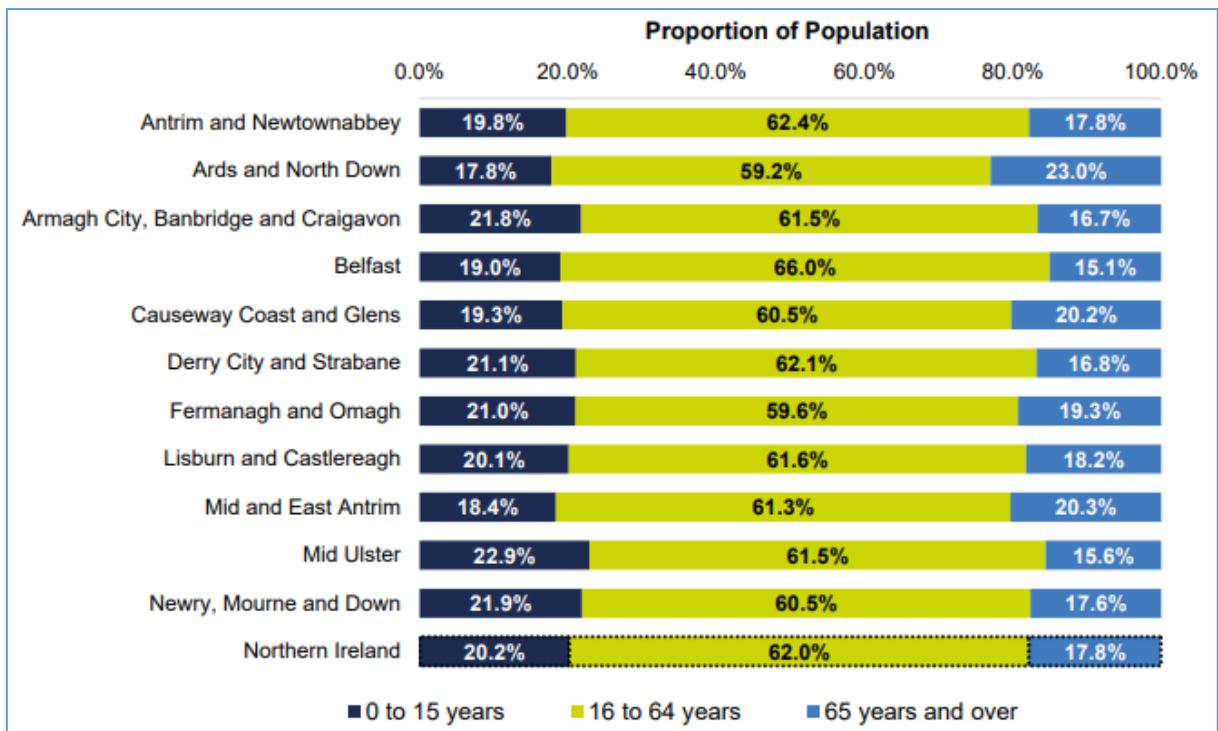
3. Socio Economic Assessment

- 3.1 The following section includes updated statistics on the Borough and also calculations for the projected employment land allocation, extended to align with the end of the Plan period; 2032.

Demographic Profile

Population change

- 3.2 Mid year population estimates for 2022 from the NI Statistics and Research Agency note ANDBC's total population as 164,223, which represents 8.6% of the total Northern Ireland population and the fourth largest population of the 11 councils. Between 2013 and 2023, the population of the Borough has grown by 4.1% which is lower than the Northern Ireland figure of 4.8%.
- 3.3 The graph below shows a breakdown of the population by age. The 0-15 age group is 2% lower than the NI average and is the smallest age group overall. The working age population of 16-64 represents 59% of the total age composition. The proportion of the population in the 65+ age band (23%) is the highest out of all the Local Government Districts. The NISRA Mid-year Population publication for 2023 notes that over 1 in 5 people living in AND are estimated to be aged 65 or over. As noted in the first iteration of the ELRR, these trends impact on a range of issues including the availability of labour, consumption patterns and demand for housing within the Borough.



Source: NISRA

- 3.4 Over the year ending mid-2022, the population, the population of AND increased by 400 people. this can be attributed to a loss of 300 due to natural change (i.e. more deaths than births) and a gain of 700 people due to net migration. These figures indicate that the Borough remains an attractive place to live, benefitting from being within commuting distance to Belfast.

Population Forecasts

- 3.5 Insight into future population numbers is a critical element of service delivery planning. Population projections produced by NISRA forecast the population of the Borough will decrease slightly from 164,283 in 2024/2025 to 163,566 by 2042/2043.

Place and Quality of Life

Health

- 3.6 In the 2021 Census, almost half of the residents of ANDBC (47%) declared themselves as being in 'very good health,' on par with that of NI overall (50%) and also representing little change from the last census results reported in the 2019 ELRR. When combined with the results for 'good health,' the healthy proportion of the Borough population rises to 78% which is also on par with the NI figures. Those reporting their health to be 'bad' (6%) or 'very bad,' (2%)

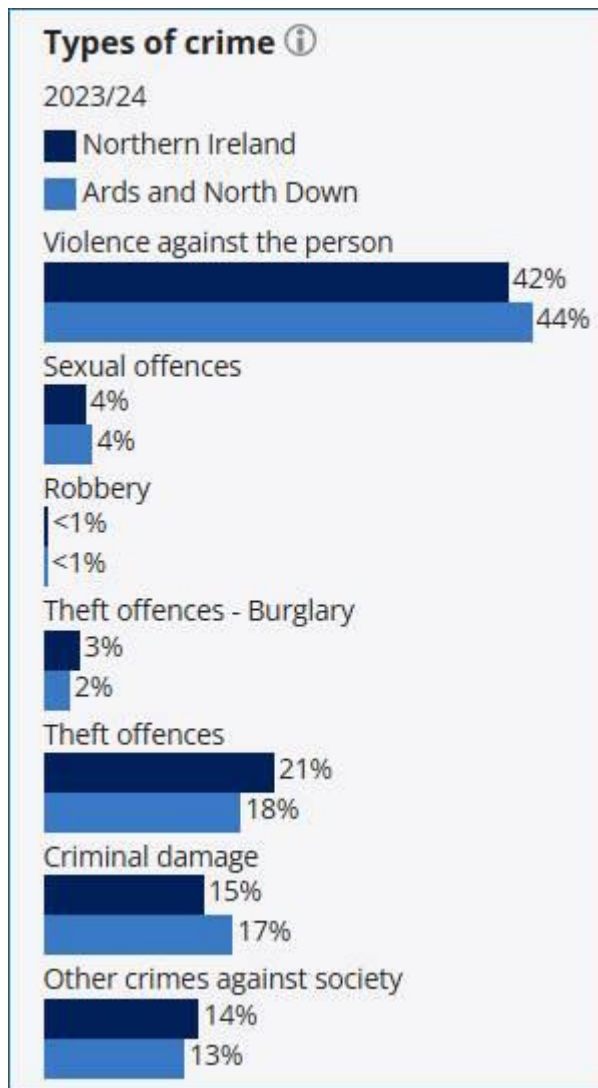
follow the NI trend exactly. In terms of long term health conditions, 38% of the Borough population responded that they had 1 or more of these – this is slightly above the NI percentage of 35%

Social and Environmental Deprivation

- 3.7 The 2019 ELRR reported on the NI Multi-Deprivation Measure 2017 (NIMDM) to describe the spatial distribution of deprivation or disadvantage within the Region. The Report found that Scrabo 2 in Newtownards fell within the top 10% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland and a further 3 other wards in the Borough were ranked within the top 20% (Glen 1, Central, Conlig 3 and Harbour 1.) There are currently no plans to update the 2017 NIMDM.

Crime

- 3.8 In 2023/2024, a total of 6268 crimes were recorded in the Borough, equating to an overall recorded crime rate of 39 per 1000 population. This was lower than the NI rate of 55 per 1000 persons and on par with the 2015/2016 figures reported in the 2019 ELRR. The following gives a breakdown of the types of offences that were recorded during this period:



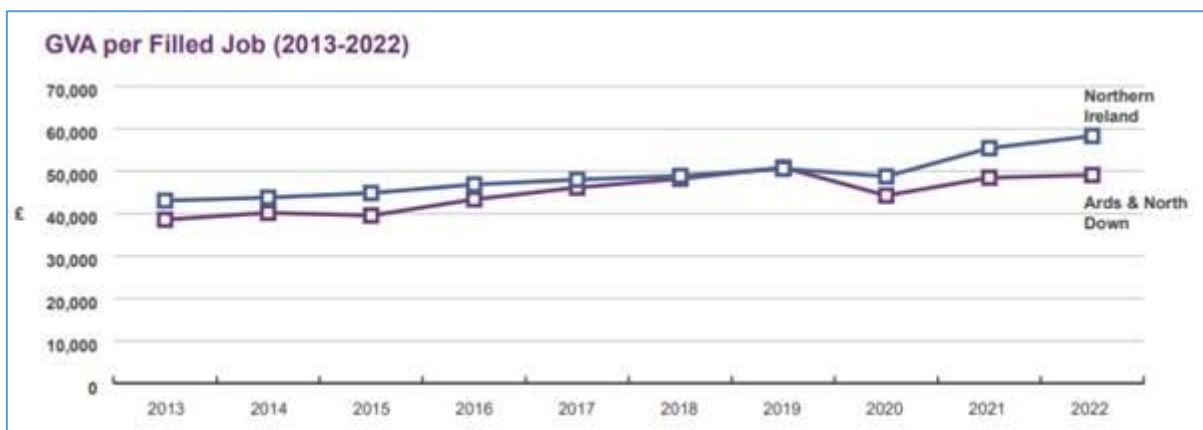
Source: NISRA

Economy and Business Base

GVA and Exports

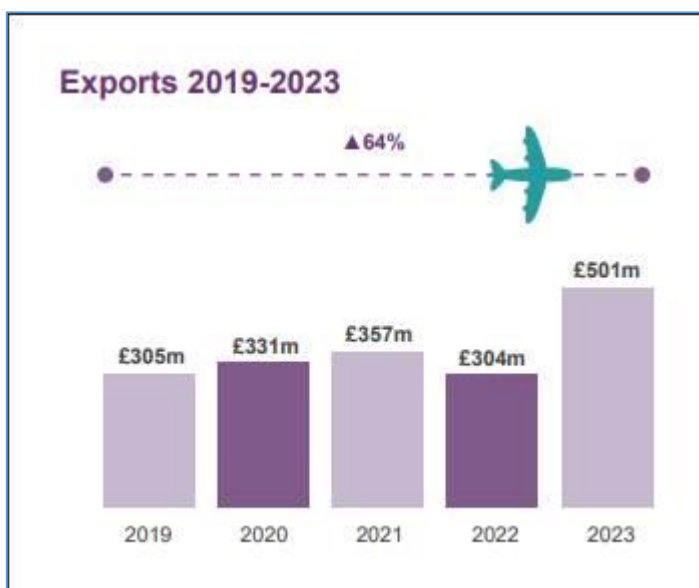
3.9 In 2022, the ANDBC area contributed £2.65 billion to the Northern Ireland Economy.

3.10 GVA (Gross Value Added) is a measure of productivity – it is the value of any unit engaged in the production of goods and services. The below chart shows how Ards and North Down compares to the NI trends.



Source: NISRA

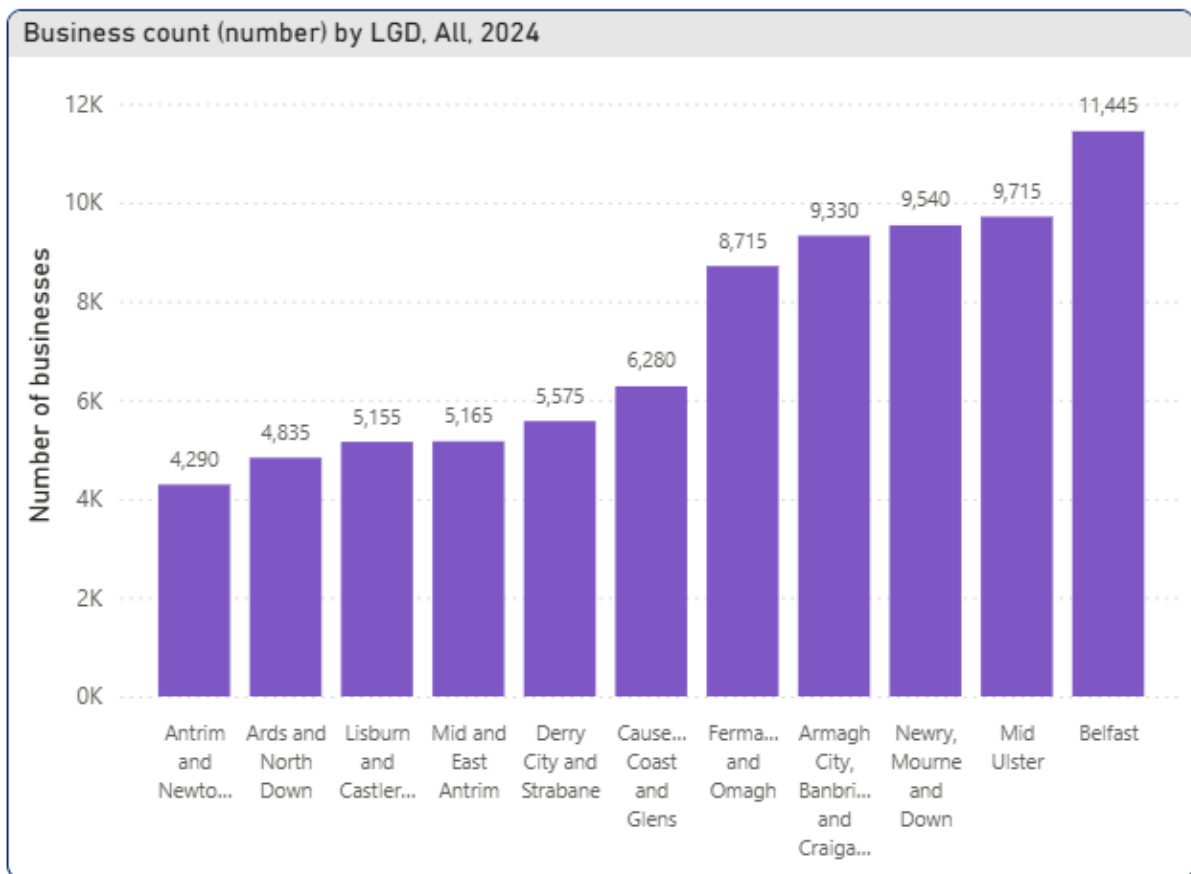
- 3.11 In 2023, the value of export trade from Ards and North Down was £501 million. Outside of Northern Ireland, AND exports 11% of goods to Great Britain, 10% to the Republic of Ireland, 4% to the EU and 3% to the rest of the World. According to Invest NIs latest (2025) Economic Briefing, the export market in the Borough has experienced a substantial increase between 2022 and 2023.



Source, Invest NI

Registered Companies

- 3.12 In 2024, there were a total of 4835 registered companies in the Borough, which equates to 6% of the total number of businesses in Northern Ireland.



Source: Invest NI

Business Size

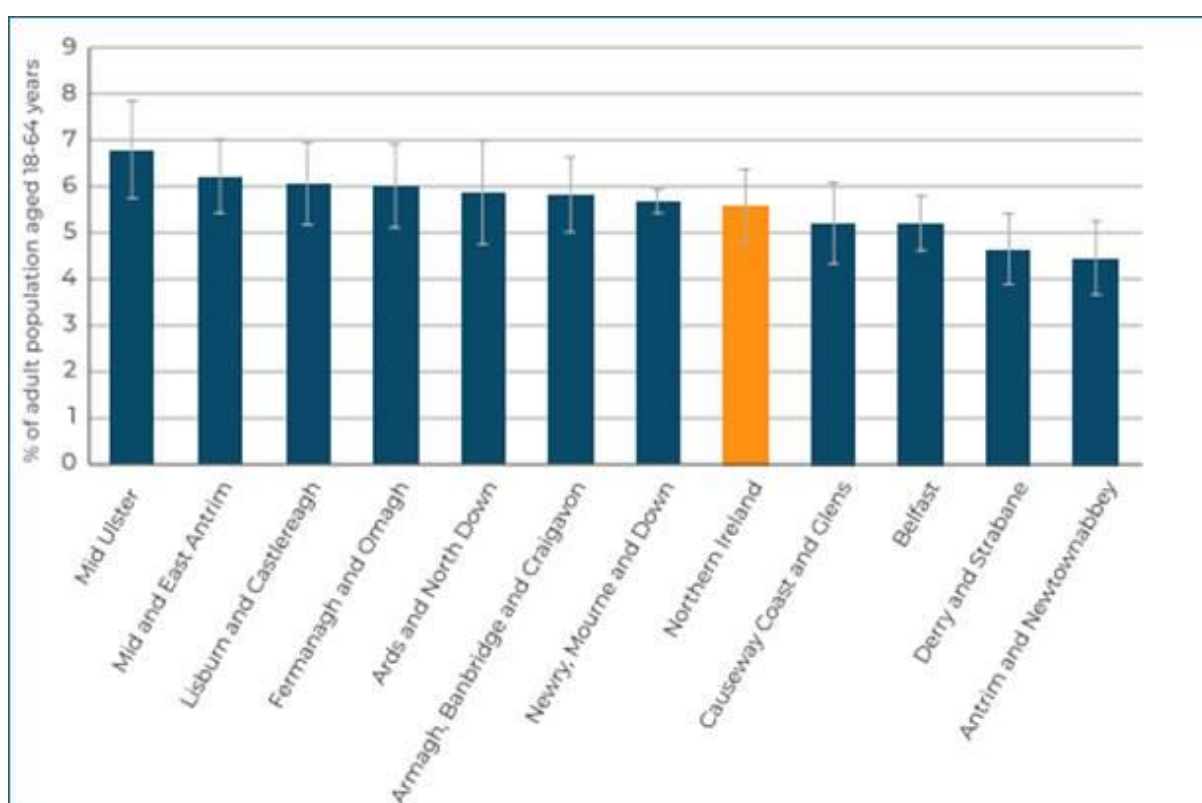
- 3.13 The Ards and North Down area has a similar business demographic to the rest of NI. It is an SME driven economy, with 70.8% of businesses with under 10 employees in 2024. This is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 61.6%.

Business Demography – Companies by Size (employees) 2024 (Invest NI)

Companies by size	ANDBC	NI
0	865	22730
1-9	3510	49740
10-19	290	4400
20-49	165	2520
50-99	35	870
100-199	15	435
200-249	0	95
250+	20	350

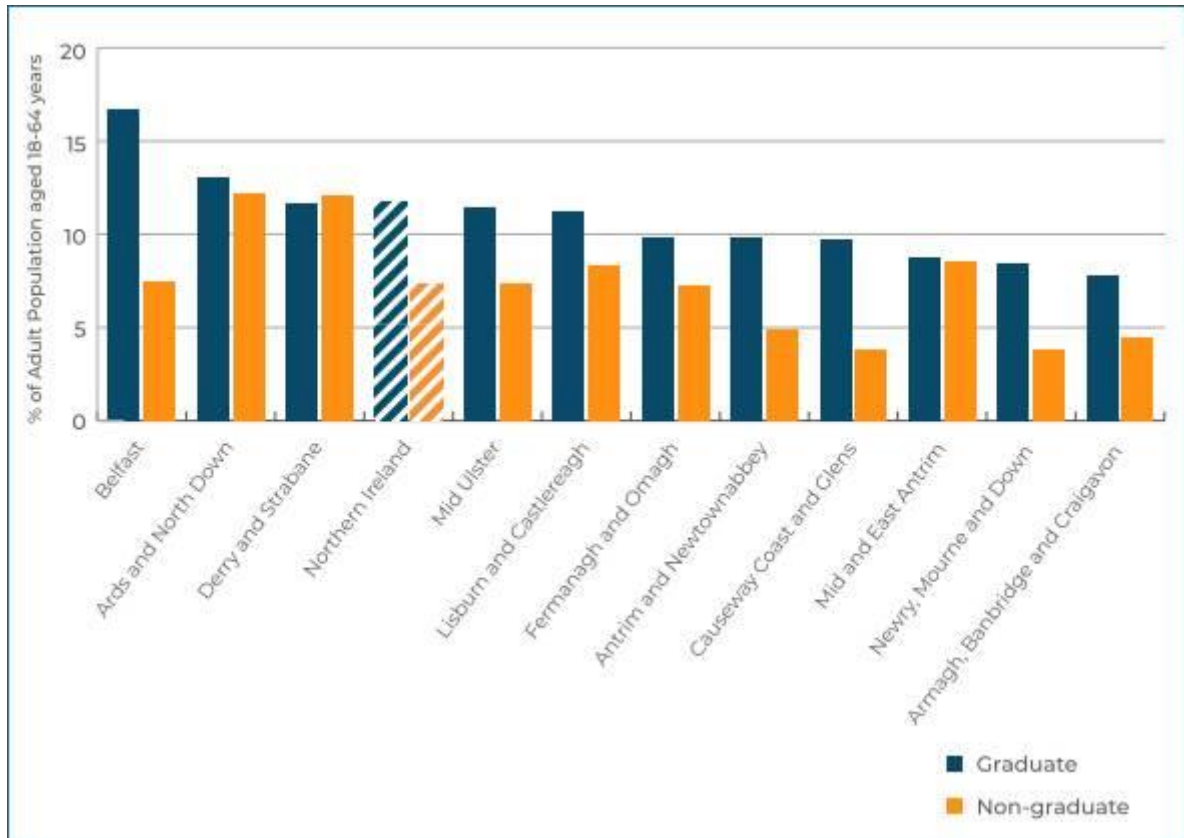
Entrepreneurship

- 3.14 The statistics on business demography point towards a Borough that is entrepreneurial, with a concentration of 'second phase businesses with 5-50 employees and £50,000 to £1 million turnover. The best measure of Entrepreneurship is contained within the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor National Report for Northern Ireland. Levels of entrepreneurial activity (Total Early Stage Entrepreneurial Activity, TEA) and the creation of new ventures are positively connected to the drivers of economic growth through increased innovation, competition and job creation. Northern Ireland has historically lagged behind the rest of the UK in terms of enterprise start up activity. The following table summarises the TEA in Ards and North Down, compared to other LGDs and Northern Ireland as a whole.



Source: Invest NI

- 3.15 Further analysis of trends between 2002 and 2023 shows there was little variation in entrepreneurial activity rates across Council areas in the decade to 2010. Thereafter, Ards and North Down has had the biggest increase and continues to outpace all other areas, recording rate of 13% for the 2021-2023 period.
- 3.16 When considering graduate and non-graduate performance, Ards and North Down ranks above the NI average, and 2nd of all NI councils.



Source: Invest NI

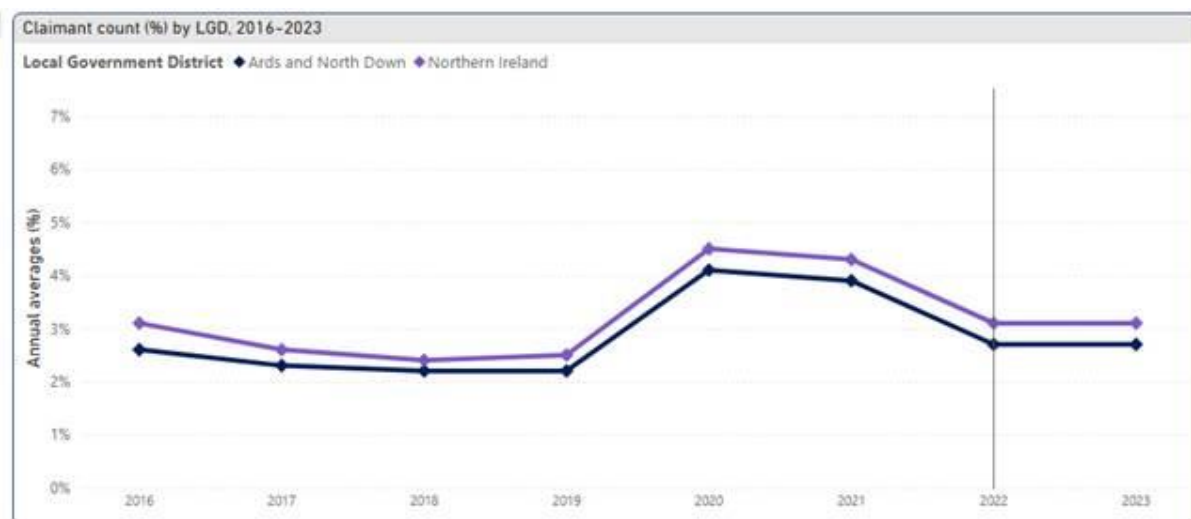
Labour Market and Sectoral Employment

Economic Activity

- 3.17 In 2023, 83.7% of those aged 16-64 living in the Borough were economically active.

Claimant Count

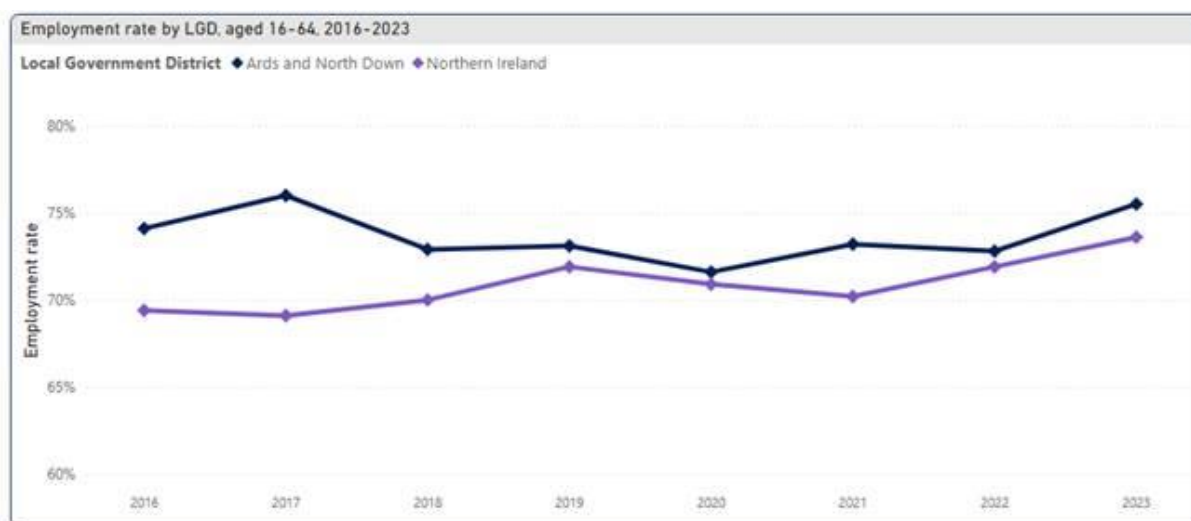
- 3.18 The average number of people aged 16-64 in Ards and North Down claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in 2023 was 2625, representing a claimant count annual average rate of 2.7%. This compares to a claimant rate for NI of 3.1% in 2023. ANDBC has the same general trend line as NI, albeit at a more reduced level.



Source: NISRA

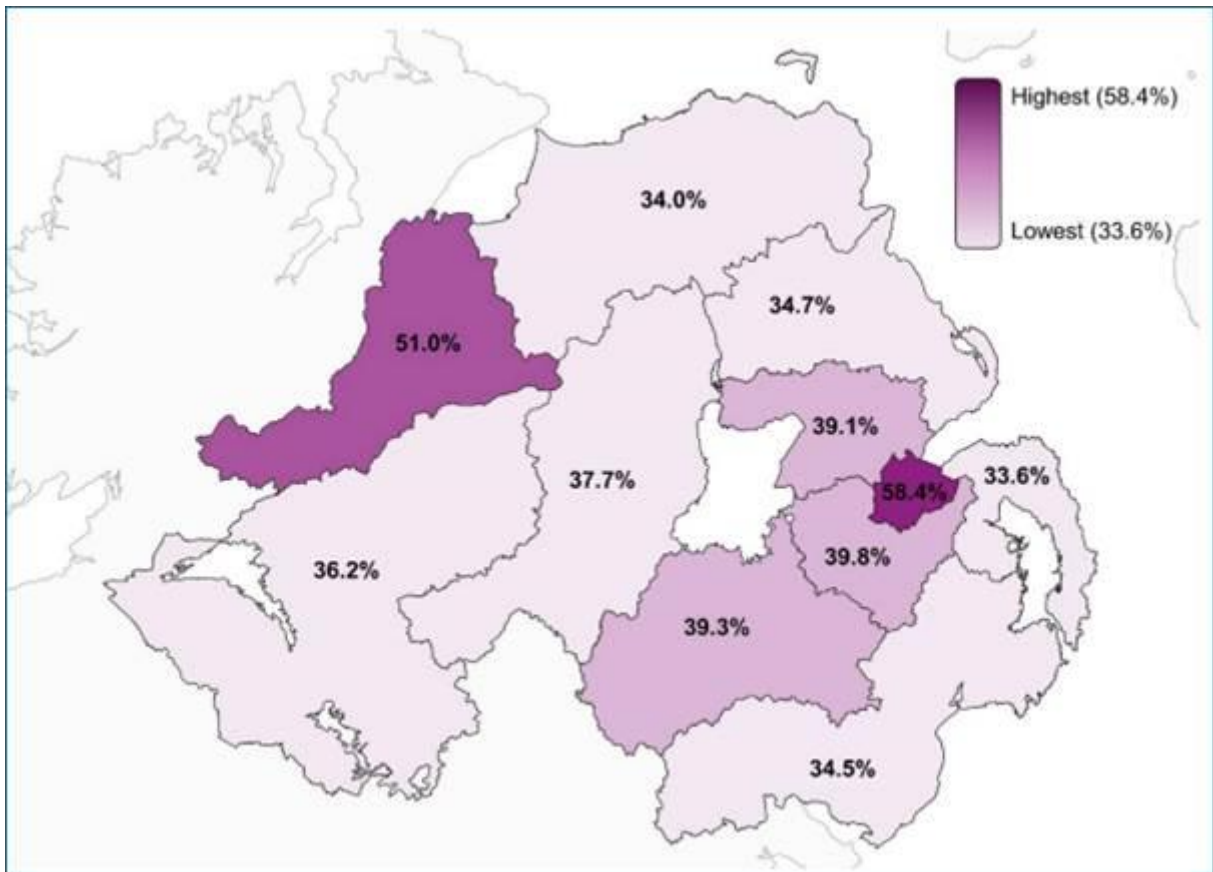
Employment Rates

- 3.19 In 2023, the 16-64 employment rate in the Borough was 75.5% which is higher than the NI percentage of 73.6%. After a slight dip in 2021, employment rates in the Borough have been rising steadily since and are now at the highest point since 2016.



Source: NISRA

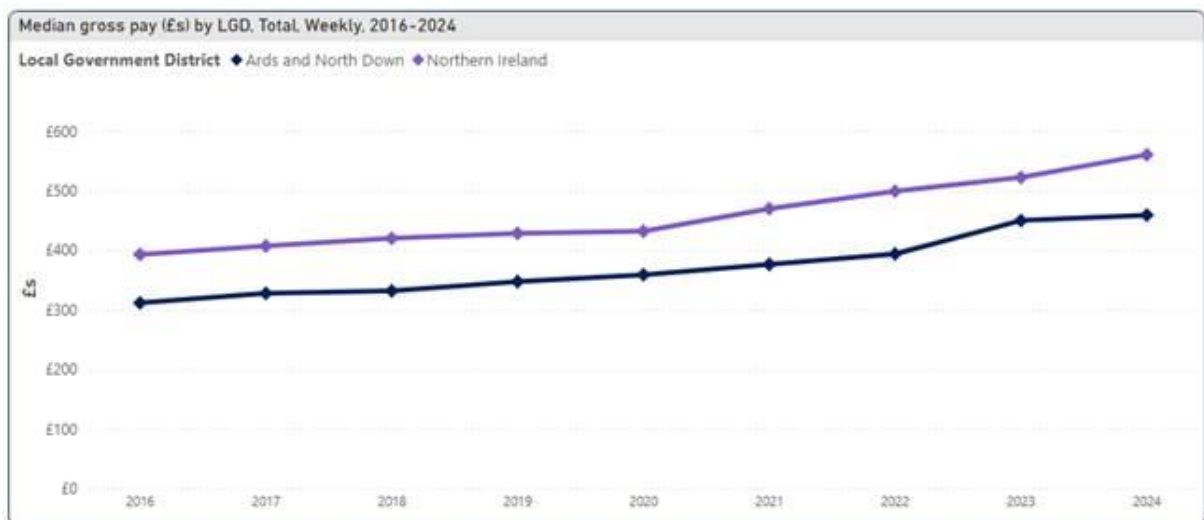
- 3.20 The strong employment rate is in part driven by high levels of commuting out of the council area for work. The Census results on commuting patterns revealed that Ards and North Down had the lowest percentage of the working population with a workplace less than 10km from their home.



Source; NISRA

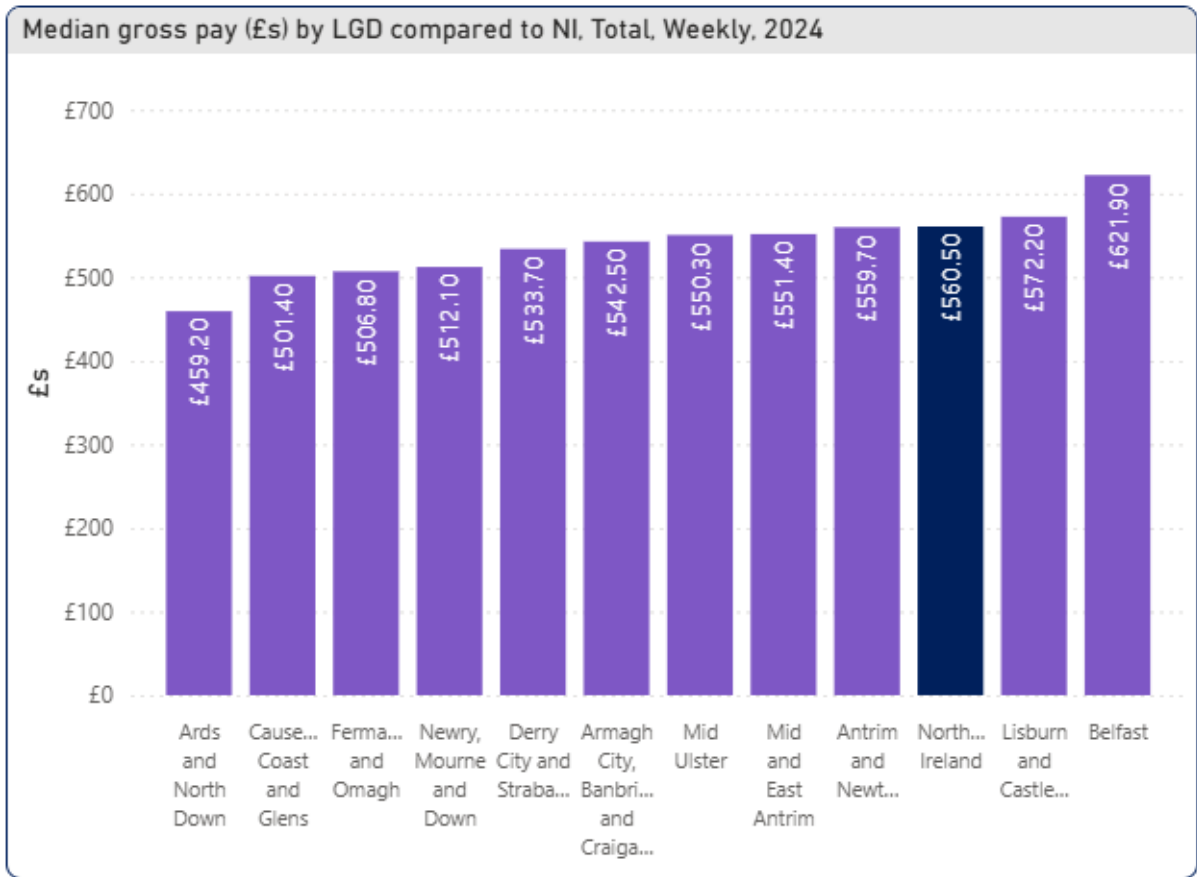
Earnings Profile

3.21 Median weekly wages for employees in Ards and North Down have increased steadily since 2016 although remained under the NI rate.



Source: NISRA

3.22 Gross median weekly pay in AND in 2024 was £560.50, which is the third highest pay rate of all the 11 Councils, after Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.



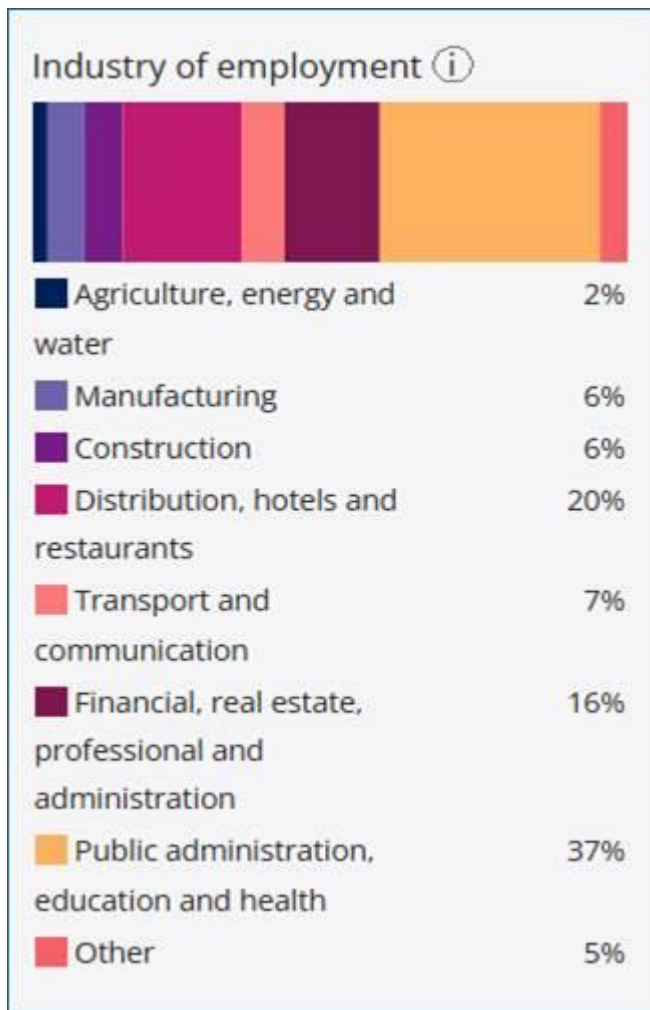
Source: NISRA

Employment Profile

3.23 In 2022, there were 41,806 employee jobs in the Borough, a marginal increase from 2021. Ards and North Down has the lowest number of employee jobs of all 11 councils.

Sectoral Composition

3.24 This section provides a high-level overview of sectoral structure. The sectoral composition of companies in the Borough includes Public Administration, Education and Health (37%), Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (20%) and Financial, Real Estate, Professional and Administration (16%).



Source: NISRA

- 3.25 Within this, 20% of the roles held were 'professional occupations,' 13% were classified as 'administrative and secretarial, 11% were 'caring and leisure,' and 'sales and customer service' and 'skilled trades' accounted for 10% each.

Rural Economy

- 3.26 The nature of sectoral employment statistics is such that they typically underestimate the scale of the agricultural sector. The Agricultural Census from DAERA provides more insight into the agriculture sector across the Borough. With over 32, 000 hectares farmed in the area in 2024, the Borough has 752 farms, representing 2.9% of the NI average.

Rural Economy Indicators (Source; DAERA Agricultural Census)

Indicator	Number 2024	% of NI Total/Average
Number of Farms	752	2.9%
Area Farmed (ha)	32,356	
Farmers	1261	3.1%
Large farms	102	

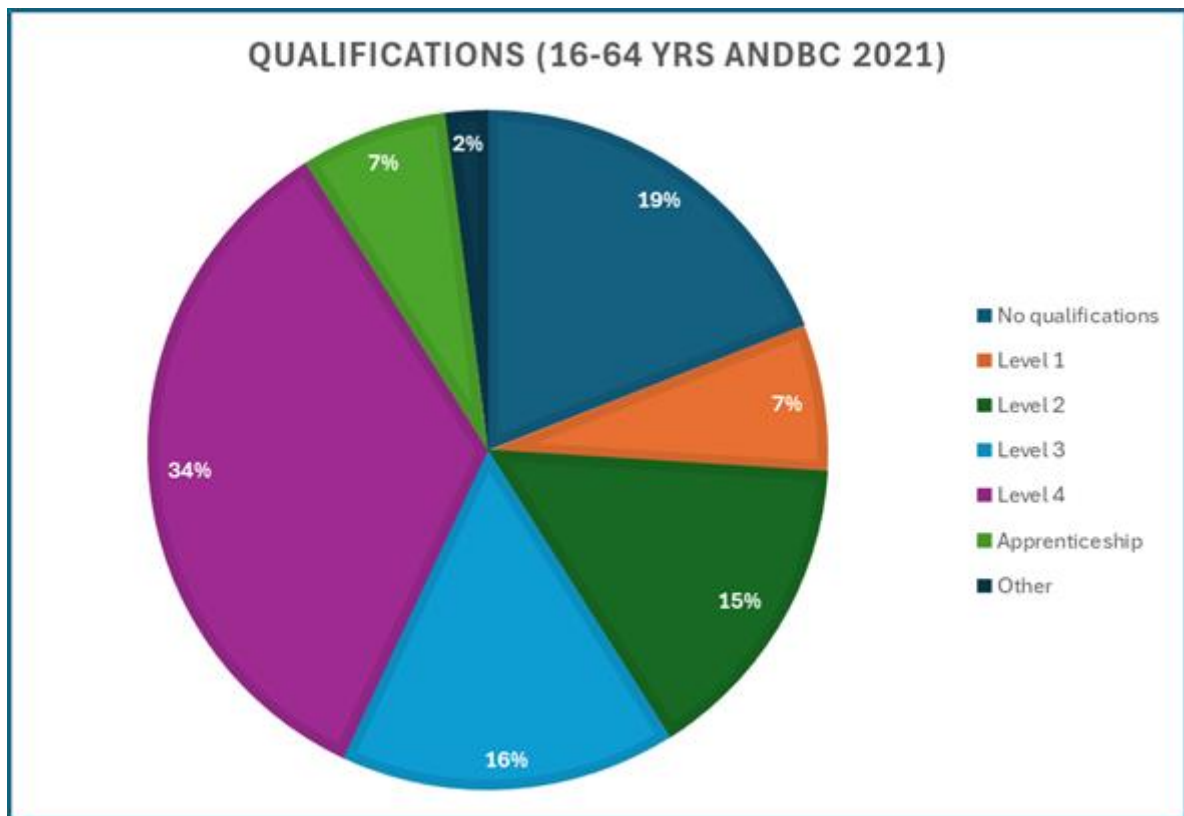
- 3.27 The majority of land in the AND Borough Council area is used for grazing rather than crops. Poultry farming is the dominant farming category with 163, 286 poultry farmed in 2024.

Animals farmed in ANDBC Area (DAERA Agricultural Census)

Indicator	Number 2024	% of NI total
Cattle	64, 859	3.9%
Sheep	40, 371	1.9%
Pigs	12, 341	1.8%
Poultry	163, 286	0.6%

Education and Skills Profile

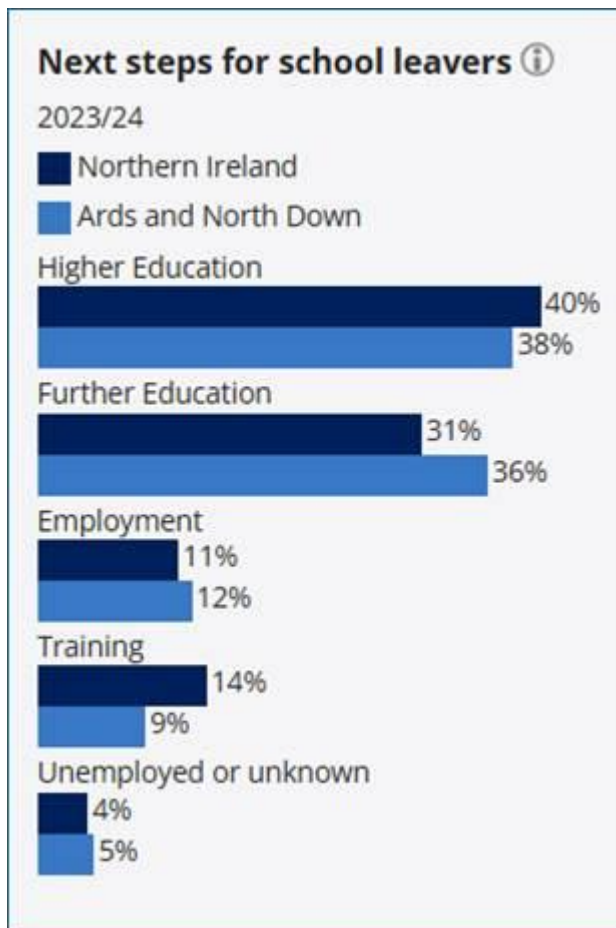
- 3.28 The most comprehensive assessment (In terms of sample sizes) of skills of residents in the Borough is the 2021 Census. This showed a Borough where close to one in five working age residents did not have any formal qualifications (19%, compared to NI average of 24%) whilst 34% of the population held Level 4 (i.e. degree level) qualifications, higher than the NI average of 32%. This suggests a higher skilled labour force than the NI average.



Source: NISRA Labour Market Survey

3.29 In 2023/2024, 53.7% of school leavers in the Borough left with 2 or more A Levels grades A – E; 88.8% left with 5 or more GCSEs grades A* - C and 71.4% left with 5 or more GCSEs grades A-C including English and Maths. These figures are in line with the NI average.

3.30 In terms of next steps for school leavers, 74% progress to Further and Higher Education. Although the proportion of school leavers entering Higher Education is slightly below the NI average at 38% (compared to NI average of 40%), the share entering Further Education (36%) is higher than the NI figure (31%).



Source; NISRA

Tourism Performance

Visitor Attractions

- 3.31 With a growing NI-wide tourism offer and active policy and marketing focus, there is significant potential for Ards and North Down to benefit from improving the local tourism offer. Currently, the main visitor attractions in the Borough as identified by Tourism NIs Visitor Attraction Survey are:

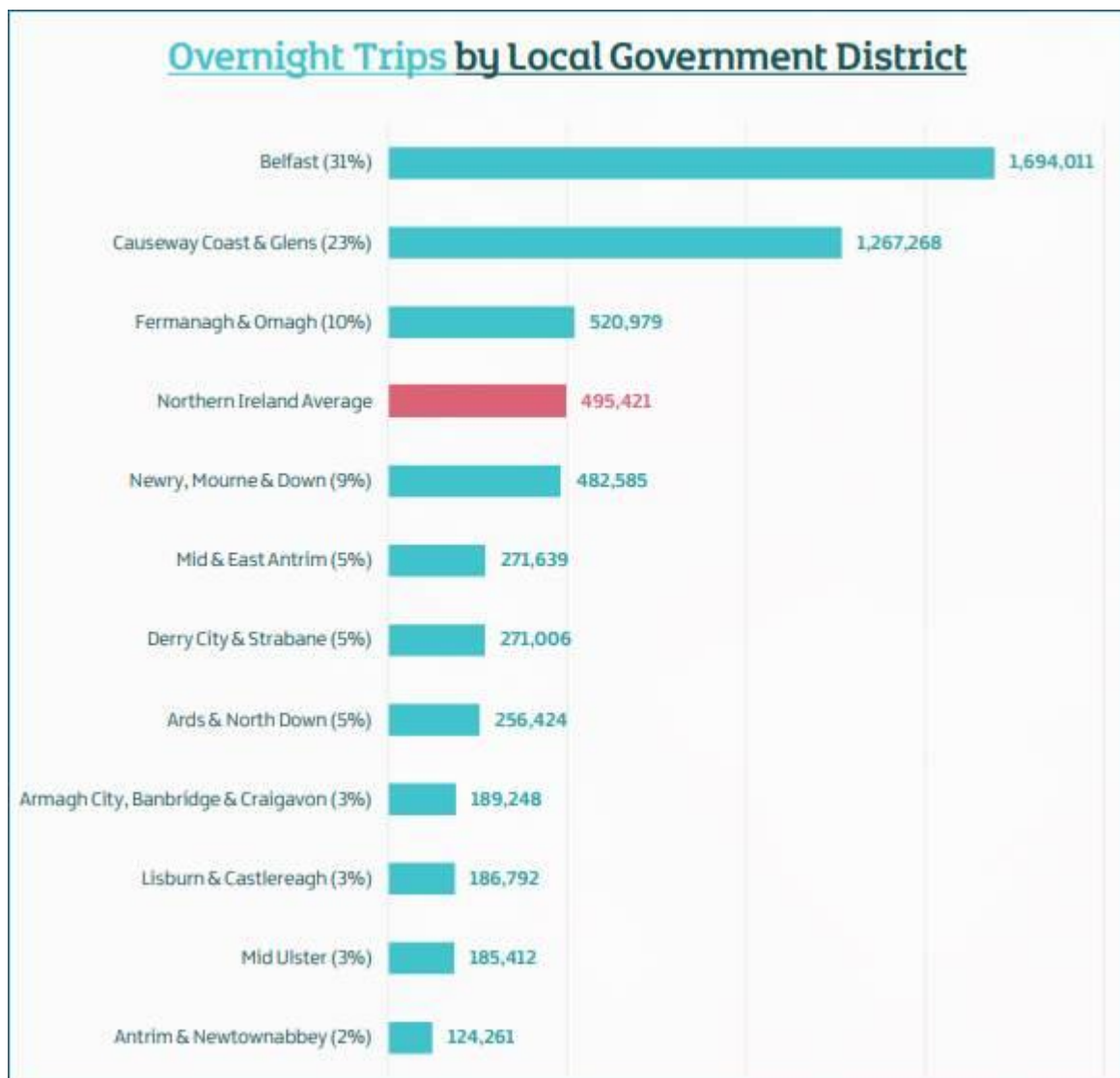
- Avalon Guitar Factory
- Ballycopeland Windmill
- Bangor Abbey
- Cockle Row Cottages
- Crawfordsburn Country Park
- Drumawhey Junction Miniature Railway
- Grey Point Fort
- Mount Stewart House and Gardens
- Nendrum Monastic Site
- North Down Museum
- Pickie Fun Park

- Portaferry Visitor Information Centre
- Scrabo Country Park
- The Lookout, Mount Stewart
- Tower House and Visitor Information Centre and
- Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

3.32 The most popular tourist attractions, according to Tourism NI were Crawfordsburn Country Park, Pickie Fun Park and Mount Stewart.

[Trips and Nights](#)

3.33 In 2023, the total number of trips to the Borough was 256, 424, which represents 5% of the NI total. There were 922, 242 overnight stays, accounting for 6% of the NI total. The following graph illustrates how AND compares with other Local Government Districts.



Source: Tourism NI

Spend

- 3.34 In terms of visitor spend, £33.8 million was spent in the Borough in 2023, which accounts for 3% of the NI total. The average spend per night was £56.32 which is lower than the NI-wide figure of £73.44. The Tourism NI LGD Factcard for the Borough notes that AND had the second highest average length of stay of all NI LGDs. Visiting friends and relatives was the most popular reason for visiting this Borough (61% of trips).



2023, Source Tourism NI



2023, Source Tourism NI

Tourism Employment

- 3.35 Tourism related jobs provided 14% of the total number of jobs in Ards and North Down in 2022 and there were 475 tourism businesses. This represents a steady increase since 2015, when there were 395 such businesses.

4. Availability of Land for Industrial and Economic Development Purposes – 2025 Update

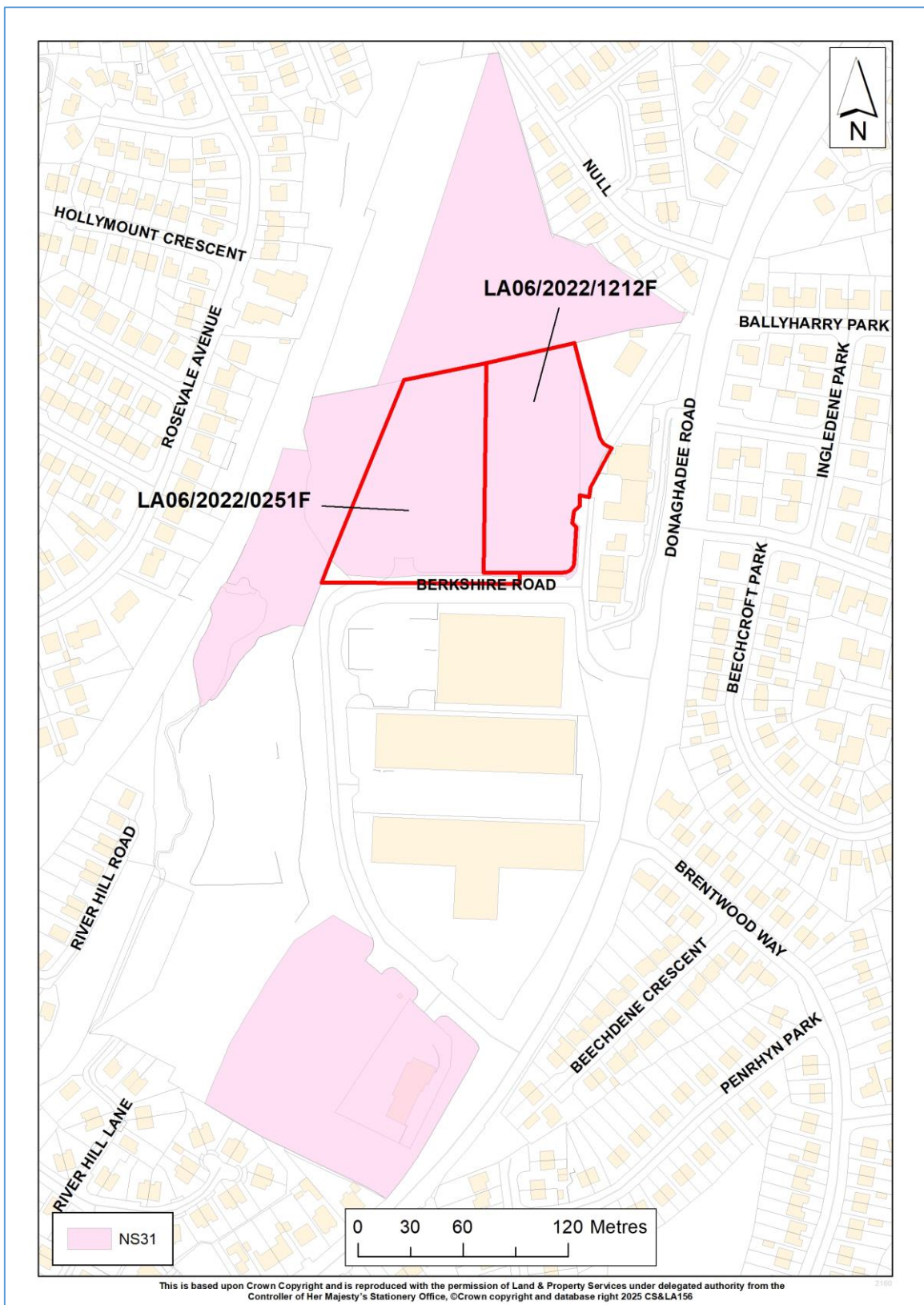
4.1 The 2025 Industrial and Economic Development Land Monitor was carried out by LDP staff in June and July of this year. Overall, the level of change from the previous 2023-2024 Monitor was very minor. There have been some small-scale changes of use within existing zonings in Balloo Industrial Estate (BR07, Monitor Site 2000), Enterprise Road (BR08, Monitor Site 3000) and North Road/Quarry Heights (unzoned Monitor Site 19000) but typically these did not equate to a net loss of available employment land and in some cases did not even constitute a change of use class from the previous use. The Industrial and Economic Development Land Geoportal shows land uses across all three monitoring periods (2022 Baseline, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025) and is available to view on the Councils' website.

4.2 The following is a summary of the key findings of the 2024-2025 Monitor:

NS31 – Donaghadee Road, Newtownards (North and South)

4.3 The extant Ards and Down Area Plan zoned 5.03ha of land on the Donaghadee Road Newtownards for industry under zoning NS31 (Monitor Site 11000). This land is owned by Invest NI and is available for leasing to Invest NI client companies. Since the 2023-2024 Monitor was carried out, two planning applications have been approved on this site:

- LA06/2022/0251/F – 41MW battery energy storage system installation with associated substation, transformer compound, control room building, parking and landscaping. Full planning permission was granted for this proposal on 10 August 2023. The scheme is currently unimplemented but remains extant until 2028. The site area of the development is 0.85 hectares.
- LA06/2022/1212/F – New storage, despatch and assembly building for World Furniture NI Ltd. This L shaped warehouse is now nearing completion and occupies a 0.72 hectare site to the east of the battery energy proposal. The building has a floorspace of 3000 sq. ft.



Approved developments at Zoning NS31

- 4.4 When fully implemented, these proposals will equate to a loss of 1.57 hectares of available economic development land in this location, which is 31% of the zoning area.

NS31 JUB – Jubilee Road Industrial Estate

- 4.5 Located on a 1.13 hectare site, at no. 4 Jubilee Road and at the entrance of existing economic development zoning NS31 JUB (Monitor site 16000), Strangford House was formerly occupied by an insurance company, use class B1. Since the 2023-2024 Monitor, the site has been acquired by Formation Works, a company which operates from 11 other locations throughout Northern Ireland and offers a variety of office spaces and meeting rooms for private rent. These range in size from 100 to 3500 sq. ft.
- 4.6 This development does not equate to a change in the level of employment land available in Jubilee Industrial Estate, nor does it constitute a change of use (still B1 – offices). However, it is worth noting as a sizeable opportunity for small businesses to have access to serviced accommodation and co-working/collaborative opportunities as a complement to existing council owned sites at Sketrick House, Newtownards and Enterprise House, Bangor.



4 Jubilee Road, Newtownards

BR09 – Greenways Industrial Estate

- 4.7 A 0.46 hectare site at the south-eastern corner of Greenways Industrial Estate is subject to a pending planning application for 'demolition of existing buildings and construction of healthcare facility with associated access and parking' (planning reference LA06/2024/0053/F). The site at 7-9 Greenway was historically an NI Water depot. The 2022 Monitor recorded a car sales

business operating from the property, whilst in 2024 and 2025 it was vacant. A healthcare facility is a sui generis land use and these are acceptable in some cases in industrial areas. The application is still pending and if approved will create a vacant unit at 5 Green Road, to the north east of the site.



Pending application for doctors' surgery in Zoning BR09

BR11 – Clandeboye Road, Bangor

- 4.8 This 2.38 hectare C-shaped parcel of land has largely been redeveloped for housing – 74% of the land area was recorded as residential (Class C1) in the 2022 Monitor. No. 116 Clandeboye Road, a former warehouse and off-licence was noted as vacant on the 2022 and 2023-2024 Monitors, technically rendering it still available for economic development use. A planning application for 20 apartments has since been approved on this site (LA06/2021/0773/F) and the existing buildings have now been demolished. When fully built out, this will represent a loss of 0.26ha of employment land on this zoning. The only Class B uses that now remain on the site are the Class B4 warehouses on the south-eastern corner (1a and 1b Faulkner Road) which occupy an area of 0.35ha.



Approved site layout for 116 Clandeboye Road

NS30 – Comber Road (East), Newtownards

- 4.9 This is an 8.19 ha flat site that takes the form of a 'J' shape that has been flipped on the vertical axis. Approximately 0.75ha of land at the northern tip has been developed for various uses such as a car wash, plant distributors,

gym and motor vehicle related services. The Council has agreed to acquire the remaining 5.26ha of lands to the south of this, which are currently in agricultural use but form part of the industrial zoning. It is intended that the purchase of this land will provide the Council with a unique opportunity to increase economic growth, attract more businesses and jobs to the Borough and increase the non-domestic rates base.



Lands at 13 Comber Road, Newtownards

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Overall, the quantum of zoned employment lands has remained stable within the Borough since date that the last Employment Land Review was carried out. Whilst there are some proposals at a planning or pre planning stage, construction work is only ongoing at two sites – NS 31 at Donaghadee Road Newtownards and BR 11 at Clandeboye Road, Bangor. The development of these lands will result in a loss of 3.23ha of economic development land which

is a negligible amount in the context of the amount of such land that remains undeveloped and available for economic development purposes.