

October 2nd, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Thursday, 9th October 2025 at 7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - Church Street, Newtownards & via Zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

 *2025.10.09 Agenda.pdf*

Page 1

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Presentation on Arts and Heritage Service**

Copy attached

 *3. Arts and Heritage Annual Summary Presentation 2425 pptx.pptx*

Page 3

Reports delegated for Decision/Approval

- 4. Response to Tourism NI draft Corporate Plan 2025/28**

Report attached

 *4. Response to Tourism NI draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028.pdf*

Page 13

 *4.1 TNI draft Corporate Plan 25-28.pdf*

Page 15

 *4.2 ANDBC Response to TNI draft Corporate Plan Consultation.pdf*

Page 47

Reports for Approval

- 5. Response to Notice of Motion (648) - ANDBC Pipe Band Championships**

Report attached

 *5.0 Response to NOM ANDBC Pipe Band Championships.pdf*

Page 56

 *5.1 Appendix 1 Table of Locations and Venues.pdf*

Page 59

- 6. Arts Bursary Funding - Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation**

Report attached

 *6. Arts Bursary Funding - Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation.pdf*

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 6.1 Ballinglen Arts Foundation Residency Bursary Guidance and Application form.pdf	Page 62
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 6.2 Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency Bursary Guidance and Application form.pdf	Page 76
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7. East Border Region 50th Anniversary

Report attached

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 7.1 East Border Region 50th Anniversary Additional Funds Request.pdf	Page 93
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 7.2 East Border Region Past Projects.pdf	Page 96
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8. Bangor Business Awards 2025

Report attached

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9. UKREiiF Update

Report attached

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 9.1 Appendix 1 - Belfast City & Region Investement Guide.pdf	Page 102
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10. Market Square Bangor Christmas Tree, Bangor

Report attached

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Reports for Noting

11. Bangor BID Update

Report attached

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12. Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25

Report attached

 **12. Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25.pdf**

Page 149

 **12.1 Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024 25.pdf**

Page 150

13. Any Other Notified Business

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

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

14. Ards TT Event 2028 Working Group Update and Event Progress Proposal

Report to follow

15. Millisle Environmental Improvement Scheme Proposal

Report attached

 **15. Millisle Environmental Improvement Scheme.pdf**

Not included

 **15.1 Appendix 1 Landscape Layout.pdf**

Not included

 **15.2 Appendix 2 Location Plan.pdf**

Not included

 **15.3 Appendix 3 Visuals.pdf**

Not included

16. Supporting Thriving High Streets - Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme

Report attached

 **16. Supporting Thriving High Streets Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme.pdf**

Not included

 **16.1 Bangor boundary map.pdf**

Not included

 **16.2 Newtownards boundary map.pdf**

Not included

17. Local Action Group Proposal

Report attached

 **17. Local Action Group Proposal.pdf**

Not included

18. Ballywalter Pathway Small Settlements Project Update

Report attached

 *18. Ballywalter Pathway Project - Small Settlements Programme Update.pdf*

Not included

Reports for Noting (In Confidence)

19. Bangor Waterfront Update (October 2025)

Report attached

 *19. Bangor Waterfront Update Oct 2025.pdf*

Not included

 *19.1 Appendix 1 - Pickie Fun Park Design Proposals.pdf*

Not included

 *19.2 Appendix 2 - BYC Watersports Centre Design Proposals.pdf*

Not included

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

2 October 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 9 October 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. Presentation on Arts and Heritage Service (presentation attached)

Reports delegated for Decision/Approval

4. Response to Tourism NI draft Corporate Plan 2025/28 (report attached)

Reports for Approval

5. Response to Notice of Motion (654) - ANDBC Pipe Band Championships (report attached)
6. Arts Bursary Funding - Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation (report attached)
7. East Border Region 50th Anniversary (report attached)
8. Bangor Business Awards 2025 (report attached)
9. UKREiiF Update (report attached)
10. Market Square Bangor Christmas Tree, Bangor (report attached)

Reports for Noting

- 11. Bangor BID Update (report attached)
- 12. Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25 (report attached)
- 13. Any Other Notified Business

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

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

- 14. Ards TT Event 2028 Working Group Update Report and Event progress proposal (report to follow)
- 15. Millisle Environmental Improvement Scheme (report attached)
- 16. Supporting Thriving High Streets – Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme (report attached)
- 17. Local Action Group Proposal (report attached)
- 18. Ballywalter Pathway Small Settlements Project Update (report attached)

Reports for Noting (In Confidence)

- 19. Bangor Waterfront Update (October 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

09.10.2025



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

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Arts **AND** Heritage Service

Annual Summary 2024/25

Emily Crawford, Arts and Heritage Manager



Bringing **Arts** AND **Heritage** to life in Ards AND North Down by enriching people and places

Ards and North Down Borough Council
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Core Services

- ▶ **Ards Arts Centre**
- ▶ **North Down Museum**
- ▶ Arts and heritage events and festivals
- ▶ Associated Outreach and Education Services
- ▶ Provision of Arts and Heritage Grants and Bursaries
- ▶ Support for/engagement with the Arts and Heritage Sectors
- ▶ Arts and Heritage as a mechanism for wellbeing/change



Ards and North Down Borough Council
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Key Staff Roles



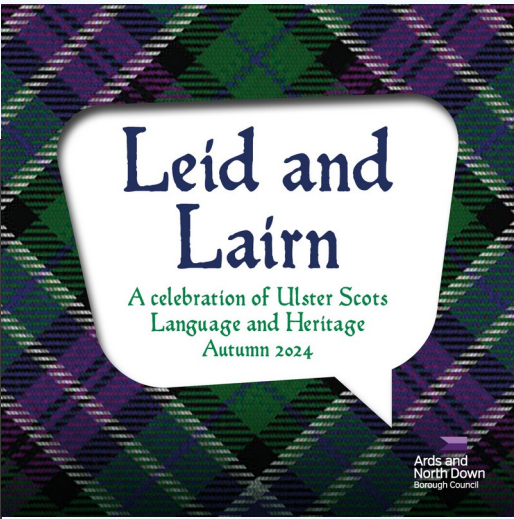
Arts and Heritage Manager:	Arts Centre, Programming, SUM, Guitar Fest, Creative Peninsula, Leid AND Lairn
Arts Officer:	Arts Development, Grants and Bursaries, ForM, Aspects
Community Arts Dev Officer:	Outreach, Grants, Community Engagement, Puppet Fest
Arts Centre Coordinator:	Bookings, Classes, Operations, Administration
Museum Manager:	Museum, Collections Care, Curation, Accreditation
Heritage Dev Officer:	Outreach, Grants, Community Engagement, Cluster
Museum Education Officer:	School's Programmes, Talks and Tours, SEND
Museum Coordinator:	Bookings, Classes, Operations, Administration

Ards and North Down Borough Council
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Arts Service

- ▶ **Arts Programming**
 42,326 engagements
 18 events, 22 exhibitions, 55 courses
- ▶ **Festivals**
 5 festivals, 18,000 attendees, 100 events
- ▶ **Grants/Bursaries**
 5 streams, 46 recipients, £50,250
- ▶ **Arts Development/Outreach**
 £14,920 in externally funded projects
- ▶ **AND Arts Network**
 launched 2023, 141 members, 4 events





Ards and North Down Borough Council
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Heritage Service

- ▶ **Museum Programming**
 66,532 visitors, 10 events,
 23 exhibitions, 20 talks, 10 tours
- ▶ **Accreditation**
 2024-2027, Governance
- ▶ **Collections Development**
 Percy French, Colin Middleton
- ▶ **Education**
 70 visits by 50 schools, 2,835 attending
- ▶ **Heritage Cluster/Outreach**
 Quarterly meets, 26 groups, 10 grants
 valuing £5,000



Ards and North Down Borough Council

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk



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Online Engagement

- ▶ ANDculture website received 42K active users and 173K views
- ▶ 12,263 followers on social median channels  1,270 on 23/24
- ▶ 3.2K subscribers to a monthly 'What's On' e bulletin

Top Performing Posts:

- Swimmer Ryan from Hong Kong visits North Down Museum: 63.2K
- Launch of Young Aspects '25 programme: 17K
- Launch of Boom Studios Heritage Sketchbook Exhibition: 18.5K

ANDculture.org.uk [@Culture Ards and North Down](#)



Ards and North Down Borough Council

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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Date of Report	23 September 2025
File Reference	TOTD187
Legislation	The Tourism (NI) Order 1992
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Tourism NI draft Corporate Plan 2025/28
Attachments	Appendix 1 - TNI draft Corporate Plan 2025/28 Appendix 2 - ANDBC Response to TNI draft Corporate Plan Consultation

Delegated approval to the Committee

The Department for the Economy's Tourism Vision and Action Plan: 10-Year Plan recognises the important contribution which the tourism sector can make to our region's economy. Tourism NI (TNI) welcomes the ambition set out in the Plan and looks forward to playing its part in making this vision a reality over the next ten years and is therefore consulting on its Draft Corporate Plan 2025/28.

The draft Corporate Plan sets out the actions which TNI will undertake over the next three years to help realise the vision laid out in the Tourism Vision and Action Plan: 10-Year Plan to 2035. The strategy, which recognises the important contribution the tourism sector makes to the Northern Ireland economy, has set a goal of increasing tourism expenditure from overnight visitors to £2 billion by 2035, up from £1.2 billion in 2023.

Not Applicable

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Tourism NI's goal is to grow overnight tourism spend (from NI and RoI) by 36% and grow spend from domestic/RoI day trips by 36% to £1.5bn and the draft Corporate Plan sets out how it plans to make that goal a reality, through playing a key role in supporting the tourism industry succeed in a highly competitive global market.

Actions include supporting tourism businesses to become more innovative, more sustainable and increase productivity, the development of award-winning marketing and promotional campaigns on the island of Ireland and supporting the work of Tourism Ireland overseas.

Strategic Objectives

1. **Regional Balance:** a balance between urban, rural, and coastal destinations - ensuring that investment and economic activity is spread broadly across Northern Ireland, and not overly concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and a concentration of honeypot areas.
2. **Good Jobs:** secure, flexible, rewarding employment with supportive employers, offering opportunities for skills development and career progression where wellbeing is valued.
3. **Productivity:** a competitive tourism industry that offers a compelling proposition, is innovative, and maximises resources and the potential of our assets throughout the year.
4. **Sustainability:** a tourism industry that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.
5. **Strong Organisational Capability:** Tourism NI is an effective, diverse, innovative and impactful organisation for which people are proud to work.

TNI will achieve these objectives through the development of 'an internationally compelling destination focusing on our Landscape, Heritage, History and Culture and world class Food and Drink offer' resulting in 'visitors staying longer, spending more, all year round, across the region'

The Tourism Service has compiled a draft response to the consultation, provided in Appendix 2. The response is based on a series of questions with 'agreement' or otherwise options. Commentary is included where relevant. The public consultation has been actively promoted by TNI and partners across a range of industry digital channels and the Council has also promoted its request for responses via our own industry ezine.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves (delegated authority has been granted in September) the response to the TNI Corporate Plan 2025-28 consultation to enable officers to issue a formal response before the consultation completion deadline of 22 October 2025.



TOURISM NI

CORPORATE PLAN
2025/28
DRAFT

TOURISMNI.COM



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1. Statement of Intent from the Chair and Chief Executive

The restoration of the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly and the appointment of the Minister for the Economy has brought a renewed focus on the importance of NI's tourism industry.

Having now recovered from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry is well placed to:

- Support a regionally balanced economy.
- Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs.
- Raise productivity levels.
- Reduce carbon emissions.

The recently published Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan to 2035 recognises the important contribution which the tourism sector can make to our region's economy. Tourism Northern Ireland (NI) welcomes the ambition set out in the Plan and we look forward to playing our part in making this vision a reality over the next ten years.

This Corporate Plan sets out the actions which we will undertake over the next three years to help realise that vision and fulfill the potential of NI's tourism industry. At Tourism NI we have a significant role to play in supporting our industry to succeed in a highly competitive global market.

We plan to do this through our award-winning marketing and promotional campaigns on the island of Ireland and by supporting the work of Tourism Ireland overseas. Together we will also continue to help our businesses to secure contracts with tour operators from across the globe.

We will support tourism enterprises across NI to innovate, increase productivity and create more sustainable tourism experiences. We will also work to help them recruit, develop and retain the talent required to compete globally and meet the expectations of increasingly discerning international visitors.

We will work closely with local councils to support the delivery of the tourism-led regeneration projects within the City and Growth Deals Programme. These projects are central to our ambition of increasing visitor numbers to NI, encouraging them to stay longer, travel further and make a greater contribution to local communities.

Public sector finances remain very challenging, and this is likely to continue throughout the lifespan of this plan. It is more important than ever that we work in collaboration with our many partners to make best use of our collective resources and deliver on the potential of our tourism industry over the next three years.

Ellvena Graham OBE
Chair, Tourism NI

Áine Kearney
Chief Executive (Acting), Tourism NI

2. Tourism Northern Ireland Strategic Framework 2025/28

Tourism NI Goal

By 2028: Support the industry to grow the domestic market by 2% year on year and achieve a 10% value share of Republic of Ireland trips on the island of Ireland

Five Strategic Objectives:	1. Regional Balance: a balance between urban, rural, and coastal destinations - ensuring that investment and economic activity is spread broadly across Northern Ireland, and not overly concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and a concentration of honeypot areas. Regional Balance is not about displacement - it is about generating new growth.		
	2. Good Jobs: secure, flexible, rewarding employment with supportive employers, offering opportunities for skills development and career progression where wellbeing is valued.		
	3. Productivity: a competitive tourism industry that offers a compelling proposition, is innovative, and maximises resources and the potential of our assets throughout the year.		
	4. Sustainability: a tourism industry that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.		
	5. Strong Organisational Capability: Tourism NI is an effective, diverse, innovative and impactful organisation for which people are proud to work.		
Through the development and marketing of:	An internationally compelling destination focusing on our Landscape, Heritage, History & Culture and world class Food & Drink offer		
Resulting in:	Visitors Staying Longer, Spending More, All Year Round, Across the Region		
Enabled by:	• All Island Collaboration	• Insights and Data Analytics	• Industry Capacity Building
	• Local Network Building	• Supportive Policy Environment	• Supporting Sales Growth
	• Strategic Leadership through Stakeholder Engagement	• Product Development	• Stimulating Consumer Demand

3. Tourism Northern Ireland's Role

Tourism NI is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for the Economy (DfE). The organisation was originally set up as the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) in 1948 and operates under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. It was re-branded Tourism NI in January 2015.

Tourism NI's principal functions are to:

- Encourage tourism.
- Encourage the provision and improvement of tourist facilities and amenities.
- Certify tourism accommodation.

4. Tourism Northern Ireland's Mission and Core Purpose

Our mission is to support the development of a productive, regionally balanced and sustainable tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which provides workers with good jobs and enriches its people, its economy and its guests.

We will do this through:

- Supporting our industry to raise productivity and grow sustainably.
- Promoting NI as a must-see destination to markets which offer the greatest potential for growth.
- Developing a tourism ecosystem that presents opportunities for all, bringing economic and community benefit through good jobs and regional balance across Northern Ireland.
- Supporting the tourism sector to become greener, working towards net zero and contributing to the sustainable development of our built and natural environment.
- Supporting the development of authentic tourism experiences which bring our landscape and unique heritage to life in an invigorating, responsible and sustainable way.
- Looking after our people ensuring they have good jobs and that we engage good management practices.
- Transforming the way we work.



5. Our People & Culture, Our Values, Our Structure

Tourism NI’s people strategy is based on the We Invest in People standard and we recognise that all our people have a part to play in delivering on strategic objectives. Our People Strategy prioritises having the right people with the right knowledge, skills and experience, working collaboratively in an inclusive, positive and supportive environment. Everything that Tourism NI achieves would not be possible without the commitment of all staff; their professionalism, determination and desire to make a difference. To ensure we continue to be a great place to work and one of NI’s best employers, we:

- Ensure our people are proud of what they do.
- Encourage empowerment, engagement and accountability.
- Support our people to be flexible and agile in how and where they work.
- Communicate regularly and effectively with our people so they can see the connection between high-level plans and their jobs.
- Get the best out of people by providing clear structures and enjoyable work.

At Tourism NI our Organisational Values are at the heart of who we are, what we do and how we do it. We have four key Organisational Values that are represented by the acronym CARE. Our Core Values are:

	Collaboration Working together, sharing ideas and accountability across the organisation, ensuring we achieve together
	Ambition Creative in our thinking and bold in our actions, consistently striving to be the best versions of ourselves
	Resilience Supporting and empowering, welcoming opportunities to grow and learn
	Excellence Delivering a high quality and impactful service, always striving to exceed expectations and seeking out opportunities to make a difference



We **CARE** about our People, our Visitors, our Industry, our Communities and our Environment. In carrying out our roles, we must demonstrate HONESTY, acting with integrity, being truthful and ensuring our actions match our words. Through honesty, we cultivate a culture of RESPECT, recognising that every individual has something powerful to offer. This enables us to respect each other and embrace INCLUSIVITY, recognising different strengths, fresh thinking and empowering everyone to be authentic in the workplace.

Tourism NI’s **organisational structure** is based on four directorates:



Our programme of delivery is organised by directorate as follows:

Marketing	Strategic Development	Events	Corporate Services
- NI destination marketing & PR - Social & Digital Media - ROI destination marketing & PR - Business Solutions - Visitor Information - Golf Marketing	- Experience & Industry Development - Regions & Investment - City & Growth Deals - Quality & Standards - Corporate Communications	- Major Events - Event Development	- People & Organisational Development - Financial Accounting - Management Accounting - Strategy & Policy - Digital & Computer Services



Our marketing activity is fundamental to creating consumer confidence and stimulating demand. This includes advertising campaigns, earned media coverage and public relations through to the discovernorthernireland.com website and our social media channels and ‘always on’ activity. We work closely with the travel trade, tour operators and associations to put NI tourism businesses front of mind for buyers from overseas markets.

As part of our core function, we deliver a certification service to the tourism accommodation sector to ensure that we provide a recognised standard of product and service to our visitors. Tourism NI does not sell products or services – we work closely with tourism providers from all parts of the tourism ecosystem to build their capacity and competitiveness so that they can sell memorable, authentic experiences and services to customers. These providers are then able to maximise the opportunities available when NI hosts sporting or cultural events, often publicised on a global stage.

We work closely with Tourism Ireland in their promotion of NI outside the island of Ireland and also in ‘on the ground’ support for visits made by international media. We also work closely with Visit Britain through a Memorandum of Understanding.

In line with our core values, we will continue to collaborate with Councils, DMOs and representative bodies to support the development of the tourism industry. These are vitally important partners, and collaborative working is more important than ever to make the most effective use of our collective resource in times of constraints on public sector funding.

Tourism cuts across several policy areas and strategic remits, including those of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure. By its very nature of connecting people with place, tourism supports a range of both public policy areas and private enterprise activity including:

- Providing passengers for transport and supporting sea and air routes.
- Supporting the promotion of our unique culture, heritage and natural environment.
- Providing local and central government revenue; and importantly.
- Promoting Northern Ireland’s image overseas to generate investment.

As the tourism development authority for NI, Tourism NI plays a leadership role in working with the sector, stakeholders and partners across other government departments to ensure that the tourism ecosystem is fully functioning and that visitors experience a well-rounded tourism offer.

Underpinning all this external support, we operate as a publicly funded organisation employing around 150 people in Belfast and Dublin.



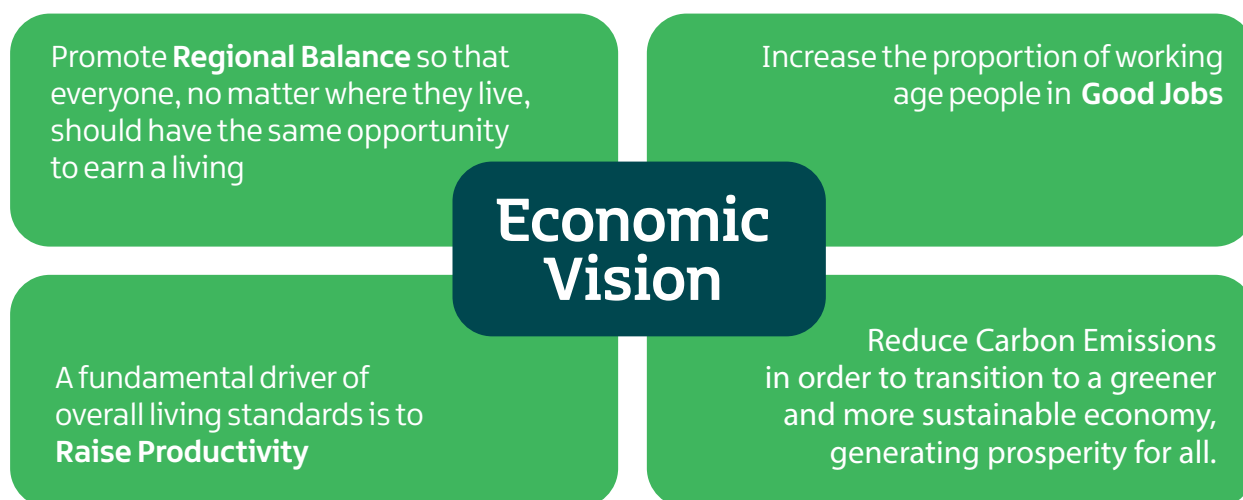
6. Policy Context

As an arm's length body of the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI operates within a dynamic government environment that directs our strategic priorities and ways of working. The importance of tourism is fully recognised by the government.

Tourism NI's Corporate Plan for 2025/28 is set in the context of key government policies and departmental plans.

Minister's Economic Vision

In February 2024, the Economy Minister set out four key objectives as part of the Economic Vision:



The **Programme for Government 2024-2027 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most** includes a key action to boost tourism's sub-regional impact through an innovative Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan, promoting Northern Ireland as a great place to visit and generating sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The **Department for the Economy Business Plan 2024-25** committed to setting up a Tourism Partnership Board (TPB), which was established in September 2024, to support the development and delivery of the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan.

The **DfE Sub-Regional Economic Plan** acknowledges the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan as the foundation for developing local action plans based on community strengths and potential. Through representation on the TPB, Tourism NI has been involved in this process.

DfE's **Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan** was launched in January 2025 and aims to complement other key strategies and policies across various sectors.



Department for the Economy Tourism Policy

Within the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan, two specific actions are identified that aim to ensure that departmental policies on tourist accommodation, support schemes and mechanisms are fit for purpose and ultimately to ensure that Northern Ireland has a thriving tourism sector.



Transfer of Invest NI's tourism responsibilities to Tourism NI

The Invest NI review recommended that financial assistance for the development of tourist accommodation should transfer from Invest NI to Tourism NI. Work is progressing on the development of policy in this area as well as an assessment of the case for a new financial assistance scheme.

ACTION: Ensure that there is an adequate mix and scale of tourist accommodation across the North which meets visitor expectations. DfE will review its policy to support this and transfer the accommodation support scheme from Invest NI to Tourism NI.

Review of tourism delivery mechanisms including the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

All accommodation provision in Northern Ireland is currently subject to regulatory certification by Tourism NI as defined in the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The legislation was originally formulated to ensure that the accommodation provided in Northern Ireland met the expectations of the visitor. Since the last update of the Tourism Order in 2011, those expectations have changed substantially to a point where the legislation has potential to preclude development of the types of accommodation that visitors have come to expect. New forms of accommodation provision such as hosted accommodation through collaborative sharing economy platforms, budget hotels, boutique hostels and unique and alternative styles of property (for example, glamping, tree houses, yurts, and bubble domes) have shown the product landscape is continuously evolving, driven by consumer demand.

ACTION: Review tourism delivery mechanisms required to meet the future needs of the tourism sector, including the Tourism Order, funding schemes and delivery structures.

7. Department for the Economy Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan: Goals



Tourism NI's role is to stimulate market demand from the island of Ireland. In 2023, overnight visitors from NI and the ROI accounted for £540m (44%) of expenditure, split evenly by market.

In terms of delivering against the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan Goal:



The vast majority (98%) of day trips are made by residents from within the island of Ireland, with this expenditure projected to grow by 36% also, to £1.5bn by 2035.

NI is promoted outside the island of Ireland by Tourism Ireland. In 2023, overnight visitors from outside the island of Ireland accounted for 56% of total expenditure. Tourism Ireland's growth target is 6.5% each year until 2030, slowing down in subsequent years, with overnight expenditure from international visitors planned to exceed £1.3bn by 2035.

Revenue growth projections for overnight spend are 36% to over £700m in 2035 based on a growth rate of **2% each year to 2028 and 3% per annum thereafter for NI and a 10 percent value share of ROI trips on the island of Ireland.**

Tourism NI's Corporate Plan for 2025/28 and its constituent Operating Plans will therefore be aligned to the Minister's Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan through those actions where Tourism NI either takes the lead or works in partnership with other bodies.



8. Enablers to Support Tourism Northern Ireland meet its objectives

All-Island Collaboration

Tourism NI has had close working relationships with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland in the past. These relationships have been further enhanced by the Minister's emphasis on 'considering opportunities that come from collaboration across the island of Ireland that will help to create a strong all-island economy and sustainable communities across Ireland'.

An all-island Strategic Tourism Group has been established and senior management teams from the three agencies and the sponsor Departments meet regularly to discuss work on sustainability, extension of Fáilte Ireland's brands, events and the Irish government's Shared Island programme.

Local Network Building

Tourism NI currently works with a wide range of organisations across the UK and Ireland in meeting its objectives. In delivery of this Corporate Plan, we will strive to further embed collaboration with the sector, government and key strategic partners to bring benefits to the whole of NI. We will work together at a local, regional and national level to align strategic priorities, as well as working alongside the industry to ensure that local communities experience the benefits of tourism. We work closely with Councils at a sub-regional level to

ensure a consistent approach to tourism development across NI and, going forward, to ensure that the objectives of the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan are met. Building on existing relationships established as part of our work on the City and Growth Deals projects, we will play an increasingly important role in working with Councils to facilitate the development of destinations across Council boundaries where that is not happening effectively. Through our development of a Destination Management Framework for NI, we will provide direction and guidance to Councils and other stakeholders on how places can be developed and made more sustainable from a visitor perspective. We also need to collaborate closely with Councils so that we have a single and consistent brand for NI.

Strategic Leadership through Stakeholder Engagement

As a public body we strive to ensure that we provide leadership to the tourism sector in all aspects of our role and functions. It is therefore vital that we deliver an effective Corporate Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Programme to protect and enhance the public profile of Tourism NI and underpin key projects and events.

9. Challenges to Tourism Northern Ireland and the Sector

Remaining Competitive

Our ambition is for the Northern Ireland tourism sector to be 'an internationally compelling destination'. Competitor destinations continue to invest in new products and accommodation to meet the needs of increasingly discerning consumers. It is important that NI is also able to make capital investment in its tourism experiences, accommodation and infrastructure to remain competitive and thereby stimulate consumer demand.

The Cost of Doing Business

The legacy of dramatic increases in energy costs and steep inflation remains a significant challenge for businesses and consumers alike. Businesses continue to incur high overheads across all cost areas and whilst they have been reluctant to pass these on to customers, they are now having to raise their prices. On the flip side, consumers are also being impacted through pressure on personal finances and reduced disposable income. This is reflected in our consumer sentiment monitoring where visitors are looking for more free things to see and do.

Whilst the NI tourism sector outlook is generally favourable for 2025, significant levels of concern remain regarding reduced disposable incomes and high energy costs. The increase in employer National Insurance contributions, the additional rises for the National Minimum Wage, the National Living Wage and business rates will all exacerbate cost pressures. The differential in VAT rates for NI and the ROI for food hospitality also provides a challenge.

This will have implications for us in how we support the sector in dealing with these issues but also how we stimulate demand with consumers to attract them to stay in NI for a short break, making the most of our tourism offer.



Skills and Recruitment

Skills shortages and recruitment difficulties within the tourism and hospitality sector have been issues for many years. This has been particularly heightened by the pandemic, with many employees leaving the sector and not returning. Prior to the pandemic, the tourism and hospitality sectors had a reputation of offering a poor work/life balance with long working hours and conditions, and a lack of career progression opportunities. Brexit also impacted the sector due to new immigration rules.

We have made significant strides in addressing perceptions of the sector, in collaboration with key partners. However, with a tight labour market, an ongoing focus is required to communicate the career opportunities and positive changes in employer terms and conditions, to ensure that access to a skilled workforce does not restrict sustainable growth of the sector.



UK Government Policy

The UK Government's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system is now fully implemented for all visitors travelling to the UK. Travellers coming into the UK via air and seaports will have to be in possession of an ETA linked to their passport. Visitors to NI however can come via the ROI; in fact, 67% of overseas visitors come to NI this way. The ETA will not be checked but it is a requirement to have one. Concerns have been raised by the sector about the impact that this might have, particularly on group travel and spontaneous day trips made by overseas visitors coming from Dublin, for example. Travellers must have a passport to get an ETA, so for Europeans who are used to travelling on ID cards and likely do not have a passport, this represents an additional barrier created by the ETA.

Tourism NI continues to liaise closely with DfE, Tourism Ireland, the NI Tourism Alliance, and the Home Office to ensure communications are as effective as possible.

Tourism NI Budgetary Pressures

The Northern Ireland Executive continues to face significant budget challenges. In developing our

Corporate Plan, we have carefully considered where we can allocate our budget to ensure the greatest return on investment to support tourism growth and meet our obligations set out in the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-year Plan. Single year budgets also prove challenging particularly when planning capital expenditure.

We continue to make the case for tourism, demonstrating the economic, social and cultural benefits that it brings for our region, our residents and our visitors.

Technological Advances

Technological advances can be an opportunity as well as a challenge. The advancement and application of new technologies move rapidly. As consumers adapt to new technologies, travel and tourism businesses need to ensure that they use the latest methods of engaging with potential customers, alongside running their day-to-day operations.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a disruptor for all industries, and it is critical that Tourism NI and the tourism sector embrace this technology to remain competitive. As an organisation, we have developed an AI Policy to ensure we use this technology in the correct way. We are also supporting the industry in helping them understand how best to use AI to grow their business.

It is important that as an organisation we are aware of the technological changes impacting both us and the sector and are agile enough to adapt and pivot as required.

External Factors beyond our Control

Consumer confidence and demand can be impacted by many factors such as political instability, war, energy prices, recession, tariffs and low consumer confidence, not to mention a pandemic.

It is our role to support the industry to maximise opportunities and build skills and resilience so that in pressured times they have reserves to fall back on or can flex their activities to new markets and/or products.

10. Northern Ireland Visitor Economy - Performance Snapshot

2024 Tourism Performance

- NISRA tourism performance statistics for 2024 indicated that:
- NI welcomed approximately 4.7 million overnight visitors in 2024, who stayed 14.9 million nights and spent £1.1 billion in NI.
 - On average, visitors stayed 3.2 nights and spent £233 per overnight trip in NI in 2024.
 - Holiday trips were the most popular reason for visiting NI, representing more than half of all visits.

The Day Trip Market

NISRA official statistics indicate that the NI tourism day trip market was worth an estimated £703 million in 2024, with approximately 96% of visitors from the island of Ireland. Tourism NI will aim to convert a proportion of these day trip visits to overnight stays to encourage greater spend.

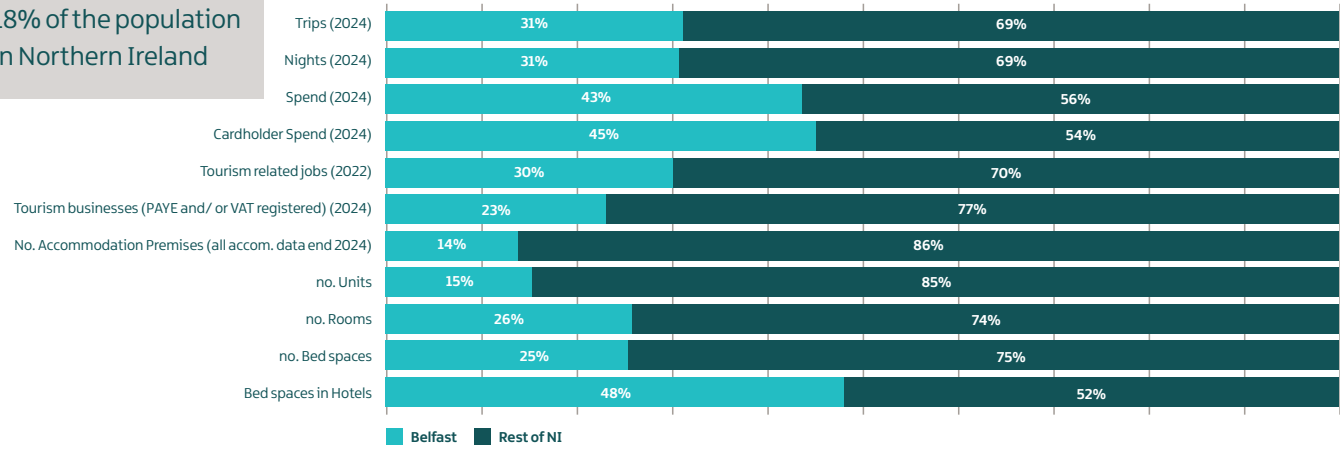
Regional Spread

Belfast accounts for a disproportionate share of NI tourism activity across several indicators as demonstrated below:



Belfast accounts for 18% of the population in Northern Ireland

Belfast vs Rest of NI



This profile reflects Belfast’s pull to visitors as the biggest city, with all that it has to offer, as well as its role as the gateway to the rest of NI. Continuing to encourage the regional spread of tourism and its benefits forms a core part of this plan.

Seasonality and Extending the Season

The peak months for NI tourism are July, August and September: 30% of visitors come in these months accounting for 31% of spend. A third of visits to visitor attractions are made over the same period. Seasonality also varies depending on a number of factors:

- Seasonality varies by market with 39% of all trips made by visitors from outside the Island of Ireland and GB taking place in July, August and September.
- One third of all holiday trips are also taken in these three months.
- Business trips are relatively evenly spread across the year with Visiting Friends and Relatives more frequent in the second half of the year.

The seasonal nature of the tourism industry in Northern Ireland presents the industry with a range of challenges including:

- Low productivity due to the comparatively low utilisation of assets outside of the high season.
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.
- Difficulties creating sustainable year-round businesses where the income is generated in a short period of time.
- Capacity issues at some attractions during the peak season leading to reduced levels of visitor satisfaction.
- Businesses outside of the main cities are dependent on the domestic market to survive the low season.



11. Embrace a Giant Spirit: Our Destination Brand



Since the launch of the 'Embrace A Giant Spirit' brand in 2019, we have seen the tourism industry and visitors resonate with its sentiment and essence. The brand was developed to promote NI as a visitor destination on the island of Ireland and strengthen Tourism Ireland's messaging overseas. This approach was crucial in helping NI to stand out amongst our competitors, to emotionally connect with its target market segments and communicate to the consumer the experience that they can expect if they choose to visit NI.

The brand is synonymous with a high-quality tourism offering and visitor experience, instantly recognisable as distinctively Northern Irish and has ensured the region has the ability to complement and stand on a par with the other experience brands on the island of Ireland. Our consumer sentiment research indicates that awareness of the brand has grown, and businesses find it an embodiment of NI which they believe in and can use to market their products and experiences.

We work closely with a growing Portfolio of innovative experiences and attractions committed to delivering on our brand inspirers and strengthening our destination appeal. This cohort benefit from increased account management and a tailored learning and development programme. Close to 100 businesses form part of this portfolio programme, representing both the top attractions driving initial interest and visit to NI, as well as smaller experiences, which help extend the stay and drive regionality

Alongside the Embrace a Giant Spirit brand, we will collaborate with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland over the timeline of this Corporate Plan to explore opportunities for NI tourism businesses to align with the Fáilte Ireland experience brands. This approach will allow us to build synergies and route development and support Tourism Ireland in marketing the island of Ireland overseas.

12. Tourism Northern Ireland - Market Focus

Tourism NI's mandate is to market NI to the domestic and ROI markets. In 2024, 42% of overnight spend in NI came from the island of Ireland.

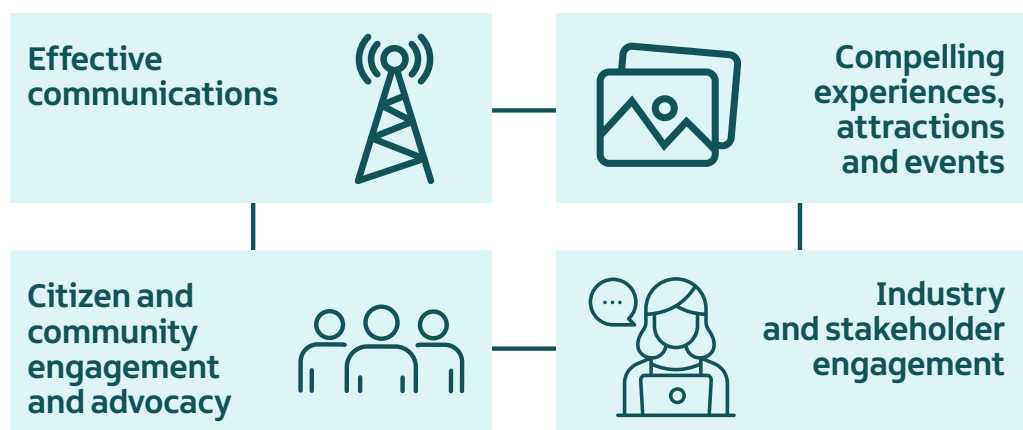
Our ongoing consumer sentiment indicates a consistently large majority of ROI and domestic visitors feel their trip matches or exceeds expectations, with the range of places to eat and drink and the welcome and hospitality being particularly highly rated by both markets. Overall, consumers in both markets continue to rate NI as a better 'value for money' tourism destination than ROI and GB, whilst competition from abroad remains strong.

Domestic Market

The domestic market has a significant positive impact on the regional and seasonal distribution of tourism.

The NI Domestic Market Review was completed in early 2020, coinciding in an untimely way with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strategy focused on four key pillars:



In recent years, as we recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic, the domestic market has provided a lifeline to the sector. The domestic market is stronger in delivering regional dispersal and season extension than all other markets and is the main market for many council areas.

In the same way that we focus our efforts on key market segments in the ROI market, we have three priority segments in the NI market, namely Aspiring Families, Natural Quality Seekers, and Social Instagrammers. These three segments represent the best opportunity to drive value growth within the domestic market.

In 2024,

- Domestic overnight stays accounted for 1.6m visitors, 33% of all visitors.
- Domestic visitor expenditure was £217 million, 20% of all spend by overnight visitors.
- Domestic breaks accounted for 3.6m nights in NI, 24% of all nights.
- Average spend per trip and spend per night was the lowest of all markets
- 51% of trips were holiday trips, 37% were visiting friends/relatives.



Republic of Ireland Market

As our nearest neighbour, the ROI market has seen considerable growth and continues to demonstrate huge potential.

The economic value of visitors from the ROI is higher than those from NI, as they bring additional revenue, rather than recirculating existing money within the region. Priority marketing segments for value growth are: Active Maximisers, Indulgent Relaxers and Open-Minded Explorers.

The ROI Market Recovery Taskforce launched its growth strategy in 2017, and this was further refreshed in 2021.

The revised strategy focussed on three pillars:

1.

Collective Effort

Industry Engagement and Development, developing and supporting a motivated, engaged, connected and committed industry that is focused and equipped to win in the ROI market.

2.

Compelling Communications

Powerful messaging delivering consistent, connected and motivating communications that builds knowledge of what Northern Ireland has to offer and clear and compelling reasons to go.

3.

Constant Purchasability

Maximising conversion creating the conditions through which compelling and connected short break propositions (accommodation, attractions, experiences and events) are easily accessed and purchasable.

The strategy has been embraced by the industry and enabled by Tourism NI's targeted marketing campaigns and supporting activities, resulting in the market making a bold recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Evaluation of our focused marketing campaign activity in ROI reveals a strong return on investment. Consumer sentiment research has indicated that after the launch of the strategy, approximately half of NI's visitors from ROI were visiting for the first time, presenting an opportunity to attract these visitors for a return visit.

In 2024,

- ROI accounted for 1.1m visitors to NI, 24% of all visitors.
- ROI visitor expenditure was £243 million, 22% of all spend by overnight visitors.
- ROI visitors spent 2.5m nights in NI, 17% of all nights, staying an average of 2.2 nights per trip.
- Average visitor spend per night was 63% higher for ROI visitors than for NI residents taking an overnight break in NI.
- The ROI market is stronger for regional dispersal than other out of state markets.
- 47% of trips are visiting friends/relatives, 35% are for holidays.
- NI attracted 6.4% of the overnight trips made by ROI residents within the island of Ireland.

Alongside focusing on the domestic and ROI markets, Tourism NI works closely with Tourism Ireland to optimise opportunities in the most important markets outside of the island of Ireland, particularly GB, North America and mainland Europe.



Our role in product and industry development, in particular, is critical to providing more reasons for visitors to visit NI, stay longer and deliver positive impacts.

13. Strategic Objectives

The following section sets out the main initiatives that Tourism NI will deliver in the next three years under each of the five Strategic Objectives. Several initiatives can deliver against more than one objective and where this occurs it is highlighted, e.g. + Productivity. Those actions where Tourism NI takes the lead or works in collaboration with partners, which are detailed in the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan, are also highlighted, e.g. (Action 4).



Objective 1: Regional Balance

Outcome: 'Regional Balance - a balance between urban, rural, and coastal destinations - ensuring that investment and economic activity is spread broadly across Northern Ireland, and not overly concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and a concentration of honeypot areas.... **Regional Balance is not about displacement – it is about generating new growth.'**

A primary objective of the Minister's economic and tourism vision is 'regional balance.' This is not seen as a redistribution of existing business, but rather that the value of tourism in the regions outside of Belfast will grow at a faster pace than before.

Tourism is one of the most regionally balanced sectors within the local economy with 70% of jobs based outside Belfast. Outside of employment, Belfast dominates by every measure, as capital cities tend to do, given that they typically have the scale, infrastructure, cultural facilities and a nighttime economy that meets the needs of the visitor. From a tourism perspective, market forces and tourism infrastructure will continue to drive business towards Belfast, particularly for first time visitors to NI.

Through maximising existing assets in rural, urban and coastal locations, as well as innovative itineraries and

partnership collaboration, we can create an opportunity to slow down travel, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more. In so doing, growth in tourism income and good tourism and hospitality jobs will be better spread across Northern Ireland.

Stimulating Demand

Promoting NI as a must-see destination for consumers is a core element of what we do. Our efforts and finite budgets need to be optimised across an appropriate range of media to expand our reach and share of voice to ultimately move the customer through the purchase funnel to book a trip.

Our marketing in the ROI over recent years has resulted in approximately 50% of visitors from ROI visiting NI for the first time. Continued investment in our focused marketing to the key segments in this market will aim to repeat visitation thereby promoting growth outside Belfast.

We know that the domestic market is important for delivering regional balance, but we need to ensure that staycations are kept front of mind to compete with short breaks in ROI and abroad.

Destination and Product Development

In the DfE Sub-Regional Economic Plan, we are mandated to take a destination-led approach through the development of local action plans based on community strengths and potential. These Destination Stewardship Plans will form the bedrock of our ‘regional balance’ approach. In our use of the term ‘destination,’ we mean a defined geographical area with reasons to visit, stay and spend, supported by a strong tourism ecosystem. Destinations will possibly not be congruent with Council boundaries so it will be important that Councils work in collaboration with us to deliver these plans.

It is important to recognise that different destinations are at various stages of development and so each requires its own development plan. We must keep in mind the true potential of each destination, as the aim is not to get all of these on a level playing field but rather to maximise the growth potential of each area. Having key attractors with supporting experiences is therefore important to driving visitor spend and distribution. This is also an important factor in driving repeat visits.

The aim is that the City and Growth Deal projects will increase the number and distribution of key attractions, with a further phase of the Experience Development Programme supporting the breadth of the offer of authentic experiences.

Underpinned by our Embrace a Giant Spirit brand, we support the development of authentic tourism experiences which bring our unique heritage to life in an invigorating, responsible and sustainable way. We have developed Visitor Experience Development Plans for Food & Drink, for Culture, History & Heritage and for Outdoor & Activities. This is proving to be an effective way to engage with businesses and stakeholders across the region.

Tourism is one of the success stories coming out of the Good Friday Agreement. Visitors want to learn more about our recent history, which creates the opportunity to grow peace tourism and tell our unique story. This opportunity is identified in the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan.





Economic and Industry Development

In terms of niche sectors, screen tourism and the luxury market can be further developed and maximised. NI's recognition as a location for global TV programmes and films, in particular Game of Thrones and Derry Girls, continues to provide us with the opportunity to attract visitors from across the globe. The luxury end of the market is one that we can develop and enhance, working in collaboration with sector partners and providers of luxury accommodation and experiences.

NI's reputation as a world class golf destination goes from strength to strength, with Royal Portrush hosting the 153rd Open Championship in July 2025 – the second time it has done so in six years. Attracting golf visitors, who stay longer and spend more than average, helps to spread economic benefits across the region.

Cross Border Collaboration

A number of our workstreams involve working with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, and other partners across the border. We have been involved in bidding for Shared Island funding including the Wild Atlantic Way / Causeway Coastal Route Programme that is currently underway. Other collaborative activities include Meet the Buyer, familiarisation trips for journalists and tour operators and a shared content pool. We are working with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to explore opportunities for NI tourism businesses to align with the Fáilte Ireland experience brands.

Major Events, Event Development and Delivery

Events have played a significant role in the growth of Northern Ireland's tourism industry in recent years. Large scale events such as the Giro d'Italia, the MTV European Music Awards and The Open Championship at Royal Portrush have had a positive impact on the perception of Northern Ireland in overseas markets. Together with our home-grown events that have an appeal to overseas tourists, these have contributed to greater visitor numbers, increased visitor spend, extension of the season and sustained employment in the local tourism and hospitality sectors across Northern Ireland. In addition to the direct tourism benefits, a balanced portfolio of festivals and events can deliver significant social and cultural impact.

Major events such as The Open, which we have existing infrastructure to deliver, act as important anchors in our mid to longer term events programmes. Active targeting of a major event every two to three years would be integral to this ambition. Where it is possible to do so, operating on an all-island basis to develop a festival series, clustering together activity which is already taking place and thereby reducing costs of promotion, are options to be considered, as are new sources of funding.

Success will be recognised as:

- Tourism NI continuing to support the regional growth of tourism, resulting in:
- Well-defined destinations - each with a standout tourism hub or hubs including accommodation, visitor experiences and an evening economy.
 - Tourism providers who represent our unique identity, customs, traditions and ways of life across NI.
 - Tourism businesses that are equipped with the right skills to maximise opportunities.
 - Investment in tourism infrastructure, events, experiences and services that deliver measurable benefits for residents, communities and tourism providers – this is optimised through a regular review of funding sources.
 - Clusters within NI destinations: collaborating to maximise social and economic opportunities via sustainable tourism development.
 - A year-round calendar of experiences and events driving seasonal bookings and a major event every 2-3 years to raise Northern Ireland’s profile.
 - The tourism industry delivering on the Embrace a Giant Spirit brand promise and exceeding visitor expectations.
 - Effective stakeholder collaboration between Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and local authorities to maximise opportunities.

Key Metric/ Indicator	Source
• Percentage growth of tourism value by council area year on year • Average length of overnight stay and spend per trip • Economic benefit derived from Major Events • Percentage marketing campaign content outside Belfast	• NISRA tourism performance statistics • NISRA tourism performance statistics • Event evaluation studies • Tourism NI Marketing Budget

Initiatives by Workstream

Stimulating Demand
• Promote NI as a short-break destination in the domestic and the ROI markets through integrated marketing campaigns that drive visitor growth and revenue and support regional and seasonal balance. + Productivity • Continue to deliver discovernorthernireland.com, to inspire and drive interest and visits to Northern Ireland as a destination. • In collaboration with Tourism Ireland, promote Northern Ireland in overseas markets through international media familiarisation (fam) trips. • Support Tourism Ireland to promote sustainable tourism experiences in overseas markets.
Destination and Product Development
• Lead the development of stewardship plans for priority tourism destinations across NI, building on existing collaborative working with Councils and other key stakeholders. (Action 4) • Oversee and support the successful delivery of the major new tourism investment projects identified within the four City and Growth Deals across NI on behalf of DfE. + Good Jobs (Action 8) • Develop new capital investment and development programmes to support new and enhanced tourism experiences drawing on the recommendations of the NI Product Review. (Action 3) • Deliver an effective service for the certification and grading of visitor accommodation and visitor experiences to drive quality and good practice across the sector. • Review the future regulation and classification of the visitor accommodation sector to inform DfE and related policy areas.

- Encourage investment in, and the provision of, new and enhanced visitor accommodation which can support growth in visitor spend and regional spread across NI. **+ Good Jobs (Action 6)**
- Support the development of innovative tourism experiences to underpin our brand proposition, with a particular focus on those businesses with significant growth potential, and the regional development of experiences in Food & Drink, Culture & Heritage and Outdoor & Activities. **+ Productivity**
- Define and deliver a shared approach to realising the potential of Peace Tourism, in partnership with key stakeholders. **(Action 2)**
- Continue to optimise the potential of Screen Tourism to secure added value.
- Lead an NI development plan for the luxury segment in order to capitalise on opportunities in this area.

Economic and Industry Development

- Deliver the NI Golf Tourism Strategy including a programme of B2B Golf sales missions.
- Develop a Travel Trade Strategy to maximise revenue for Northern Ireland.
- Develop and deliver an industry focused Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Programme. **+ Productivity + Sustainability**

Cross Border Collaboration

- Collaborate with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to explore opportunities for NI tourism businesses aligned to the Fáilte Ireland experience brands. **+ Productivity (Action 9)**
- Work in partnership with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to deliver a programme of activity to build synergies, brand collaboration and route development. **+ Productivity (Action 9)**
- Working with partners, develop and deliver an innovative B2B programme of sales and marketing activity to support the NI tourism industry to increase programming from international operators. **+ Productivity**

Event Development and Delivery

- Develop a strategic approach to support the development of a long-term programme of events for the North capable of contributing to the delivery of the Minister's economic vision to maximise the benefits to NI and support the ambitions set out in the Tourism Vision to 2035. **(Action 7)**
- Deliver a Tourism Events Support Programme which will enhance the destination profile, increase visitor numbers and bednights from key markets, increase spend and encourage regional spread. **+ Productivity**

Objective 2: Good Jobs

Outcome: 'Good Jobs that offer secure, flexible, rewarding employment with supportive employers, offering opportunities for skills development and career progression where wellbeing is valued.'

Good Jobs is a critical objective of the Minister's Economic Vision. The Minister sees tourism and hospitality as having the potential to provide meaningful, fulfilling employment opportunities across NI and in doing so help tackle our chronic economic inactivity challenge and help sustain both rural and urban communities across the region.

DfE has defined a 'good job' as one that offers an employee of working age, which is between the ages of 16 and 64, the following:

- A permanent contract; and
- A non-zero-hour contract; and
- Earning the Real Living Wage or more.

The tourism skills landscape is complex and fragmented, with no 'one size fits all' approach. We therefore need to focus our limited resources where we can generate the greatest impact. Tourism NI's activities are therefore clearly focused on the areas of skills development and industry support.

Tourism NI has developed partnerships with organisations which are working to encourage pupils in schools to think about tourism as a career opportunity. Many larger hotels and visitor attractions are highly active in this area, engaging with third party people accreditations including Investors in People and Great Places to Work as well as delivering innovative in-house bespoke initiatives.

The Minister's Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan commits Tourism NI to develop and deliver an Employer's Excellence Programme, drawing upon the successful Fáilte Ireland programme. The Plan also commits Tourism NI to work in partnership with industry and DfE Skills Division to deliver a bespoke Skills Action Plan to address skills gaps and improve career pathways.

The connection between good jobs, staff that are well-supported and content and satisfied customers is fundamental to a successful tourism industry.

Jobs in Tourism:

- 5,865 VAT and/ or PAYE registered businesses, 70,384 jobs equating to 9% of all jobs in NI
- 70% of these jobs are located outside the Belfast City Council area.
- The top three employment sub-sectors are restaurants (42%), hotels (15%), and beverage outlets (9.9%)
- 56% of those employed are under 35 years of age.
- 50/50 split male/ female (pre 2023 there was a higher proportion of females employed)
- Average pay for those employed in the tourism sector is lower than the Living Wage and the NI average.



Skills Development and Industry Support

The recruitment and retention of good people continues to be a challenge for our sector. These challenges are increased because of a longstanding perception of the sector as being one which typically offers low pay, long unsociable hours and limited potential for career progression. Our very competitive labour market further exacerbates this, with an unemployment rate of 1.7%. However, tourism is well placed to help tackle the challenge presented by 27% of NI's working population being economically inactive.

As a result of Brexit, the sector has had recruitment challenges due to the loss of thousands of workers from Eastern Europe. The salary levels that overseas workers require in order to secure a visa represent a barrier to recruitment of foreign nationals.

In response to the industry's needs, Tourism NI has expanded its Industry Development activities in recent years to help change perceptions of the sector and to support businesses with recruitment, retention and staff development. This has been done in partnership with a range of stakeholders including the HATS Network, Hospitality Ulster, the Further Education network and the two Universities.

The most notable of these has been the 'Make it Here' campaign which has sought to change perceptions of the sector by dialling up its positive attributes and help employees to change the lived experience of working in Tourism and Hospitality, ensuring that the sector becomes a best-in-class employer. Our research indicates that this campaign is improving perceptions of the sector.

Success will be recognised as:

Tourism NI continuing to promote and support good jobs in tourism, resulting in:

- Attracting, developing, and retaining people across all skills levels, all backgrounds and from all parts of Northern Ireland.
- Pay, terms and conditions in the tourism and hospitality sector improving and offering flexibility.
- Increased positive perceptions of the tourism and hospitality sector.
- More people employed in the tourism and hospitality sector.
- Growth in skill levels and capability of the workforce.

Key Metric/ Indicator	Source
• Number of jobs in, and Work Quality Indicators for tourism and hospitality • Percentage of respondents who: • have positive perceptions of the tourism and hospitality sector • consider that tourism and hospitality will grow as a provider of permanent jobs	• NISRA • Tourism NI Perceptions Survey (omnibus)

Initiatives by Workstream

Skills Development and Industry Support
• Support DfE in the development and delivery of a Tourism Skills Action Plan which can provide a blueprint for collective activity over the next 10 years. + Productivity (Action 10) • Continue to promote tourism careers in order to support employee recruitment and retention across the sector. • Build individual and team capability and expertise and embed good practice in employee development across the sector.

Objective 3: Increased Productivity

Outcome: a competitive tourism industry that offers a compelling proposition is innovative, and maximises resources and the potential of our assets throughout the year.

Supporting the Increased Productivity objective will ultimately require the creation of new jobs and the growth of existing businesses, which will result in greater levels of employment across the region.

The sector currently employs over 70,000 people across 5,845 VAT/ PAYE registered businesses. This however excludes many people within the sector who are sole traders / self-employed as tour guides, drivers, and activity / experience providers for example. Like the broader NI economy, the tourism sector is dominated by small and micro-enterprises (90%) with the top

10% of businesses generating an estimated 80% of all bookings. The majority of small business owners are driven by their passion and not necessarily by a desire to grow employment, which presents a challenge in encouraging increased employment.

The range of businesses does however provide breadth to the tourism offer and 98% of holidaymakers see this as an important factor in their choice of holiday location.

Industry Capacity Building

Tourism NI takes a multi channelled approach to industry development and capacity building:

- The Tourism Enterprise Development Programme is an important mechanism whereby we provide

online support, webinars and workshops that are open to all tourism businesses.

Based on industry feedback the themes covered address current issues and topics that the sector sees as important. Latterly, sustainability, innovation and digitisation including Artificial Intelligence (AI) have been the focus.

- 'Always on' business support is especially important for small businesses and the 'My Tourism NI' E-learning platform developed in partnership with industry practitioners goes some way to providing practical learning materials in this way.
- Working on a 'One to Many' basis with smaller experience providers with the greatest growth potential. We have adopted a particular focus on Food and Drink, on Culture and Heritage and on Outdoor Experience Providers through the Embrace a Giant Spirit Portfolio.
- For major tourism providers, such as leading attractions, we take an organisation-wide approach where different teams from Tourism NI will engage on different workstreams with staff in the respective tourism business.

Innovation in Tourism

Improving Productivity is an important strand of any economic development strategy. Higher levels of innovation tend to lead to greater use of resources, increased income levels and a higher standard of living within a region. This tends to be driven by increased automation, which is difficult to deliver in a people-centric industry such as tourism. However, innovation in the tourism sector can come about through new product development and the greater utilisation of existing assets.

Growing Business Events and B2B Sales

Regional programming of MICE (meetings, incentive, conferences and events) business across NI and promoting the delivery of business events, predominantly bringing business into Belfast and Derry contribute to both Regional Balance and Productivity. Business conferences for example tend to be held midweek and outside the peak season, which gives a

greater return on investment for hotels and restaurants thereby supporting business survival and productivity.



Our work in these areas is conducted in collaboration with partners including the DMOs and Tourism Ireland, thereby ensuring opportunities emerging from international markets are maximised.

Success will be recognised as:

Tourism NI working with the industry, resulting in:

- Increased investment in new and existing innovative businesses.
- Tourism revenue growing faster than visitor numbers, with visitors staying longer and spending more.
- NI being perceived as an attractive place to work, live in, visit and invest.
- Tourism revenue being more evenly spread across the year (through growth of the shoulder season) thereby providing workers with secure employment, increasing business survival rates and profitability.
- Tourism businesses engaging in strong management practices for efficient use of existing resources.
- Increasing take-up of tourism industry platforms to support sales growth.
- NI being recognised and winning more business as a leading business meeting, incentive, conference and events location for our key NI growth sectors.
- NI being recognised for its golf, luxury and peace tourism offer.

Key Metric/ Indicator	Source
- ROI market overnight spend value - Percentage annual tourism spend in shoulder season - Number of tourism businesses holding an Innovate NI related accreditation - Conference and business meeting economic benefits	- NISRA tourism performance statistics - NISRA tourism performance statistics - Tourism NI Innovate Tourism Growth Programme monitoring - Visit Belfast and Visit Derry

Initiatives by Workstream

Industry Capacity Building
Work in collaboration with Tourism Ireland / DMCs and stakeholders within the industry to help them to secure Incentive Business and Corporate meetings for operators. (Action 12)
Innovation in Tourism
Deliver an Innovate Tourism Growth Programme aligned to the Innovate NI framework.
Growing Business Events and B2B Sales
Work with Visit Belfast and Visit Derry to deliver recommendations within the Business Tourism Strategy that support the industry in securing conferences and business meetings for NI, and to support cruise tourism. (Action 12)

Objective 4: Sustainability

Outcome: A tourism industry that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable

The climate crisis and loss of biodiversity globally is leading to an increasing demand for more environmentally and socially sustainable tourism experiences. As a result, there is a need for destinations to promote themselves as sustainable to secure business in the future.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set the standard for sustainability as they strive for a better and more sustainable future for all through economic growth, reducing poverty, supporting cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. In addition to consumer demand, being able to demonstrate that our destinations, venues and experiences are aligned to the values of corporate and industry associations’ Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies is critical to securing conference and incentive business.

Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN Environment Programme and UN World Tourism Organization as: ‘Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, **addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.**’

From a legal perspective, the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 requires NI to become carbon neutral by 2050 and the Tourism and Hospitality Sectors have a role to play in this.



Reducing the Sector’s Carbon Footprint

Our work in this area in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to develop an All-Island Sustainability Mark has been paused as we consider the implications of the EU Green Claims Directive. In the meantime, Tourism NI is working with Fáilte Ireland in the development of a toolkit which will allow tourism businesses across the island to measure their carbon footprint in a consistent manner. We have been able to expand our Sustainable Tourism Business Programme, now accredited by Ulster University, which aims to embed sustainability action plans and create regional cohorts of sustainable tourism businesses. Given the importance of this area of work, external funding sources are being explored to develop new carbon reduction programmes.



Success will be recognised as:

- Tourism NI supporting the sector and promoting Northern Ireland, resulting in:
- The sector being recognised as sustainable in economic, social, and environmental terms.
 - Tourism businesses being financially sustainable.
 - Businesses effectively responding to climate change and reducing their carbon footprint.
 - Regional dispersal and seasonal growth underpinned by sustainable destination management plans that attract investment.
 - Our natural and built environment being considered attractive by visitors.
 - Tourism’s impact on the environment being managed.
 - NI residents and communities welcoming tourists and seeing tourism as making a positive contribution to their area.
 - Tourism providing a range of financial and non-financial benefits to local areas and communities.
 - Tourism experiences, attractions and accommodation that are accessible by all.

Key Metric/ Indicator	Source
• Number of businesses participating in Climate Action Programme initiatives • Tourism seen as bringing benefits to local residents and communities	• Tourism NI Climate Action Programme monitoring • Tourism NI Consumer/ Community Survey

Initiatives by Workstream

Reducing the sector’s carbon footprint
• Deliver a Climate Action Programme to embed good practice across the tourism industry. (Action 16) • Work in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to develop a sustainability accreditation scheme or alternative in order to drive climate action and showcase the destination. (Action 17)

Objective 5: Strong Organisational Capability

Outcome: Tourism NI is an effective, diverse, innovative and impactful organisation for which people are proud to work.

To deliver the objectives set out in the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan, it is important that Tourism NI has the relevant resources, talent, skills and processes efficiently deployed within the organisation.

People & Organisational Development

We recognise that our people are our greatest asset and as an organisation we have developed and maintain a strong people-centric culture. Our People Strategy prioritises Tourism NI having appropriately skilled, knowledgeable and experienced people who can work together and thrive in an inclusive, positive and supportive environment.

Finance, Governance & Procurement

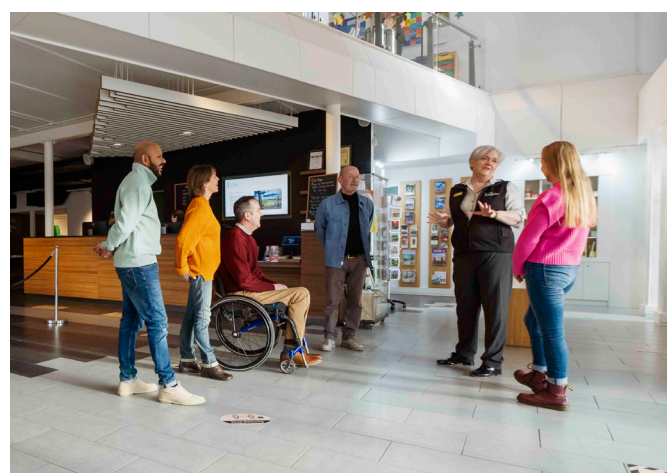
It is important that the legislative framework within which Tourism NI operates gives it the necessary powers to deliver the types of support required to fulfil its objectives. We must also have robust governance arrangements in place, manage risk effectively and provide assurance that we can fulfil our obligations as a public body and deliver value for money.

Digital & IT Services

Tourism NI leverages technology to ensure we are an effective and efficient organisation and that our systems are compliant with regulatory requirements. As a business implementing a hybrid working policy, we ensure that our staff have the necessary tools to achieve our corporate objectives. With technological changes come opportunities and threats – AI provides an opportunity for us as an organisation and for the tourism industry. We implement sophisticated cyber security tools to protect our information and infrastructure.

Communications & Stakeholder Engagement

As the national authority with responsibility for developing tourism in Northern Ireland, we hold a leadership role for the sector. This requires us to engage effectively with stakeholders, to protect and enhance the public profile of Tourism NI, to act as advocates for the development of tourism and to leverage resources and maximise opportunities.



Strategy & Policy

We use data and insights to inform our decision making at many levels and we share this information with tourism businesses and stakeholders to support their own decisions about planning, product development, marketing and investment. We listen to both consumers and the industry to ensure that the needs of the visitors can be met, and their expectations can be exceeded. We are working to enhance our provision of data and insights through the development of the Tourism & Research Insights Platform (TRIP) – a ‘one stop shop’ for tourism insights that will service the sector, stakeholders and investors with multi layered information and intelligence.

Our newly developed ESG Framework sets out the ways in which we operate internally as an organisation, including working on reducing Tourism NI’s carbon footprint, and externally with our stakeholders. These three strands give an added positive perspective and dimension to our activities.

Success will be recognised as:

Tourism NI:

- Attracting, retaining and developing a highly motivated workforce whose work demonstrates our company values and culture.
 - Being a sustainable organisation.
- Being innovative and using technology to improve our productivity.
 - Deploying good management practice and governance ensuring our stakeholders’ and partners’ expectations are met through delivery of effective corporate governance, finance and procurement arrangements.
 - Managing risk: effectively identifying and mitigating risks.
 - Being well regarded by its stakeholders.
 - Being recognised as the authoritative source of NI tourism insights and intelligence.



Initiatives by Workstream

People & Organisational Development
• Implement the Tourism NI People Strategy in response to industry demands, market conditions and technological change.
Finance, Governance & Procurement
• Ensure compliance with all DoF financial, governance guidance and risk management processes. • Work with DfE in the development of a new funding scheme, which includes provision for Selective Financial Assistance. (Action 5) • Explore ways of sharing Shared Services with other DfE ALBs in consultation with DfE.
Digital & IT Services
• Provide Digital & IT services to enable staff to deliver the Corporate Plan objectives. • Improve information management methodology to deliver continuous improvement and compliance, and exploit AI technologies to improve organisational efficiencies.
Communications & Stakeholder Engagement
• Deliver a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to increase understanding of the impact of the organisation’s work and the contribution of the tourism sector to the NI economy and local communities.
Strategy & Policy
• Deliver a high quality, robust evidence base for TNI, industry and stakeholders to help inform policy and strategy development and operational decisions. • Implement the ESG Framework for Tourism NI.

14. Monitoring and Assessing our Performance

Tourism NI's overarching aim for this three-year Corporate Plan can be measured by the NISRA tourism performance statistics as used by the Department for the Economy in monitoring performance against the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan.

Our annual Operating Plans contain the specific KPIs that each of the initiatives will be measured by. These KPIs are both output and outcome based depending on the nature of the initiative. Each initiative within the plan is owned by a Directorate and Team who are responsible for delivery and reporting on progress on a quarterly basis. Individual Teams develop an annual Unit Plan to manage their workstreams across potentially multiple initiatives. Through the annual Performance Review process, individual team members have annual performance objectives that align with team, directorate, and ultimately corporate objectives.

Managers, Heads of Departments and Directors provide quarterly performance reports for their areas. These reports are reviewed and approved by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and are submitted to the Board for approval. The reports are discussed as a standing agenda item with DfE officials at the quarterly Oversight and Liaison meetings.

Our Annual Report details a review of our performance and achievements made during the year based on our main areas of work.

Tourism NI's Corporate Risk Register is aligned to the objectives in the Corporate Plan and Operating Plan to ensure that any risk or uncertainty linked to delivery is identified, managed, and effectively controlled or mitigated where possible. Corporate Risks are initially identified by the ELT and agreed with the Tourism NI Board. The Risk Register is formally reviewed and updated each quarter and reported to Tourism NI Board, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and DfE.



Tourism NI consultation

Introduction

The Department for the Economy's Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10-Year Plan recognises the important contribution which the tourism sector can make to our region's economy. Tourism NI welcomes the ambition set out in the Plan and we look forward to playing our part in making this vision a reality over the next ten years.

Our draft Corporate Plan 2025/28 sets out how we propose to do this over this three-year period. Public sector finances remain very challenging, and this is likely to continue throughout the lifespan of this Plan. It is more important than ever that we work in collaboration with our many partners to make best use of our collective resources and deliver on the potential of our tourism industry.

As an organisation we also want to ensure that we provide a positive working environment for our staff to support the growth of tourism in Northern Ireland.

We would welcome your thoughts and feedback on our Corporate Plan which sets out our priorities and key actions for the next three years. This is your opportunity to help shape the final plan.

Background information

Question Title

1. [Which best describes you/ your business?](#)

Public sector organisation

[Council](#)

Tourism business/ body

Non tourism business/ body

Community and voluntary sector

Academic organisation

Individual

Other (please specify)

2. [The Corporate Plan for 2025/28 sets out the following proposed goal for Tourism NI up to 2028:](#)

Support the industry to grow the value of spend from overnight trips from the domestic

ANDBC response

[Type here]

Appendix 2

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market by 2% year on year and achieve a 10 percent value share of ROI trips on the Island of Ireland.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a suitable goal?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If you 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

In line with ANDBC Corporate Priorities this target should be achievable and stimulate economic growth to the region by increasing demand for business, especially via the increase in the share of ROI trips which is new 'money' into NI. This should be aligned to the commitment to promote an 'internationally compelling destination' via TNI targeted plans. These should be in collaboration with Local Authorities to ensure best inclusion of capable tourism businesses' offerings.

The Plan is aligned to the Tourism Vision & Action Plan: 10 Year Plan, and ultimately the Minister's Economic Vision. The Plan comprises five objectives:

1. Regional Balance
2. Good Jobs
3. Increased Productivity
4. Sustainability
5. Strong Organisational Capability

Question Title

3. Objective 1 of the Plan is Regional Balance. Tourism NI considers the outcome of this objective as:

Regional Balance - a balance between urban, rural, and coastal destinations - ensuring that investment and economic activity is spread broadly across Northern Ireland and not overly concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and a concentration of honeypot areas. **Regional Balance** is not about displacement – it is about **generating new**

ANDBC response

[Type here]

Appendix 2

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growth.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a suitable outcome?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

ANDBC welcomes Regional Balance as a key objective and one that should be expected to ensure a sustainable NI destination. It is recognised that product and offering must deliver against market demand and be one of quality. Connectivity and collaborative working to 'push' and 'promote' other areas beyond the 'honeypot areas' is therefore needed, as well as investment plans such as the anticipated Destination Stewardship Plans. Further regular engagement with LAs will enhance TNI officer knowledge and promotional opportunities that already support this objective.

Question Title

4. To deliver Regional Balance a series of Workstreams is proposed:

- Stimulating Demand
- Destination and Product Development
- Economic and Industry Development
- Cross Border Collaboration
- Major Events, Event Development and Delivery.

Within each Workstream there are a number of Initiatives/ programme areas.

To what extent do you agree that these are the right Workstreams and Initiatives to achieve Regional Balance?

Strongly agree

ANDBC response

[Type here]

Appendix 2

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Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

These are all welcomed, however; they will only be realised if central government funds for the industry are secured. Councils or individual businesses may struggle to develop and deliver on the targets set out in this document. This is applies to maximising existing assets and developing or enhancing key attractors and experiences. Investment in marketing must be equally prioritised to stimulate demand. ANDBC has product within the niche sectors identified – screen and opportunities within luxury tourism. Destination and Product Development Plans, once developed, require funding to enable Council's and partners to deliver on those identified opportunities. Reference is made to 'priority tourism destinations' which should not be contradictory to 'regional dispersal' dependent upon the completion of the current TNI destination exercise. Workstreams relating to event development and delivery in a collaborative way with Councils is important to maximise economies of scale.

Objective 2

Question Title

5. Objective 2 is Good Jobs. Tourism NI considers the outcome of this objective as:

Good Jobs that offer secure, flexible, rewarding employment with supportive employers, offering opportunities for skills development and career progression where wellbeing is valued.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a suitable outcome?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

This is welcomed as Tourism jobs within ANDBC are 8% of NI total and 4th highest in NI. Support to the sector through the 10 year Skills Action Plan and the continuing promotion of the sector positively by TNI to support retention and development is positive, however impacts on the industry since Brexit and those more recent such as increases in National Insurance are placing strain on SMEs who move to employ less employees and stretch existing resource. The service sector needs to be of a world class standard regionally for NI to compete globally – industry programmes such as the many delivered by TNI contribute greatly to this. Consistently qu service is key to retain competitiveness.

Question Title

6. To deliver Good Jobs, a Workstream on Skills Development and Industry Support is proposed, within which are a number of Initiatives/ programme areas.

To what extent do you think this is the right Workstream and these are the right Initiatives to support delivery of Good Jobs?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

ANDBC response

[Type here]

Appendix 2

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Objective 3

Question Title

7. Objective 3 is Increased Productivity. Tourism NI considers the outcome of this objective as:

Increased Productivity: *A competitive tourism industry that offers a compelling proposition, is innovative, and maximises resources and the potential of our assets throughout the year.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a suitable outcome?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

The ambition of increasing productivity in a sector whereby most businesses are SMEs and capacity to develop may be limited but support to those businesses with the correct mechanisms in place is key – the resource to do so must therefore be appropriate to need. Often growth or expansion can be seen as a requirement to do more with same resources, which is not sustainable for SMEs.

Question Title

8. To Increase Productivity a series of Workstreams is proposed:

- Industry Capacity Building
- Innovation in Tourism
- Growing Business Events and B2B Sales.

Within each Workstream there are a number of Initiatives / programme areas.

To what extent do you think these are the right Workstreams and Initiatives to achieve Increased Productivity?

Strongly agree

ANDBC response	[Type here]	Appendix 2
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Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

Growing events and B2B sales is positive but consideration of regional dispersal where appropriate is required – although an area may not have the specific conference offering required for a particular opportunity its delegate/spouse offering may be particularly relevant.

Objective 4

Question Title

9. Objective 4 is Sustainability. Tourism NI considers the outcome of this objective as:

Sustainability: A tourism industry that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a suitable outcome?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

ANDBC’s corporate plan 2024-2028 is driven by three corporate sustainability priorities – economic, environmental and social so therefore this objective clearly aligns to the Council’s own ambition. The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 requires NI to become carbon neutral by 2050 and all sectors of industry have a part to play. Environmentally conscious decisions for travel are likely to become more prominent. The social and environmental impact of tourism is fundamental for development of a sustainable destination.

10. To support a Sustainable tourism industry a Workstream on Reducing the Sector’s Carbon Footprint is proposed, within which are two Initiatives / programme areas.

To what extent do you agree that this the right Workstream and are these the right Initiatives to support delivery of a sustainable tourism sector?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', please expand below:

Objective 5

Question Title

11. Objective 5, Strong Organisational Capability, sets out the workstreams and areas of work that Tourism NI proposes delivering over the next three years. A number of these are core requirements to ensure that we operate an *effective, diverse, innovative, and impactful organisation for which people are proud to work.*

ANDBC response

[Type here]

Appendix 2

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Do you think there any other activities that we should be undertaking to support this Objective?

Destination Structures and how these will be embedded across the structure of the organisation.

Question Title

Final questions

12. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make on the Plan?

Q 6 Early support and education of the industry to be embedded in schools from their early careers education.

Q10 – The workstreams identified as success in the document are valuable and a requirement for a sustainable destination, however further support to SMEs are likely required to meet these.

END

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 Committee
Date of Meeting	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Date of Report	17 September 2025
File Reference	TO:EV/64
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Response to Notice of Motion - ANDBC Pipe Band Championships
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Table of Locations and Venues

In March 2025, the Council approved the following Notice of Motion (NOM):

‘This Council acknowledges the success of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Pipe Band Championships, hosted by this Council in Bangor and Newtownards.

This Council notes that other areas of the Borough have the space, potential locations, and infrastructure required to host major events, for example 14,000 people attended the Donaghadee Lights Up event, and that a spread of large events across the Borough brings cultural, social and economic benefits, fostering a sense of whole- Borough inclusivity.

Therefore, working with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI, this Council will bring back a report considering the potential for the ANDBC Pipe Band Championships to be held across the Borough on a rotational basis in Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and Donaghadee’.

Not Applicable

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Officers were asked to consider locations in the city and each of the towns, whilst also considering the views of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI). It should be noted that officers have been asked previously to consider other Borough venues for the delivery of the ANDBC Pipe Band Championships.

A comprehensive review was undertaken in 2018, for event sites in the Borough as part of a request by the Council to consider hosting the event in Bangor and Newtownards. This included site visits with RSPBANI personnel. In June 2018, the Council agreed to rotate the event in Bangor and Newtownards, subject to each annual successful Council bid to the RSPBANI for a local competition event.

Further site analysis was undertaken in 2023 in and around Newtownards to provide alternatives to the Airfield. An alternative was agreed as suitable by the RSPBANI of the Regent House School Playing Fields. This event ran on 19 July 2025 and feedback from attendees, participants, RSPBANI, Regent House School and Council officers has been favourable. Numbers were marginally reduced; this was attributed to the time of year as it was quite close to the July holidays. The addition of a mid-afternoon parade and some themed activity added to the town centre atmosphere attracted participants/spectators from the competition into the town centre.

After the above event took place officers discussed and undertook site visits (where the site had changed or not been visited previously) with RSPBANI Project Officer, Treasurer and Chairman on 16 September 2025.

RSPBANI outline that to host a Championship the following are necessary requirements:

Essential criteria

1. Parking - Capacity for approximately 1,000 cars. This may include buses, accessible parking, motorhome parking, participant parking, spectator parking and trader parking.
2. Contest Areas - Adequate space for two band arenas and one Drum Major arena, ideally on grass with level surfaces.
3. Practice Areas - Sufficient space for bands to practise without noise interference with contest arenas.
4. Trader Facilities - Designated area for traders with vans to park and operate.

Desirable Criteria

1. Proximity to town centre - Walking access to hospitality and shopping facilities, which are widely used by families attending the event.
2. Toilet Facilities - Availability of permanent toilet facilities on site or nearby (in addition to Portaloos that will be provided).
3. Community Impact - Minimal disruption to local residents in terms of traffic, road closures and noise.
4. Accommodation - Suitable accommodation nearby for officials, ideally with facilities for a post contest dinner if budget permitted.
5. Highland Dance - Provision of space to deliver a dance competition alongside the Pipe Band Championships, if budget permits.
6. Parade - Option to deliver a short parade of bands following the competition.

Not Applicable

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Based on the essential and desired criteria outlined by RSPBNI various sites were inspected. See Appendix 1 for a table noting the site attendees' consensus view under each criterion and any required venue hire cost.

The sites favoured by RSPBNI are Castle Park, Ward Park and Regent House Playing Fields. Their comments are that these sites are tried and tested, with adequate parking for all their requirements and within walking distance from the town/city centre.

All the sites surveyed will require the same infrastructure to be brought in, including toilets and generators. It should be noted that marketing costs will be minimal for existing locations, however, change of venue would require additional budget for marketing and considerable extra planning time for both event teams and event partners.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the continuation of the previous approach to rotate the event in Bangor and Newtownards, subject to each annual successful Council bid to the RSPBANI and available budget.

[Type here]

[Type here]

Appendix 1

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Summary of Site Visits – Pipe Band Event Venues

Criteria	Castle Park	Ward Park	Regent House	Airfield	The Commons	Crommelin	Parkway	Spafield
Parking	Good	Good	Good	Good	Not sufficient	Not sufficient	Not sufficient	Not sufficient
Contest Arenas	Good	Good	Good	Good	Insufficient flat areas	Good	Two areas split	Not sufficient
Practice Areas	Good	Good	Good	Good	Insufficient flat areas	Good	Divided areas	Not sufficient
Trader Facilities	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Proximity to Town Centre	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Good
Community Impact	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Residential	Egress traffic would have major impact on town centre flow	Minimal	Minimal
Accommodation	Good	Good	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Good
Highland Dance	Good	Good	Good	Good	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not suitable
Parade	Good	Good	Good	Not suitable	Good	Good	Good	Good
Venue Hire Costs	0	0	£2,500	£8,500	0	0	0	0

*Please note that when assessing parking that this refers to participants who will have large instruments to bring to site.

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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Date of Report	12 September 2025
File Reference	ART 04/TG/2026 ART 04/BG/2026
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below: Screening Date: 10 September 2025 Ref: 411
Subject	Arts Bursary Funding - Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Ballinglen Arts Foundation Bursary guidance and application form Appendix 2 - Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary guidance and application form

Background

The aim of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Arts Bursary scheme is to enhance professional development for artists in the Borough. The scheme opens annually and awards a bursary for a residential of one or two weeks to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation to support and develop artists in the Borough.

Attached is the application form and guidance criteria. Under the new Grants Policy, the scheme requires approval from the Council prior to opening in mid-November 2025.

Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the Tyrone Guthrie Centre and Ballinglen Arts Foundation Bursary Guidance notes and Application Forms.



Ards and North Down Borough Council Ballinglen Arts Foundation Residency Bursary

dates xxxx - xxxx

For opportunities taking place from xxxx - xxxx

Application Criteria and Guidance Notes

Deadline for applications: XXXXX

General Conditions of Application:

- All applications must be: completed in full, submitted with all necessary supporting information and received by the closing date set out in the advertisement and application form.
- Late / incomplete / retrospective applications will not be considered.
- Applications to the Ballinglen Arts Foundation Residency Bursary will open every year.
- Bursary awards are subject to budget approval.

Applications can be submitted via:

Online via: <https://andculture.org.uk/funding/bursaries>

If you require this application form in a different format, please email artsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or phone 028 9181 0803 before the deadline date.

Please read these guidance notes carefully before submitting an application

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Ards and North Down Borough Council

Balliglen Arts Foundation Bursary

Two-week Studio Residency at Balliglen Arts Foundation, North County Mayo

Please refer to the criteria below before completing the Application Form

For residencies taking place between 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027

DEADLINE: 8 December 2025, 11:59pm (sharp)

The aim of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Arts Bursary scheme is to enhance professional development for artists in the Borough.

This bursary award is for a two-week studio residency for one individual artist at Balliglen Arts Foundation. Its aim is to enhance professional development across visual arts. Only one award is available for the 2026/27 financial year*. Applicants may only submit one application form.

Application for the Ards and North Down Bursary to Balliglen Arts Foundation 2026/27 is by an online application form available via our website:
<https://andculture.org.uk/funding>

If you require special assistance with this application process, or would prefer to complete a Word version of this application, please contact us before the deadline (no later than 12 noon on Monday 1 December 2025) so this can be arranged. Email:
artsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk for more information.

**Awards are subject to budget approval*

Timescales

Scheme advertised	< insert date >
Scheme open	< insert date >
Date of Assessment	< insert date >
Award and regret letters issued	< insert date >
Letter of acceptance received	< insert date >
Completion of grant period	< insert date >
Claim to be submitted	< insert date >
Monitoring Form to be submitted	< insert date >
Close of Scheme	< insert date >

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible you must meet all the following:

- Be resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council Area.
- Be a practising professional artist¹ in a recognised visual arts form²
- Aged 21 years+.

The applicant must be able to:

- Demonstrate a high-quality professional practice.
- Have relevant experience and significant achievement in their creative practice.
- Be able to clearly demonstrate what they wish to accomplish during their residency, and clearly outline the benefits the residency will provide for the applicant and their practice.
- The residency cannot start before 1 April 2026 and must be completed by 31 March 2027.

The following essential documentation must be provided with your application:

- Up-to-date Artist CV
- Support materials of your artistic practice (Images* and other supporting materials that would be relevant to your practice where applicable, such as publications, etc)

It is recommended that you compile the essential documentation in the following formats before completing your application online, ready to be uploaded:

- Up-to-date Artist CV (PDF or Word document ONLY)
- Supporting materials in the following formats where applicable (Images in JPEG or PNG format ONLY no less than 1MB, video files no more than 60 seconds in length and less than 25MB, publications as one PDF document no more than one page in length per example)

** A maximum of 6 high quality images can be provided. Images which show examples of artists' work should be of high quality/resolution and clearly demonstrate the work. If you require further information on photographing your artwork, see Appendix 3.³*

Failure to meet the eligibility and/or supply the requested essential documentation at time of application will result in your application not being assessed.

Further Information

Applicants should show significant achievement in their chosen field by providing supporting evidence appropriate to their particular art discipline. For example: visual artists should have had solo exhibitions in reputable galleries and craftspeople should have had their products retailed in reputable outlets. Otherwise, the applicant must demonstrate a high degree of promise attested by references from established figures in the arts.

Applicants who were successfully awarded a bursary to Ballinglen Arts Foundation from Ards and North Down Borough Council in the previous financial year (1 April

¹ See Appendix 1 for definition of *practising professional artist*

² See Appendix 2 for definition of *recognised visual arts form*

³ See Appendix 3 for *Tips for photographing your artwork*

2025 – 31 March 2026) will not be applicable to apply for the following financial year (1 April 2026 - 31 March 2027). Applicants will however still be able to apply to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary for the 2026/27 financial year. Please note that priority may be given to those applicants who have not received this bursary before.

Scoring

Applications will be scored on the following criteria:

- Is the applicant resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area? **(Yes – Eligible / No – Ineligible)**
- Quality of applicant's current artistic practice and experience of applicant **(35%) Assessed under Qs 8 – 12 of the application form**
- Quality of work proposed and applicant demonstrates how the residency will benefit their artist's practice/skills **(50%) Assessed under Q13.i and Q13.ii of the application form**
- Applicant demonstrates a tangible outcome EG: exhibition, new body of work, publication, etc **(15%) Assessed under Q14 of the application form**

Applications will be scored based on a Scoring Matrix.⁴

A pass mark will be agreed and set before applications are assessed. Those who do not reach the pass mark will not be awarded.

There is only one residency award available for this bursary. The award will be given to the applicant who scores the highest.

Assessment Process

- All bursary applications will receive an automatic email as soon as your online application has been completed and successfully submitted. A receipt for your response will be emailed to you from the address **no-reply@mail1.citizenspace.com** with the subject "**Response received - Response ID: XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-X**". If it doesn't appear in your inbox within a couple of minutes after submitting your application, please check your "spam" or "junk" folder.
- All bursary applications will receive an acknowledgement email after the date of the deadline from the Arts Service of Ards and North Down Borough Council, along with information on the next steps.
- Fully completed and submitted applications received by the closing date and time will be assessed against the criteria detailed in the Criteria and Guidance Notes by an assessment panel.
- Assessment panels will apply a minimum pass mark of 50%; scoring criteria will be detailed in the grant Criteria and Guidance Notes.
- All applicants will be informed by email of the outcome of the assessments once this process has been completed.
- A Letter of Offer will be issued to the successful applicant.

How to draw down the Award

⁴ See Appendix 4 for details on the Scoring Matrix

- Payment of the bursary award will be made by Ards and North Down Borough Council directly to the Ballinglen Arts Foundation. No payment or financial award will be given to the successful applicant.
- The return of the Letter of Offer confirms the bursary award to the successful applicant.

What happens to your Application?

- Applications to the Arts Bursaries are assessed after each deadline by a panel made of Ards and North Down Borough Council Officers.
- The deadlines for receipt of applications are published on the cover of the application form. The residency must take place between dates 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027. Completed applications should be submitted to Ards Arts Centre by the relevant deadline.
- A pass mark will be agreed and set before applications are assessed. Those who do not reach the pass mark will not be awarded.
- There is only one residency award available for this bursary. The award will be given to the applicant who scores the highest.
- You will be contacted by email to inform you of the outcome of your application. This usually takes four weeks from the application deadline.
- Please refer the Council website regarding appeals procedure.
www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

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)

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Appendix 1

Definition of 'Professional Practising Artist'

An Artist's CV, and up to 6 support materials of examples of work must be included with the application, plus other supporting evidence that demonstrates that you meet the required level of professional experience as listed in the criteria.

Applicants must have a demonstrable high standard of original, quality, consistent body of work with a specialist skill set within their art form AND be working consistently on a full time or part time basis within the arts sectors.

Those who do not meet at least one of the listed criteria will be considered on an individual basis on merit, for example: a recent graduate who has not yet had a solo exhibition or a self-taught artist with a high-quality body of work who does not hold a professional qualification.

A professionally practicing artist is defined as someone who meets at least one of the following (see relevant art form):

Visual Arts / Applied Arts / Craft / Digital Art:

- Degree or Diploma from a recognised third level college in your arts specialism
- Hold Professional Level membership to a recognised arts body (eg: Visual Artists Ireland, Crafts Council Ireland)
- One-person / solo exhibition (including time-based events) in a recognised gallery or exhibition space (EG: Local Authority gallery/arts centre, publicly funded art gallery). Please note any commercial gallery solo exhibitions will only be considered if selected on merit as part of the gallery's visual arts programme.
- Participation in an exhibition/visual art event which was selected by a jury in which professional artists or recognised curators participated (EG: Royal Ulster Academy)
- Participated in a national/international craft/trade show (EG: Gifted-The Contemporary Craft & Design Fair)
- Work is sold at a reputable retail outlet / craft design retail specialist outlet (EG: CRAFT NI)
- Work has been purchased by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Work has been commissioned by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Have been awarded a bursary, residency, materials grant or otherwise grant aided by the Arts Council/Arts Council of Northern Ireland/local authority or other funding body
- Have been awarded tax-exempt status by the Revenue Commissioners, or are on schedule D as a self-employed artist in Northern Ireland

Appendix 2

Definition of ‘Recognised Visual Arts Form’

The following are examples of recognised visual art forms:

Visual Arts:

This includes traditional painting, drawing, printmaking, illustration, sculpture, photography, and more contemporary forms such as lens-based, installation art and digital art.

Craft:

Craft is considered as those disciplines defined by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (<https://www.dcci.ie/>). This can include ceramics, textiles and fashion, woodworking, silver/goldsmithing, glasswork, stonework. *Please note that in this instance for this bursary scheme, ‘Upcycling’, candle making / work containing candles or wax melts, cosmetics / soaps / skin care, and electrical goods will not be eligible.*

Digital Art:

This refers to artwork created exclusively in the digital space, including online artwork, digital installations, and digital applications that deliver artistic content. It can either exist in the digital space or be translated into a physical object or tangible experience through technology.

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Tips for photographing your artworks

- Position the artwork on a plain flat surface or hang on a wall, and position the camera looking straight at the artwork.
- Ensure the full artwork is shown in the photograph and not cropped.
- You may provide a detail/close up image of artwork if you have included a photograph of the full artwork as well.
- You may provide scale for the artwork by taking a distance photograph showing the work in situ in a gallery setting.
- Use bright, indirect, natural light avoiding glare/reflections on the artwork or on glass of framed work.
- Do not use your camera flash.
- Do not include other objects in the photograph other than the artwork unless providing a high quality photograph of the artwork in situ in a gallery space.
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- Please ensure the photograph is of high quality and resolution.

Appendix 4

Scoring Matrix

The following scoring matrix will be applied when assessing applications:

Score	
10	Exceptional response that fully meets and exceeds all criteria.
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4	Weak. Does not adequately meet several criteria. Application lacks coherence or clear rationale. Limited potential demonstrated.
3	Poor. Major gaps in response. Application fails to address core requirements and lacks clarity or focus.
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0	Not Applicable. No response provided to relevant criteria, or application is ineligible or disqualified.

Copy of questions for Online Application Form

Arts Bursary: Ballinglen Arts Foundation 2026/27 (Ards and North Down Borough Council)

About You

1. Name:

Name (Required)

2. Professional name (if different):

Professional Name

3. Address: (include post code):

Applicants must be resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area.

4. Email address:

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your application.

Email (Required)

5. Telephone number:

Telephone number (Required)

7. Do you have a disability, or a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities? (Required)

Yes No

About your Professional Practice and Experience

In this section you will be asked to demonstrate your professional artistic practice and experience.

8. Have you been to Ballinglen Arts Foundation before?

(Required) Yes No

If yes, please provide details

9. Please tell us your artistic discipline, and please describe your practice and experience. (500 words / 3,000 characters max)

Practice and Experience(Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

10. Please list your most important exhibitions / commissions / product lines, etc of the last three years, with dates and venues where applicable. (150 words / 1,000 characters max)

Most Important Activity of last 3 years(Required)

There is a limit of 1000 characters

11. Please provide an up-to-date Artist CV:

[What should I include in an Artists CV?](#)

Failure to supply the requested essential documentation at time of application, or not provided in the formats as stated, will result in your application not being assessed.

Please provide in PDF or Word document format ONLY.
Professional CV (Required)

Please make sure your file is under 25MB

12. Support Material: Please provide examples of your work.
Applicants must provide at least one example of their work in a format that is best suited to their practice.

Examples of supporting materials:

- High res images* for visual artists / craftspeople (JPEG or PNG accepted **ONLY**)
- Other supporting materials that would be relevant where applicable, such as; video files no more than 60 seconds in length and less than 25MB, publications as one PDF document no more than one page in length per example)

A maximum of 6 supporting materials can be provided.

**Images which show examples of artists' work should be of high quality/resolution (no less than 1MB) and clearly demonstrate the work.*

Failure to supply the requested essential documentation at time of application, or not provided in the formats as stated, will result in your application not being assessed.

Your Proposal

In this section you will be asked questions about what you propose to accomplish during the residency, and how this will benefit your professional artistic practice and skills.

13. Please describe what you propose to accomplish during the residency bursary, and clearly outline the benefits the residency will provide by explaining how it will meet the following points below. (500 words / 3,000 characters maximum in total per required section)

- i. Describe what you propose to accomplish during the residency to Ballinglen Arts Foundation (Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

- ii. Describe how this opportunity will further develop, benefit or improve your artistic professional practice. (Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

14. Please demonstrate if the residency bursary will result in a tangible outcome eg: exhibition, new body of work, publication, etc. (200 words / 1,200 characters maximum)

Tangible outcome(Required)

There is a limit of 1200 characters

Checklist

15. I confirm that I have uploaded the following essential supporting documents:

- Artist CV
- Images and/or other support materials outlining my professional practice

Yes (Required)

16. I confirm that by submitting my application that I have read, understood, and agree to the Bursary Criteria and Conditions of Application.

Criteria and Conditions of Application

Yes (Required)

17. I confirm that I have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements.

Yes (Required)

18. I understand that applications are assessed based solely on the information supplied in this application form and support material. I confirm that I have included all information requested and required, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information in this application form is true and correct. I understand that you may ask for more information at any stage of the application process.

Yes (Required)



Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency Bursary dates xxxx - xxxx

For opportunities taking place from xxxx - xxxx

Application Criteria and Guidance Notes

Deadline for applications: XXXXX

General Conditions of Application:

- All applications must be: completed in full, submitted with all necessary supporting information and received by the closing date set out in the advertisement and application form.
- Late / incomplete / retrospective applications will not be considered.
- Applications to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency Bursary will open every year.
- Bursary awards are subject to budget approval.

Applications can be submitted via:

Online via: <https://andculture.org.uk/funding/bursaries>

If you require this application form in a different format, please email artsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or phone 028 9181 0803 before the deadline date.

Please read these guidance notes carefully before
submitting an application

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**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

Tyrone Guthrie Bursary Residency at **The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Co. Monaghan**

Please refer to the criteria below before completing the Application Form

For residencies taking place between 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027

DEADLINE: Monday 8 December 2025, 11:59pm (sharp)

The aim of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Arts Bursary scheme is to enhance professional development for artists in the Borough.

This bursary award is for a one-week studio residency for one individual artist at The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig. Its aim is to enhance professional development across all art forms. A maximum of four professional artists will be awarded for the 2026/27 financial year*. Applicants may only submit one application form.

One of the available bursaries will be prioritised for an artist with a disability. Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to supporting artists with disabilities across all art genres. This bursary was launched in memory of Chris Ledger, late CEO of the University of Atypical.

Application for the Ards and North Down Bursary to The Tyrone Guthrie Centre 2026/27 is by an online application form available via our website:
<https://andculture.org.uk/funding>

If you require special assistance with this application process, or would prefer to complete a Word version of this application, please contact us before the deadline (no later than 12 noon on Monday 1 December 2025) so this can be arranged. Email: artsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk for more information.

**Awards are subject to budget approval*

Timescales

Scheme advertised	< insert date >
Scheme open	< insert date >
Date of Assessment	< insert date >

Award and regret letters issued	< insert date >
Letter of acceptance received	< insert date >
Completion of grant period	< insert date >
Claim to be submitted	< insert date >
Monitoring Form to be submitted	< insert date >
Close of Scheme	< insert date >

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible you must meet all the following:

- Be resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area.
- Be a practising professional artist¹ in a recognised art form²
- Aged 21 years+.

The applicant must be able to:

- Demonstrate a high-quality professional practice.
- Have relevant experience and significant achievement in their creative practice.
- Be able to clearly demonstrate what they wish to accomplish during their residency, and clearly outline the benefits the residency will provide for the applicant and their practice.
- The residency cannot start before 1 April 2026 and must be completed by 31 March 2027.

The following essential documentation must be provided with your application:

- Up-to-date Artist CV
- Support materials of your artistic practice (Images* and other supporting materials that would be relevant to your practice where applicable: EG: publications/examples of writing, audio recordings for examples of music, short video footage of performances, etc)

It is recommended that you compile the essential documentation in the following formats before completing your application online, ready to be uploaded:

- Up-to-date Artist CV (PDF or Word document ONLY)
- Supporting materials in the following formats where applicable (Images in JPEG or PNG format ONLY no less than 1MB, video files no more than 60 seconds in length and less than 25MB, publications as one PDF document no more than one page in length per example)

** A maximum of 6 high quality images can be provided. Images which show examples of artists' work should be of high quality/resolution and clearly demonstrate the work. If you require further information on photographing your artwork, see Appendix 3.³*

Failure to meet the eligibility and/or supply the requested essential documentation at time of application will result in your application not being assessed.

Further Information

¹ See Appendix 1 for definition of *practising professional artist*

² See Appendix 2 for definition of *recognised art form*

³ See Appendix 3 for *Tips for photographing your artwork*

Applicants should show significant achievement in their chosen field by providing supporting evidence appropriate to their particular art discipline. For example: writers should already have published in book form; visual artists should have had solo exhibitions in reputable galleries; composers, musicians, performers should have had their work commissioned, recorded or performed. Otherwise, the applicant must demonstrate a high degree of promise attested by references from established figures in the arts.

Applicants who were successfully awarded a bursary to The Tyrone Guthrie Centre from Ards and North Down Borough Council in the previous financial year (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026) will not be applicable to apply for the following financial year (1 April 2026 - 31 March 2027). Applicants in visual art/craft will however still be able to apply to the Ballinglen Arts Foundation Bursary for the 2026/27 financial year. Please note that priority may be given to those applicants who have not received this bursary before.

Scoring

Applications will be scored on the following criteria:

- Is the applicant resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area? **(Yes – Eligible / No – Ineligible)**
- Quality of applicant's current artistic practice and experience of applicant **(35%) Assessed under Qs 8 – 12 of the application form**
- Quality of work proposed and applicant demonstrates how the residency will benefit their artist's practice/skills **(50%) Assessed under Q13.i and Q13.ii of the application form**
- Applicant demonstrates a tangible outcome EG: exhibition, new body of work, publication, etc **(15%) Assessed under Q14 of the application form**

Applications will be scored based on a Scoring Matrix.⁴

A pass mark will be agreed and set before applications are assessed. Those who do not reach the pass mark will not be awarded.

There are a maximum of four residency awards available for this bursary. Allocations of the residency will be awarded to successful applicants based on ranked scores. One award will be prioritised for an artist with a disability.

Assessment Process

- All bursary applications will receive an automatic email as soon as your online application has been completed and successfully submitted. A receipt for your response will be emailed to you from the address **no-reply@mail1.citizenspace.com** with the subject "**Response received - Response ID: XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-X**". If it doesn't appear in your inbox within a couple of minutes after submitting your application, please check your "spam" or "junk" folder.
- All bursary applications will receive an acknowledgement email after the date of the deadline from the Arts Service of Ards and North Down Borough Council, along with information on the next steps.

⁴ See Appendix 4 for details on the Scoring Matrix

- Fully completed and submitted applications received by the closing date and time will be assessed against the criteria detailed in the Criteria and Guidance Notes by an assessment panel.
- Assessment panels will apply a minimum pass mark of 50%; scoring criteria will be detailed in the grant Criteria and Guidance Notes.
- All applicants will be informed by email of the outcome of the assessments once this process has been completed.
- A Letter of Offer will be issued to the successful applicants.

How to draw down the Award

- Payment of the bursary award will be made by Ards and North Down Borough Council directly to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre. No payment or financial award will be given to the successful applicants.
- The return of the Letter of Offer confirms the bursary award to the successful applicants.

What happens to your Application?

- Applications to the Arts Bursaries are assessed after each deadline by a panel made of Ards and North Down Borough Council Officers.
- The deadlines for receipt of applications are published on the cover of the application form. The residency must take place between dates 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027. Completed applications should be submitted to Ards Arts Centre by the relevant deadline.
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Those who do not meet at least one of the listed criteria will be considered on an individual basis on merit, for example: a recent graduate who has not yet had a solo exhibition or a self-taught artist with a high-quality body of work who does not hold a professional qualification.

A professionally practising artist is defined as someone who meets at least one of the following (see relevant art form):

Visual Arts / Applied Arts / Craft / Digital Art:

- Degree or Diploma from a recognised third level college in your arts specialism
- Hold Professional Level membership to a recognised arts body (eg: Visual Artists Ireland, Crafts Council Ireland)
- One-person / solo exhibition (including time-based events) in a recognised gallery or exhibition space (EG: Local Authority gallery/arts centre, publicly funded art gallery). Please note any commercial gallery solo exhibitions will only be considered if selected on merit as part of the gallery's visual arts programme.
- Participation in an exhibition/visual art event which was selected by a jury in which professional artists or recognised curators participated (EG: Royal Ulster Academy)
- Participated in a national/international craft/trade show (EG: Gifted-The Contemporary Craft & Design Fair)
- Work is sold at a reputable retail outlet / craft design retail specialist outlet (EG: CRAFT NI)
- Work has been purchased by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Work has been commissioned by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Have been awarded a bursary, residency, materials grant or otherwise grant aided by the Arts Council/Arts Council of Northern Ireland/local authority or other funding body
- Have been awarded tax-exempt status by the Revenue Commissioners, or are on schedule D as a self-employed artist in Northern Ireland

Performing Arts:

- Degree or Diploma from a recognised third level college in your arts specialism
- Hold Professional Level membership to a recognised arts body (eg: Musicians Union, The Actor's Guild)
- One-person / lead performance in a recognised performing arts venue (EG: Local Authority venue/arts centre, publicly funded performance venue).
- Participation in an arts festival or performed at an event programmed by a recognised arts body (eg: local authority arts festival, Grand Opera House, Lyric Theatre, etc)
- Work has been purchased by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Work has been commissioned by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
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- Have been awarded tax-exempt status by the Revenue Commissioners, or are on schedule D as a self-employed artist in Northern Ireland

Literary Arts:

- Degree or Diploma from a recognised third level college in your arts specialism
- Hold Professional Level membership to a recognised arts body (eg: The Society of Authors, etc)
- Work has been published by a recognised publisher.
- Participation in an arts festival or performed at an event programmed by a recognised arts body (eg: local authority arts festival, Grand Opera House, Lyric Theatre, etc)
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Literary Arts:

This includes poetry, prose, creative writing, and other forms such as screenwriting and songwriting.

Performing Arts:

This includes music, theatre, dance, and other forms of live performance.

Digital Art:

This refers to artwork created exclusively in the digital space, including online artwork, digital installations, and digital applications that deliver artistic content. It can either exist in the digital space or be translated into a physical object or tangible experience through technology.

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- You may provide a detail/close up image of artwork if you have included a photograph of the full artwork as well.
- You may provide scale for the artwork by taking a distance photograph showing the work in situ in a gallery setting.
- Use bright, indirect, natural light avoiding glare/reflections on the artwork or on glass of framed work.
- Do not use your camera flash.
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4	Weak. Does not adequately meet several criteria. Application lacks coherence or clear rationale. Limited potential demonstrated.
3	Poor. Major gaps in response. Application fails to address core requirements and lacks clarity or focus.
2	Very Poor. Severely lacking across all areas. No clear artistic rationale, feasibility, or impact.
1	Inadequate. Completely fails to address the criteria. No artistic merit or relevance apparent. Application may be incomplete or off-topic.
0	Not Applicable. No response provided to relevant criteria, or application is ineligible or disqualified.

Copy of questions for Online Application Form

Arts Bursary: Tyrone Guthrie Centre 2026/27 (Ards and North Down Borough Council)

About You

1. Name:

Name (Required)

2. Professional name (if different):

Professional Name

3. Address: (include post code):

Applicants must be resident within the Ards and North Down Borough Council area.

4. Email address:

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your application.

Email (Required)

5. Telephone number:

Telephone number (Required)

7. Do you have a disability, or a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities? (Required)

Yes No

About your Professional Practice and Experience

In this section you will be asked to demonstrate your professional artistic practice and experience.

8. Have you been to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre before?

(Required) Yes No

If yes, please provide details

9. Please tell us your artistic discipline, and please describe your practice and experience. (500 words / 3,000 characters max)

Practice and Experience(Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

10. Please list your most important exhibitions / commissions / product lines / publications / performances, etc of the last three years, with dates and venues where applicable. (150 words / 1,000 characters max)

Most Important Activity of last 3 years(Required)

There is a limit of 1000 characters

11. Please provide an up-to-date Artist CV:

[What should I include in an Artists CV?](#)

Failure to supply the requested essential documentation at time of application, or not provided in the formats as stated, will result in your application not being assessed.

Please provide in PDF or Word document format ONLY.
Professional CV (Required)

Please make sure your file is under 25MB

12. Support Material: Please provide examples of your work.
Applicants must provide at least one example of their work in a format that is best suited to their practice.

Examples of supporting materials:

- High res images* for visual artists / craftspeople (JPEG or PNG accepted ONLY)
- Other supporting materials that would be relevant where applicable, such as; video / audio files no more than 60 seconds in length and less than 25MB, publications as one PDF document no more than one page in length per example)

A maximum of 6 supporting materials can be provided.

**Images which show examples of artists' work should be of high quality/resolution (no less than 1MB) and clearly demonstrate the work.*

Failure to supply the requested essential documentation at time of application, or not provided in the formats as stated, will result in your application not being assessed.

Your Proposal

In this section you will be asked questions about what you propose to accomplish during the residency, and how this will benefit your professional artistic practice and skills.

13. Please describe what you propose to accomplish during the residency bursary, and clearly outline the benefits the residency will provide by explaining how it will meet the following points below. (500 words / 3,000 characters maximum in total per required section)

- i. Describe what you propose to accomplish during the residency to Tyrone Guthrie Centre (Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

- ii. Describe how this opportunity will further develop, benefit or improve your artistic professional practice. (Required)

There is a limit of 3000 characters

14. Please demonstrate if the residency bursary will result in a tangible outcome eg: exhibition, new body of work, publication, etc. (200 words / 1,200 characters maximum)

Tangible outcome(Required)

There is a limit of 1200 characters

Checklist

15. I confirm that I have uploaded the following essential supporting documents:

- Artist CV
- Images and/or other support materials outlining my professional practice

Yes (Required)

16. I confirm that by submitting my application that I have read, understood, and agree to the Bursary Criteria and Conditions of Application.

[Criteria and Conditions of Application](#)

Yes (Required)

17. I confirm that I have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements.

Yes (Required)

18. I understand that applications are assessed based solely on the information supplied in this application form and support material. I confirm that I have included all information requested and required, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information in this application form is true and correct. I understand that you may ask for more information at any stage of the application process.

Yes (Required)

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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development (Interim)
Date of Report	19 September 2025
File Reference	DEV23
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	East Border Region 50th Anniversary
Attachments	Appendix 1: East Border Region Additional Funds Request Appendix 2: East Border Region Past Projects

Background

The East Border Region (EBR) is a cross-border organisation with local authority partners on both sides of the border that includes Ards and North Down Borough Council. By exploring various funding mechanisms, they have developed and delivered a number of EU funded initiatives, most notably projects that were developed under Interreg and the various PEACE programmes. Its aim is to promote economic, social and cultural development within the following six partner regions:

Ards and North Down Borough Council
 Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
 Newry Mourne and Down District Council
 Monaghan County Council
 Meath County Council
 Louth County Council

Not Applicable

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Projects Funded Through the East Border Region

Council recently secured funding through EBR for the PEACEPLUS Mini Digi Hub Project, letter of offer signed 28 May 2025. This €6.3M project works over the 6 partner councils and one academic institution, Dundalk Institution of Technology.

The Ards and North Down allocated budget is €553K (£482K) which will be used to re-imagine the Comber Community Centre as a Digi Hub and Internet of Things Exemplar Centre.

The legacy Councils of Ards BC and North Down BC would also have availed of monies from EBR for various projects including Eisenhower Pier Project, Greyabbey Walking Trails project and Car Park, North Down Museum Christian Heritage project, Bangor Castle UV lighting project and the FASTER (electric Vehicle) project. Further details on these projects and respective budgets are available in Appendix 2: East Border Region Past Projects.

The Council currently contributes £20,000 per year for membership of the EBR.

Update

The East Border Region is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2026. It will do so with a series of events highlighting cross-border collaboration between the partner regions.

These events will include hosting the Association of European Border Regions Conference in Monaghan, a celebratory reception in Warrenpoint, local showcase events across member authorities, and participation in Ireland's EU Presidency. EBR will also highlight its international cooperation efforts, including its partnership with Ukraine's Rivne Region. The anniversary will feature a communications campaign to promote the impact of cross-border projects and peacebuilding initiatives.

A one-off contribution of £10,000, in addition to the annual membership fee, has been requested to support these activities. This request has been made by the Chief Executive of the East Border and is at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council, based on the positive out workings of the Partnership to date, agrees to the request from the East Border Region for an additional £10,000 which can be met from existing budgets.



East Border Region

‘Showcasing 50 years of genuine cross border collaboration across the Ireland N Ireland Border Region’ 1976-2026

EBR is excited to showcase at regional, national and international level, the exemplar nature of local authority, cross border cooperation in our region during the past 50 years. EBR is a success story, and we want to use the occasion of our 50th anniversary to raise the profile of the organisation and to position ourselves for the foreseeable future as ambassadors for what can be done when people work together for the common good. EBR wishes to use the 50th anniversary events not only to honour our past but to inspire our future.

Several high-profile events will take place in 2026 aimed at showcasing the exemplar nature of genuine cross border co-operation in our region during the last 50 years. At these events EBR will demonstrate the longstanding commitment of the constituent Local Authorities towards cross border cooperation.

The aim of EBR’s 50th anniversary showcase is twofold.

In the first instance to highlight the many achievements of the organisation over the past 50 years, despite constant challenges and obstacles, not least promoting Peace and Reconciliation during the troubles in N Ireland and the border area. Notwithstanding these challenges East Border Region has secured significant EU and national funding for Local Authority led projects in the region which have had a positive impact and ultimately contributed to the modernisation of our region. These projects reflect the needs of the constituent local authorities and are developed in collaboration with council officials on a needs based, bottom-up approach.

Secondly to highlight the fact that in 2026 EBR is a model of best practice in respect of building Peace and Reconciliation on a cross-border basis at a regional level. Local Authorities established EBR in 1976 at the height of the Troubles when the region suffered from high unemployment, weak infrastructure, no inward investment or tourism and lacked a skilled workforce as many of our young people were emigrating. In the 1970s elected members and officials from our Local Authorities took the bold step

of cooperating when it was not fashionable to do so. It is the elected members and officials of the region who have worked towards Peace and Reconciliation through the mechanism of the cross-border group, EBR. It's worth noting that this work began 25 years before the IRA ceasefire and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

Showcase events:

- **Association of European Border Region. (AEBR)**
EBR will host the Association of European Border Regions Annual Conference in Autumn 2026. At least 150 delegates from across Europe will travel to Monaghan to attend this conference which will take place in the Monaghan Peace Campus, a shared space funded from the INTERREG VA Programme and an excellent example of Peace and reconciliation in the border region. The delegates will stay for three nights in Monaghan and will be joined by representatives from the six-member local authorities. It is hoped that the Irish government and N Ireland Executive will be represented at this event alongside the EU Commissioner.
- **Celebratory Reception.**
The official 50th Anniversary Celebratory Reception will take place in Warrenpoint, County Down. An Taoiseach, has indicated that he will attend this event which will showcase, amongst other things, the Narrow Water bridge project as a catalyst for economic development on a cross-border basis. Representatives from Stormont and the European Union will also be in attendance.
- **Local authority Showcase events.**
A showcase event will take place in each member local authority highlighting the investment and additionality of the cross-border group to each area. Through the various projects throughout the 50 years EBR has invested in each of the areas and the aim is to showcase these outputs to the people of each area.
- **Irish Presidency European Union**
When Ireland assumes the presidency of the European Union in June 2026 EBR has requested to showcase at some of the government events the exemplar cross border work which has been done through EBR Local Authorities for the past 50 years. As one of the longest established cross border groups in Europe EBR could add value to some of these events as a sustainable model of best practice.
- **An International Model of Best Practice for other Border Regions.**
Through the mechanism of EBR, the constituent Local Authorities of EBR can use their expertise to assist other border areas coming out of conflict across Europe and beyond. In 2024 EBR signed an MOU with the Rivne Region of Ukraine. EBR has provided training to upskill local authority officials and key stakeholders in Ukraine to develop and implement genuine cross border programmes and projects which will ultimately contribute to the Peace Process there. During our 50th Anniversary EBR will highlight the value of the work to date and the value of

which cross border local authority collaboration can add to peace building. EBR understands that this will be a key focus of the new PEACE PLUS + Programme.

- **EBR approach**

Through a bespoke communications and publicity campaign throughout 2026 EBR will showcase the 50th anniversary events which will acknowledge the work and the intrinsic value of local authority cross border cooperation in the East Border Region. This will include strategic messaging, promotions, utilising a range of communication channels, video campaigns, social media etc..

“An Exemplar Cross Border Region”

EBR has consistently demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity. From its inception EBR has been served by local authority politicians from across the political spectrum north and south who have worked selflessly for the good of the region. These politicians ably supported by council officials from their respective local authorities persevered with their vision of a vibrant, thriving cross border region despite ongoing setbacks. EBR’s journey from its founding at the height of the Troubles, through peace building milestones like the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit, and beyond, showcases the local authorities unwavering commitment to economic, social and cultural development within the region.

East Border Region has stood the test of time due, in the most part to the tenacity of elected members and officials within the member local authorities who believe that it makes sense to work on a cross-border basis. On many occasions over the past 50 years elected members and council officials took risks to further the cause of Peace and Reconciliation on the island of Ireland. EBR was the first cross border grouping to have a Chairman from the Democratic Unionist Party. The secretariat of EBR undertakes continuous capacity building Programmes to ensure that elected members from all the political parties are comfortable and committed to the idea of cross border cooperation which benefits everyone and contributes to the Peace Process.

The 50th Anniversary is not just a celebration, it is a strategic moment to strengthen relationships, enhance visibility and shape the next chapter of the EBR journey. It will be an opportunity for EBR and the constituent local authorities to honour our past and simultaneously to inspire our future.

I respectfully request that your Council consider awarding EBR a one-off contribution of £10,000. This contribution will directly support the activities above and will help ensure the success and the legacy of this important milestone. Our member local authorities always have been and, will be intrinsic to the success of EBR.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Pamela Arthurs

Chief Executive

Appendix 2: East Border Region Past Projects

The following is a breakdown of key information relating to council’s membership of the East Border Region (EBR)

- Ards Borough Council joined the EBR in 2005
- North Down Borough Council joined EBR in 2007

Both councils contributed £10K each per year up to 2015 after which Ards and North Down Borough Council has paid £20K per year

The following pre 2015 projects have received funding through projects delivered by the East Border Region:

Council	Name of Project	Budget received by Council
North Down BC	North Down Museum Christian Heritage Gallery	£63,500
North Down BC	St Columbanus Feasibility Study	£125,978
North Down BC	Eisenhower Pier Upgrade	£125,978
North Down BC	Interpretation and translation at North Down Museum	£24,000
Ards BC	Greyabbey Walking Trails	£15,000
Ards BC	Greyabbey Carpark	£11,000
Ards BC	Cloughey Kearney Coastal path enhancements	£58,559

In addition, while not being a project partner, the region of Ards and North Down experienced project activity from the following projects:

- INTERREG IIIA Programme**
- INTERREG IVA Programme**
- INTERREG VA Programme**

Some of the key projects from the INTERREG portfolio for which council was an associate partner include:

- Energy Efficiency and Micro Generation Project
 - Including energy efficiency audits of Ards Arts Centre, Kircubbin Community Centre, West Winds Community Centre, Queens Leisure Centre, Bangor Sportsplex and Bangor City Hall which received solar photovoltaic panels, draft proofing of windows and replaced oil boilers with gas
- Co-Innovate
 - £16.6M project across 5 partners with Northern Ireland activity led by Enterprise NI. Aim was to help SMEs harness innovation and work smarter
- Swim Project
 - Resulting in a weather station at Ballyholme Beach allowing for the provision of real time information on bathing water quality
- FASTER Project
 - 7 partner €9M project aim was to raise awareness and facilitate behavioural change to increase use of EV’s, cycling and transport. Included 73 rapid charger points across the partner regions

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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Development (Interim)
Date of Report	18 September 2025
File Reference	160094
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☒ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Bangor Business Awards 2025
Attachments	None

Background

Following the success of Bangor Business Awards held on 24 October 2024, Bangor Chamber of Commerce has planned to host the annual business awards ceremony 2025 to celebrate the achievements and successes of the local business community.

The Bangor Business Awards ceremony will take place on 6 November 2025 in the Clandeboye Lodge, Bangor.

The Bangor Business Awards launched on 2 September with entries closing on 2 October 2025. The finalists will be announced on 9 October 2025 following the judging process in which the Mayor and the Council's Chief Executive will take part.

For the 2025 awards, the Council will be a supporting sponsor of the Bangor Business Awards and sponsor of the Professional Business Services Company of the Year category at a cost of £3,000, which is covered within this year's Economic Development budget allocation. As part of the package, four complimentary tickets

Not Applicable

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are being made available to Council. The Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of Place and Prosperity will be invited separately as guests of the Chamber.

Additional tickets may be purchased at a cost of £100 per ticket.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to nominate a maximum of four Members to attend the Bangor Business Awards Ceremony on 6 November 2025 at the Clandeboye Lodge, Bangor.

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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	19 September 2025
File Reference	RDP196
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	UKREiIF Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Belfast City & Region Investment Guide

Background

Members may recall as part of the Council's participation in the Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP) through the Belfast City and Regional Place Partnership officers had previously attended the UKREiIF (UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum) event in Leeds in 2024. Based on the feedback from this event two officers attended the same event in Leeds between the 19 and 22 May 2025.

The event brought together over 24,000 professionals from local and national government, investors, developers, and end users to act as a catalyst to drive investment in regeneration, placemaking, and infrastructure initiatives. It is worth noting the significant increase in attendees in 2025 compared to the 2024 attendee figure of 13,000.

Officers had reviewed the extensive programme of events and had booked their attendance on various Workshop, Panel, and Meeting sessions, some of which included:

Not Applicable

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- 'Who puts the Distinctiveness into Place?'
- Greener Spaces, Thriving Places
- Transforming Projects Together
- Regeneration: Making a Difference
- Industry and Society – How Do We Make Towns and Cities Work for Both

A common theme throughout the various sessions was the noticeable shift of focus towards regeneration in and around large-scale housing developments and infrastructures. This shift of focus is in response to the Government's 1.5 million new homes target and the fact that Council's in England have been issued with new and mandatory targets aimed at removing a key barrier to UK economic growth whilst addressing the housing crisis.

To provide some context of the scale of the regeneration projects as part of housing development projects the following example can be provided. During the event it was announced that as part of a collaboration between Manchester City Council, placemaking specialist Muse, and Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) a £500 million regeneration project would begin. The project aims to deliver over 2,000 new homes, Culture Hub, public square, the transformation of a shopping centre, and flexible workspace accommodation. Other interesting regeneration projects, albeit again focused in or around housing developments, were provided in Wakefield and Hull. These focused on Wayfinding signage, use of green spaces, and other placemaking initiatives.

Officers were keen to explore examples of projects on the development of commercial land given some of the ongoing and potential future opportunities for similar projects within the Borough. Although the scale of these types of projects in the UK mainland is much larger than those within the Borough, it was encouraging to note that the projects discussed had similar rationale, desired outcomes, and challenges as the Council's projects. For example, officials from the West Midlands presented their commercial development project between Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Councils which was focused on the redevelopment of 16.4 million sq. ft of development land aimed at securing over 1,000 new jobs, economic growth, green economy and private investment all equating to a combined £582 million of GVA.

To raise awareness of key opportunities within the Borough colleagues in the Communications and Marketing Service ensured that the following projects were included in the Belfast City & Region Investment Guide which was available in print and digital formats including the interactive screen throughout the duration of the event. The PDF version of this guide is included in Appendix 1.

- Bangor Waterfront
- Queens Parade, Bangor
- Whitespots, Newtownards
- Balloo Road, Bangor
- Castlebawn, Newtownards
- Former Crepe Weavers, Newtownards

Not Applicable

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Officers also attended a networking reception hosted in partnership with the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership and UK Property development and investment firm MRP. During the keynote speech the Borough's Queens Parade and Bangor Waterfront projects were illustrated and discussed as key drivers for the Borough and wider Belfast City Region. This event provided officers with an opportunity to raise awareness of the projects, the drive towards securing private investment, and the wider Borough's opportunities. Officers have been in contact with some of the attendees since the event to discuss projects of interest.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves two officers to attend UKREiiF 2026, or an alternative networking event if deemed more beneficial, using existing Council budget.



Belfast

City & Region

Investment Guide
[INVESTINBELFAST.COM](https://investinbelfast.com)





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Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

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Regional opportunities

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Welcome

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME FOR THE BELFAST REGION.



John Walsh
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council



Joe O'Neill
Chief Executive,
Belfast Harbour and Chair,
Belfast City & Region Place
Partnership

The Belfast region presents an exceptional opportunity for investment, with unmatched potential on the international stage. Boasting a dynamic, youthful and highly educated population, a thriving economy and an array of world-class projects across industries and tourism, the region is primed for continued growth and development.

We are home to Northern Ireland's capital city, Belfast, and a well-connected, compact network of vibrant towns and cities.

Our region is home to a thriving ecosystem of indigenous companies, global brands, world-class researchers and emerging start-ups. They can take advantage of our unique position - both geographically and politically – under the Windsor Framework, which gives our businesses access to trade in both the UK and European Union; a unique investment opportunity.

We have a robust talent pipeline and two world-renowned universities producing highly skilled graduates who are rapidly contributing to the region's success, as well as contributing globally through research.

Our education system is highly attuned to the changing needs of business and the new world of AI and robotics. A large and diverse student population has quickly filled newly developed, purpose-built student housing, bringing new vibrancy to our city centre.

Beyond the student years, demand continues to grow for further city centre living options, with the build-to-rent (BTR) market remaining largely untapped and poised for further expansion. The completion of Loft Lines, the first major BTR development in the city's Titanic Quarter, will be a major milestone for this burgeoning sector.

Belfast Grand Central Station, the island of Ireland's largest integrated transport hub, has significantly bolstered connectivity throughout the island, paving the way for a new hourly service between Belfast and Dublin.

Just adjacent to the landmark Belfast Grand Central, Weavers Cross offers a million square feet for mixed-use development. Meanwhile, the Belfast Waterfront, spanning over 10 kilometres along the River Lagan and home to Titanic Quarter - one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects - and Belfast Harbour, Northern Ireland's largest port, provides a generational opportunity to make Belfast one of the world's great waterfront cities.

Major projects in the £1 billion Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment are delivering significant opportunity for even greater growth, including the Studio Ulster global virtual production studios and research facilities, the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) and the iREACH Health clinical research centre at Queen's University Belfast.

The region's tourism sector is also flourishing, with the hotel industry benefiting from rising visitor numbers, a trend expected to continue as exciting new tourism experiences like Belfast Stories and the Mourne Mountains Gateway are realised in the coming years.

It makes sense to invest here.

Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

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At a glance



348,005

Belfast population



1.13 million

Belfast region population



36%

Population under 30 years of age



£5.5 billion

worth of investment and development opportunities available over the next decade



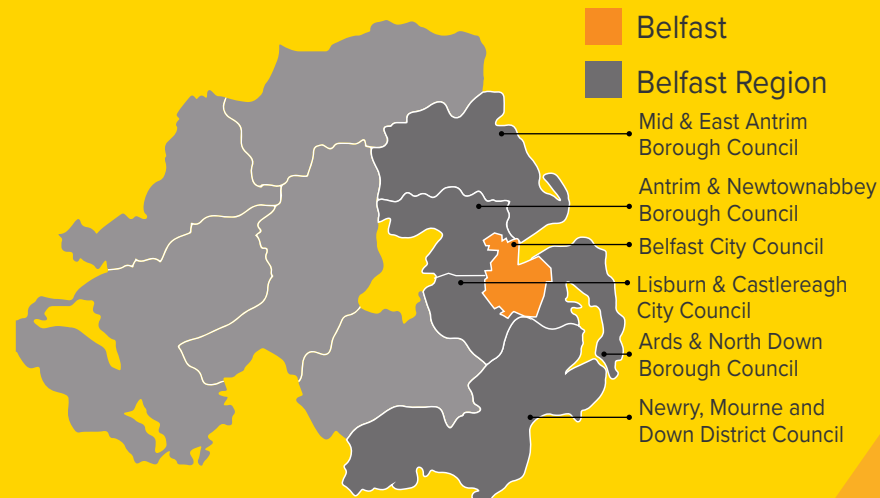
£36.5 billion

GDP*



67,515

full and part-time students are enrolled in higher education in Northern Ireland





Why invest in the Belfast region?

A great place to call home

The Belfast region is home to a population of over 1.13 million, living in a well-connected, compact network of vibrant towns and cities, situated close to nature and surrounded by rugged mountains, wild coastlines and beautiful beaches.

The Belfast region is committed to becoming inclusive, resilient and carbon neutral. We're working to protect the environment for future generations by using our natural resources and assets carefully and tackling climate change - not only by encouraging greater use of low emission vehicles, active travel and public transport, but also by producing electric and hydrogen vehicles for sale across the globe.

We have an outstanding education system, diverse employment opportunities and a high quality, affordable way of life.

Perfectly positioned

The Belfast region is strong on connections. Not just between people and organisations – between cities and countries too. You'll find it easy to do business here. In 2024 Belfast Grand Central, the largest multimodal transport hub on the island opened following a £340m investment.

Strategically located between Europe and the US, our region and people have always looked outward and welcomed strong connections with the rest of the world.

The Belfast region is well serviced by road, rail, air and sea. Dublin and London are within easy reach. There are three international airports located 90 minutes drive from Belfast city centre, providing direct flights to

202 destinations
in

41 countries
and

3 major
ports.



Innovation is in our DNA

Once world leaders in linen production and shipbuilding, today we're making waves in ICT, Fintech, Medtech, Advanced Manufacturing, the digital creative industries and more.

Our fibre connectivity is already amongst the best in Europe, with major investments in place to deliver world-class advanced wireless networks that will future-proof our digital infrastructure and establish a series of regional hubs as places that focus and accelerate collaboration and the growth of our innovation economy. Full fibre broadband is available to 148,000 homes and businesses in Belfast.

An inherent ability to problem solve has made the Belfast region an industrial success story for hundreds of years. We have a tight-knit, engaged ecosystem of SMEs, researchers, corporations, entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Today, Belfast is the UK's second fastest growing knowledge economy. The Belfast region is already home to globally recognised research centres in secure information technologies, cognitive robotics, renewable technologies and cancer research, with major Belfast Region City Deal investments in advanced manufacturing, connected health technologies, virtual film production, digital twins, agrifood and net zero.

We're investing in our city centre smart district, the Titanic Quarter innovation district and a series of regional hubs, as places that focus and accelerate collaboration and the growth of our innovation economy.

A region of talent

The Belfast region is brimming with talent and creativity. 67,515 full and part-time students are enrolled in higher education in Northern Ireland, creating a pipeline of highly educated, adaptable young people who are primed for success.

Our two outstanding universities, Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, play a central role: connecting people and ideas, creativity and commerce. Driving innovation and our knowledge economy.

Our network of industry-facing Further Education Colleges is also investing in the skills pipeline needed to fill the jobs being created across our growth sectors.

Investment from the £1bn Belfast Region City Deal, and an enhanced focus on meeting the needs of our fast-growing indigenous businesses and global investors through our assured skills and employment academies, means we can match our talent to your ambitions.



Ulster University was crowned University of the Year in the 2024 Times Higher Education Awards, recognising the university as the top higher education institution in the UK and Ireland. Ulster University was hailed as a "force for good in fostering peace, prosperity and cohesion" and the judges further recognised the university's impressive progress in research, particularly in medical technology and quantum computing, in teaching, student experience and graduate outcomes. The award also honoured the completion of Ulster's £364 million new state-of-the-art Belfast city centre campus, one of the largest higher education capital projects in Europe, which was also recently named Building of the Year by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects.

Queens University Belfast is one of the UK and Ireland's leading universities and continues to grow its global reputation for teaching and research. The ninth oldest university in the UK, the beautiful campus symbolises both the rich history and academic heritage of Queen's. Founded in 1845, Queen's has grown from a small cohort of students to a thriving multi-cultural community of over 4,200 staff and 24,000 students. Queens University Belfast is ranked in the Top 200 universities in the world for impact and sustainability (THE Impact Rankings 2024/QS World University Rankings 2025: Sustainability) Belfast is the UK's most affordable student city (Natwest Student Living Index 2024). Queens University Belfast, a member of the prestigious Russell Group of 24 UK research intensive universities, is ranked 13th in the UK for Research Intensity (Complete University Guide 2025). The university's research has global impact - 99% of its research environment is world-leading or internationally excellent (REF 2021).

It's easy to network and do business here

The Belfast region is compact, with strong relationships between government, universities, colleges and business - working together to help drive the region's economy.

Leading businesses are working together with our councils, colleges and universities to deliver assured skills programmes and employment academies which provide tailored solutions to meet current and future skills gaps.

Our outstanding universities and third level institutions are pragmatic and business-focused, working closely with industry to deliver courses which develop highly employable graduates with the necessary skills and drive to succeed. Over 4,500 people are employed through 105 active Queen's University Belfast spin out companies.



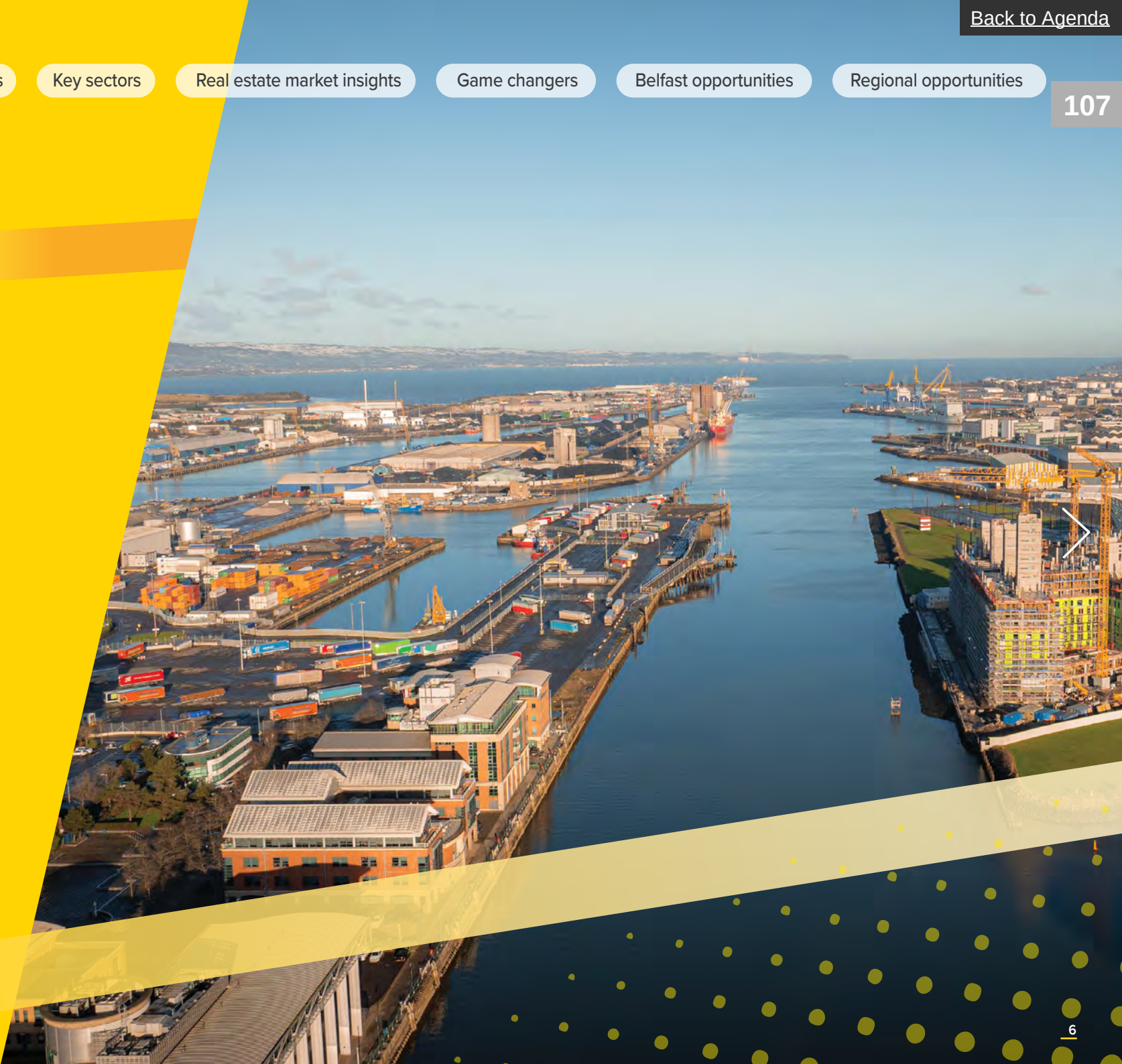
An enviable track record in attracting investment

The Belfast region is the powerhouse of the local economy, with an enviable track record in attracting investment. NI is now home to nearly 1,225 international companies including global brands like PwC, Wrightbus, Spirit AeroSystems, Allstate, Coca-Cola HBC, Randox, 3M and Norbrook.

Belfast has been successful at attracting foreign direct investment into high business growth sectors, particularly technology and financial services, and the city's skyline has changed dramatically in recent years, with the development of new Grade A office space, hotels and purpose-built student accommodation.

The new Ulster University campus in the heart of the city centre has resulted in significant investment in purpose-built student accommodation, bringing new residents and vitality. Students and the growing city centre workforce are fuelling the demand for city centre residential accommodation.

Investment opportunities continue to be created across the Belfast region through the development of more than £300 million new, globally visible tourism experiences and transformative plans for the regeneration of our major towns and cities.



Belfast region council profiles



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

An outward looking, fast growing borough of innovation and opportunity, Antrim and Newtownabbey is attractive to new investors and expanding businesses.

Located on Belfast's immediate periphery, with a population of approximately 145,000, it has excellent road, rail and air connections. Belfast International Airport is located here, servicing over 6.2m passengers and 60 destinations per year.

It's home to two popular retail destinations, The Junction Retail & Leisure Park and The Abbey Centre. There are also three higher education facilities: Ulster University, CAFRE Agricultural College (Greenmount) and the Northern Regional College.

One of Northern Ireland's top performing planning authorities, Antrim and Newtownabbey is a highly sought-after investment location, with many major global companies choosing to set up business here. 138 hectares of zoned employment land are available at our Strategic Employment Locations.

www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk



Ards and North Down Borough Council

Adjacent to Belfast, Ards and North Down includes two urban centres: the new City of Bangor and thriving retail town of Newtownards, and covers the southern shores of Belfast Lough, the scenic Ards Peninsula and Strangford Lough. With excellent infrastructure and digital connectivity, a talented workforce, strong industry base and vibrant tourism offering, it's rich in investment opportunities.

A hub for Creative Industries, Services, Agrifood and Advanced Manufacturing, it is the chosen location for global leaders such as 3M, Denman, Navico Group, Teleperformance, Mash Direct and Lakeland Dairies.

Ards and North Down is an appealing visitor destination with a vibrant tourism offering and boasting 185 km of stunning coastline.

Key visitor attractions include the National Trust's Mount Stewart, Pickie Funpark, WWT Castle Espie, Ulster Folk and Transport Museums, Crawfordsburn Country Park and Scrabo Tower.

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk



Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council

Belfast is NI's capital and largest city. Uniquely located between Europe and the US, the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor gives us strong links with the rest of the island of Ireland.

Cranes dot our skyline as new offices, hotels, student and residential accommodation are built. The Belfast Agenda is ensuring that we continue to attract investment and boost our citizens' health and prosperity.

By 2033, we'll deliver the £1bn Belfast Region City Deal investment programme. By 2035, we aim to deliver 31,600 new homes, increasing our population by 66,000.

Our Bolder Vision is creating a more attractive, accessible, safer and more vibrant city centre - and a greener, more walkable, wheelable street network.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk



Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Spanning nearly 200 square miles, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) offers a strategic location on the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor, connecting businesses to a 2.5 million population catchment. With excellent transport links, proximity to Belfast's airports, and seamless access to UK and EU markets, it is a prime investment hub. Home to thriving sectors in advanced manufacturing, engineering, and professional services, LCCC features world-class employers like Coca-Cola, ASSA ABLOY, and Camlin Group. Its highly skilled workforce, the most degree-educated in Northern Ireland, drives a strong pro-business economy.

Investments in digital infrastructure, including 95% full-fibre broadband and 5G, further boost its appeal. LCCC balances vibrant urban centres with rich rural landscapes, offering exceptional quality of life. Strategic developments, such as the Knockmore Hill Link Road and Belfast Region City Deal, will continue driving innovation and sustainable growth.

www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Mid and East Antrim's CleanTech and Green economy is primed for international investment opportunities. The borough is developing as a CleanTech hub for Northern Ireland, transforming its workforce via the award-winning Hydrogen Training Academy. The £15m HyTech NI project will extend capabilities of the planned Belfast Region City Deal projects to support the CleanTech sector.

The area has excellent infrastructure with top planning application processing times in Northern Ireland and offers the unique Michelin Grant and Load fund for additional investment support. With strong rail, sea and road links, including the Port of Larne, the borough provides easy access to Belfast's airports and abundant renewable energy resources.

Located at the start of the Causeway Coastal Route, it features attractions like The Gobbins, Carrickfergus Castle and Game of Thrones filming locations.

www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council occupies the southeast of Northern Ireland, which includes southern County Armagh and a large part of County Down.

The area is strategically placed, approximately 45 minutes from both Belfast and Dublin on the A1 Euro Route. This district council has a population of approximately 107,000.

It incorporates the majestic Mourne Mountains, an area of outstanding natural beauty, and has an extensive coastline stretching from Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough.

www.newrymournedown.org

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Advanced manufacturing and engineering

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) i4C proposal involves the construction of a new, significant scale innovation and clean technology centre for SMEs. The centre includes a range of accommodation types to facilitate SME innovation activity i.e. incubation labs and workshops, Grade A office and co-working office space, as well as meeting and event spaces to encourage open innovation and collaboration. The Innovation Lab (iLAB) at i4C also forms a key part of the i4C proposal allowing for an engineering staff led and well-equipped workshop that focuses on developing products, services, training and solutions for the cleantech sector across NI i.e. in the emerging hydrogen economy.

The BRCD regeneration pillar investment aims to help create a step change for these regeneration plans by enabling i4C to serve as the anchor tenant building and key economic driver for future growth and will also allow local communities to avail of skills and employability opportunities. This regeneration will add greater social value through place-making, enterprise stimulation, community development and good relations in the wider catchment area. The Belfast region's rich manufacturing and engineering heritage features global leaders like Spirit AeroSystems, Collins Aerospace, Wrightbus and Denroy Plastics. World-renowned shipbuilders Harland and Wolff draw on over 150 years of marine manufacturing experience supporting maritime, offshore and renewable energy sectors, while innovative companies like Artemis Technologies build on this tradition.

The £100m Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), a key Belfast Region City Deal project, builds on 50 years of innovation through the Northern Ireland Technology Centre

(NITC), the Polymers Processing Research Centre (PPRC) and the NI Advanced Composites and Engineering (NIACE) partnership. Its 10,500m² Factory of the Future at Global Point Business Park in Newtownabbey will open in 2026, delivered by Queen's University in partnership with industry, Ulster University and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

This open access innovation centre will reinvigorate Northern Ireland's industrial potential by providing specialised environments for advanced manufacturing sectors to access cutting-edge digital, automation and robotics technology, supported by experienced engineers and underpinned by academic excellence.

The complementary i4C proposal will create a significant scale innovation and clean technology centre featuring incubation labs and workshops, Grade A office and co-working spaces, and meeting facilities, to encourage open innovation. The Innovation Lab (iLAB) will be an engineering-led workshop developing products, services and solutions for the cleantech sector, particularly in the emerging hydrogen economy. Beyond economic growth, this BRCD regeneration investment will deliver social value through place-making, enterprise stimulation and community development in the wider catchment area.

Digital, ICT and creative industries



Belfast is Europe's leading FDI destination for new software development (fDi Markets FT 2021)

The Belfast region has established itself as a prominent UK hub for the digital, ICT and creative industries.

The UK's Innovation and Knowledge Centre, the Centre for Secure Information Technologies (CSIT), within Momentum One Zero - a Queen's University-led innovation centre as part of the Belfast Region City Deal - has a mission to help companies commercialise emerging cybersecurity technologies. Northern Ireland is the number one international investment location for US cyber security firms.

Our young population and highly skilled workforce ensure there is a wealth of talent available across the film, animation, music, mobile, gaming and TV subsectors; a diverse and easily accessible supply chain for the creative and digital industries.

The region's stunning landscapes provide prime locations for film and television production – with major TV and film

productions including HBO's Game of Thrones, Paramount Pictures' Dungeons & Dragons and Universal's How To Train Your Dragon filmed here in recent years. Our animation cluster is one to watch, with a number of creative studios producing award-winning productions broadcast worldwide, including The Coop Troop and Happy the Hoglet.

Studio Ulster, a project developed by Ulster University, in partnership with Belfast Harbour Studios, and supported by Northern Ireland Screen, is a unique 75000 ft² facility that represents c.£72m+ of investment that integrates Virtual Production (VP) solutions with traditional film and broadcast, animation, games and immersive content production and is situated in an industry with leading edge R&D&I capability.

The numbers of staff working in the gaming industry in Ireland continues to grow significantly. The cluster that has been bolstered by the creation of the Pixel Mill in Belfast, an interactive sector-specific co-working space for game development teams from across Northern Ireland.

Key sectors

FinTech and financial services



The Belfast region has a thriving FinTech industry that provides services and technological solutions to international clients, including banks, insurance and asset management companies. Belfast was ranked number two for FinTech Strategy among mid-sized European Cities of the Future 2023/2024 and is ranked runner-up for FinTech strategy among mid-sized European Cities of the Future 2025.

Digital capability and access to outstanding talent has made the Belfast region home to a diverse range of financial and professional services companies. Global firms such as Citi, Allstate, Liberty Mutual, Aflac and FD Technologies have all established and expanded their operations here, while investors such as CME Group, Vela, Options IT and TP ICAP are all part of this emerging cluster.

Currently, our core FinTech and financial services strengths lie in RegTech and compliance, TradingTech, InsureTech, Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Analytics. Momentum One Zero, a £70m project supported by the Belfast Region City Deal and delivered by Queen's University, will catalyse the digital transformation of NI's economy and the FinTech sector, with its focus on cyber security, wireless connectivity, artificial intelligence and machine learning.

A pipeline of over 5,000 graduates across relevant disciplines, such as finance, accounting, economics, law and computing, provide a ready supply of skills and talent to support this growing sector.

no.1

Belfast is the world's number 1 investment location for financial services technology inward investment projects. (fDi Markets FT 2023)

Life and Health sciences



Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) investment is leveraging opportunities at the interface of medical research and digital transformation; we're becoming a pioneering centre for Life and Health Sciences technologies.

Our universities have particularly strong offerings. Queen's University Belfast is already home to the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research, which has revolutionised cancer research, and the Precision Medicine Centre of Excellence, which aims to translate genomics into clinical care. Under Belfast Region City Deal, Queen's University is delivering two innovation centres which build on its expertise on the life and health sciences sector. iREACH Health will turbocharge the city region's ability to test new drugs, medical-technology, care pathways and societal interventions. Meanwhile, Momentum One Zero will use expertise in cyber, AI and wireless technologies to unlock new healthcare innovations.

Ulster University's £43M Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) is a research-led, industry-facing project designed to address the strategic needs of the rapidly growing digital healthcare technology sector. Located in a purpose-built 3,800m² facility in Belfast city centre, adjacent to the university's expanded campus, it will provide a collaborative environment where industry and researchers can co-locate, supported by state-of-the-art research equipment and innovation facilities. Dedicated staff will drive innovation and facilitate collaborative R&D, while the Community Care Living Laboratory (CCLL) will allow innovators to test and refine their products in real-world community care settings. The CDHT aims to position the Belfast City Region as a global leader in the design, development, and launch of innovative medical devices and diagnostics, contributing to economic growth, enhanced productivity, reduced healthcare costs, improved levels of care and better patient outcomes.

1st

Belfast is the world's number 1 investment location for financial services technology inward investment projects. (fDi Markets FT, 2023)

Key sectors

Tourism and hospitality

Over the last decade, the Belfast region’s economic, social and cultural sectors have been transformed and it’s now considered a ‘must-see’ international destination. Multi-million-pound investments have brought accolades including the World’s Leading Tourist Attraction (Titanic Belfast, 2016), Cruise Critic’s Best Port of Call in UK and Ireland (Belfast Harbour) and Golf Digest Number One Golf Course in the World (Royal County Down).

We’re home to the Mourne Mountains, Royal Hillsborough Castle and Gardens and world-class links and parkland golf courses. And we’ve secured the World’s Best Conference and Events Destination title at the annual C&IT Awards for five out of the last seven years (up to and including 2024).

Our wide and varied annual calendar of events animate the city region and we have established a strong reputation for delivering major events including The Giro d’Italia Big Start, The World Police & Fire Games, MTV European Music Awards (EMAs), The 149th Open Championship and The Irish Open. We look forward to a thrilling calendar of major events in years to come, including The Open Championship in 2025.

Last year, Belfast enjoyed another successful cruise season, welcoming 145 cruise calls, including 60 ships from 35 different cruise lines, bringing 260,000 passengers and crew to Northern Ireland. The Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment is creating internationally visible tourism products, extending the visitor route from Royal Hillsborough to Belfast through Carrickfergus, towards the breathtaking Causeway Coast and Glens and along the County Down coast to the majestic Mourne Mountains.



no.1 Belfast named by Which? as one of top UK spots for a city break in 2024

The landmark Belfast Stories visitor destination, Bangor Waterfront, Newry City Centre and Carrickfergus regeneration developments, Mourne Mountain Gateway Project, Destination Royal Hillsborough and The Gobbins Phase Two will further enhance our visitor offering, encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more, whilst regenerating the region’s towns and cities.

The Moravian Village in Gracehill, County Antrim, has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status, recognising its cultural and historical significance. Additionally, Galgorm Resort has achieved global recognition as the Best Luxury Spa Resort, earning the title of Best Destination Spa 2024 in the prestigious Condé Nast Johansens Awards.

Belfast Harbour is making a significant £90 million investment in a new deepwater quay, enhancing its port facilities and positioning the city as a key destination for turnaround cruises—those that begin and end in Belfast. This development is a crucial part of the Harbour’s recently announced five-year £300 million capital spending plan, aimed at strengthening Belfast’s reputation as a leading cruise and maritime hub. The investment will not only attract more international cruise liners but also contribute to the region’s economic growth, further elevating Belfast as a world-class tourism and business destination.



Real Estate Market Insights

Resilience continues to define the Northern Ireland real estate market, one which offers investment opportunity across the board.

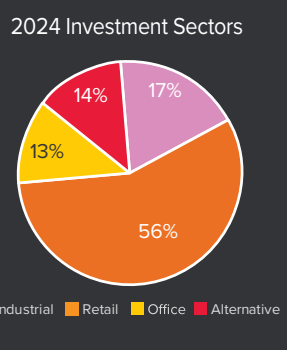
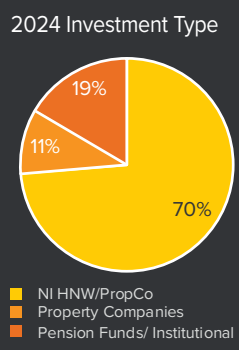
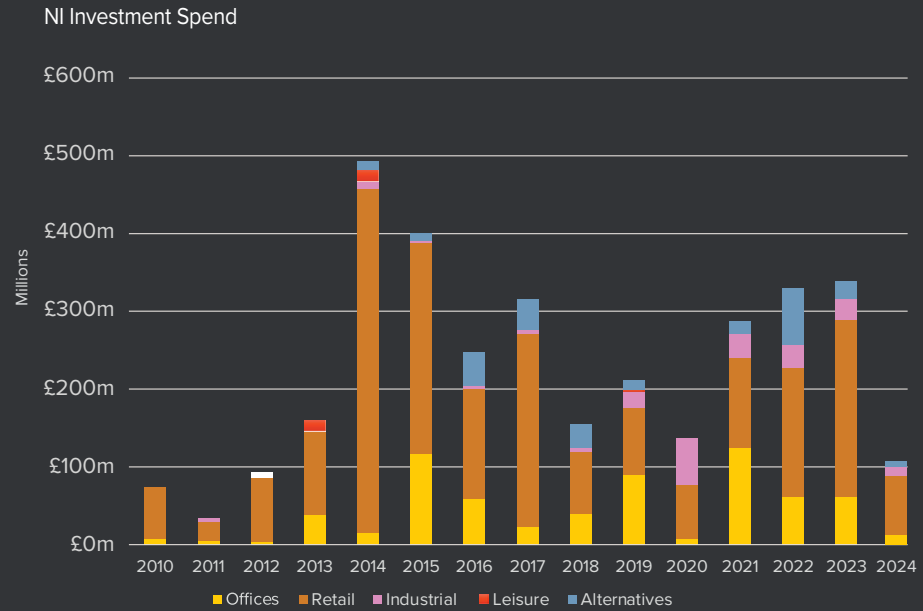
That is particularly true in key sectors such as residential and city centre living, specifically when it comes to student accommodation and the hotel market. Both latter sectors have performed strongly in recent years, with plenty of headroom for further growth.

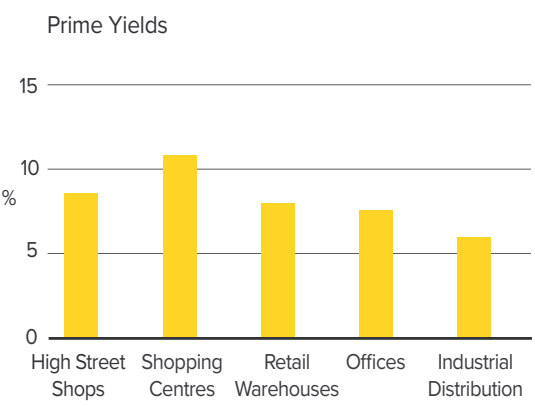
While overall trends reflect the broader UK market, the Belfast region stands out to the international investment community given the fact both sustainability and innovation are built in to that offering. That's bolstered by the completion

of landmark projects, including the Belfast Grand Central Station which enhances the region's connectivity to the rest of the island and to the world.

Its longer-term potential is certainly impressive and by sharing insights and fostering collaboration across the business community – such as through the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership – we can make sure that ambition is reached.

Collaboration will drive increased innovation, investment and growth right across Northern Ireland, underpinning our competitiveness and boosting our attractiveness, now and in the future.





Capital markets

Retail was the most prominent sector within capital markets last year, solidifying its position as the most dominant investment sector in Northern Ireland for the third consecutive year.

Demand across the board remained strong, with local investors active, accounting for more than 70% of the 24 transactions worth around £118 million, with institutional investors and pension funds representing over 18%.

While a relatively subdued performance, indications suggest more resilience in 2025 with stronger investment sentiment expected, particularly given the recent fall in UK interest rates and expectations of more to come.

Office

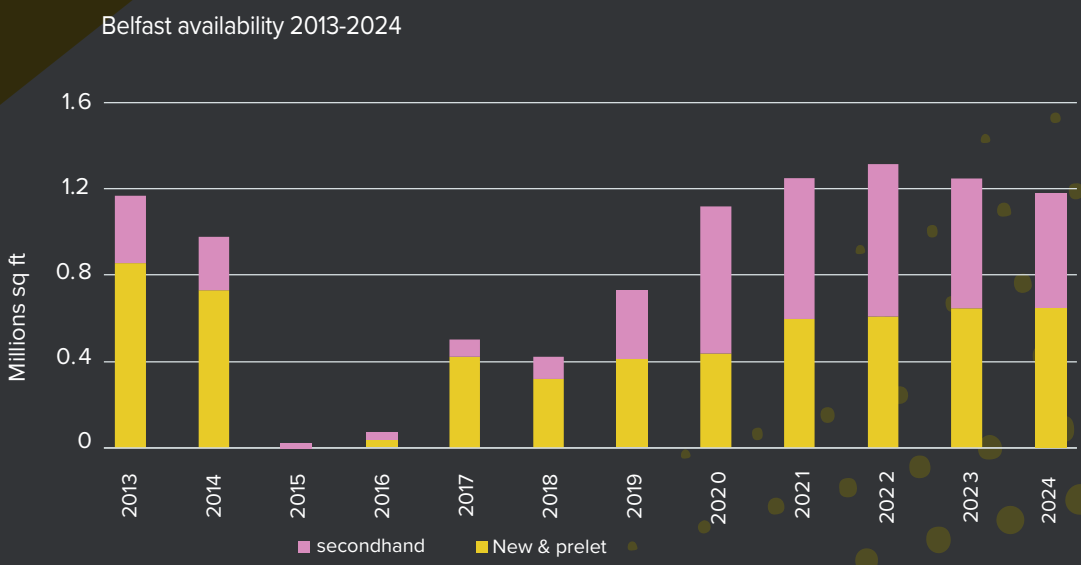
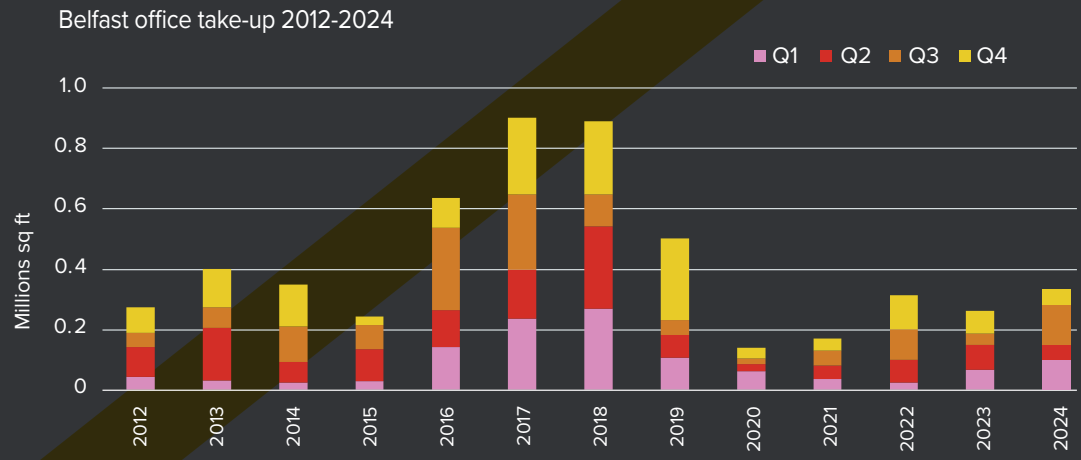
Take-up in the office market in Northern Ireland jumped by a third last year, with the market experiencing a flight to quality.

There was strong demand for modern high-speciation offices over older stock, with ESG credentials and amenities still high up the priority list.

Available office space stood at 1.26 million square feet, although Grade A space is in short supply and expected to tighten further. Prime Grade A office rents stood at £25.50 per square foot.

Highlights of the year include the granting of planning approval from Belfast City Council for the latest phase of the waterfront City Quays development, a nine-storey mixed-use building which will be known as City Quays 5.

The development will comprise 160,000 square feet of space over nine floors and will be located directly opposite the Belfast Harbour Office.



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Student accommodation

Once again the Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) sector was a stellar performer in 2024, continuing to grow on the back of strong fundamentals.

Demand from a growing student population has expanded for five consecutive years - and Belfast is now one of the largest full-time student populations in the UK outside London. The completion of the Ulster University's Belfast city centre campus, significant investments in the Queen's University Belfast estate, and a boom in student accommodation developments have seen over £1 billion invested in higher education in Belfast over the past decade.



According to the Deloitte Crane Survey, there are around 1,200 student rooms under construction and over 4,000 with planning or at the pre-planning stage, further signs that the momentum in the sector continues to build. The PBSA developments have certainly proved popular with students and have added to the strength of Belfast as an attractive destination for higher and further education. Around 65% of students applying to university for the first time said that the availability of accommodation had influenced their decision on where to apply.

Of note, Queen's University Belfast has earmarked some £100 million to help meet a supply deficit of around 3,000 rooms from its students.

City centre living

Momentum in city centre living in Belfast continues to grow in response to growing demand for residential accommodation.

Residential development in Belfast city centre has been dominated by Loft Lines - a landmark scheme in Titanic Quarter. It is the first major build to rent development in Belfast and will deliver 800 homes when complete in 2026.

The potential in the sector is significant as the current student population – one increasingly used to quality purpose-built student accommodation – matures. Meanwhile, Belfast City Council has selected GRAHAM as its long-term private sector partner to work alongside the council to deliver residential-led, mixed-use, sustainable developments across multiple sites.

With an overall development potential of around £630 million, the initial partnership phase leverages strategic council-owned city centre sites with a development value of £280 million, which will deliver mixed tenure homes to help meet the needs of those wishing to live in the city.

The approach will help drive forward city centre living and housing-led regeneration across the city.





Retail

The retail sector in Northern Ireland continues to show resilience while reshaping its offer to meet the changing needs of shoppers.

Larger, strategically-located shopping centres and retail parks are experiencing strong demand from occupiers and investors alike, with shoppers warming to a combined offer which integrates retail, dining and, in some cases, leisure.

A number of retail parks have benefited in recent years from the addition of food outlets, while shopping centres have found a willing audience by adding cinemas or similar. A range of new developments and sustained occupier interest provide optimism that 2025 will present promising opportunities for growth and reinvention.

Over the past year, Belfast has seen the arrival of a number of new retail, leisure and hospitality brands, some of which are first-to-market and first-to-island brands. Recent additions include The Ivy Restaurant, Amelia Hall on Howard Street, the German footwear company, Deichmann, at the Keep; Menswear brand Charles Tyrwhytt and ladies fashion brand – Marella have both opened on Arthur Street.

Another trend we saw was local hospitality brands, including Bodega Bagels and Neighbourhood, opening new city centre locations.

Meanwhile, Belfast City Council’s £1 million Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme in the city centre has committed grant funding to 41 applicants, reactivating previously vacant city centre units by SMEs or Independents, with 21 of these being in heritage buildings, including the recently opened award-winning Golden Thread Gallery on Queen Street. The City Council has also just widened the Vacant to Vibrant Scheme to include arterial routes in the wider council boundary area after securing an additional £500k of funding.

Industrial and logistics

The continued growth of online shopping has continued to underpin the industrial and logistics sector in Northern Ireland, with strategically-located warehouse space finding strong demand from occupiers.

A lack of stock remains the overriding feature of the sector, with potential for investment across the region, particularly at sites close to major cities and strong transport links. In line with that demand, rental values have edged higher, with interest in properties with strong ESG credentials highly sought.

Hotels

Northern Ireland’s hotel sector is going from strength to strength, notching up a record-breaking year in 2024. The investment market recorded £57 million across eight major sales in what remains an active market.

That upward trend looks set to continue in the coming year amid a raft of new developments, refurbishments and benchmark transactions.

Of note is the nine-storey 175-room aparthotel room2 in Belfast, one of the greenest aparthotels in Northern Europe, which has come to the market with a guide price of £21.2 million.

Overall, the underlying fundamentals of the hotel market are reflected in average room rate for the year of 10% - the only region on the island of Ireland to deliver double digit growth – and a 9% increase in revenue per available room.

Occupancy rates have also held strong above 80% and, with a buoyant outlook for the tourism sector for the year ahead, that trend looks set to continue. Industry data also points towards sustained growth from key visitor markets. Unsurprisingly, with approximately 2,000 bedrooms across 14 hotels receiving planning approval since 2020, further hotel developments are anticipated across the city centre.



Tourism

The resurgence of the tourism sector across Northern Ireland has been impressive in recent years, with tourism expenditure continuing to break new records, and there is still room for substantial growth. Momentum is set to build in the coming years with the Department for the Economy announcing plans to double the size of the local tourism sector over the next decade.

In addition, both domestic and external tourist arrivals are growing year on year. Research by Tourism Northern Ireland has shown that expectations amongst the industry are for visitor volumes to increase in 2025, paving the way for development and investment in the hotel sector and other tourism-associated industries. That is evidenced by the arrival on the market of room2, the 175-room hotel on Belfast's Queen Street, and demand for more bedspace in cities such as Lisburn and Newry.

There is continued diversification in the hotel market and further delivery of apart hotel/accommodation, catering for longer-term visitors.

There were a number of hotel approvals over the last 18 months and a growing trend in the reuse and adoption of historic building stock.

Other recent developments include The Flint (as part of £11 million investment) on Howard Street in Belfast; the recent opening of The Foundry on Hill Street in Belfast and the opening of VOCO Belfast in the Gasworks, the first VOCO hotel on the island of Ireland.

The tourism offering in the Belfast region is also continuing to strengthen, with the consultation period recently closing on initial design concepts for the landmark Belfast Stories visitor destination. Due to open in 2030, the £100 million multi-purpose destination will include a world-class, interactive and immersive visitor attraction that tells the stories of Belfast; the people and the place in the heart of Belfast city centre.



Game changers - Belfast city region

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) was formally signed in December 2021, marking the first ever signed City Deal for Northern Ireland and securing substantial financial commitment from UK and NI Government and BRCD partners.

Representing a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners, the highly ambitious Deal secures £1billion of transformative co-investment across the region. It will create up to 20,000 new jobs as it is delivered over the next 10 years. It's an exciting, once-in-a-generation opportunity to accelerate inclusive and sustainable economic growth for the region, making it a global investment destination. The Deal has been developed by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, working with Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, the Southern Regional College and our government and private sector partners.

The BRCD will deliver more than 20 highly ambitious projects and programmes over the next decade. The programme is now well into delivery, with construction commenced on several landmark projects, contracts awarded, and competitions launched across many more. The most advanced projects are now recruiting and upskilling staff, constructing new premises, co- designing projects with industry,

procuring next generation technology and equipment, and moving fully into operation. Thirteen contracts have been signed for projects with a value of more than £620 million, with Studio Ulster moving into full operations early this year.

The BRCD's ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through four investment pillars:

Tourism and regeneration - Boosting tourism and regenerating our region – creating world-class visitor attractions and investing in towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will provide standout in international markets.

Innovation and digital - Achieving world-leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capability - facilitating invention, commercialisation^o and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased wellbeing.

Employability and skills - Enabling a constant pipeline of appropriately skilled talent to support the job opportunities resulting from the BRCD programme of investment.

Infrastructure - Connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure.

belfastregioncitydeal.co.uk



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Game changers - Belfast city region

Innovation & Digital
Tourism and Regeneration

Infrastructure
Employability and Skills

BELFAST REGIONCITY DEAL



AMIC - Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre
A 10,500² state-of-the-art facility at Global Point, Newtownabbey, for advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses.



Bangor Waterfront
This redevelopment will make the city a 'destination of choice' once again, reflecting the location's individuality and shared heritage and culture.



Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2
Developing the system to the north and south of the city and extending the existing CITI route to serve Queen's University and City Hospital.



Momentum One Zero
Transforming NI's digital economy by increasing the volume and range of digital innovation taking place and developing skills to meet industry needs.



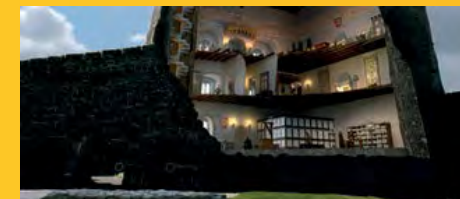
i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks
An innovation and clean technology centre of significant scale in Ballymena for SMEs, encouraging open innovation, collaboration and support.



iREACH Health - Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare
An NHS, industry, and research facility, facilitating world-class clinical research to deliver better treatments to improve people's health.



Belfast Stories
A landmark visitor attraction, public space and creative hub close to Cathedral Quarter, which will speak to the essence of Belfast and its people.



Carrickfergus Regeneration
Regeneration as an authentic heritage-led tourism hub; the 'must-visit' starting point of the internationally recognised Causeway Coastal Route.



CDHT - Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology
Accelerating a dynamic, productive, open innovation ecosystem for the development of innovative medical technology devices and diagnostics.



Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge
This iconic pedestrian and cycle bridge over the River Lagan will connect south and east Belfast to the city centre, further activating our waterfront.



Mourne Mountain Gateway Project
Redefining the majestic Mourne Mountains visitor experience, establishing a visitor centre and creating a mountainside Gondola experience.



Newry City Centre Regeneration
This investment will deliver a civic and regional hub, theatre/conferencing facilities, public realm improvements and Grade A office provision.



Design Smarter Digital Twin Centre
Providing common, shared physical and digital infrastructure to support the development of digital twins, focusing on maritime, aerospace and defence sectors.



Destination Royal Hillsborough
Establishing a high-quality, leading visitor experience, while regenerating the village with an enhanced, sustainable culture and heritage offer.



DTFF - Digital Transformation Flexible Fund
A collaborative NI-wide project supporting small and micro businesses to be active in digital transformation, supporting inclusive growth.



Hytech NI Project
The £15m project will invest in the hydrogen economy and extend the capabilities of the two planned BRCD projects AMIC and i4C.



Newry Southern Relief Road
High-standard relief road to improve traffic flow and connectivity.



Shed 1.0 and Innovation Hub
State-of-the-art innovation space for the creative industries in Hollywood.



Studio Ulster
Centre of R&D and innovation excellence in virtual production on Belfast's North Foreshore, as part of the expansion of Belfast Harbour Studios.

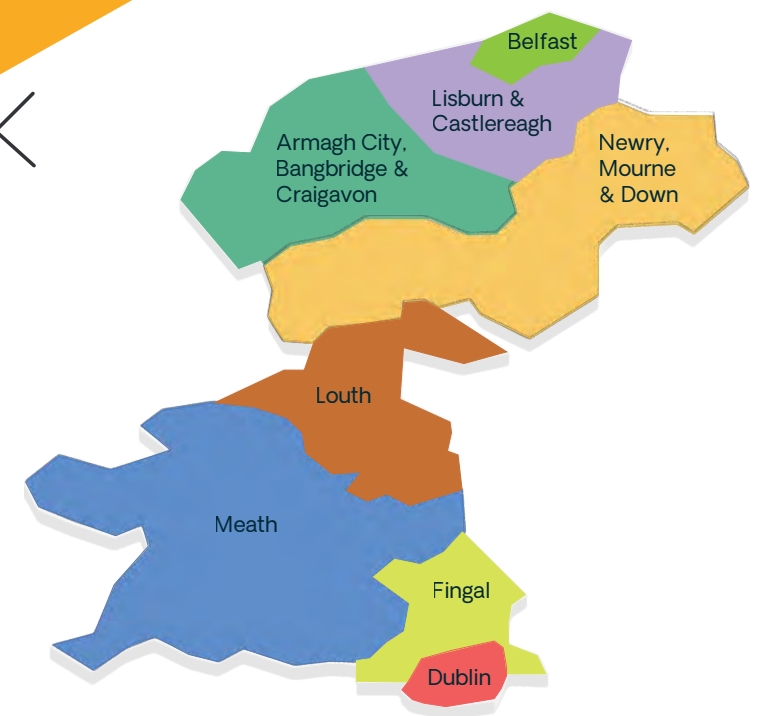


The Gobbins Phase 2
An iconic staircase structure will link existing cliff top and cliff face paths, significantly increasing visitor capacity.



100 miles. One Corridor. Unlimited Potential.

The Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) represents a landmark initiative that unites stakeholders from across this dynamic region in a shared vision for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Spanning eight council areas and encompassing one-third of the island's population, the corridor offers unparalleled opportunities to leverage our collective strengths and build a thriving economic ecosystem.



Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor

An established global investment destination

The corridor is the island of Ireland's most sought-after investment destination and is already home to both leading global enterprises and a range of successful local SMEs. Following the UK's exit from the European Union, Northern Ireland continues to have access to Great Britain and EU markets for goods - making it the only place where businesses can operate free from customs declarations, rules of origin certificates and non-tariff barriers on the sale of goods to both GB and the EU.

Perfectly positioned for investment

- Scale: 2.2 million people living across the corridor (over a third of the island's population)
- Talent: 34% of working age population educated to at least third level qualification
- Connectivity: Well-connected transport networks (six seaports, two airports)
- Business-friendly: 38% of the island's business base located on the corridor

Key sector clusters for growth

Several clusters have developed along the corridor in specific key sectors where there is growing demand - financial services, life sciences, agri-food, digital services, and renewable energy. Investments in collaborative approaches help businesses expand internationally, leveraging expertise developed within clusters to access new markets.

Our current areas of focus

- Making DBEC a live-and-do business destination by achieving sustainable growth through collaborative and cross-border R&D, enabling infrastructure and developing a highly skilled workforce
- Sustainably developing strategically important infrastructure - prioritising improvement and upgrading of cross-border rail, road and utilities fundamental to future success
- Enabling businesses to do business better by fostering a culture of support for innovation and enterprise

The corridor offers an outstanding quality of life with world-class education systems, access to innovative talent and unparalleled connectivity across the region. For investors, this means a strong cross-border economy with a collective focus on sustainable economic growth.

For more information:

www.dbec.info
Email: dbec@nmandd.org

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Accelerating city centre living

Belfast is fast becoming one of the most attractive cities in the UK and Ireland to live, work, socialise, study and invest in, with bold ambitions to become home to an additional 66,000 residents and increase the number of homes in the city by 31,600 by 2035.

The development of over 2 million ft² in city centre office space since 2015 has created a vibrant, liveable city centre ecosystem, with global occupiers making Belfast their city of choice. Belfast has seen significant regeneration in recent years, including the stunning new Ulster University campus, multi-million investment in Belfast Grand Central Station and wider Weavers Cross development, as well as major development of purpose-built managed student accommodation across the city centre. This is an exciting time in Belfast for residential development – and a huge opportunity to increase our city's residential population.

Private and public sector partners are collaborating to accelerate city centre living and bring forward residential opportunities at scale across all housing tenures; reimagining the city centre through placemaking; improving connectivity between the centre and the surrounding communities; and investing in our cultural offering to create a culturally vibrant city centre – a place people want to work, live, study, socialise and invest in.

In a major move forward to accelerate city centre living and housing regeneration across the city, Belfast City Council recently selected GRAHAM as its long-term private sector partner to work alongside the Council to deliver £630m housing-led regeneration programme.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/citycentreliving



Home of urban innovation

INNOVATION
CITY
BELFAST

With Belfast's proud history of research excellence, a vibrant community of innovators, high-growth SME clusters, and significant public and private sector innovation investment, the city is perfectly positioned to make the most of opportunities presented by digital innovation – not least by creating more and better jobs and improving quality of life.

The Innovation City Belfast (ICB) partnership, formed by seven of the city's key public sector, private sector and academic institutions and supported by the Belfast Innovation Commissioner, is harnessing place-based investment, including the £1 billion Belfast Region City Deal, to build on our collective strengths and knowledge to establish Belfast as a globally significant destination to invest in innovation. Together, we've made Belfast a great place to hatch new ideas, grow a business, solve urban challenges and impress the world.

- Over £330m investment in five new university centres of research excellence.
- £54m innovation R&D funding to help grow the region's most innovative industry sectors, stimulate collaborative innovation and tackle complex urban challenges.
- £39.5m investment in world-class wireless connectivity and data infrastructure to support research and business innovation, to help create new urban services and data-enabled solutions.
- Belfast designated a UK 5G Innovation Region, unlocking the economic and social opportunities presented by advanced wireless technologies.
- A Smart Belfast Urban Innovation programme that is directly tackling major urban challenges.

www.innovationcitybelfast.com

Belfast Net Zero and climate resilience



Belfast has made good progress since launching the Belfast Resilience Strategy and Net Zero Carbon Roadmap in 2020. We have adopted ambitious net zero targets: 66% reduction in scope one and two emissions by 2025, 80% by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

A Belfast Local Area Energy Plan provides a pathway to achieve those targets by modelling the city's energy system and building a pipeline of priority net zero projects, including a heat network and rooftop solar PV, including a Decarbonisation Plan for Queen's Island. This work supports the planned development of a Net Zero Tech Park in Belfast's Innovation District to support and grow an existing cluster of clean tech companies to develop and commercialise new net zero technologies.

Meanwhile, the Belfast Retrofit Hub was established to bring all the key stakeholders together to catalyse retrofit across the city. The hub will help decarbonise the built environment, with plans to develop a series of pilot projects alongside the UP2030 project which is designing net zero neighbourhoods. A Belfast EVI Strategy is also being developed..

Other initiatives include a 15-year tree planting scheme under the Belfast One Million Trees project and the UPSURGE project, which is using council-owned vacant land to test nature-based solutions, co-designed with local communities, and the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and programme, which is scaling community growing schemes.

This work is led by the Belfast Our Planet Board and has culminated in Belfast achieving an A score in its annual submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (a global reporting framework) and ranking 9th in the Global Destination Sustainability Index in 2024.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/climate-change

Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

Why invest in the Belfast region?

Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

Real estate market insights

Game changers

Belfast opportunities

Regional opportunities

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Game changers - Belfast

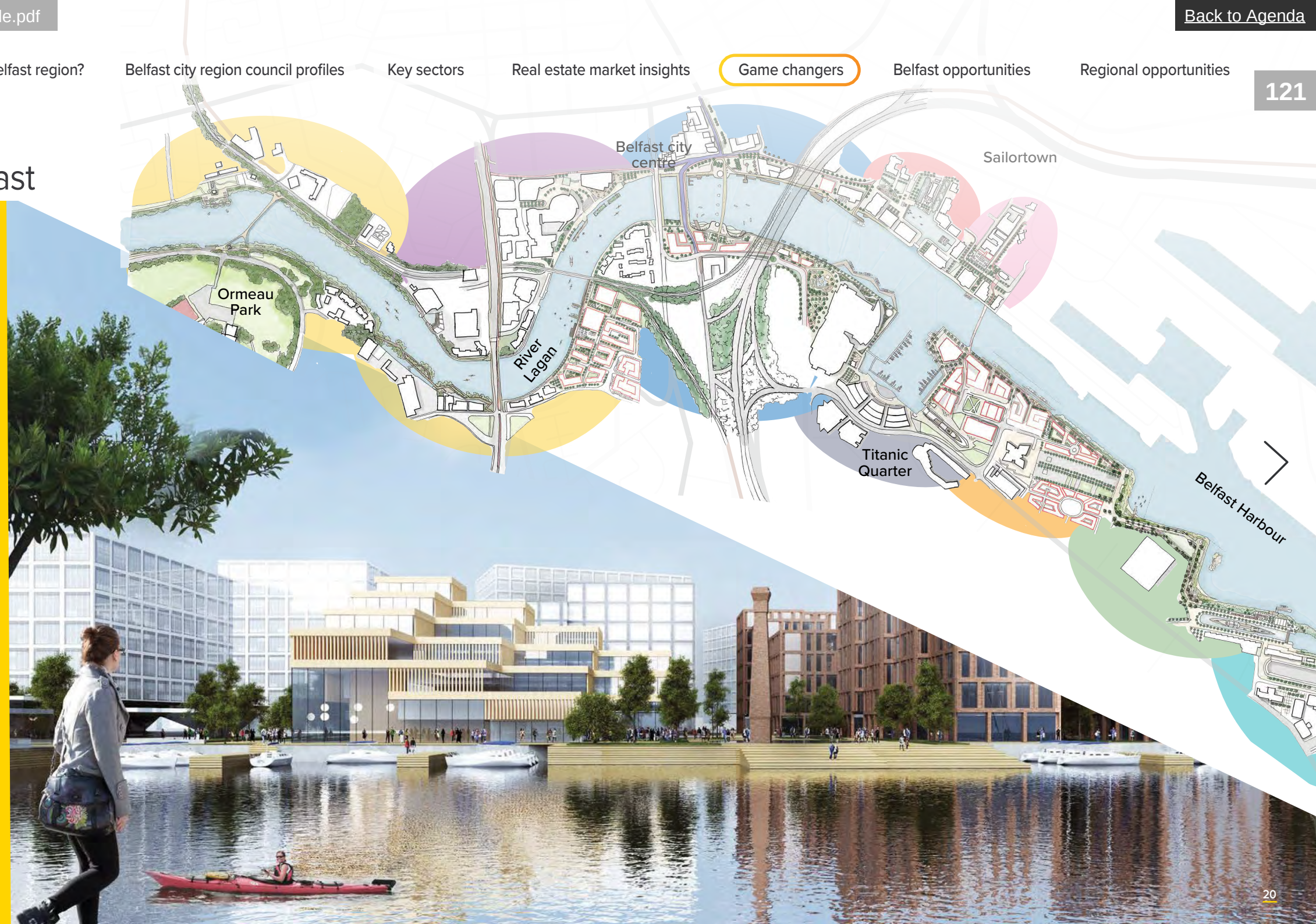
Embracing our waterfront

Stretching over 220 miles, from wild coastlines and beautiful beaches to thriving coastal towns and iconic world-class waterfront developments, the Belfast region has an enviable maritime location steeped in maritime manufacturing and engineering heritage.

Global shipbuilding titan Harland and Wolff draws on over 150 years of marine manufacturing experience to support the needs of the maritime, offshore and renewable energy sectors to inspire a growing cluster of innovative maritime technology companies who are using this tradition and expertise as a springboard.

Belfast has launched its vision to make Belfast's waterfront a truly iconic location to work, socialise, live and play. Spanning over 10 kilometres along the River Lagan, the Waterfront Promenade Framework provides a generational opportunity to reshape Belfast's relationship with its waterfront and to maximise the area's potential to provide environmental, economic and social benefits for all of Northern Ireland. Bangor Waterfront, a prime waterfront regeneration project in the heart of Bangor, proposes to redevelop 3.3km of prime water's edge location into a thriving seaside destination. Funded through the £1bn Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment, it will deliver a mix of public spaces, creative events, activities, attractions and experiences for residents and visitors; reconnecting the city centre with its waterfront.

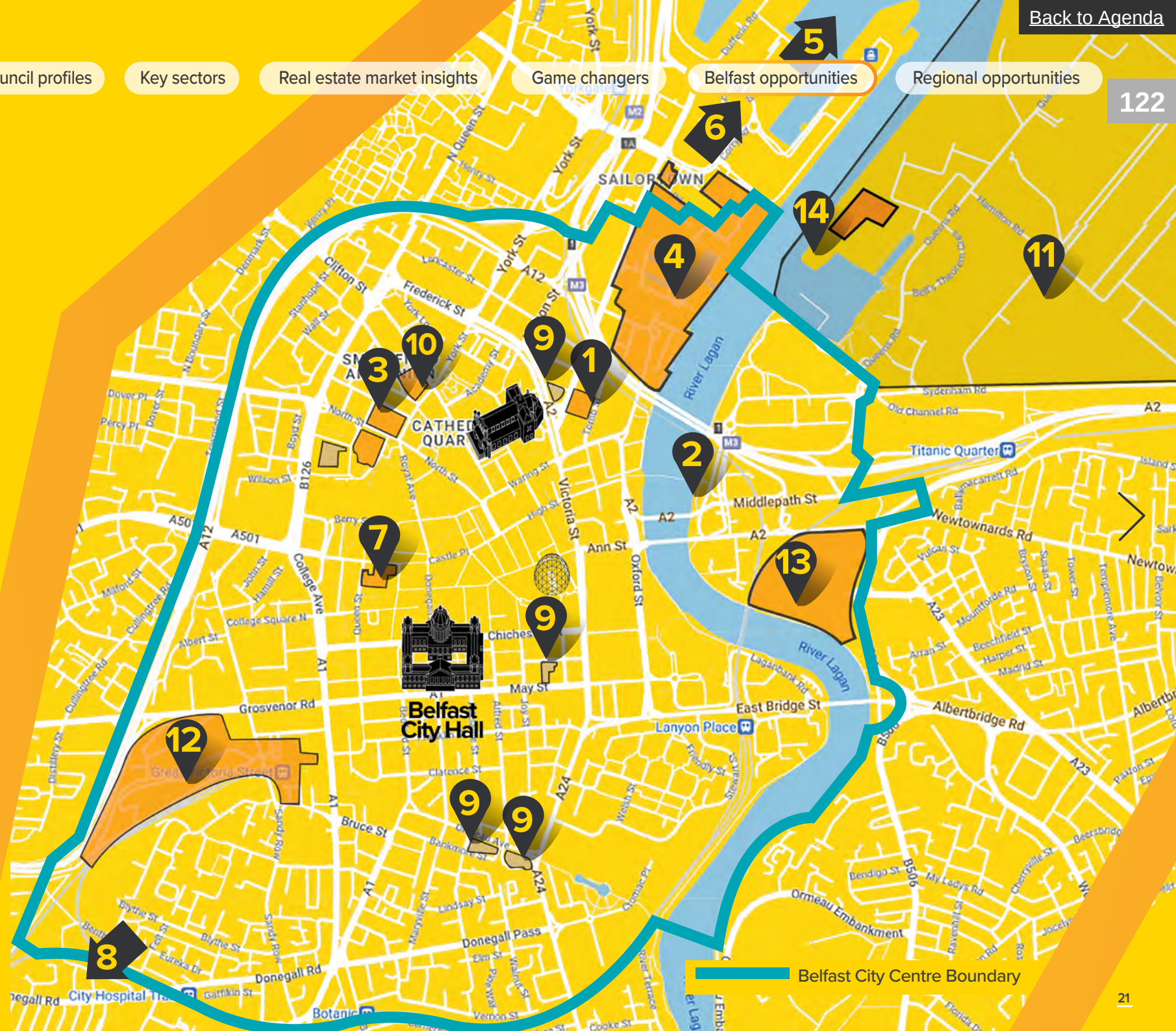
Belfast Harbour's strategy, Advance Regional Prosperity 2025-2029, sets out plans to invest £208 million in major port improvements and £105 million in the ongoing regeneration and development of the Harbour Estate and waterfront. As a Trust Port, Belfast Harbour is entirely self-financing, reinvesting all post-tax profits into the continuous development of the port and estate to drive economic growth and enhance benefits for the city and region.



Belfast opportunities



- 1. 18 Central, Corporation Street
- 2. Queen's Quay
- 3. Belfast Stories
- 4. City Quays
- 5. Giant's Park - CleanTech Park
- 6. Giant's Park - Leisure / Commercial opportunity
- 7. One Fountain Street
- 8. Queen's University Belfast
- 9. Residential-led developments
- 10. The Sixth
- 11. Titanic Quarter, Belfast
- 12. Weavers Cross
- 13. The Waterside Belfast
- 14. TQ PBMSA Student Village



18CENTRAL, CORPORATION STREET



Scale of development
A £80 million Build-to-Rent development offering 298 new homes



Sector(s)
Build-to-Rent, Residential



Location
Belfast city centre



Investment Type
Equity / Development Funding



Programme
Opportunities available now



Planning Status
Planning approved



Land Owner
MRP

mcaleer-rushe.co.uk/mrp_projects

A substantial build-to-rent development in the cultural heart of Belfast, 18Central will see the creation of 298 new city centre homes. The homes will benefit from a resident concierge service, retail and extensive amenity spaces, including roof terraces overlooking Belfast, a gym, communal lounges and a semi-public central courtyard linking Tomb Street and Corporation Street.

The new development, which is only a two minute walk to the new Ulster University city centre campus, has been designed with a focus on sustainable living, with the homes coming in a range of sizes and layouts that will appeal to families, individuals and those looking to downsize and live in the city centre.

Its location, with excellent travel connectivity, is in close proximity to active and public transport hubs and adjacent to many of the city's leading bars and restaurants in Cathedral Quarter.

A major investment in the city, developing an important 'gap site' between the city centre and Titanic Quarter, the scheme significantly contributes to Belfast City Council's goal of increasing the population of the city centre by 66,000 by 2035 and providing much-needed public realm upgrades.



QUEEN'S QUAY



Scale of Development
£100 million with total floor space of over 50,000 metres²



Sector(s)
Office, residential, hotel, mixed commercial



Location
East of Belfast city centre



Planning Status
Outline Planning Permission expected early 2025

Queen's Quay is a major waterfront Belfast city centre development opportunity consisting of 13,000 metres² of prime development land and offering the potential development of over 50,000m² of commercial space, including residential, Grade A workspace and 'active' retail and leisure opportunities.

Situated at one of the most strategic gateways from the city centre to east Belfast, the site is adjacent to landmark visitor attractions, including The Odyssey SSE Arena and Titanic Belfast. As the landing point for the Lagan Weir Bridge, it's also attractive for water-based leisure activity. Owned wholly by the public sector, the Department for Communities is developing the hard infrastructure requirements to maximise development potential and provide a seamless approach to market.



BELFAST STORIES



Scale of development
Circa £100 million with 3500sqm outdoor space and 8000sqm indoor space



Sector(s)
Tourism, culture, leisure, amenity



Location
Belfast city centre



Programme
Construction estimated to commence in 2026. Opening 2030.



Planning Status
Concept design stage to complete March 2025. Stage 3, planning to commence April 2025

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfaststories

Belfast Stories is a transformative £100m tourism-led regeneration project in the heart of Belfast city centre, on the edge of the historic Cathedral Quarter.

This landmark development is a flagship project in the £1bn Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment. Due to open in 2030, Belfast Stories will restore one of the city’s most loved and unique heritage buildings, the art deco former Bank of Ireland building on Royal Avenue.

This building forms part of a 4,000 m² site, acquired by Belfast City Council for redevelopment as a world-class, interactive and immersive visitor destination that tells the stories of Belfast; the people and the place. Belfast Stories will also accommodate a new state-of-the-art multi- screen centre, supported by vibrant public spaces to meet, eat, drink, shop, network, enjoy new cultural experiences and relax.



CITY QUAYS



Scale of development
£275 million



Sector(s)
Mixed-use Grade A office space, hotel, retail, residential and hotel



Location
Waterfront location. Belfast city centre



Planning Status
Critical mass of development delivered and Full Planning consent in place for more than 250 Build-to-Rent residential units, 69 affordable homes and a Grade A office to include retail and restaurant. Planning approval for a further 700 residential units will be sought during 2025.

belfast-harbour.co.uk



City Quays is a £275 million, eight-hectare, mixed-use waterfront regeneration project located on former docklands at the edge of Belfast city centre.

Three BREEAM Excellent, Grade A offices have now been completed, providing 40,000m² of BREEAM Excellent accommodation, and home to blue-chip occupiers such as Baker McKenzie, ITV, TP ICAP, Aflac and, most recently, Investec, B-Secur and Santander, covering the legal, media, finance, IT, medtech and insurance sectors.

Planning consent has been achieved for a further phase of office development, which will deliver best in class ESG credentials and offer a mix of office and retail spaces, including a roof top restaurant/bar.

Other completed City Quays developments include a four-star, 188-bed AC by Marriott hotel, a 900-space multi-storey car park and a vibrant new ‘green’ urban garden on a 0.8-hectare site between the City Quays waterfront buildings and the historic Belfast Harbour Office, designed to achieve the ‘One Planet Living’ environmental accreditation, a first in Northern Ireland.

Building on this momentum, Belfast Harbour is bringing forward further projects to make City Quays a vibrant and exciting place to live, with 2,566 water-fronting ‘Build-to-Rent’ residential units and 69 Affordable Homes, both of which have been granted Full Planning Approval. In addition, masterplanning is under way for upwards of 700 further mixed tenure residential units, creating a safe and inclusive neighbourhood with all the benefits of waterfront living.

GIANT’S PARK - CLEANTECH PARK



Scale of Development
C. 30 acres

Sector(s)
Cleantech

Location
3km from Belfast city centre

Planning Status
Masterplan prepared as a Local Area
Plan key site requirement

At approximately 340 acres, the Giant’s Park, North Foreshore site is Belfast’s largest development site ever offered to the market. Reclaimed from Belfast Lough, this landmark site is situated adjacent to the main motorway network and Belfast Harbour. With the support of Invest NI, Belfast City Council is promoting a CleanTech park which provides developers, occupiers and investors with the opportunity to be part of a cutting edge business sector.

The CleanTech park is located within the overall Giant’s Park North Foreshore of c. 30 acres, with serviced sites available up to 13 acres.

GIANT’S PARK - LEISURE / COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY

Scale of Development
250 acres

Sector(s)
Service retail, Food and beverage,
Leisure, Tourism, Logistics and industrial

Location
Giant’s Park is attractively located and
readily accessible due to its proximity to
Junction 1 of the M2, connecting Belfast to
the wider motorway network and offering
unrivalled accessibility province-wide.

This 250 acre site will comprise four key zones:

- Pit Stop Hub (PFS / Hotel / F&B / Service Retail)
- Distribution and Logistics Hub
- Welcome Hub
- Adventure Park

A Welcome Hub will be located at the entrance to the site, comprising a Petrol Filling Station (PFS), fast food outlets, coffee shop and hotel. Adjacent to this will be a c. 600,000ft² Distribution and Logistics Park, developed to provide best-in-class accommodation and to provide much-needed space and meet the evolving needs of local consumers. The northern portion of the site will be transformed into a major urban park which will be the first of its kind in Northern Ireland.



ONE FOUNTAIN STREET



Scale of Development
£75m GDV new build development providing
160,000 ft² Grade A office accommodation

Sector(s)
Office, Commercial, Retail

Location
Belfast city centre

Investment Type
Equity / Development Funding

Programme
Opportunities available now

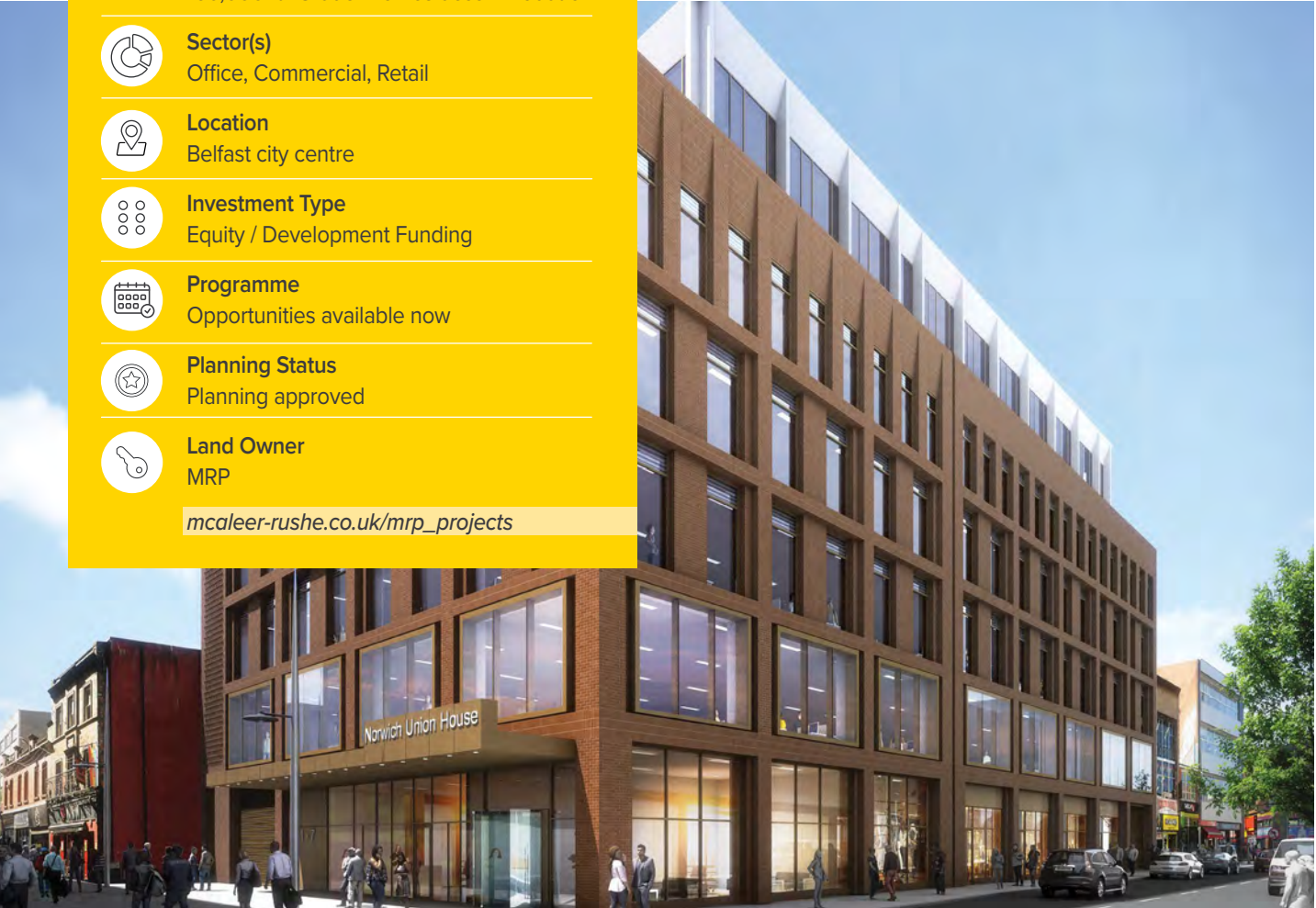
Planning Status
Planning approved

Land Owner
MRP

mcaleer-rushe.co.uk/mrp_projects

Situated in a vibrant area of the city with numerous bars, restaurants and leisure amenities nearby.

The site is also within walking distance of the new Ulster University campus and Belfast Stories - a transformative £100m tourism-led regeneration project, which is due to open in 2030. It also offers 32 sheltered cycle storage to promote active travel and extensive provision of shower changing facilities and lockers.



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST



- Scale of development**
Potential development phases over the next ten years, total > £0.5bn
- Sector(s)**
Residential, educational and recreation
- Location**
Citywide
- Planning Status**
In development

As an anchor institution of the city, contributing over £3billion to the economy annually, Queen's University is developing an exciting estates masterplan over the next 10 years, which will include the development of new and additional education, residential and recreational spaces. With more than 25,000 students and 4,500 employed at Queen's from almost 100 countries, campus life is diverse, rich and exciting.

Overall demand for purpose-built student accommodation is on the rise in Belfast and the university has indicated that it requires 2,500-3,000 more student bed spaces by the end of this decade. Provision is underway for up to 800 bedrooms and 154 apartments across three Belfast sites in response to this growing need. Additional investment and developments close to Queen's campus are required to cater for the additional 1,700-2,200 student places required by 2030.

Queen's, together with Ulster University, is leading on the development of the £330m capital build as part of the Belfast Region City Deal innovation pillar; a suite of five projects with a common thread of digital innovation.

The three Queen's-led projects are the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, Momentum One Zero and iREACH Health representing a transformational £230m programme of innovation. Our ambition emphasises the key role Queen's is bringing to lasting economic and social benefits to the people of Northern Ireland and beyond.



RESIDENTIAL-LED DEVELOPMENTS



- Scale of development**
£630m GDV
- Sector(s)**
Residential-led and commercial, community and public realm
- Location**
Belfast city centre
- Investment Type**
Investor
- Planning Status**
Pre-Planning Stage

The proposed project combines a number of prime sites located in the heart of Belfast city centre and ideally placed for residential-led placemaking development. The promoter, Belfast City Council, has successfully appointed property investor and developer GRAHAM as its delivery partner to act as master developer to deliver residential-led mixed-use developments to support its ambition of substantially growing the number of new city centre homes by 2035.

By combining these sites, this project offers the opportunity to bring forward housing-led development at scale across a range of tenures. Based on preliminary indicative studies, it is envisaged that initial sites which could be brought forward within the city centre have an estimated GDV of £280m and not less than 850 residential units, alongside supporting commercial, community space and public realm. Additional sites owned by the council, other public sector bodies or other third parties, have also been identified with the opportunity across the city to produce a total potential GDV of £350m.



THE SIXTH



- Scale of Development**
£100million GDV with 233,000ft² total floor area
- Sector(s)**
Offices, Mixed Commercial, Hotel, Residential, Life Sciences.
- Location**
Belfast city centre
- Investment Type**
Equity / Development Funding
- Programme**
Opportunities available now
- Planning Status**
Planning approved
- Land Owner**
Bel Tel LLP

www.thesixthbelfast.com

The Sixth is a major redevelopment project that will bring the iconic former Belfast Telegraph building back into active use. Delivered by BelTel LLP, the first joint venture by Belfast City Council with a private developer, MRP, this 233,000 sq ft mixed-use scheme has achieved planning for state-of-the-art workspace and active ground floor uses such as cafés, restaurants and retail.

Designed by Stirling Prize-winning architectural practice Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM), the wellbeing and experience of its users are at the core of its design. The scheme will deliver the first running track within an office development in the city, located on the roof level, in addition to multiple terraces and extensive wellbeing and green travel facilities.

The workspace has the flexibility to accommodate global headquarters, with floorplates of up to 30,000 sq ft, and would work equally well for smaller enterprises with the potential to expand. This prime mixed-use development has the flexibility to be brought forward in phases in a variety of uses, to include, but not limited to, Hotel / Leisure, Life Science, Grade A office and Residential.

Northern Ireland has one of the fastest growing technology clusters in the UK, with Cyber Security and Fintech particular areas of strength, and the scheme, adjacent to Ulster University's new campus, is strategically located to cater to this emerging creative district catering to the Education, Media, Technology, Health and Life Sciences sectors in Belfast city centre.

The Sixth's location also benefits from being in close proximity to the proposed £100m Belfast Stories visitor attraction, set to open in 2030. This new world class tourist attraction will drive footfall to this part of the city, helping to improve the vibrancy of the area. The forelisted Seaver building offers a compelling proposition for hotel development opportunities as part of a wider mixed-use development of The Sixth.

TITANIC QUARTER, BELFAST



- Scale of Development**
Potential development phases over the next 10 years, totalling £1.4 billion
- Sector(s)**
Mixed commercial, retail, offices, residential, cultural, leisure and tourism
- Location**
Titanic Quarter, Belfast
- Investment Type**
Project Promoter, project equity, project debt and occupancy
- Programme**
Ongoing opportunities
- Planning Status**
A Planning Development Framework has been approved for the regeneration of Titanic Quarter, which provides multiple investment opportunities.
- Land Owner**
Titanic Quarter Limited and Belfast Harbour
titanicquarter.com

Titanic Quarter on Belfast's Maritime Mile has evolved from masterplan to reality as a thriving and bustling destination, where some 20,000 people live, work, visit and stay daily.

With over £650 million having already been invested in Titanic Quarter, delivering homes for over 1,000 residents, it is Northern Ireland's leading visitor and leisure destination and generates 12,200 direct and indirect jobs for the city.

Titanic Quarter is currently home to over 100 multi-national companies, including Citi, HBO, Amazon, Artemis Technologies and Catagen. Olympic House, recently completed and now ready for occupiers, is the district's most recent flagship office development built to a BREEAM 'Excellent' standard and does not use fossil fuels.

Construction of Loft Lines (778 new apartment homes) started in June 2023 and represents the largest ever private sector investment into housing in Northern Ireland. The construction of the Hamilton Dock Hotel (228 beds) started in December 2023. Both of these projects will be completed in 2026.

Titanic Quarter's ambition over the next 10 years is to increase the investment to £2 billion, create over £0.5 billion of social value, grow its residential population to over 9,000 residents and increase the number of direct and indirect jobs to 27,100.

Titanic Quarter continues to pioneer sustainable development and place making, creating a healthy and active environment for all.



WEAVERS CROSS



Scale of Development
c. £500 million with total floor area of c. 1,500,000 sq/ft

Sector(s)
Offices, hotel, life sciences, residential, retail, leisure and amenity

Location
Belfast city centre

Investment Type
Equity investor/ funder, end users

Programme
Opportunities available from Q3 2025

Planning Status
Outline Permission Granted

Land Owner
Translink

www.weaverscross.co.uk

Weavers Cross is a transport-led regeneration project which will deliver 1.5 million square feet of mixed-use development opportunities in Belfast city centre. The adjacent Belfast Grand Central Station, developed and operated by Translink, is a £340m flagship investment project is the largest integrated transport facility on the island of Ireland.

The station is expected to accommodate 20 million passenger journeys per annum and enhances local and international connectivity on all bus and rail journeys alongside active travel. There is also a new hourly Enterprise service between Grand Central Station and Connolly Station in Dublin, along with direct links to all the major airports. MRP has been appointed by Translink as Development Partner to develop the lands surrounding Belfast Grand Central Station.

Outline Planning Permission has already been secured for Weavers Cross. The masterplan involves the potential for 1.5 million square feet of mixed-use office, life sciences, residential, hotels and retail/leisure space, presenting a unique opportunity to transform and regenerate a current brownfield site and create a new destination in the heart of the city.

The site comprises an excellent opportunity for a world class innovation district, with large floorplates of up to 30,000 sq. ft to cater for Life Science, Technology and Financial Services markets, conveniently located and within walking distance of the city’s main hospitals and universities. The project will support the regeneration of nearby communities, create a new gateway to Belfast, as well as stimulating further economic opportunities.



THE WATERSIDE BELFAST



Scale of Development
GDV £500 million, 16 acres, c. 2m ft² development

Sector(s)
PBSA, BTR, Private & Social Residential, Hotel, Serviced Apartments, Office, Retail, Food & Beverage.

Location
Belfast city centre - River Lagan

Investment Type
Equity / Development funding

Programme
Opportunities available now

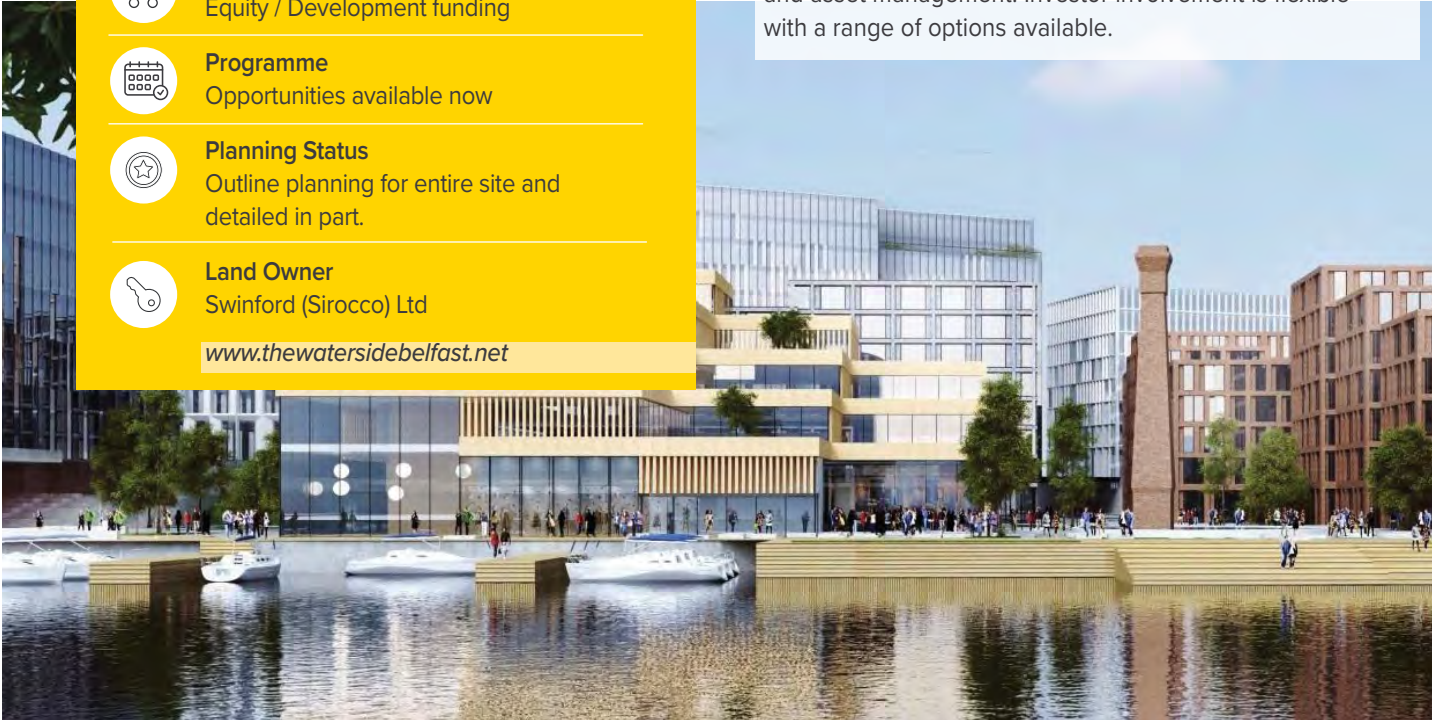
Planning Status
Outline planning for entire site and detailed in part.

Land Owner
Swinford (Sirocco) Ltd

www.thewatersidebelfast.net

The Waterside Belfast represents an opportunity to invest in a prime waterfront location in central Belfast – something that caters for the needs of the hotel, student, serviced apartments, residential and office sectors. Spanning 16 acres of prime riverfront land, the site is conveniently located only 750 metres from the refurbished Lanyon Place train station. The location is a short walk along the river Lagan to the city centre which provides high-quality amenities such as Victoria Square retail destination.

This pivotal site reconnects Belfast city centre and embraces its most iconic natural asset, the River Lagan. The location provides unparalleled connection to central Belfast and the surrounding areas. It is the site of the former Sirocco engineering works and represents one of the largest remaining development opportunity sites in the city centre. Osborne + Co has over 25 years of experience in global real estate development, investment and asset management. Investor involvement is flexible with a range of options available.



TQ PBMSA STUDENT VILLAGE



Scale of Development

Units: 1,007 student bedrooms
Storey: 5-9 storeys
Area: 35,850 sqm



Sector(s)

Residential - PBMSA



Location

Belfast



Titanic Quarter Student Village is a new Purpose-Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) development located in the historical maritime site and upcoming waterfront community in Titanic Quarter, Belfast.

The new PBMSA development composed of 1,007 student bedrooms with a mix of bedroom types including cluster rooms and studios, with additional use of accommodation by further or higher education institutions outside term time, is comprised of four blocks of accommodation with building heights ranging from five to nine storeys and up to 35,850sqm gross external floorspace.

Within the scheme, student residents can avail of the various communal facilities promoting health and wellness, private or group study, or meet friends in one of the recreation spaces. Associated communal facilities include landscape courtyards, shared space such as student lounges, private dining rooms, screen rooms, flexible co-working study spaces, launderettes, secure bike parking and a gym and fitness centre.

The scheme was conceived as a perimeter block, responding to the defined urban edges of the Titanic Quarter masterplan plot around a secure private landscape courtyard and is composed of a series of ‘architectural pieces’ with varying architectural character through material tone and articulation to read as a composition of buildings responding to the site and street contexts. Breaks in the massing at upper floor levels articulate this ‘urban assembly’ allowing glimpse views through to neighbouring buildings, as well as the historic H&W cranes.

At an urban street level, the scheme includes and offers new public realm spaces located on the east and the west of the plot, integrated into streets which form ‘view corridors’ retaining key vistas towards Titanic House, the listed former Harland and Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Office and to the Hamilton Graving Dock scheduled monument as identified in the Titanic Quarter Development Framework.



Belfast Region opportunities



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Ards and North Down Borough Council	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Belfast International Airport	Bangor Waterfront	Laganbank Car Park	St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena	Mourne Park Estate
Global Point Business Park	Queen's Parade, Bangor Park	Castle Street Car Park, Lisburn	Larne Industrial Opportunities	Mount Caulfield Site, Bessbrook
Mallusk north and south	Whitespots, Newtownards	Destination Royal Hillsborough	Ballymena industrial opportunities	Downpatrick Police Station
Nutt's Corner Commercial Park	Balloo Road, Bangor	Dundonald International Ice Bowl (DIIB)	Carrickfergus Industrial Opportunities	Carnmeen Lands
	Castlebawn, Newtownards	Derriaghy Primary School		Project Luna
	Former Crepe Weavers, Comber Road, Newtownards			Pearce's Gate

BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



- Scale of Development**
100 acres
- Sector(s)**
Airports and Aviation, Commercial and Offices, Industrial, Logistics
- Location**
Crumlin
- Investment Type**
Brownfield and Greenfield, Joint Venture Opportunity
- Planning Status**
Various

The BIA lands accommodate approximately 250 businesses with over 5,000 employees, including national and multinational brands. BIA is the 10th largest airport in the UK, with typically over six million passengers per year.

Potential uses:
The lands at BIA would be suitable for a wide range of uses such as manufacturing and distribution, aviation-related industries, including aircraft maintenance hangars, research and design facilities, offices and call centres and leisure/hotel use. BIA has recently completed a masterplan for the site and secured outline planning permission.

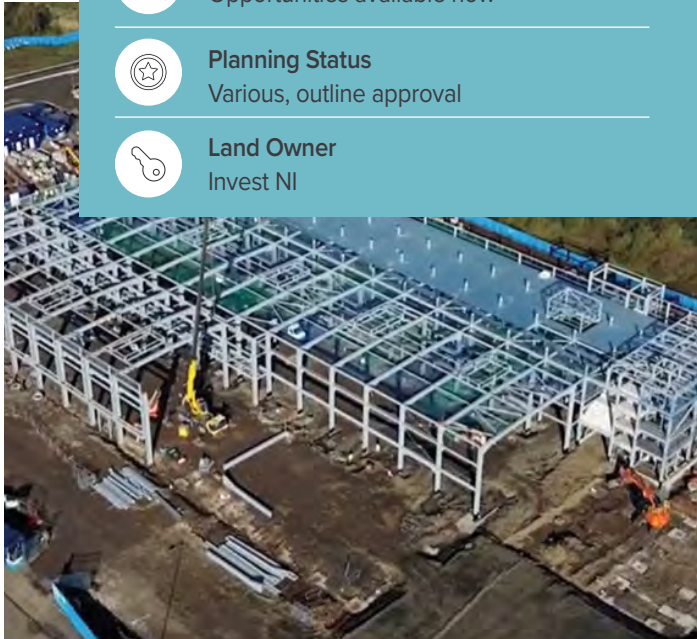
The subject lands are located 18 miles north-west of Belfast. BIA is the main gateway to Northern Ireland and to the north of the island of Ireland. Road access to BIA is via the A57, connecting to Belfast city centre via the M2 motorway. BIA is well serviced by public transport, with buses to and from Belfast city centre, Antrim, Lisburn and Crumlin. Planning permission has been granted for a new 5.5m state-of-the-art 81 room hotel to be developed on BIA Lands.



GLOBAL POINT BUSINESS PARK



- Scale of Development**
42 acres of land remaining
- Sector(s)**
Manufacturing, research and design, distribution, office (ancillary)
- Location**
Corr's Corner, Newtownabbey
- Investment Type**
Developer, Investor, Joint venture
- Programme**
Opportunities available now
- Planning Status**
Various, outline approval
- Land Owner**
Invest NI



Global Point Business Park is the premier location for manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland. Owned by Invest Northern Ireland, it is a fully serviced site which extends to 59.39 hectares. The site is zoned employment land, suitable for a variety of uses and is emerging as a leading UK destination for companies in the advanced manufacturing sector.

- A number of major investments are in the pipeline for Global Point totalling more than £268m, including:
- £150m canning factory by manufacturing giant Ardagh Metal Packaging
 - £100m Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (AMIC) led by Queen's University as part of the Belfast Region City Deal
 - Sensata's new £16.5m research and development centre
 - Steel Mac Distribution Ltd's new £4m manufacturing facility.

These strategic investments will sit alongside the multi-million pound, world-class manufacturing facility RLC Engineering, which was the first company to take up occupancy at Global Point. Accounting for the investment pipeline above, approximately 42 acres of land remain across a number of developable parcels.

The subject lands are 8.5 miles north-west of Belfast, accessible via Sandyknowes Junction of the M2 Motorway. Global Point is considered part of the wider Mallusk commercial area, a long established and favoured location for manufacturing and distribution companies, due to its unparalleled access to Northern Ireland's motorway network and proximity to Larne (c. 15 miles) and Belfast Harbour (eight miles), Belfast International Airport (12.5 miles) and Belfast City Airport (11 miles).

The site also benefits from a train halt and Park and Ride facility located to the north-east of the site and cycle/pedestrian path links from the M5 (Shore Road) through the site.

MALLUSK NORTH AND SOUTH



Scale of Development
99.5 acres



Sector(s)
Industrial, logistics, warehousing



Location
Mallusk



Investment Type
Greenfield development site sale



Planning Status
Various

The subject lands comprise of approximately 99 acres of greenfield land with access from the Antrim Road. The lands lie north and south of the Antrim Road, with 44 acres north of Antrim Road and 65 acres south of Antrim Road.

The lands are zoned for employment use under the Local Development Plan. This location has proven highly sought after for a variety of industrial/warehouse uses, such as manufacturing or storage and distribution.

The subject lands are located on the Antrim Road in Mallusk, one of Northern Ireland's premier industrial locations. Mallusk is a long established and favoured location for manufacturing and distribution companies, due to its unparalleled access to Northern Ireland's motorway network and proximity to Larne (16 miles), Belfast Harbour (eight miles), Belfast International Airport (nine miles) and Belfast City Airport (10 miles). Public transport is available in the form of buses, which run between Belfast and Ballymena via the Antrim Road.



NUTT'S CORNER COMMERCIAL PARK



Scale of Development
14.5 acres



Sector(s)
Industrial, logistics, warehousing



Location
Nutt's Corner



Investment Type
Greenfield development site sale



Planning Status
Various

An expansive 34 acres, Nutt's Corner Commercial Park has recently received planning approvals, unlocking a golden opportunity. Sysco Ireland has committed £23m in a state-of-the-art 250,000 ft² distribution facility at Nutt's Corner, creating 90 jobs and taking the company's workforce in Northern Ireland to 230, with plans to double its operations in the next five years.

The project forms part of Sysco's long term growth strategy to increase their share of the foodservice industry on the island of Ireland. The company cites Antrim & Newtownabbey's infrastructure as the critical reasons for locating to Nutts corner alongside exceptional connectivity to service their customers and grow the business across the country. NIE Networks is progressing a new £6m training centre at Nutts Corner comprising a two storey building with workshops, classrooms and welfare facilities.

A substantial portion of the premier site remains available for investment, presenting a rare chance to be part of a thriving commercial community. Earmarked for diverse potential uses, with a focus on logistics and manufacturing facilities. With planning permission secured for a cutting-edge distribution park, the site is tailor-made for design and build opportunities that cater to the evolving needs of modern businesses.



BANGOR WATERFRONT



Scale of Development
c.39.22 acres, c.15.87 hectares



Sector(s)
Hospitality and Hotels, Leisure, Retail



Location
Bangor, Co Down



Investment Type
Various



Programme
Opportunities available from 2024



Planning Status
Pre-Planning Stage; contract for funding received



Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council



Progress
Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICT) appointed for Pickie Funpark and Ballyholme Yacht Club, and operator appointed for Pickie Fun Park. ICT for Bangor Marina and Harbour issuing Spring 2025.

ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/business/bangor-regeneration/bangor-waterfront

Bangor Waterfront is a flagship project in the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment. This large multi-opportunity seafront project aims to create a unique destination, enriching mind, body and soul with a mix of public spaces, creative events, activities, attractions and experiences for residents and visitors; reconnecting the city centre with its waterfront.

The subject lands have a total of approximately 39.22 acres / 15.87 hectares, some of which is zoned as town centre in the area plan. Redevelopment of the seafront to return Bangor to its former status as a thriving city and prime visitor attraction in Northern Ireland. The project focuses on providing economic, leisure, tourism and recreational benefits including the regeneration of the coastline between Pickie Funpark and Ballymacormick Point/Banks Lane (approximately 3.3 km/2.1 miles). The Bangor Waterfront development aims to create a unique destination, encouraging more visitors and residents to enjoy the coastline, by regenerating Bangor into a ‘destination of choice’ connecting its rich cultural heritage with creative industries and blue/green experiences alongside an inspirational coastal backdrop.



QUEEN’S PARADE, BANGOR PARK



Project Sponsor
Bangor Marine Ltd.



Scale of Development
Approx. £65m



Site area
c.13 acres (c.5.26 Ha)



Site Development
c.350,000ft²



Sector(s)
Hospitality and Hotels, Leisure, Mixed Use, Residential, Office, Commercial



Location
Bangor, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield, other



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Formal Planning Approval Received September 2022



Landowner
Department for Communities

www.queensparadebangor.com



Queen’s Parade in Bangor offers a unique opportunity to create Northern Ireland’s premier public waterfront space in the country’s newest city.

Subject lands consist of approximately 13 acres (5.26 Ha), which now have formal planning approval for a truly mixed-use regeneration project. The site has two distinct parts: Marine Gardens (the ‘sea-side’): the creation of a new vibrant public space that overlooks a marina, and the development site (the ‘land-side’) which offers a variety of leisure, hotel, retail, hospitality, office and commercial opportunities.

The proposed £65 million scheme is suitable for a variety of uses, including hotel, residential, leisure, retail, restaurants and offices. The planning permission is made up of the following: 66 bed hotel with spa and swimming pool; 137 residential units; 6,503 m² (70,000ft²) of office space; 1,858 m² (20,000ft²) of food and beverage/retail opportunities; 1,503 m² (16,178ft²) destination/cinema building; 1,440 m² (15,500ft²) kids’ indoor recreational area; refurbishment of 5,330 m² (57,371ft²) of commercial property along Main Street; 255 space undercroft car park. Marine Gardens public realm combining external events space, cafés, sheltered promenade and kiosks, seafront lawns, children’s play area, marketplace and courtyard squares.

This development opportunity is located adjacent to Bangor Waterfront, another prime regeneration site with a unique range of leisure and tourism opportunities.



WHITESPOTS, NEWTOWNARDS



Scale of Development
c.80.55 acres c. 32.6 hectares



Sector(s)
Hospitality, Leisure, Adventure Tourism, Other



Location
Newtownards, Co Down



Investment Type
Development Site



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Pre-Planning Phase



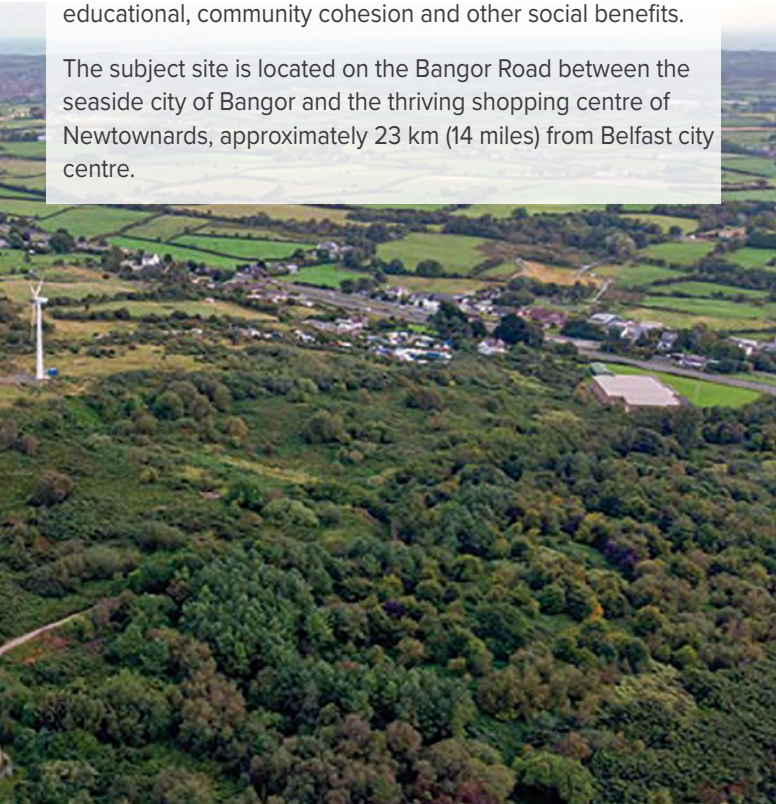
Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council

ANDbusiness.co.uk

This development of a new multi-use recreational facility, with major visitor attractions in the lands at Whitespots Country Park, Newtownards, focuses on enhancing the visitor experience with walking trails and potential new features, such as a unique mining heritage attraction, Ireland’s World War experience with outdoor recreation, visitor accommodation and event spaces. The subject lands cover approx. 80.55 acres (32.6 hectares) and the site (a former mining area) was established as Whitespots Country Park in 1995, with development ongoing. Ards and North Down Borough Council is developing a long-term vision for a regional park connecting Whitespots to other key locations via greenways linking Belfast through Comber; Newtownards; Donaghadee and back to Belfast.

The subject site is suitable for a variety of different uses, including tourism, leisure, and recreation to bring economic, health and educational, community cohesion and other social benefits.

The subject site is located on the Bangor Road between the seaside city of Bangor and the thriving shopping centre of Newtownards, approximately 23 km (14 miles) from Belfast city centre.



BALLOO ROAD, BANGOR



Scale of Development
c.7.7 acres, c.3.1 hectares with approximately 1,607 sqm/17,300ft² building.



Sector(s)
Commercial, Industrial



Location
Bangor, Co Down



Investment Type
Other



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Designated as existing Employment Land



Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council

ANDbusiness.co.uk

Throughout Northern Ireland there is a shortage of space for small businesses; additional enterprise parks are required for incubation space to support and grow new businesses.

The subject lands are on Balloo Road, approximately 3.2 km/2 miles from Bangor city centre and approximately 21 km/13 miles from Belfast city centre. Belfast International Airport is approximately 48 kms/30 miles and Belfast City Airport approximately 16 km/10 miles by road. Belfast Port is also nearby at approximately 23 km/14 miles. Balloo is Ards and North Down’s premier industrial and commercial location and home to a number of major businesses. Balloo Road is well serviced by public transport, with buses running to Belfast Laganside Bus Centre, and located 10 minutes from Bangor train station. Bangor train station provides services running from Bangor to Belfast at peak times.

Council in progress of appointing ICT to align with Scoping Report on future economic development sectors in Ards and North Down. The Council has gained permission to include c5.6 acres/2.3 hectares of Invest Northern Ireland land which immediately abuts the Council’s site for overall development. This location would be suitable for an innovation/light industrial unit or business units to further support economic growth in an area where many fast-growing businesses have established premises. There is currently a shortage of good quality industrial property ready to occupy across Northern Ireland. Industrial rentals are increasing due to lack of supply and increased demand.



CASTLEBAWN, NEWTOWNARDS



Project Sponsor
Castlebawn Newtownards Ltd.



Scale of Development
c.47.0 acres, c.19.02 hectares



Sector(s)
Commercial and Offices, Healthcare Estates, Other, Residential, Retirement Living



Location
Newtownards, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield/ Greenfield Site



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Various



Landowner
Castlebawn Newtownards Ltd.

www.killultagh.com

The former factory site comprises approximately 16 acres, including the Historic Bawn Wall and adjacent South Street sites, which includes residential development. of approximately 200 units. Planning permission has been granted for an 80-bed nursing home and coffee shop drive-thru restaurants with car parking.

The lands have planning consent for showrooms, trade counter retail and approximately 13,935 m² (150,000ft²) workplace business park. Current occupiers on the site include newly developed Lidl, Starbucks and Tim Horton Drive-thru's in the retail and FCB sectors, 66 residential units on South Street and an 80-bed specialist dementia care nursing home owned and operated by Dunluce Healthcare. Planning permission was granted in July 2023 for the erection of 2no. light industrial units with associated trade counters/sales area, 1no. tyre depot and 1no. storage and distribution unit with associated trade counter/sales area on land immediately south of the Portaferry Road roundabout.

Proximity to Castlebawn Retail Park makes this site an optimal location for retail development. Trade counter/warehouse developments are currently well occupied with vacancy levels remaining relatively low. Whilst the retail sector has encountered challenges in recent years, the NI sector remains resilient; out of town retail market remains buoyant, with limited vacancy and demand primarily driven by 'discounters' and grocery operators. The site's connectivity to Newtownards town centre means that it is in close proximity to a host of amenities, including hospital, surgery, shops and shopping centres, schools and the South Eastern Regional College.

FORMER CREPE WEAVERS, COMBER ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS



Project Sponsor
Clonrose Developments



Scale of Development
Site area:c.25 acres (c.10.1 hectares)



Sector(s)
Commercial and Offices, Healthcare Estates, Industrial, Logistics, Mixed Use, Residential, Retirement Living, Hotel



Location
Newtownards, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield site – for mixed use development



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Outline Planning Permission granted – reserved matters on part of site under consideration



Landowner
Clonrose Developments

Clonrose.com

The former Crepe Weavers Site is located at a gateway into the thriving shopping town of Newtownards, with potential opportunities for industrial, leisure, retail and residential development. The subject lands consist of a brownfield former industrial site that has now been cleared. The subject lands are zoned as existing industry in the area plan.

The subject lands cover approx. 25 acres (10.1 Ha) and previously benefited from outline planning permission for mixed use development to include residential, nursing home, hotel, petrol filling station, neighbourhood centre, leisure and light industrial park use.

A Revised Outline Application is currently under consideration for the following mixed use scheme:

Demolition of existing buildings and proposed mixed use development scheme comprising:

- circa 95 no. dwellings
- nursing and care village comprising circa 96 beds
- 78-bed hotel
- Petrol filling station
- 1no. drive-thru (Sui Generis);
- Leisure unit (Sui Generis);
- Neighbourhood retail centre to include a convenience store and hot food outlets
- Light industrial/storage and distribution units
- Business units
- Provision of a new roundabout (at Cambourne Housing Estate entrance), road improvements at Comber Road access and new access on Comber Road/Castlebawn Link Road.

LAGANBANK CAR PARK



Scale of Development
Site extends to c.2.10 acres (c.0.85 hectares)



Sector(s)
All



Location
Laganbank Road/ Linenhall Street, Lisburn
BT28 1LU



Investment Type
Sale for development



Programme
Opportunities available



Landowner
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Laganbank Car Park has been earmarked by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council as a regeneration development opportunity. The subject site forms part of the Laganbank Quarter in the south-east sector of the city centre area, as designated in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP).

The site extends to c.2.10 acres (c.0.85 hectares) and is currently a ‘pay and display’ 238-space car park. It is strategically positioned with prominent frontage directly onto both the A1 Laganbank Road (a main arterial route through the city) and Linenhall Street.

The city’s primary retail core is only a few minutes’ walk away. The site is located in an area of mixed use with nearby occupiers including but not limited to, Royal Mail Group, Lisburn City Library, Irish Linen Centre and Museum and Lisburn Health Centre. Laganbank Retail Park located opposite comprises around 50,000 ft² and is fully let with occupiers including TK Maxx, Pure Gym, Upstairs Downstairs Furniture and Ground Coffee.

The council’s prime objective in offering this development opportunity is to contribute to the revitalisation of Lisburn city centre through a high quality, comprehensive, mixed-use regeneration development of a viable and sustainable economic use, which acts as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the surrounding Laganbank / Linenhall Street area.

LCCC is registered owner of the freehold title of the site. A title pack containing copies of title to the site is available on request. A copy of the development brief is also available on request.

CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LISBURN



Scale of Development
The site extends to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54)



Sector(s)
Residential



Location
Castle Street Lisburn, BT27



Investment Type
Sale for Development



Programme
Opportunities available



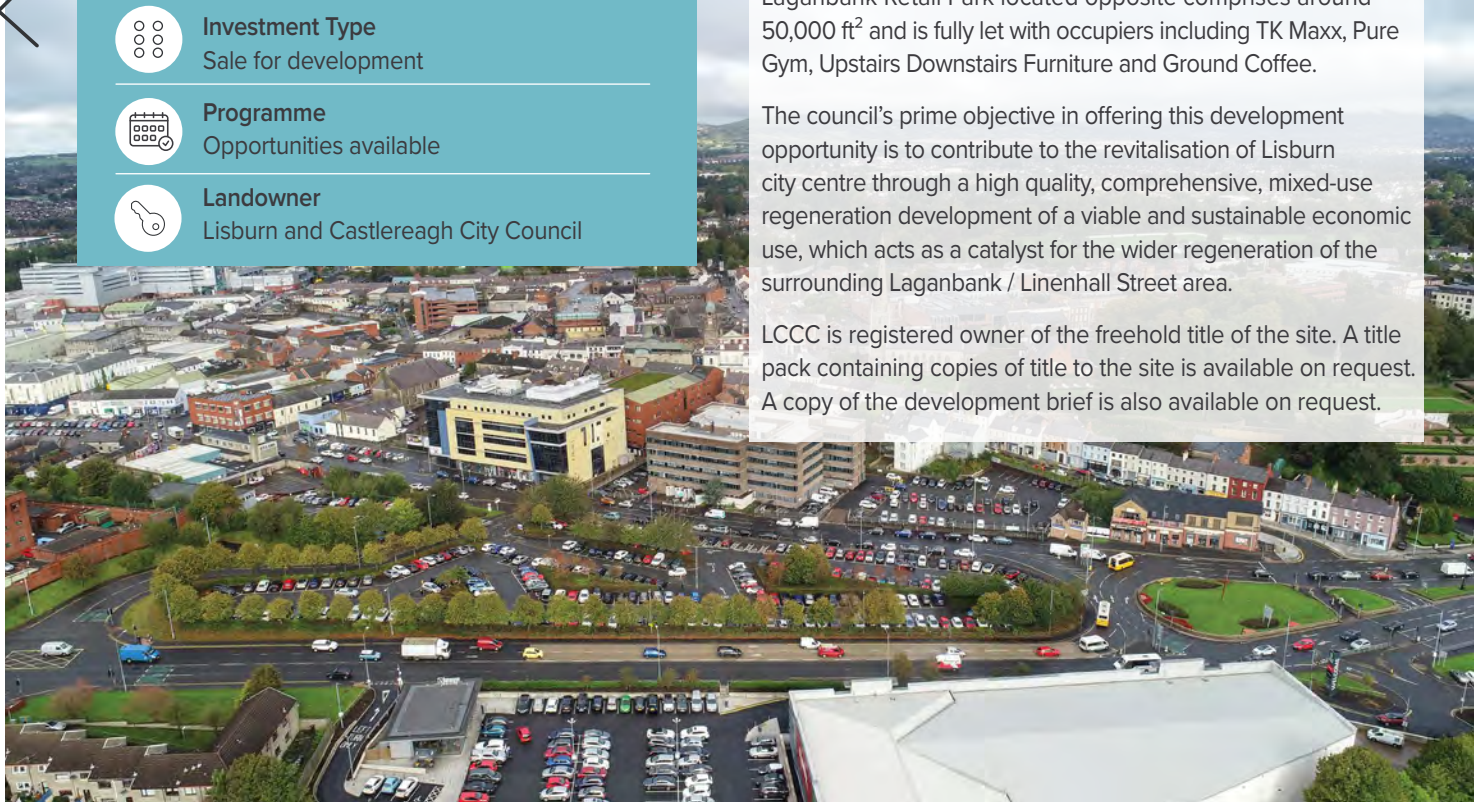
Landowner
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Located on Castle Street, within the Lisburn Conservation Area and overlooking the historic Castle Gardens listed in the Department for Communities register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, this site is conveniently situated within walking distance of the main retail core, railway station and bus station. It is also connected to the main city bus route, the M1 motorway junction and is approximately nine miles south of Belfast.

The site was previously used as a council-run surface car park, extending to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54 hectares) with prominent frontage onto Castle Street of approximately 85m (approximately 279 ft), which provides easy access to Lisburn’s city centre and to the pedestrian precinct to the west, with a mix of retail, residential and employment uses located within walking distance.

Given the setting of this 1.39-acre city centre site, coupled with the surrounding conservation area and adjacent Castle Gardens, the site represents a real opportunity to build upon and complement the surrounding land uses and setting already in place.

LCCC has high expectations for the future development of this site and is keen to ensure that development will create a positive impact on the area from an economic development perspective. A copy of the development brief is available on request.



DESTINATION ROYAL HILLSBOROUGH



Scale of Development
The estimated cost of the landmark ‘Destination Royal Hillsborough’ project is £26million



Sector(s)
All - A number of development opportunities coming forward to include Public Realm works and a social enterprise opportunity



Location
Royal Hillsborough Village, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council



Investment Type
Development



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Various



Landowner
DfI under licence to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The heritage village of Royal Hillsborough is unlike any other village in Northern Ireland. It is home to the Royal Family when visiting Northern Ireland and was significant to negotiations during Northern Ireland’s Peace Process. Named after the Hill family, who played a significant part in its development, it has retained much of the historic character and the family’s influence can still be seen in many of the elegant buildings dating from the 18th and 19th century.

The village of Hillsborough in County Down gained ‘Royal Hillsborough’ status in 2021. Home to Hillsborough Castle, the residence of His Majesty the King and other members of the Royal family when visiting Northern Ireland, it is the first village or town in Northern Ireland to receive Royal status.

Through funding secured from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has designed and developed the prestigious ‘Destination Royal Hillsborough’ project. The proposed BRCD investment will build on £20 million of investment by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens as a visitor attraction and the designation of Hillsborough village as ‘Royal Hillsborough’ in 2021.

Hillsborough is one of only four towns and villages across the UK with the Royal prefix and the first in Northern Ireland. In addition, the proposed investment builds on over £1m of recent investment in Hillsborough Forest by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

The overall vision of the proposed investment is: “To create a high quality, distinctive, leading visitor destination and experience, targeting the ‘culturally curious’ market segment alongside regenerating the village via an enhanced sustainable culture and heritage offering.”

The proposed capital investment components include:

- integrating and improving the access to and connections between key attractions such as the Castle, Forest, including the Fort and wider village via a major public realm scheme
- developing the Fort as a venue for events such as authentic re-enactments
- restoration of the Courthouse as a venue for conveying the history and heritage of the Courthouse and wider village through audio visual interpretation
- development of a social enterprise offering in the Forest to provide an amenity for visitors to the Forest, as well as a source of training and employment for vulnerable adults or young people working with third sector partners.
- through partnership with a private sector operator license, offer additional opportunities for recreation such as a high ropes course in the forest
- provision of additional parking infrastructure to offer appropriate infrastructure for increased visitors to the village, encouraging parking outside the village and less vehicular traffic through the village

The aim is to create a ‘whole village heritage tourism experience’ and help drive forward Tourism NI’s goal of encouraging more ‘out of state’ visitors to Northern Ireland. Work began early 2024, with a planned completion date of September 2027.



LCCC
**Lisburn &
Castlereagh
City Council**



2.06 acres or 0.83 hectares



All



111 Old Dundonald Road, Castlereagh,
Belfast BT16 1XT



Development



Opportunities available



Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The site is located adjacent to the Omni Park which comprises of an 11-screen cinema complex, eight thriving restaurants and a children's soft play offering. It is located close to a greenway for walking and cycling, linking to Comber in one direction and the CS Lewis Square in the other. The site also benefits from being close to the main Glider route into Belfast city centre.



The site extends to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54



This site is 1.6 hectares



14 Milltown Park, Lisburn BT28 3TU



Development



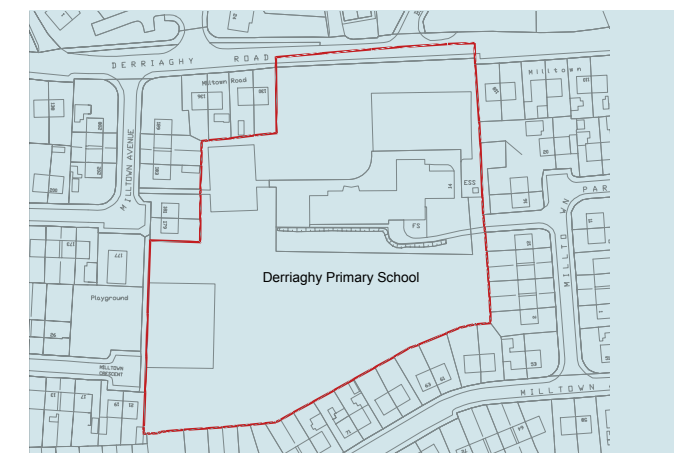
Opportunities available



Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Derriagh is the wider townland in which the settlement of Milltown is situated. Milltown is a village located three kilometres to the north of Lisburn city centre. The site of the former Derriagh Primary School sits centrally within the

The design of the site development should take into consideration the requirement for high quality open spaces, in line with relevant planning policies. It is recommended that a minimum of 10% open space is achieved throughout the overall site. Development needs to have regard for PPS8 and enhancement of public amenity for the wider community as a minimum standard. The council would welcome approaches in relation to this opportunity site. We are open to imaginative and creative solutions based on the former development brief, with a specific focus on meeting community need.



ST PATRICK’S BARRACKS, BALLYMENA



Scale of Development
37 acres / 15 hectares



Location
The subject lands are located 0.5 miles from Ballymena town centre, the site has easy access to Belfast via the M2 Motorway approximately 1.4 miles from the site. The subject site is well serviced with public transport with Ballymena train station being approximately 0.8 miles away.

The St Patrick’s site is a strategically important location of approx. 15 hectares, close to the centre of Ballymena. The former military barracks was closed by the Ministry of Defence in 2007 and declared surplus, then transferred to the Northern Ireland Executive.

The development of the site will transform this part of Ballymena and act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of neighbouring public stakeholder sites. It will stimulate job creation and sustain employment through the economic, social and physical regeneration of the area. The site has been approved planning for the development of a number of social houses, along with a new Northern Regional College campus. The subject land is also suitable for uses to include an innovation and clean technology centre for technology businesses.



LARNE INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



Scale of Development
c52 acres / 21 hectare



Sectors
Logistics / Manufacturing.



Location
The subject lands at Port of Larne / Redlands are in close proximity to Larne town and main arterial routes. Larne is located approximately 21 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 21 miles from Belfast International Airport, approximately 21 miles from Belfast City Airport and Approximately 22 miles from the Port of Belfast. The subject area is well serviced with public transport with buses and trains going to and from Belfast city centre.



Larne has excellent connectivity to the rest of NI and beyond, thanks to the A8 dual carriageway which runs to the Port of Larne’s main entrance, with access to NI’s motorway network in 20 minutes. In addition to the main ferry berth, the port has four other berths, capable of handling cargo: Curran Quay, Continental Quay, Olderfleet Quay, and Chainé Quay.

Existing accommodation at Port of Larne / Redlands includes a mixture of uses, including warehouse, industrial and retail operations. There are significant opportunities for new industrial developments as the subject site is zoned for industry under the Area Plan.

The existing Industrial zoning at Larne Port and Redlands, as defined by the Larne Area Plan 2010, is located between the Harbour Highway and Olderfleet Road. The zoning comprises of several parcels of land - the ‘Redlands’ site (and the adjacent lagoon), the site east of Coastguard Road, and the site on Curran Point north of East Antrim Boat Club. The Redlands site is the main part of the zoning and comprises of approx. 33ha, developed for a mix of uses including storage or distribution, general industry); sui generis uses such as Council recycling depot, NI Water Wastewater Treatment Works, a filling station, trade counters and builders’ merchants.

The area of zoning (approx. 3ha) to the east, closer to Larne Port, has a range of uses including Residential, Guest Houses, Larne Port Offices, and Sui Generis Uses, including the Coastguard building. The area at Curran Point (approx. 3.5ha) has been developed for harbour related industry – predominantly lorry trailer parking and customs related infrastructure. There remains approximately 8.5ha of land undeveloped within the zoning. The subject site falls within the NI Gas Supply Network and are also serviced by Northern Ireland Electricity Networks and Northern Ireland Water.

BALLYMENA INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



Scale of Development
86.5 acres / 35 hectares



Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing

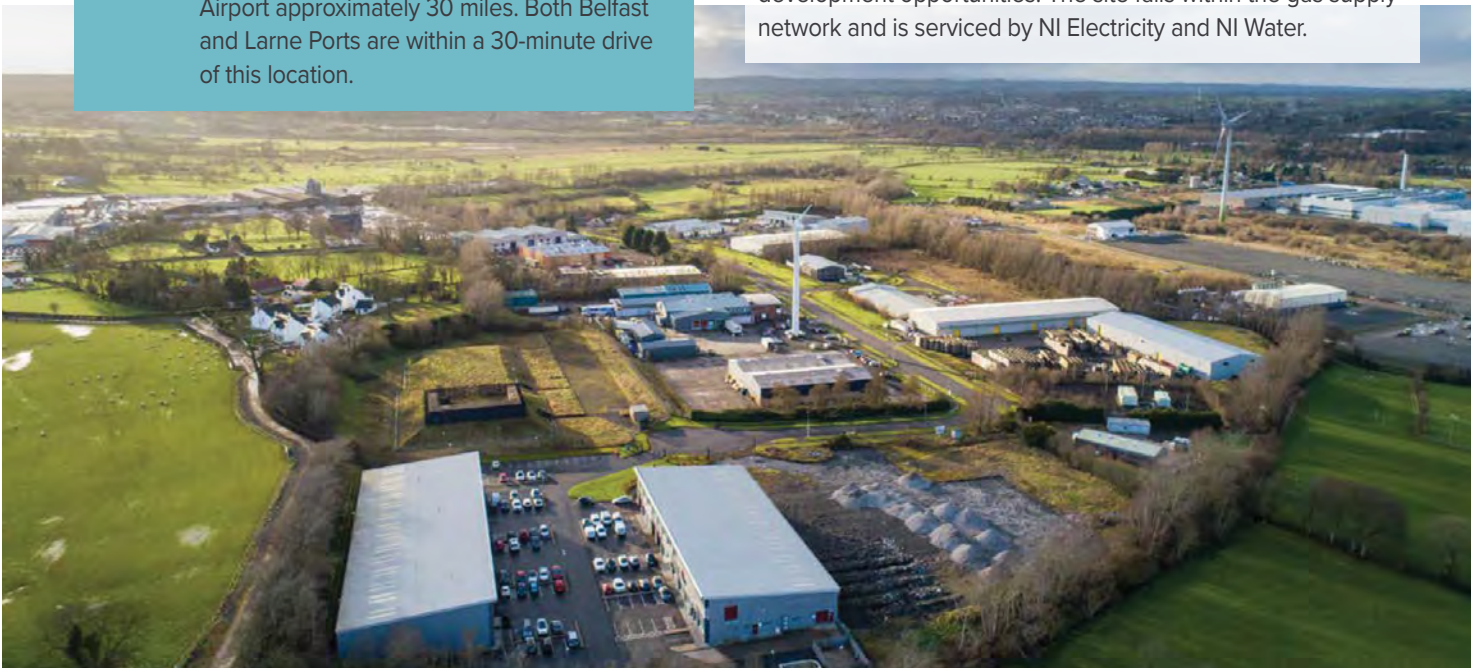


Location
The subject lands are located within three miles of Ballymena town centre and benefit from ease of access to the M2 motorway via Junction 11. Belfast is approximately 28 miles away, Belfast International Airport approximately 17 miles and Belfast City Airport approximately 30 miles. Both Belfast and Larne Ports are within a 30-minute drive of this location.

The subject site is comprised of a mix of greenfield land together with office, warehouse, industrial and manufacturing space.

The area includes land, office and industrial space at the former Michelin site on Raceview Road, which is approximately 100 acres and includes 830,000 sq. ft. of existing warehouse and office accommodation. There is outstanding internal road infrastructure, which enables HGV access around the 2km internal road network. Services include a mains electricity supply of 2 no. 20/24 MVA transformers, 1 no. 2.3 MW wind turbines and natural gas – 250mm /2.5 bar supply.

Also included are development opportunities on Woodside Road, which include Invest NI-owned lands, and an industrial estate made up of over 86 acres, providing a range of industrial and development opportunities in an area zoned for industrial use. The estate is made up of a multi-tenanted commercial park with office, industrial and manufacturing accommodation, with the surrounding greenfield lands presenting a wide range of development opportunities. The site falls within the gas supply network and is serviced by NI Electricity and NI Water.



CARRICKFERGUS INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



Scale of Development
South West - 223 acres / 90.2 hectares
Kilroot - 60 acres / 24.3 hectares



Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing



Location
The subject lands are both within approximately two miles of Carrickfergus town centre. Carrickfergus is located approximately 12 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 21 miles from Belfast International Airport, approximately 13 miles from Belfast City Airport and approximately 10 miles from the Port of Belfast. The subject area is well serviced with public transport with buses and trains going to and from Belfast city centre.



Kilroot Business Park is 60 acres in total and includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and office accommodation, as well as a gym and a café. Units range from 100sq ft to 90,000 sq ft.

There are significant opportunities for new industrial developments as the site includes areas zoned for employment within the Area Plan. New design and build opportunities are available for up to 130,000 sq ft. An additional 107-acre greenfield site is located adjacent to the business park and is zoned as industrial lands.

The south-west Carrickfergus area presents a range of commercial, logistics and manufacturing opportunities across two key areas: Shore Commercial Park and Trooperslane Industrial Estate.

Shore Commercial Park is c118 acres in total and includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and office accommodation, as well as opportunities for new build industrial units. The site also includes greenfield land zoned for employment within the Local Area Plan.

The Trooperslane Industrial Estate presents a range of opportunities for Invest NI client companies, with the c100 acre site providing existing and prospective investors, with access to high quality industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and office accommodation, and development sites with access to 11kva electricity supply and telecoms ducting.

The sites fall within the NI Gas Supply Network and are also serviced by Northern Ireland Electricity Networks and Northern Ireland Water.

MOURNE PARK ESTATE



Scale of Development
160 acres / 64.7 hectares



Sector(s)
Tourism / Leisure / Residential



Location
The subject premises are located close to the village of Kilkeel, approximately 15 miles from Newry. The subject land is situated approximately 39 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 46 miles from Belfast International Airport and approximately 42 miles from Belfast City Airport.

The subject lands include parklands, woods, fields and paddocks.

The property is ringfenced by the Coast Road to the south and Kilkeel Golf Club to the east, which was originally part of the estate. Potential uses for this site include tourism related, leisure and residential.



MOUNT CAULFIELD SITE, BESSBROOK



Scale of Development
3.76 acres / 1.52 hectares



Sector(s)
Tourism / Leisure / Residential



Location
The Mount Caulfield House is situated in the south-east of the village of Bessbrook, just off Fearons Terrace. Bessbrook is situated c 38 miles from Belfast city centre. The site is situated approximately a one-hour drive from both Belfast City and International airports. Bessbrook is well serviced with public transport, with train and bus services going to and from Newry.

The site consists of 3.76 acres / 1.52 hectares of land, of which the historical Mount Caulfield House sits on.

The subject site would be suitable for a mixed development opportunity for tourism, in the form of a guest house or hotel, with possible rental holiday cottages or housing development.



DOWNPATRICK POLICE STATION



Scale of Development
1.93 acres / 0.78 hectares

Sector(s)
Regeneration

Location
The subject lands are located just off Irish Street. The site has ease of access to road networks with Belfast (22 miles), Newry (30 miles) and Dublin (100 miles). The site is well serviced by public transport with buses running from Belfast and Newry.

The subject lands consist of an existing council owned car park and former Police Station site, as owned by the Department for Communities (DfC).

The subject lands would be suitable for a variety of uses given its town centre location.



CARNMEEN LANDS



Scale of Development
40 acres / 16 hectares

Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing

Location
The lands are located immediately adjacent to the Invest Northern Ireland lands at Newry, which offers opportunities for collaboration, creating synergies and the sharing service provision. The lands have direct access to the M1/A1 Euroroute.

The subject lands offer a unique opportunity to develop a dynamic, employment generating business and education campus on a large greenfield site. The land is in a strategic location, with profile and direct access onto the Dublin Belfast M1 corridor at Newry.

The connectivity to the cities of Dublin and Belfast and their airports and ports, as well as access to potential employees from both locations, is a very significant advantage of this location for potential occupiers and investors.

Potential uses for this site include industrial logistics, manufacturing and offices. The current planning application is for B1 office and B2 Light Industrial.



PROJECT LUNA



Scale of Development
1 Hectar

Sector(s)
Hospitality & Service Sector

Location
Merchant's Quay, Newry

Investment Type
Development of derelict site

Programme
Opportunity currently available

Planning Status
Planning to be obtained

Owner
Glena Developments

Project Luna at Merchant's Quay, Newry, is a major city centre, mixed-use development scheme, with plans for the development of a 82-bedroom hotel and 45,000 sq ft of offices, along with 160 parking spaces.

Brought forward by Glena Developments, an established property development and investment company, with a head office in Newry city centre, the project will focus on the redevelopment of three acres of derelict site. The project will further strengthen Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's exciting plans for the continued regeneration of the city.



PEARCE'S GATE



Scale of Development
0.4 Hectares

Sector(s)
Retail / Service sector / Private & social housing

Location
Merchant's Quay, Newry

Investment Type
Development of derelict site

Programme
Opportunity currently available

Planning Status
Planning Approval in place (March 2023)

Owner
Keltbray Developments

Pearce's Gate at Merchant's Quay, Newry is a major city centre, mixed-use development scheme, comprising of 73 no. apartments, three retail units and a coffee bar, 864square metres of office space, landscaped areas, communal courtyard and car parking.

Owned by Keltbray Developments, a specialist engineering and construction solutions group based in London, and as part of their ongoing commitment to redefining the way sustainable development is delivered, the planning-approved scheme offers 11 car parking spaces, with the aim of encouraging the reduction on the use of private cars and increasing the use of public transport. Pearce's Gate will also offer Newry's first Car Club giving residents of the apartments the opportunity to hire a car by the hour for those infrequent journeys, rather than the need to own their own vehicle. The scheme firmly respects the site's heritage and historic location adjacent to Newry Canal and will see the regeneration of a vacant and under-utilised area to create a high quality, sustainable urban development. It will also further strengthen Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's exciting plans for the continued regeneration of the city. Construction of the approved scheme is expected to commence in June 2025.





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	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	24 September 2025
File Reference	RDP60
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Market Square Christmas Tree, Bangor
Attachments	None

Background

Bangor Chamber of Commerce has approached Council officers with the proposal for the Chamber to purchase an artificial Christmas tree for Market Square, Main Street, Bangor, with the view of gifting this to the Council for future use.

Members may be aware that a report agreed in June 2025 included the proposal for 5 new road crossing frames along Main Street, and new decorative light column frames throughout the City Centre. These will be in situ for the upcoming festive period.

Bangor Chamber of Commerce welcomed the new feature lighting and proposed to enhance this with an artificial Christmas tree to replace the real tree in this location. The Chamber, working with Council officers, has identified a suitable artificial tree that can be purchased and delivered within the timeframes for the festive season.

Should the Council accept this gift from the Chamber of Commerce, the Council will be required to cover the annual cost of installation and take down. The Council's Assets and Property section has confirmed that they are content with this proposal.

Not Applicable

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The artificial Christmas tree will be approximately 30 feet in height and will be purchased from a reputable supplier.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council accepts the artificial Christmas tree from the Bangor Chamber of Commerce.

Unclassified

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ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	22 September 2025
File Reference	RDP 164
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☐ If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Bangor BID Update
Attachments	None

Background

Members may recall at this Committee in January 2025 it was agreed to provide £40,000 of grant funding towards a Bangor Business Improvement District (BID) proposal.

Regeneration Officers liaised with the Bangor BID Steering Group and subsequently submitted an application for funding to DfC. The application was successful, and a Letter of Offer was received by the Council in July 2025. The Council accepted the Contract for Funding awarding the Council £40,000, therefore match funding the Council's budget towards the BID proposal.

Update

Officers awarded a Contract for Funding to the Bangor BID Steering Group which was agreed, signed, and returned to Council on 14 August 2025.

There are currently 16 members on the BID Steering Group from various businesses and sectors based in Bangor. The Steering Group has established themselves as a

Not Applicable

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Limited Company - Bangor Business Improvement District Limited, and have developed the following website, www.bangorbid.com which demonstrates progress to date including the intended boundary of the Bangor BID proposal.

The positive impact of successful BIDs for the town / city they operate in, and their wider Borough, are broadly accepted with some successful and well established BIDs in Northern Ireland including:

- Ballymena BID
- Linen Quarter BID, Belfast
- Newry BID

The Steering Group continues to be proactive in broadening its knowledge base of the BID process and has engaged with other Steering Groups and BID Managers to gain an insight into the process, and any lessons learnt.

Next Steps

To progress with the BID proposal and comply with the T&C's of the Contract for Funding the Steering Group will now use the funding available to gain the required resources to design and develop the BID proposal to the ballot stage. The BID Steering Group will report to officers on a quarterly basis.

Council officers will continue to work independently and in collaboration with DfC to assist the Bangor BID Steering Group in progressing their BID proposal to the ballot stage. Most recently, officers have been engaging with other Councils, established BIDs, and DfC to gain an understanding of the ballot process which is a function that the Council will have responsibility for managing.

Officers have secured Council budget for the 2026/27 financial year for a potential Newtownards BID proposal. Officers will engage with the Chamber of Trade early next year to explore this further and consider the next steps if it is agreed to proceed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	09 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Date of Report	15 September 2025
File Reference	ART/MUS 03/23-24
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes ☐ No ☐ Other ☒ If other, please add comment below: Summary report
Subject	Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25

The Arts and Heritage Service prepares a summary of its activity in the form of an Annual Summary report. This is presented to the Council for noting in the autumn period. The report covers all aspects of the service and provides a comprehensive overview of its activity and successes.

The Arts and Heritage Service has prepared an Annual Summary for 2024-2025 and is attached as Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes the Arts and Heritage Annual Summary 2024-25.



Ards and North Down Borough Council



Arts **AND** Heritage Annual Summary

April 2024-March 2025

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ARDS ARTS CENTRE AND ARTS SERVICE OVERVIEW

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Arts Service commenced the 2024/25 financial year with an operating budget of **£523,400** to include all programmes, arts festivals, grant aid, staff, and the provision of Ards Arts Centre.

2024/25 saw a continuation of high levels of engagement in events and classes though a change in audience behaviour across the arts sector has been observed. Audiences are not booking as far in advance for events and ticket sales are slower than pre-Covid. Although events and classes are still selling out or with high attendance, the sales are coming in later. Audiences have less disposable income and are more choosy about what they book.

ARDS ARTS CENTRE VISITOR FIGURES

This year the museum has seen steady visitor figures, reaching **42,326 visitors** in the 2024-25 period.

STAFFING

The year saw continuing challenges for the staff both personally and professionally with short and long-term absences amongst the team. The Arts Centre Coordinator post was permanently filled in the autumn of 2024.

The Corporate Communications support for Arts and Heritage became full-time from April 2024 with the service gaining an additional ½ day of support that is welcomed.

BUDGETS

In early autumn 2024 the process of estimating budgets for 2025/26 commenced with some very challenging decisions to be made in order to keep the Council's annual rate at a manageable increase.

With a new Director in place the process for submitting budgets changed and presentations were made. Arts festivals and all arts and heritage grants were subject to scrutiny presentations to secure funding. Gratefully a small percentage increase of 4% was secured for festivals and a budget of £20,000 secured for 2025/26 to support a partnership Community Project *Beach of Dreams* during a challenging rate setting process.

The process made planning for the Guitar Festival particularly difficult as it takes place so early in the financial year in April and therefore programming must be completed before budgets are finalised.

KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024/25

Arts and Heritage Strategy Extension

A key priority for 2024/25 was to review the Integrated Arts and Heritage Strategy 2018-2023. It was agreed to extend the Strategy until 2025 due to the impact of Covid-19 in 2020/21/22. Some initial consultation work took place with the Arts and Heritage Panel in 2023/24 however the previous Chief Executive announced a re-structuring that was always intended after 10 years of operating as Ards and North Down Borough Council. It was decided that until a decision was made on the restructuring under the new Chief Executive that a review of the strategy should be put on hold.

A decision was made in early 2025 that the Arts and Heritage services would be moving to the Tourism Dept in August 2025. It will be decided by a new Director and Head of Service what the future of the strategy should look like.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AND Arts Network

AND Arts Network was established in 2023 as a new arts collaboration to include ALL arts, not just visual art with the intention to encompass all creative industries.

AND Arts Network will help the arts service to have a comprehensive understanding/knowledge of the individual practitioners and arts genres working within our Borough. With that knowledge, be able to communicate effectively and support through the development of skills events, networking and opportunities.

Recruitment commenced in early 2023 for the new Arts Network with 86 signing up in the first tranche recruiting artists and makers. A total of 141 members have now signed up with 26 new members in the last year.

1 networking event took place in February of 2025 with 2 further sessions planned in August and November 2025.

The event was kindly hosted by Cecilia Stephen's at her Bishop's Mill Studio. Marianne Kennerly of Boom! Studios facilitated a future visioning session with attendees. Vision boards were created from old magazines and newspaper clippings. Only 10 attended but it was a fun and social session and those in attendance thoroughly enjoyed the session.

Those signed up to the Network receive comprehensive monthly e-bulletins with any opportunities available through ANDBC and opportunities received from other organisations. Throughout 2025/26 we will continue to boost membership and facilitate 3 networking events per annum.

The AND Arts Network will be the vehicle to professionally develop the sector across all art forms. This will be the mechanism to ask, respond and support the needs of the sector. Formerly there was a strong relationship with Visual Artists Ireland Northern Ireland representative and many quality training and skills events were delivered in partnership. The many changes in VAI alongside a strong Arts Professional Development programme through Boom Studios in the form of their Trade programme, has meant there has been a move away from this style of training within the section. It is anticipated that more session may take place when addressing a

need, however the feedback from the Network is the request for networking and peer support.

Professional development events:

8 January	Online arts funding information session
23 January	Arts Bursaries information session
17 January	AND Arts Network Studio visit and goal setting
6 February	Michael Geddis Artist Talk and Arts Grants Information Session

EVENTS

Wasted was a hard-hitting show by Bruiser Theatre Company that investigated themes of consent. The show was performed to the senior school at St Columbanus on Friday 20 September and although very challenging material it was positively received by the students and a worthwhile engagement initiative.

Operation Spiked by Big Telly Theatre Company was an undercover theatre project that took place in 4 schools across the Borough on 26 September. The innovative project was delivered in partnership with the Policing and Community Safety Partnership and PSNI.

Big Telly planted undercover actors in the schools and a scene unfolded to raise awareness of the dangers and legal consequences of a drink being spiked. Actual PSNI Officers were involved in arresting the actor responsible and a very informative Q&A took place following the scene.

Participating school's stated that the project dealt with an important subject matter in an impactful way that really engaged the students.

Participating Schools:

- Glastry College
- Regent House
- Bangor Grammar
- St Columbanus

Joel M – Magic

On Wednesday 3 July Joel M presented two magic shows at South Eastern Regional College's Space theatre at 3pm and 7pm. Both shows were family friendly with 256 in attendance and were sold out. Joel Mawhinney is from Bangor, a social media sensation and currently a Blue Peter Presenter. After each show Joel offered a 'meet and greet' with those who wanted to chat and get photos.

This event took place as an alternative to the outdoor Walled Garden theatre which usually took place in July. Heartbreak Theatre Company were not touring their summer shows. Although considerable research took place to find an alternative

outdoor theatre event, there was nothing that was of good enough quality, programming, cost and availability to meet our needs.

Nevermore

A creative collaboration between Londonderry/Derry based companies, Banyan Puppet Theatre and Echo Echo Dance Company. This haunting story was a perfect spooky night at Halloween for adults and teenagers alike. The performance was stunning, combining poetry, dance, puppetry, music and stage design to create an immensely intense and beautiful theatrical experience. The performance took place on 30 October in Space Theatre at SERC and as part of our engagement efforts, 7 drama students at SERC availed of complimentary tickets and were very inspired by the performance. Total audiences were **73**.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Centre Stage returned to the Queens Hall on Saturday 7 December with a matinee performance of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. A total public audience of **259** attended to enjoy the festive event. One school's performance was planned for 10am in the Queens Hall on Monday 9 December and due to demand a second performance was added at 1pm with a total over both shows **493** pupils attending from St Finian's, Clondeboy, Victoria and St Malachy's Primary Schools. They all met Santa and seemed to really enjoy the trip.

Romeo! Romeo!

Terra Nova Productions staged a unique performance at Space Theatre at SERC, Bangor

Audiences for Romeo! Romeo! had the opportunity to join experienced Shakespeare director Andrea Montgomery and her two outstanding actors as they shared their perspective on *Romeo & Juliet*. The cast and director dissected some of the most romantic scenes in history, and rehearsed them live to an audience of **50**, including **17** students from Bangor Academy.

It was a relaxed, enjoyable, banter-filled evening and offered a unique way to learn more about this iconic production and the different ways it can be performed.

Arts Night at the Museum

Arts activities took over North Down Museum on Friday 21 March with something to do in every corner of the Museum. This annual event is a highlight. It gathers a lot of media attention and attracts many visitors of different nationalities and locals who have never been to North Down Museum before, and who say they will be back. The event is free and focuses on giving good quality arts tasters to audience – adults and children – in the hope that they are inspired and take up a class in the future, engage in other activities and see the benefits. There were activities including screen printing, clay work, sketching, Viking theatrical make-up, jewellery stamping, origami. There are also self-orientated tabletop activities in the café alongside live music and the café open.

The event took place from 6-9pm and attracted approximately **500** visitors.

MUSIC

The Friday Night Live series continued in 2024/25 proving as popular as ever. There was no concert in April due to the later delivery of Ards International Guitar Festival.

The monthly series provides value for money accessible music and has proven popular with pre-sales remaining high with a regular returning audience.

- 31 May **Brigid O’Neill** (73 Sold Out)
- 28 June **Wilfie Gilbert** (70 Sold Out)
- 27 Sept **Paul Casey** (70 Sold Out)
- 1 Nov **Cormac Neeson** (71 Sold Out)
- 22 Nov **Anthony Toner** (74 Sold Out)
- 31 Jan **Popplestone** (73 Sold Out)
- 28 Jan **The Boondocks** (72 Sold Out)
- 28 Mar **Eilidh Patterson** (73 Sold Out)

Music in the Chamber

In 2023/24 the Music In the Chamber programme (MIC) which takes place in Bangor Castle was reduced as a response to the music programming in the Courthouse. MIC was started when there were no venues in Bangor with touring music events or those that had original music. With the development of the Courthouse that need is met and have more venue facilities than Bangor Castle can offer. The MIC programme has been reduced to one or two events per guide.

- 7 December **Arco String Quartet with David C. Clements** (101 Sold Out)
- 3 April **Aishling Agnew and Richard Allen** (100 Sold Out)

The Ulster Orchestra brought their summer concert to Bangor on Friday 14 June with a full house. These regional concerts in Bangor Abbey have been very successful and the audience love them. They often feature two quartets or quintets from brass or string sections of the orchestra. It is hoped that they will return with a Christmas concert at the Abbey in the coming years. **250** attended.

FESTIVALS

Ards International Guitar Festival 17–21 April 2024

Ards International Guitar Festival delivered five vibrant days of guitar-driven performances, fringe events, and a rock photography exhibition.

Festival Highlights

The event opened at the Web Theatre with *Comedy Classics*, where Paul McMordie and composer Bill Campbell entertained audiences with live scores to three short comedy films. Thursday's new *Unplugged* session featured Belfast blues artist Dom Martin in conversation with Ralph McLean. Dom's candid reflections and soulful performances earned a standing ovation—an event likely to become an annual fixture. On Friday, classical virtuoso Manus Noble returned with his multi-instrumental show *A Bard's Tale*, enchanting the crowd with guitar, shruti, hand-pan, and bouzouki. Later, Martin Harley graced Queen's Hall with his distinctive lap steel slide blues supported by Matt McGinn and Matt Curran.

Weekend Magic

Saturday was a whirlwind: Kyle Riley's sold-out children's concert for young rockers (ages 3–7) was so successful, plans are in motion to relocate it to a larger venue next year. The Classical Guitar Society's event with Florida's Miles McConnell sold out and delivered a delightful showcase. Junior Afrifa's debut event, *Distortion Through the Decades*, blended musical demonstration with historical insight, resonating with younger crowds.

Grainne Duffy headlined at Queen's Hall Saturday night, joined by Ronnie Greer and Jimmy Smyth. Rising blues guitarist Ben Cutler opened the show. Grainne's outstanding career earned her the 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award, handcrafted by ceramicist Andrew Cooke. Tony Villiers & the Villains rounded off the evening at the Ivy Bar with an energetic Americana set.

Festival Finale

Sunday kicked off with the ever-popular *Classic Band Brunch* featuring Led Zeppelin tunes and live music from Matt McGinn. Though Sarah McQuaid's afternoon concert drew only 30 attendees—an unexpected dip—her performance remained strong and heartfelt. The String Ninjas closed the festival on a high note at the Ivy Bar with their lively set and playful banter.

Fringe Events & Photography Showcase

Three free fringe events held at the Georgian Gallery offered casual hour-long performances. Kyle John Suckling's trio played Friday, while Gavin Ferris and Gary Lutton took the Saturday slot. All free tickets were quickly snapped up. Complementing the concerts was a retrospective by renowned rock photographer Keery Irvine, featuring images of Pat McManus, Dom Martin, and others—a powerful visual tribute that served as the perfect backdrop.

	2024	2023	2022*
Events Delivered	15	20	19
Tickets Sold	1,115	1,135	903
Total Sales	£10,682.83	£10,403.39	£6,607.00

A small selection of positive Customer Comments:

- *I was impressed by the professional handling and organisation and also the helpful staff at each event.*
- *Brilliant range of artists and excellent organisation.*
- *Very smoothly run with a great atmosphere and talented musicians*
- *Amazing atmosphere and incredible artists as always this brilliant festival showcases seasoned guitarists*
- *Great range of entertainers & genres and on your doorstep.*

CREATIVE PENINSULA AUGUST 2024

The 23rd Creative Peninsula Festival took place in August with a number of changes implemented this year as a result of the review of the event.

For the 2nd year the application process was opened up to the new AND Arts Network to apply to and the events and exhibitions were curated from these applications. As a result, new participants were included this year. The decision was also made to focus our efforts on events in our own venues with just a carefully curated number of 'external events'.

The Twilight Market and Arts Night were a big success with the highest volume of footfall and participants to date. Having a small bar and small number of food vendors included encouraged people to stay for longer. Approximately 6,000 attended overall with 1,730 coming into the Arts Centre.

3 Exhibitions were held at Ards Arts Centre, North Down Museum and Ards VIC. A theme and prizes were introduced in 2023 and proved popular so remained for 2024. The exhibition was one of the strongest yet, the theme was **Elementals** and 4 prizes were awarded to:

- 1 Maya Todd
 - 2 Mark Hanvey
 - 3 Lisa Ballard
- Commendation – Willie Heron

Workshops

9 workshops planned in Ards Arts Centre, all went ahead and 7 of the workshops sold out with a total of 71 attendees.

3 workshops took place at Castle Espie with 31 attendees

A number of workshops also took place at the artist's own studios and these proved popular.

Partnership with Castle Espie

A new partnership was formed with Castle Espie this year with 4 events taking place at the site. Themed Creative Café's took place with Adele Pund and artist-in-residence Tracy Johnston and an Alfresco Art Day with Pandora Butterfield. A Saturday afternoon demonstration of wildlife themed arts and crafts also took place, and the site proved popular with visitors and artists alike. It is intended to build on this relationship again next year.

The Bangor Art Tour and Tipple was delivered again after the success of last year's event. This year's tour visited Bangor Courthouse to view their art collection and an exhibition by Jan McCullough and a visit to Kate Whiteman's new gallery.

The **Open Studio** series picked up this year. Only 5 studios participated but attendance was much improved on 2023 and those participating felt it was worthwhile.

Artist in Residence

An addition to the 2024 festival was an Artist-In-Residence slot that saw the Sunburst gallery used as a studio space throughout the month of August. Elaine Burke made great use of the space, giving visitors an insight into her practice and produced a body of beautiful charcoal sketches

39 separate events took place with over **7,000** attendees

Creative Peninsula Christmas Craft Fayre 6 and 7 December 2024

The first weekend of December saw the return of the annual Creative Peninsula Christmas Fayre.

19 artists and makers took stalls, and we welcomed **1,020** visitors over two days – note. Unfortunately, Storm Daragh impacted attendance on both Friday evening and Saturday though many visitors still braved the weather to attend. This event is under review for 2025 as a higher level of engagement is required by the artists and makers to make it viable.

Aspects Irish Literature Festival

Aspects Irish Literature Festival took place from Wednesday 25 September – Saturday 6 October 2024 in various venues in Bangor. The festival included writing events featuring poetry, songwriting, memoir, fiction, history and nature writing. Notable events were Michael Longley, Foy Vance in conversation, Bangor’s Ghost, Ruby Free and Evelyn Conlon.

There were six workshops as part of the festival. Two poetry workshops, one short-story, one storytelling and two bookbinding. These workshops along with the Festival Club, Poetry Slams and Poetry competition all encourage aspiring writers to get involved.

The Festival continues to balance showcasing the talent of local writers, alongside the extensive career and talents of writers from all over the Island. This year we had writers from as far as Galway, Kerry, Cork and Dublin, many of whom have never been to Bangor before. They had a wonderful experience and return to build on the Festival’s reputation as one of the key and longstanding writing festivals in Ireland. We were further encouraged this year to discover visitors from Dundalk, Derry/Londonderry and Mayo who all came to stay in Bangor to attend Festival events.

Total attendance	1,679
Total Ticket Sales	£11,573

Aspects Festival Club

Aspects Festival Clubs take place on Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9pm upstairs in the Imperial Bar in Bangor. There is one festival club per guide. These are free to attend whether you are reading out your work or listening and supporting.

12 June	28
25 September	15
19 February	30

Aspects Festival Club is an encouraging and supportive event for new writers. Participants can read for 3 minutes – the writing can be poetry or prose. It is facilitated by Ann-Marie Foster. It is a really positive event that is gathering momentum.

Ards Puppet Festival

Sunday 27 October and Monday 28 October

The popular annual festival welcomed a packed programme celebrating animals of all shapes and sizes, through puppetry performances, workshops, and interactive experiences.

From world-renowned puppet shows to puppet-making workshops and even a Puppet Petting Farm the festival offered something for everyone.

Throughout both days, festival goers enjoyed Clydebuilt Puppet Theatre’s rendition of Billy Goats Gruff and Banyan Theatre’s timeless tale of Red Riding Hood. Professor

Queen-Bee was a huge hit with her Punch and Judy-style show with an environmental twist and her incredible Flea Circus! The classic story of The Ugly Ducking came to life with Sea Legs Theatre Company, who also performed the adventurous story of Henry Clutterbuck and the Musicians of Bremen and a highlight of the festival was certainly HandMade Theatre Company's, Puppet Petting Farm, where families could head down to the farmyard and interact with handcrafted animal puppets in a beautiful farmyard setting.

Estimated audiences over 1500.

Most of the activities on the day were free, however some scheduled performances had a small charge of £6 or £2.

A total number of 511 tickets were sold for the ticketed performances creating an income of £ £2,813.12, an increase of over £947 from 2023.

A small selection of the positive feedback:

- *Henry Clutterbucks show was fab plenty of music and entertainment, my granddaughters loved it and the petting farm was enchanting they also loved the crafts which were well laid out. The characters only added to the charm of this event. Overall excellent value for money and entertainment for all the family.*
- *So delighted and inspired to see Little Red Riding Hood yesterday. What a creative and captivating performance of a well loved tale. Thank you so much for sharing the magic. We will be back next year!*
- *I've been going every year for the last 2-3 as I just love appreciating all the hard work that goes into a performance, my kids still talk about snug and grub from last year and the ugly ducking was just fab this year as well. The ticket prices are very reasonable as well, thanku!*

Young Aspects Festival

Friday 28 February – Sunday 2 March

A weekend of creativity for children and young people took place over 3 days before World Book Day. This is the second year the children's events have been separated into their own small festival of writing/reading and storytelling activity.

The events are unique and for small groups, which include writing workshops, interactive digital workshops, bedtime stories for the little ones and even a book binding workshop to make your own books.

Highlights included the Book Doctors from Children's Books Ireland giving the children specific book prescriptions tailored to their own interests and the Chew and Yarn morning in Clandeboyne Estate.

Most of the nine events were sold out and well received. A feedback survey after the events gave excellent feedback.

Total audience	125
Total ticket income	£797.39

Leid AND Lairn – Ulster-Scots Festival

An allocation of £10,000 was made to develop an Ulster Scots Programme to raise awareness of the culture and heritage of Ulster Scots in the Borough and in particular some activity as part of Leid Week 2024. This resulted in the development of the Leid AND Lairn Festival (language and learn)

A Working Group was established comprising Officers from Arts and Heritage, Tourism and Good Relations and it was agreed that a month-long programme featuring music, storytelling, literature, talks, tours and activity for schools would be provided

It was agreed that no public activity could take place during Leid Week (25-30 November) as the dates fell between the Council's two main Christmas 'Switch On's' in Bangor and Newtownards making marketing and promotion of the events extremely challenging. Instead, a focus on educational activity for school groups took place during Leid Week

In addition to the events as part of Leid AND Lairn existing activities took place at North Down Museum and as part of Aspects Literature Festival in October.

North Down Museum continues to support local historical societies through the provision of £1,000 in grant aid for Ulster-Scots talks annually and stocks Ulster Scots literature (both adult and children) in the plantation gallery in the museum supplied by the Ulster Scots Agency.

A total of **12** events took place at venues including Cockle Row in Groomsport, North Down Museum, Ards Arts Centre, Donaghadee Community Centre, Portico in Portaferry and Ballywalter Village Hall.

Attendance overall was **311** and highlights of the programme included a lunchtime recital with Northern Ireland Opera featuring Carolyn Dobbin and Tristan Russcher and a commissioned walking tour of Newtownards with Valhalla Street Theatre.

An extensive amount of PR coverage was gained with significant print and online media was achieved plus radio coverage. The volume of coverage didn't translate into corresponding event attendance.

Feedback Summary

A post-event questionnaire was issued to event attendees and publicly online via the Council's Social Media channels. Only 11 responses were received and not everyone responded to all the questions asked.

Of those:

- 64% increased their knowledge of Ulster-Scots culture/heritage in the borough
- 36% increased their knowledge of the Ulster-Scots language (18% somewhat)
- 81% described the programme as 'engaging' with 73% saying it was 'value for money' and 'enjoyable' and 63% 'entertaining'.

Feedback - Customers

'All events that I attended were excellent. They deserved better attendance'

‘It was most interesting - enjoyed the songs, music and the stories’

‘Paul was excellent on the history of Ards and the plantation and showed us things I didn’t know existed’

‘Something very different and I really enjoyed it’

Feedback – Teachers

“It was a good experience for the children AND TEACHERS, thank-you”

“So glad this experience was open to children from our SEN department”

EXHIBITIONS

The Arts Centre hosted 21 exhibitions from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

GEORGIAN GALLERY

Pictures in Rock

17 Apr – 27 Apr

An exhibition of photography by Keery Irvine

Part of Ards International Guitar Festival, the exhibition featured a curated selection of Keery’s career highlights.

Note: No exhibitions between 27 April and 31 May as the windows were being replaced.

Meilé

31 May– 27 June

A Solo Exhibition by Juste Bernotaite

Juste explored the history of her homeland, Lithuania, and navigated her relationship to the landscapes in the hopes of ‘releasing’ it in the medium of oil paint.

Next Generation

5 July – 24 July

An exhibition by GCSE and A Level Students

A selection of the finest work being created by talented GCSE, AS and A Level students from the Ards and North Down Borough.

Creative Peninsula

2 Aug – 31 Aug

This exhibition is a celebration of the exclusivity and quality of the artwork produced by local artists and makers created within the Borough.

Unbound Horizons: Navigating Landscapes and Boundaries

5 Sept – 28 Sep

A group exhibition of sculpture and painting

An exhibition of works by Cheryl Bleakley, Grainne Kielty, Sally Young, Lorna Noble and Sandra Robinson delving into the boundaries and the ever-shifting landscape of human experience.

Earth-Made

3 Oct – 23 Oct

A collaborative exhibition between Patricia Millar and Ruth Osborne

Ceramicist, Patricia Millar and textile artist, Ruth Osborne explore commonalities using natural materials in textile, ceramic, print, colour and texture.

Aspire: Ventures in Craft **1 Nov – 28 Nov**

A group exhibition by Homo Faber Fellows 2023

A group exhibition by Claire Mooney, Jackson Byrne, Richard Butler, Noel Donnellan and Emily Criddle which exploring themes of sustainability, links to the land and the transmission of traditional craft skills in the contemporary field.

While your back was turned **12 Dec – 18 Jan**

A solo exhibition by Tim Millen

An exhibition of paintings exploring themes of ecology, mythology and place.

Surface Matters **23 Jan – 15 Feb**

A group exhibition by the Loft Artists

A collective of Portaferry based artists. Featuring works by Sara Brown, Owen Crawford, Sally Houston, Kate Rebbeck and Cecilia Stephens responding to the title of Surface Matters.

Veiled **20 Feb – 13 Mar**

A solo exhibition by Emma Stewart

This exhibition re-examined works by renowned male artists, such as Titian and Caravaggio, through a contemporary feminist lens.

Resonators by Scarlet Page **20 Mar – 13 Apr**

A Journey Through Guitar Heroism

Part of Ards International Guitar Festival, an extraordinary collection of portraits celebrating some of the world's most iconic guitarists, captured through the lens of acclaimed photographer Scarlet Page.

SUNBURST GALLERY

Part by Part **29 Mar – 27 Apr**

A Solo Exhibition by Louise French

A series of paintings and waste material assemblages exploring the tension between the aesthetic appeal of consumer objects which at the same time are a toxic token of our environmental crisis.

Note: No exhibitions between 27 April and 31 May as the windows were being replaced.

Humans **31 May– 27 June**

A Solo Exhibition by Aoife Tolerton

Aoife's work explored the themes of mass tourism, adverse environmental effect and how humans play a role in this. Translating people watching onto canvas.

Next Generation **5 July – 24 July**

An exhibition by GCSE and A Level Students

A selection of the finest work being created by talented GCSE, AS and A Level students from the Ards and North Down Borough.

Creative Peninsula **2 Aug – 31 Aug**

Artist in Residence: Elaine Burke took up residency producing large scale works in charcoal

Bated Breath

5 Sept – 28 Sep

A solo exhibition by Claudia Rose

Claudia drew inspiration from the historical relationship of the Ards Peninsula to textile industries in Ireland and the influence of Irish Lace.

Humans of Covid 19

3 Oct – 23 Oct

A solo exhibition by BJ Olsen (Quarembroidery)

This exhibition explored the artist's experience of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 as an artist but also a nurse.

Lemon Juice

1 Nov – 28 Nov

A solo exhibition by Kathryn Graham

This exhibition investigated the role of images as emblematic mediators of memory, exploring symbols and motifs from popular media, both past and present.

In Praise of Shadows

12 Dec – 18 Jan

A solo exhibition by Maya Todd

This exhibition was an evocative exploration of the interplay between fiber and form, where the boundaries of textiles are pushed to create three-dimensional sculptural shapes.

Pursuing the Third Dimension

23 Jan – 15 Feb

A solo exhibition by Michael Geddis

Michael specialises in drawing and printmaking. His intuitively drawn cellular landscapes are derived from memory and imagination and are characterised by distinctively microscopic features.

We're All Mad Here

20 Feb – 13 Mar

A solo exhibition by Keith Drury

The intention of Keith's new work was to create a narrative and open conversations about mental health issues, exploring autism, ADHD, self-harming, body dysmorphia and the experiences of some people who identify as LGBTQ.

Mid Years' Devotions

20 Mar – 13 Apr

A solo exhibition by Kim Montgomery

This exhibition combined figurative representational drawing, painting and collage, with real and imagined autobiographical narratives.

ForM Sculpture Exhibition

The 2024 ForM Sculpture attracted more applications than ever before and from all over Ireland. The reason for this is the exhibition's growing reputation, but also the Sculpture in Context Exhibition at the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin did not take place in 2024. The standard was high, and the exhibition showcased work from local artists alongside artists from further afield. The materials continue to develop and there was work from cardboard to clay to stone and bronze.

The exhibition runs for the full month of June and attracts a different audience during that month due to the exhibition and feedback from Parks staff.

Approximately **3,000** in attendance

A panel of arts specialists viewed the exhibition before the launch event and chose works which they thought deserved special awards. The panel was made up of Betty Brown, artist, Amanda Croft, Art Critic and Emily Crawford, AND BC Arts and Heritage Manager.

1st Place	Anushiya Sundaralingam
2nd Place	Joy Gray
3rd Place	Sally Houston
Highly Commended	Helen Hanse
Highly Commended	Lucy Mulholland

CREATIVE CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

One-Day Workshops – Spring 24

13 April	Still Life Painting with Pandora Butterfield	14/14
25 May	Beginners Watercolour with Trisha Campbell	10/14
22 June	Seaside Watercolour with Trisha Campbell	14/14
27 July	Silver Earrings with Diane Lyness	10/10

Children's workshops

15 June	Bug Drawing with Adele Pound	16/20
27 July	Kev F Comic Art Masterclass	60/60

May - August 2024

A 6-week spring/summer term commenced May with **11** classes running along with a new Creating with Nature class. A total of **139 out of 160** participants enrolled.

All classes have returned to full capacity and 6 of the 11 classes were fully booked.

August 2024 Creative Peninsula Workshops:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • 1:1 Throwing on the Potters Wheel with Tracey Johnston | 5/5 |
| • Linoprinting with Rosie Ennis | 8/8 |
| • Nalbinding with Christine Casey | 6/6 |
| • Oil Painting Masterclass with Craig Jefferson | 3/8 |
| • Introduction to Natural Dyeing with Ruth Osborne | 10/10 |
| • Wirework Jewellery with Morag Chambers | 10/10 |
| • Beauty of Nature Bowl with Ellen Cunningham | 10/10 |
| • Freedom of Painting with Maria Horvothova | 5/10 |
| • Mosaic Making with Geraldine Cooper | 12/12 |

September- December 2024

The term commenced in September with 13 classes programmed, including 3 new classes Impressions of Nature, Working with Wool and Mosaic Making. The term ran with **13** classes (7 of which were fully booked) total number of attendees at **146** of **184** available places.

One Day Workshops – Autumn 24

An additional silver ring workshop was programmed due to the volume of people on a waiting list and Diane was able to add another date

31 Aug	Paint your Pet with Trisha Campbell	13/14
7 Sept	Beginners Watercolour with Trisha Campbell	14/14
14 Sept	Wild Watercolour with Trisha Campbell	14/14
12 Oct	Still Life Painting with Pandora Butterfield	11/14
16 Nov	Silver Stacking Rings with Diane Lyness	10/10
5 Dec	Silver Stacking Rings with Diane Lyness	10/10

January – April 2025

A 10-week term commenced in January with 14 classes programmed, including a new print making class 1 class. The term ran with **14** classes (7 of which were fully booked) total number of attendees at **160** of **195** available places.

One-Day Workshops – Spring 25

1 Feb	Soft Pastel with Sara Brown	12/12
15 Feb	Silver Bracelet with Diane Lyness	10/10
5 April	Acrylic Painting with Kim Montgomery	cancelled

Children’s workshops

13 Feb	Waking up in Winter	12/20
24 April	Jumping into Spring	11/20

COUNCIL ASSISTANCE/PARTNERSHIP

Beach of Dreams – Our Siren Song

By Beat Carnival

Our Siren Song is part of Beach of Dreams, a UK-wide coastal arts festival in May 2025. Our Siren Song programme and events are supported by Ards and North Down Borough Council, National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All, Beach of Dreams, Beat Carnival and Arts Council Northern Ireland.

Participants will be invited to walk the coastline with Beach of Dreams from 13–15 May, exploring Portaferry, Cloughey, Portavogie, Ballyhalbert, and Ballywalter. The festival finale on 17 May at Millisle Beach will feature an afternoon of activities, followed by a stunning carnival procession and the debut of Our Siren Song — featuring operatic singer Jenny Bourke as the Siren, a mass choir, samba drummers, and dancers.

TT2028

The Arts and Heritage Manager (AHM) alongside the Events Manager is involved in plans for a large event to mark the centenary of the Ards TT in 2028. A working group has been established, and early planning is underway for what is hoped to be a weekend of celebrations similar to the Goodwood Revival. A commemoration for those that lost their lives on the course will also take place.

PORTICO PARTNERSHIP

The Service Level Agreement in place has enabled Portico to deliver a comprehensive programme of community arts engagement. Through seven initiatives, Portico engaged over **1,100** across diverse demographics. The funding facilitated inclusive programming that removed financial barriers. The partnership provides ANDBC with outreach opportunities and to support a valued arts organisation in the Borough.

Joe the Magician - April 1st, 2024

The return of Joe attracted **244 attendees**. The programme's commitment to accessibility was evident where Portico provided complimentary tickets to nursery and primary schools.

Early Birds Choir 8-Week Programme

This initiative demonstrated commitment to inclusive community engagement. Facilitated by Ciara Delaney from Body Song, the programme provided weekly 2-hour sessions combining singing, gentle movement, and social connection.

Gala Fest 2024

Portico's participation in Portaferry's established community festival enabled them to deliver two significant events. The Children's Talent Show provided a platform for emerging local talent, accommodating **20 participants** across **16 acts** before an audience of **250**.

The evening *Dragaoke* event, hosted by 'Lady Portia', combined entertainment with community participation, encouraging residents to engage with performance arts in an accessible, light-hearted format that appealed to adult audiences.

Heritage Festival 2024

This initiative demonstrated Portico's capacity to coordinate community-wide cultural programming promoting the area's natural, built, and cultural heritage.

An Afternoon with the McCooeys celebrated the work of Joseph Tomelty while accommodating community groups through free admission.

The archaeological lecture series attracted **150** attendees who explored the 5,000-year-old megalithic tomb at Millin Bay. This programme successfully combined academic expertise with community engagement.

Halloween Partnership Programme 2024

The Mexican Day of the Dead theme provided educational and cultural enrichment through a screening of Disney's *Coco* as a community sing-along event, introducing families to different cultural traditions through accessible programming.

Christmas Programming 2024

The year's programming concluded with our traditional Christmas celebrations, including a children's pantomime production of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" that attracted **250 attendees**.

Michael McHale Piano Concert Series - January/February 2025

Portico concluded with three prestigious concerts by Michael McHale, reaching local piano teachers and students via the SLA. Aspiring musicians experienced world-class artistry in an intimate venue, with the performances later broadcast on BBC Radio 3 for wider impact.

COMMUNITY ARTS DEVELOPMENT

Health and Wellbeing

The Community Arts Development Officer (CADO) continues to sit on the Councils Health and Wellbeing Council Working Group and has organised a variety of creative workshops specifically for staff of AND Council. The idea behind the creative workshops is to offer staff the opportunity to participate in a mindful activity, to learn a new skill and to have pride in their creative abilities. All ways to develop better mental health. A very positive initiative from the council which has clear benefits to staff wellbeing.

Tea Dance – Queens Hall, Newtownards

More than **100** people attended a tea dance organised by ANDBC Community, Arts and Age Friendly officers in February 2025. Attendees were treated to an afternoon of sequence and ballroom dancing while others simply enjoyed the atmosphere. Several exhibitors were also in attendance including Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership, DeafBlind UK, and Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke who were able to provide some information on support services available to people, while Tesco donated items towards the event.

Seeds of Creativity – Ards Arts Centre

In February 10 x young people aged between 8 and 12 yrs enjoyed a morning of art and drama games with Bernice Anderson and Amy McKelvey, exploring the themes of winter and nature. Great fun was had by all. The next Seed of Creativity workshop is planned for April and will explore the joy of Spring through art and drama games.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland Arts for Older People Programme

An award of £8,500 has been received for *Age Friendly Creatives*, a creative workshops programme with older people in partnership with County Down Rural Community Network.

A series of creative workshops is being offered to older people's groups within the Ards and North Down Borough addressing the theme of friendship, both through the medium of the art and also through the very act of participation in the creative activity. The aim is to offer 16 groups 8 x hours of creative workshops each. An estimated 240 participants engaging in 8 x hours of creative activity and a total of 128 hrs of facilitation by local artists.

This funding is also supporting the Cuan Craic Drama group who are working on a performance to present to older people's groups in June, and a Christmas show for community audiences in Portico in December.

The programme will culminate in Dec 2025.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland Rural Engagement Arts Programme

An award of £6,420 has been received for the project, Our Siren Song, which is a creative workshops programme and community celebration event in partnership with Beat Carnival. Rural groups and artists in the Ards Peninsula were engaged for the Our Siren Song project, a series of carnival arts, singing, samba drumming and textile workshops culminating in May 2025 at events in Portaferry and Millisle.

Summer Schemes

- Ards Arts Centre Summer Scheme 12 to 16 August 2024
- Donaghadee Arts Summer Scheme 5 to 9 August 2024

Both schemes were fully booked at 40 children attending across the two schemes.

The Ards Summer scheme took place in the Arts Centre from 10am – 4pm every day for a week. It involved arts and crafts with Trisha McNally, drama with Sarah Lyle from Cre8 Theatre and pottery with Ellen Cunningham. The young people did a short performance for their parents at the end of the week and had several arts and pottery pieces to take home. The feedback from the parents and children was excellent.

The Donaghadee scheme which focuses on arts and crafts took place in Donaghadee Community Centre from 9.30 – 1pm each day for a week. The artist facilitator was Bernice Anderson who worked with the young people to create some beautiful and imaginative pieces of work.

ARTS GRANTS AND BURSARIES

Multi Annual Arts Grants (awarded for 2024-25 and 2025-26) TOTAL: £32,000

The Multi-Annual Arts Fund is designed to enable constituted arts groups from the Borough to enhance existing or undertake new larger scale arts initiatives over a two-year period.

Core Funded

Friends of Portaferry Presbyterian Church (Portico)	£5,000
Seacourt Print Workshop	£5,000
Boom Studios	£5,000
Bangor Drama Club	£5,000
Kilcooley Women’s Centre	£5,000

Festival Funded

Hollywood Music Festival	£4,000
Bangor international Choral Festival	£3,000

There are two types of multi-annual grants - core and festival. Core funding is for organisations who have salaries and running costs throughout the year delivering arts programming year-round. Festival funding is for arts organisations who deliver an arts festival and generally run through volunteers and don’t finance an office or venue year-round.

Arts Project Fund, Total £11,000

The Arts Project Fund is open to arts, community and special interest groups throughout the Ards and North Down Borough area who wish to enhance existing and undertake new community arts activities. Grants of up to £1,000 are available. A wide range of applications were received from across the Borough mainly focusing on visual arts and drama activities.

A budget of £11,000 was available for the project funding stream for 2024-25. In two rounds, a total of 21 applications were made to the project grant totaling £20,540 requested in funding.

Successful applicants:

- Seen Dance Company
- Portico
- AMH New Horizons
- Lisbarnett & Lisbane Com Ass
- Cre8 Theatre
- Bangor Speech Festival
- Hollywood Shared Town
- Orchardville Society (previously AMH Promote)
- Boom!

- Ulster Guild of Spinners weavers and Dyers
- Ards Camera Club
- Kilcooley Women's Centre
- Cedar Foundation
- Valhalla theatre Group

Youth Arts Training Grant, Total £2,000

A total of £2,000 was available in 2024/25 for young people living in the Borough, who wish to undertake short-term or one-off youth arts training or development opportunity. A maximum grant of £250 per applicant was available under the Youth Arts Training Grant.

9 applications were received and 8 were successful.

Individual Artist Grant: Total £2,750

The Artistic Development Scheme is to support Individual artists who are living in the Borough for up to a maximum grant of £250 to support the cost of specific training or artistic residencies, to enhance their skills and develop their practice.

Over two rounds of this funding stream, 18 applications were received with 12 of them being successful.

Arts Bursaries

The Council offers three creative bursaries: The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, (Co. Monaghan); Ballinglen Arts Foundation, (Co. Mayo) and the John Hewitt Summer School, (Co. Armagh). These unique bursaries give an artist an opportunity to focus on a specific project of development in their work and further their artistic practice.

Applicants were asked to clearly demonstrate their experience and how they would use the bursary to further their professional practice.

Ballinglen Arts Foundation Bursary

Two-week bursary was awarded to Sally Houston – a visual artist.

Tyrone Guthrie Bursary

Nine applications were received for the Tyrone Guthrie Centre.

The panel recommended a one-week bursary to each of the following artists:

- Paul Maddern, poet
- Tim Dwyer, poet
- Victoria Patterson, visual artist -painter
- Clare Gallagher, visual artist -photography

Victoria Patterson was the 4th recipient of the bursary made available to support an artist with a disability. The award was created in memory of Chris Ledger through the developments of the Arts and Disability Working Group.

John Hewitt Summer School Bursary

Louis Murdock was awarded the bursary to attend the John Hewitt Summer School 2024.

MEDIA AND ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The Arts and Heritage Service continues to benefit from a strong social media presence on Facebook 6,621 followers on Culture AND/2,537 on the Guitar Festival) and Instagram (3,105 followers). The Culture channels have collectively increased their following by 1,270 on the previous year. We also continue to be active on X (formerly Twitter) with 506 for the Guitar Festival and 1,120 for Aspects.

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the ANDculture website received 42K active users and 173K views. The home page had 13.2K page views, the What's On section received 13.6K page views.

MAILING LIST

The ANDculture mailing list (combined Arts and Heritage list) currently has over 3.2K subscribers. A 'What's On' email is sent out to subscribers once a month detailing all activity coming up across the Arts and Heritage service.

Summary of Top Performing Posts on Culture Facebook by Reach:

The top performing organic posts in 2024/25 for Arts were (by organic reach):

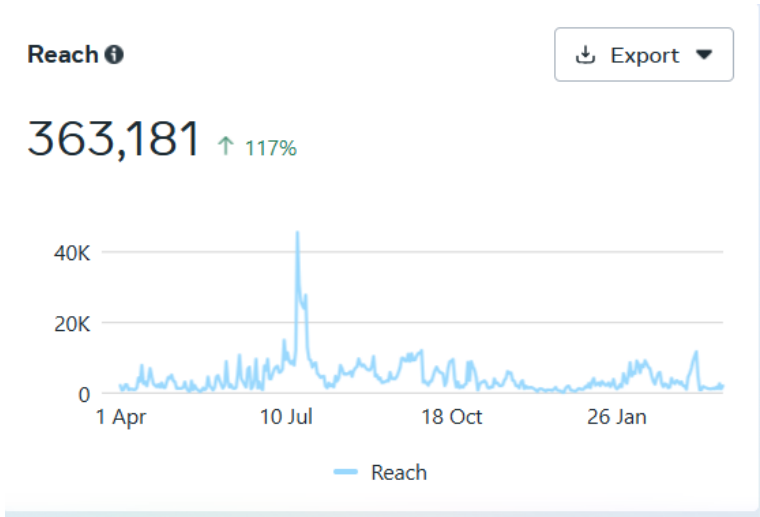
- Launch of Young Aspects '25 programme: 17K
- Opening of Guitar Festival '24 exhibition: 8.9K
- Portaferry artist Connie Baker Horne on BBC's Make it at Market: 8.1K
- Sneak Peek at ForM Sculpture Exhibition: 6.5K
- Cuan Craic Drama Group returns: 6.1K
- Galician Poetry Night at Aspects '24: 5.7K

The top performing Museum/Heritage Facebook posts of 24/25 were:

- Swimmer Ryan from Hong Kong visits North Down Museum: 63.2K
- Launch of Boom Studios Heritage Sketchbook Exhibition: 18.5K
- Museum staff at Seaside Revival event: 13.5K
- RNLI Exhibition Launch: 13.4K
- The Bees Are Back at North Down Museum: 11.3K
- Half Term Fun at North Down Museum: 9.6K

In this time period Digital Paid-For Advertising Campaigns were also in place for Guitar Festival, Creative Peninsula and Aspects Festival which contributed to increased reach across the Culture channels.

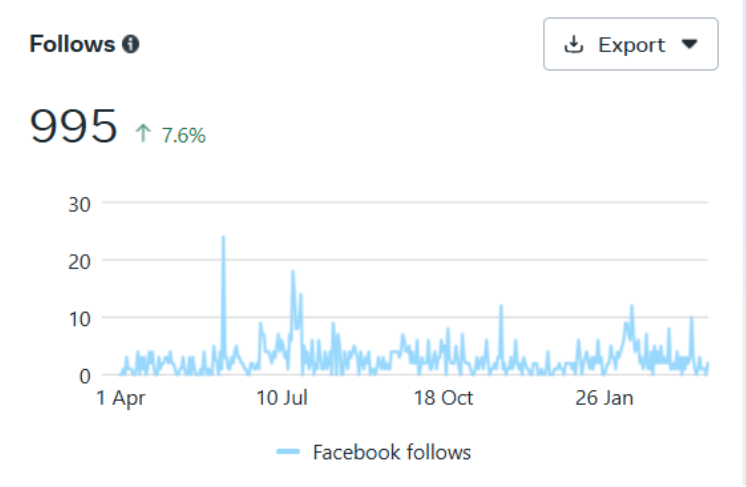
Facebook Reach 1 April 24 – 31 March 25



Instagram Reach 1 April 24 – 31 March 25



Culture Ards and North Down Facebook New Likes and Follows:

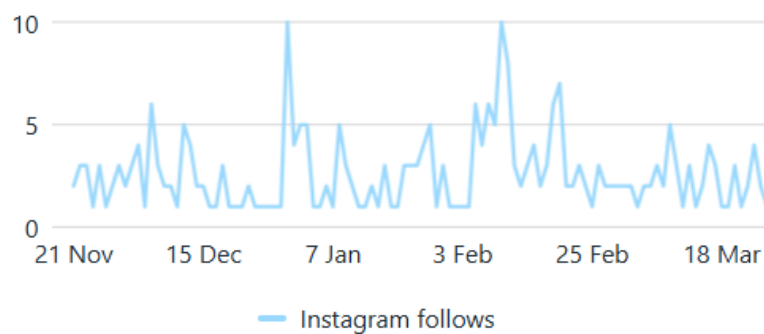


Culture Ards and North Down Instagram New Likes and Follows:

Follows ⓘ

Export ▼

285



Culture Ards and North Down Facebook visits:

Visits ⓘ

Export ▼

28,279 ↑ 100.5%

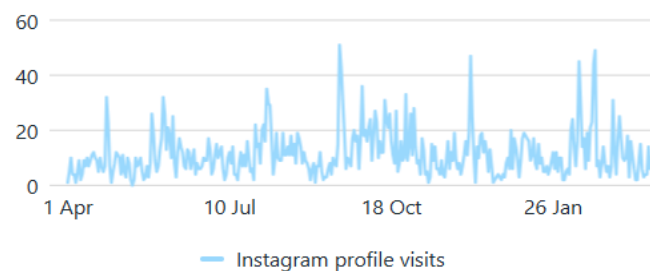


Culture Ards and North Down Instagram visits:

Visits ⓘ

Export ▼

4,196 ↑ 55.9%



ANDCulture Website Stats 1 April 2024– 31 March 2025 (G4 Analytics):



NORTH DOWN MUSEUM AND HERITAGE SERVICE OVERVIEW

Ards and North Down Borough Council's North Down Museum and Heritage Service is responsible for the curation of the museum's collection of historic artefacts and works of art. In addition, it provides exhibitions, education and outreach programmes, grant aid, historic information and advice and the provision of North Down Museum, as well as partnership work with Council and Government departments and local communities/heritage interest groups to protect, preserve and share our Borough's rich history.

The annual operating budget for 2024/25 was **£345,000**.

NORTH DOWN MUSEUM VISITOR FIGURES

This year the museum has seen steady visitor figures, reaching **66,532 visitors** in the 2023-24 period.

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & WORK EXPERIENCE

Staffing levels remained the same with the continued absence of the Museum Assistant being covered by an agency worker in the 2024-25 period. The secondment of the museum assistant was due to end in November 2024 but was extended to August 2025.

From April 2024 our Education and Outreach Officer was made full-time in response to the increased demand for our schools programming and to facilitate the expansion of our education outreach programme. This increase in hours has been hugely beneficial to our family friendly programming and adults with needs outreach project. It has enabled the museum to create much more diverse and engaging programmes and to take part in new education projects such as our original museum storybooks for the under 5's.

2024 saw an increase in the demand in the role of the Heritage development officer. Community groups have become more active post-covid and there has been an increased involvement of the HDO in working with other council departments within council and across councils.

The museum's two dedicated volunteers continued to work on documenting the museum's large image collection and researching 18th Century Bangor history. A third volunteer joined the team and is currently helping with cataloguing the museum's library.

The museum provided a work experience placement for a secondary school student.

VISITOR DATA COLLECTION

The visitor survey is available in paper form in the museum and also online in a citizen space system, this is accessed via a QR code with codes located throughout the museum building. This supplies the museum with data regarding our visitors to assess our current programming and inform future planning and programming.

For the 24-25 period, data collected from the survey highlighted some of the demographics of a portion of our visitors (approx. 0.8%). Of our adult visitors the largest age groups falls into the 65+ age group, making up 34.5% of our visitors, up 11% from last year. The second largest group with 20.2% is the 55-64 age group. 55% of our visitors in the period described themselves as female (5% drop from last year) and 41.7% as male (5% increase on last year).

The majority of our visitors are from the Uk, with 34.9% of our visitors from NI (a small drop from last year). However 39% of visitors came from outside of the Uk, suggesting that the museum is a popular attraction for tourists. Canada, New Zealand and Australia were common locations for our non-European visitors. Countries represented in our 'other' category include Japan, Mexico, Philippines, Zambia, China, and Thailand. We have seen a marked increase in the visits from the Republic of Ireland, a small decrease in European visits and a modest increase in the 'other' category.

Age Group	Percentage
16-24	6.4%
25-34	12.1%
35-44	17.7%
45-54	9.1%
55-64	20.2%
65+	34.5%

Gender	Percentage
Male	41.7%
Female	55%
Non-binary	0.6%
Not answered	0.6%
Prefer to self describe	2.3%

Location of Visitor	Percentage
Ards and North Down	21.6%
Elsewhere in Northern Ireland	13.3%
Republic of Ireland	9.6%
United Kingdom	25.2%
Europe	5.8%
USA	8.1%
Other	16.4%

Rating Experience	Percentage
Excellent	90.7%
Good	8.7%
Average	0.4%
Poor	0.2%

Where did you hear about us?	Percentage
Social Media	9.4
Printed materials	3.1
Local Press	0.5
Radio	0.5
Email	0.5
Website	11.3
Google	6.3
Word of mouth	13.1
Recommendation	5.6
Walking past	5.3
Live locally	5
Regular Visitor	6.1
Other *	33.3

The last section of the survey revealed that 99.4% of visitors rated the experience at the museum as excellent or good with over 90% falling into the excellent category. The section relating to where the visitor has heard about the museum has been reworked to include more options as last year 70% of responses fell into the 'other' category. This has allowed us to gather better information about our marketing strategies. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive with the friendliness of the staff, quality of exhibitions and child-friendly initiatives, most commonly cited in the positive comments.

AQUISITIONS

The museum continued to accept a range of new items into the collection in 2024-25 in accordance with the Museum's Collection Development Policy. Work began on the accessioning of the very large paper archive of the Percy French collection.

COLLECTIONS

Following an audit of the stores and galleries in 2023, a number of issues were identified, some of these issues were addressed in the 24/25 period. However, the progress was slow due to the absence of a dedicated collections role in the museum. The increase in historic information requests and busy programming schedule have left the museum manager with less time to dedicate to addressing collections management issues. However, some progress was made and is summarized below.

1. Environmental conditions- new dehumidifying cassettes have been placed into cases where vulnerable artefacts are displayed. Primarily this has been focused on cases containing archaeological metal.
2. Cases- There is a need for the improvement of cases, both for temporary and permanent galleries. The case that held the Ballycroghan swords was not suitable and a gallery redevelopment made it necessary to prioritise purchasing a new environmentally controlled secure case to fit into the new space. This new case is accessible unlike the prior case, it's more secure and allows for the vulnerable archaeological metal to be held in an appropriately controlled environment.
3. Following the donation of the Percy French Collection, auditing, condition reports, accessing, numbering, labelling, packaging and scanning of the collection is still underway. All paper documents (800+) are being scanned as part of the accessioning process to improve accessibility of this collection while reducing physical damage. This is a time-consuming process, and it was not possible to complete it by the end of the financial year.
4. As part of the 2023 audit, the small and most fragile artefacts of the Jordan collection were identified as most in need of remedial cleaning, labelling, boxing and packaging. This task was completed and has significantly improved the conservation of these objects.
5. An audit and identification of the lithics within the archaeological collection has taken place following issues highlighted in 2023. The report was completed by an archaeologist with a lithics specialism and has ensured the objects have all been correctly identified and labelled with accurate information recorded about each artefact.
6. Following a loans renewal inspection of our loans from NMNI and NMI, both institutions have agreed to continue the loans agreement. The improvements to our environmental conditions have helped to secure the continuation of our loans from other accredited institutions.
7. To address the issue of security and conservation of our small artefacts in the store, a new small storage unit was purchased and installed at the end of the financially year. Work is planned to transfer vulnerable objects to this unit in 25/26 year.
8. In 2024 a new CCTV system was put in place in the galleries in the museum. Cameras have also been moved where necessary and a camera has been placed in the community gallery to improve the security of objects in the gallery. This improvement will increase our ability to secure high value loans in the future. The external area of the museum and courtyard needs to be upgraded in 2025-26.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

The museum continues to provide a rolling programme of exhibitions in our temporary exhibition spaces. In 2024, the temporary galleries were each given a distinct and different identity with exhibition lengths increased and standardised across all galleries. This helped with the programming as it allowed each space to have a clear function and purpose, meeting the needs of different audiences and more effectively achieving the museum's aims. It has also resulted in each exhibitor being given a longer slot which has proved successful as this allows more time to be put into the production of the exhibitions and more time to market and gives the public a better opportunity to experience it.

Additionally, all exhibitions are curated or co-curated by museum staff rather than leaving the curation solely to individuals and communities. This ensures that each exhibition has been correctly and securely mounted in accordance with museum standards and that the text has been edited to make it accessible and appealing to a wide audience. Amending our programming in 2024 in this way has prevented clashing exhibition dates and themes and has allowed for greater forward planning. It has allowed for better strategic planning and for the integration of exhibition themes into our education and family programming which has resulted in better programming cohesion and an elevation in the quality of our programming.

LONG GALLERY

This gallery focuses on exploring themes within art and history. In 2023 improvements to the security and environmental condition management were carried out to create a space to display the museum's collection and to meet the standards required for high value loans from private collections and from other accredited institutions. Long term this will improve the quality of the exhibitions to attract a more diverse audience and to appeal to residents as well as visiting tourists.

Trains, Boats and Planes

11th April -16th June

The North Down Museum collection possesses a wealth of paintings that depict methods of transportation. Let this exhibition transport you by celebrating the movement of people by rail, sea, and sky. Drawn from the Museum's art collection, see an array of artistic interpretations of magnificent vehicles. From the Coronation Scot train to a de Havilland Rapide aircraft flying over Bangor to tall ships and warships in Bangor Bay.

RNLI 200th Anniversary

20th June-8 September 2024

2024 marks the 200th anniversary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and across the years their volunteers have answered the call to rescue day or night, on calm seas or into ferocious storms, saving more than 144,000 lives.

This exhibition will commemorate this amazing milestone, and explore the important role played by the RNLI and their volunteers in North Down and Ards since the first lifeboat station opened here in 1858 down to the present.

The Tower of Silence

12th September -17th November

Renowned artist Leslie Nicholl's latest exhibition is inspired by his experiences during the dark days of isolation and uncertainty of the lockdowns that took place during the Covid pandemic of 2020. In the artist's words 'the paintings represent a short walk from the Long Hole, in Bangor, to the Battery and back'. He was inspired by the landscape of Bangor and the people who were working tirelessly in hospitals and care homes to look after the sick and vulnerable.

Made in AND: Pop-Up Christmas Shop

21 November 2024 – 5 January 2025

The Museum's Long & Praeger gallery hosted the Made in AND: Pop-Up Christmas Shop. An alternative to a Christmas Market, featuring beautiful hand-made products supporting 32 small local artists and makers.

Once again, this unique shopping experience proved popular with visitors to the Museum and netted £9,300.95 in sale of artist work.

We also held a late-night shopping event on Thursday 28 November, featuring craft demos and live music, 285 visitors came along 6pm-8pm.

High Latitudes

16 Jan – 6 April

This exhibition has been created by the artists Julie Wilson and Susan Moody and is inspired by the dramatic landscape and wildlife of Svalbard in the High Arctic. These works highlight the fragile beauty of the Arctic, an area under threat due to the negative environmental impact of climate change. Both artists travelled to the Arctic and were impacted by the extreme nature of the environment and inspired by the spirit of the individuals who took part in early polar exploration. Using different media and with individual styles and focus, each artist has drawn on their own extensive collection of photographs and experiences they have gathered from their polar experience.

COMMUNITY GALLERY

The Community Gallery is open to local groups and individuals who wish to display their exhibitions in the museum. Communities can apply to use this gallery or exhibitions can come through projects developed by the museum's HDO. Each group has a set period for their display and each exhibition was co-curating with museum staff to improve the quality of the exhibition by mounting artefacts and providing advice and editing of content.

Bangor Shop Fronts Then and Now

20 March – 9 June 2024

Between 2020-2022, North Down and Ards U3A participated in a UK-wide U3A research project looking at changes to local high streets during the Covid epidemic.

The members recorded and photographed Bangor shop fronts in Abbey -, Main -, Bridge - and High Street then revisited the same streets 18 months' later, noting changes that took place in the interval.

Sourcing images from the Museum's extensive photographic collection, this exhibition will expand the original project by one hundred years, and explore which goods and services were on offer to Bangor's savvy shoppers from the early 1900s to today.

Boom Studios' Heritage Sketchbooks and Jenni Robinson, Landscape Artist

11th June – 11th August 2024

Boom Studios Heritage Sketchbook project captures Bangor's pre-redevelopment seafront through the eyes of 10 artists. Led by studio landscape artist Jenni Robinson, the artists recorded the landscape from Pickie around to the marina/McKee clock area. Capturing everyday viewpoints and overlooked treasures, the sketchbook are nothing short of wonderful, containing every 2d artform imaginable from drawing and painting to tetrapak prints, etching and digital integration.

Jenni Robinson is a self-taught landscape painter, based in Boom Studios in Bangor. Painting and drawing in a variety of media, her work is mostly influenced by local coastlines, but draws on inspiring landscapes wherever she finds herself with a sketchbook.

Quilting Queens: The City of Bangor Quilt

13th August 30th September 2024

In 2023, Kilcooley Women's Centre created a community quilt to celebrate the City Status of Bangor. Members of the 'Quilting Queen's' project worked on the piece over several months under the guidance of artist Lesley Cherry and drew inspiration from Bangor's landmarks, cultural events, and the everyday moments that define our city. Each patch tells a unique story of personal memories and shared experiences. It is not only a beautiful quilt but a tapestry of collaboration, community and friendship.

ND Museum at 40

2nd October – 2nd February 2025

This year North Down Museum celebrates its 40th anniversary. This exhibition will look back at the origins of the collection and the founding of the museum. Charting the growth of the museum from two rooms of exhibits open once a week in 1954 to a busy and thriving heritage service with over 70,000 visitors per year. Join us in exploring our roots and looking forward to an exciting future serving the community through celebrating the rich and diverse history of our borough.

Carrickmannon PS Bicentenary

Tue 4 Feb – Sun 4 May

In 2025, Carrickmannon Primary School will celebrate its 200th anniversary! Pre-dating the National School System by six years, Carrickmannon PS was established with a grant of £22 from the Kildare Place Society to *educate the poor* and was originally housed in a one-room, thatched roof, schoolhouse. Two hundred years later,

the school is still going strong, delivering quality education to local families and in 2017, was the first school in Northern Ireland to be awarded the Space Education Quality Mark. Having served the community for 200 years, this exhibition will record the stories and memories of past pupils and teachers over many generations.

CAFE GALLERY

This space was assessed to be best suited to display artworks exclusively. The exhibitions can be from both professional and amateur artists/photographers and offers them the opportunity for sales in a busy part of the museum. This opportunity is externally advertised and assessed by a panel against a set of criteria. Consideration is given to the content of the other galleries to ensure diversity of themes and topics.

Round My Way

27 February –21 April 2024

Nigel Snell is a Bangor based Wildlife and Nature photographer with a particular interest in Birds. He is often seen in the locality of the North Down shoreline where a significant number of his images are made. This is not to say that Nigel is confined to Ards and North Down, he will also work throughout the Island of Ireland and occasionally further afield, whilst trying to minimise his carbon footprint.

The different types of environments, shoreline, woods and even townscapes provide many opportunities to capture images of a wide number of species including some visitors to Ireland. Always being true to the animal or bird being portrayed, Nigel likes to think with a more creative mindset, showing the environment a little more than just a portrait of the subject, adding a Fine Art feel to the images.

Through the Millenia

23 April-9 June 2024

Seanna O'Boyle-Irvine, known as Misehandmade, is an abstract painter and sculptor. Her works are acrylic mixed media paintings and sculptures from ancient bog pine. This wood she takes from the bogs herself, confirmed by Queen's University of Belfast to have been living timber an amazing 5,000 years ago. Her work is inspired by Ireland's prehistoric past which she discovered through her amateur archaeological studies. So what does Prehistoric Art look like and how can it be reintroduced into the modern world? So far this is her interpretation of it. This Art is an expression of generations past and in her work the multiple layering and earthy limited palette creates that depth and a feeling of timelessness. She thinks it should be remembered as they left these messages in the landscape in the unsolved symbolism of rock art engravings, stone head carvings or bog bodies reclaimed from their sacrificial watery homes.

R O O T S

Nature and Nature, how nature nurtures us.

11 June-28 July 2024

Linda J Barbour is a screen print creative media artist living in Bangor.

From she wakes up in the morning until she goes to sleep at night she constantly, records images via the lens of her camera and through this medium she is able to have a starting point to which the idea can develop and evolve.

Whether it be nature shots or moving objects or people, she's constantly collecting ideas. She also enjoys drawing and painting, which gives her the freedom to add texture and depth as she is always trying to push the boundaries of screen print - pushing it out of the solid restrictions, breaking its barriers to the point she is often asked....“Is that a screen print ?” Her inspiration for this exhibition is to share her love of trees and convey their spirit, presence, shape and lifelines in our local Borough.

Creative Peninsula

30 July-22 September 2024

Creative Peninsula is Northern Ireland's premier celebration of Art and Craft.

This thriving annual event features workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions and much more, all taking place throughout the beautiful and picturesque Ards and North Down Borough. This exhibition features unique pieces of art and craftwork specially selected for display in North Down Museum. It is a celebration of the exclusivity and quality of the artwork produced by local artists and craftspeople and a fantastic opportunity to purchase a beautiful piece of art.

Petals and Pixels

24 September-10 November 2024

This exhibition provides a glimpse into the collaborative work of mother-daughter artists Joanna Loane and Katie Armstrong, based in North Down. Katie's artistic focus on contemporary still life, achieved through digital technology, breathes new life into traditional oil painting techniques. Her inspiration from the natural world, particularly the unspoiled landscapes of the Ards Peninsula, infuses her work with a sense of organic beauty. Transitioning from printmaking to digital illustrations, Katie echoes the aesthetics of historic oil paintings while employing modern tools. On the other hand, Joanna's background in horticulture and botanical art lends depth to her compositions. Her techniques, through the exploration of plant life, while employing methods such as dry point etching/printmaking and watercolour, capture the essence of botanical specimens. This collaborative venture delves into the symbolic realm of flowers, exploring their meanings and significance. Katie's intimate portrayal of still life, inspired by family members and their birth flowers, juxtaposes with Joanna's focus on the character and anatomy of plants. Together, they weave a narrative that marries artistic expression with botanical fascination, inviting viewers into a world where art and nature converge.

Essence of the Ards Peninsula

12th November 2024 to 5th January 2025

Portaferry Art society is located at the southern end of the Ards Peninsula, in the scenic town of Portaferry. The Society was founded in 1975 by like-minded people who had a love of art. It has continued to grow and develop over many years into the vibrant inclusive society it is today. They are proud to say the Society is celebrating it's 50th Anniversary in 2025. Since those early days, artists have enjoyed painting and creating art inspired by the area they live in, painting 'En Plein Air' when possible. They currently have 40 members who work across a wide variety of mediums and thrive when coming together to inspire each other sharing skills, knowledge and enthusiasm culminating in creating art influenced by this dramatic landscape they call home.

Terry Aston's Bangor

Tue 14 Jan - Sun 13 Feb

Terry was born in 1943 near Manchester, at a time when German bombs were targeting the heavy industry near the house where he was born. His background and training were not as a fine artist but as a graphic designer and illustrator. In short, it was never the original image that was important, but the printed image based upon the original, and the desire for multiple prints are an example of that. Of these his drawings of buildings and cityscapes are the most well-known. He lived in Bangor from 1970 to 1971 and returned in 1973 to present day.

Memories by Steve Cheung

Tue 18 Feb - Sun 13 April

Originating from Hong Kong, Steve and his family moved to Glasgow. This exhibition celebrates the impressive culture of the world as translated through the beauty of different landscapes into tangible, visual stories. Through these backgrounds, each stroke becomes a memory, and every colour reflects the mood of a specific locale. A group of mixed media works that draw from the artist's lived experience. The works in this series are autobiographical in nature and depict real-life sceneries viewed from his perspective from all over the world. From the tranquil view of Belfast's Titanic quarters to the serene sunset in Tenerife.

PRAEGER GALLERY

The Praeger gallery has been used for small exhibitions although it is not ideal for this purpose. At the beginning of 2024 it was trialed as an area to highlight and promote artists and crafters of the borough. The 'Artists Showcase' was designed to educate visitors on the history of the artform in question and the processes involved in creating this work. The idea was to promote local artists and crafters of the borough but also inform the public of the skill and intricacy involved in creating these works. This was well received by visitors and each maker did a talk and demo to highlight their work further. However, there was a lack of exhibitors in 2025 and so the gallery was redeveloped to be a space to display sculptural artworks as this fitted well into the artworks already on display in this area and allowed the museum to display more art, which has been an issue as a very low percentage of the museums artworks are currently on display.

Artist Showcase: Alison Hanvey

29 January – 7 May 2024

Our community in Ards and North Down has a wealth of creative talent. Many of these artists, crafts people and makers use traditional techniques to create their handmade pieces. Our first artist showcase featured ceramic artist Alison Hanvey.

Artist Showcase: Rosemary McCartney

8 May – 18 August 2024

Weaving and spinning form an integral part of our shared creative heritage and this showcase will feature the highly experienced and talented Rosemary McCartney of Simply Spun. Rosemary is a weaver, spinner, craft teacher and craft demonstrator based in Holywood, who uses only natural, eco-friendly materials to create her work from hand, using traditional methods.

Artist Showcase: Irene McBride

20 August – 17 November 2024

Glass making is an ancient artform that dates back thousands of years to the Middle East. The revolutionary discovery that glass could be blown by mouth led to the invention of flat glass and consequently to the creation of windows. Stained glass windows were eventually created to secure, educate and allow light into places of worship. Today, however, stained glass making is on the list of endangered crafts. Irene McBride of Discovery Glass Studio will showcase her passion for keeping this artform alive by exhibiting her “Tiffany” style angels and giftware creations, including kiln-formed pieces.

Artists Sales

Sales from artists’ work from our galleries came to a total of **£16,230.65**

Made in AND: Pop-Up Christmas Shop

Made in AND

22 November 2024 – 5 January 2025

The Museum’s Long & Praegar galleries & shop hosted the Made in AND: Pop-Up Christmas Shop, featuring beautiful hand-made products from 29 local artists and makers. Once again, this unique shopping experience proved popular with visitors to the Museum and netted £9,300.95 in sale of artist work.

MARKETING & DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

The Culture Facebook and Instagram channels continued to grow and gain followers. By March 2025 the Culture Facebook page had gained 720 new followers, bringing its total followers to 6,621 and Instagram increased to 3,105 followers.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Museum Facebook posts have performed very well over the past year.

The best performing Museum/Heritage Facebook posts of 24/25 are (by organic reach):

Swimmer Ryan from Hong Kong visits North Down Museum: 63.2K

Launch of Boom Studios Heritage Sketchbook Exhibition: 18.5K

Museum staff at Seaside Revival event: 13.5K

RNLI Exhibition Launch: 13.4K

The Bees Are Back at North Down Museum: 11.3K

Half Term Fun at North Down Museum: 9.6K

WEBSITE

The ANDCulture.org.uk website has once again been an essential platform for promoting all the Museum's events and exhibitions. The site has also been important for promoting and sharing grants information and general information on the museum and visitor experience.

The website received a total of 42K active users and 173K views in this time period.

SURVEYS

North Down Museum's new Visitor Experience Survey received 201 responses during 24/25. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews carried out by front of house staff and also through scanning QR codes placed around the building. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive and will prove useful to inform future programming and visitor experience.

MAILING LIST

The ANDculture mailing list (combined Arts and Heritage list) currently has over 3.2K subscribers. A 'What's On' email is sent out to subscribers once a month detailing all activity coming up across the Arts and Heritage service.

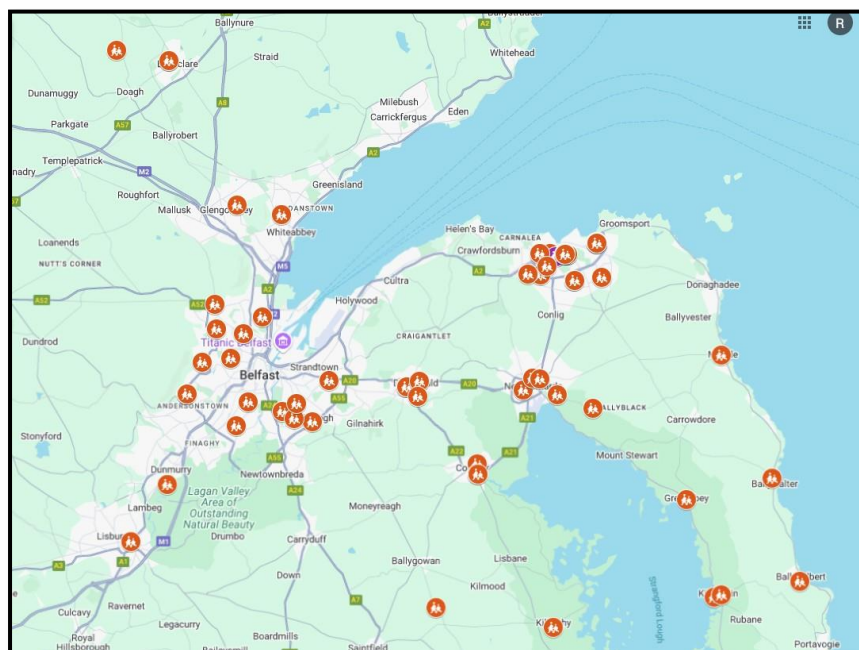
CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

The museum ran an adult workshop as well as several kids workshops including Little Historians four-day Easter workshop, Halloween workshop and Christmas workshops.

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

School Visits

The museum continued to receive schools throughout 2024/25 for our Vikings and Early Christian programmes. We hosted **70 visits from 50 schools** with a total of **2,835 pupils and staff/parents attending**. This map shows the spread of schools



that visited us in 2024/25:

Feedback from schools continues to be overwhelmingly positive, and this year we attracted 9 new schools from outside the borough who had never visited before.

Positives continue to be that:

- we offer a programme that lasts the full school day (including travelling time) which makes bus costs worthwhile;
- we are able to take large numbers of children (up to 72 per visit) due to hiring additional facilitators, which again reduces cost of travelling;
- the visit is well-planned and organised, and children are 'contained' and supervised by museum staff at all times (including their own staff), and are not expected to share public spaces;
- the programme is divided into shorter sessions that appeal to different types of learners and different interests.

Issues continue to be:

- for the minority of schools, the cost of the workshop at £4 per child plus the cost of transport is too expensive. However, the cost of the workshop is to cover the cost of facilitators which allows us to take in larger school numbers;
- if we were to reduce the cost, we could do this by removing the craft element. Therefore, we would no longer pay for an additional facilitator nor craft resources. However, this would then mean that we could take no more than 48 children at one time (this would affect 30% of schools);

- if transport costs continue to rise, we may see a drop in the number of schools able to book with us;
- timings – many schools reduce costs by using the Education Authority buses. However, these bus drivers dictate drop-off and pick-up times as they have other journey commitments. Therefore, some school visits are incredibly rushed and teachers are not given timings in advance, so we are unable to prepare for these shorter visits;
- the lunch space is often too cramped for the number of children attending and we cannot stagger lunches due to the same space also being used for crafts (96% of schools request a lunch space);
- accessibility – our Lecture Room (for craft and lunch) can only be accessed via a stairwell. If a child uses a wheelchair or rollator, then we can re-use our Little Historians Gallery as it has lift access (i.e. flip the room over from archaeology focus to craft space whilst the children visit the longhouse). However, this means we can only take one group at a time (with maximum 24 pupils) which could lead schools to cancel their booking if they have larger class sizes.

Little Historians Easter Workshops

We held a new 4-day event for children aged 7-11 over Easter 2024. The workshops ran from 10am-2pm and the same 12 children attended each day. Each day focused on a different aspect of local history with lots of learning through games, quizzes and arts and crafts and special visitors.

Feedback:

“I just wanted to email you to say how much H* loved his week at the museum. It really was brilliant and all the lovely things they made. I loved them all, but the handprint wreath was great.”

“The boys have had a great time and did so much in the 4 days! B* really enjoyed it - thanks for having him.”

Due to schools in the borough having different Easter holiday dates, pupils from only a few schools were able to book into our workshops. Next year, we aim to move the workshops to the week beginning with Easter Monday so that children from more schools can attend. This would result in the workshop running for 3 days instead of 4.

Communities Summer Scheme

We supported the Communities team by hosting 48 children each day from 7 borough-wide summer schemes. The children enjoyed a Victorian games day on the west lawn followed by a scavenger hunt in Castle Park.

Feedback:

Just a wee note to say thank you for your help in our summer schemes this year. Kids seemed to have a lot of fun playing traditional games on the lawn, not an electronic in sight. Hopefully do something similar next year.”

Ulster Scots Summer Events

We worked with Dayna Jost and Matthew Warwick from the Ulster Scots Community Network to host free summer events for children. 2 events were held for children aged

5-11 where they learnt about Ulster Scots language and culture through word hunts and a ceilidh in the courtyard, accompanied by a piper.

Feedback:

"I just wanted to say how much the kids enjoyed the event yesterday. They had such fun and were asking already if it will be on next year."

"Thank you so much – the girls had a blast today. C* was reluctant to go but she told me when she came home she had lots of fun. They even did a demo of their dancing for me. Appreciate all the effort."

It was great to be able to provide these events free of charge, but 7 bookings did not attend on the day, nor did they cancel their booking. This was a drop-off event and parents were required to complete registration forms, so this created a lot of admin as parents had to be regularly contacted but with no response.

We then held 2 more events for under 5s entitled, 'Wiggly Weans' where they also learnt about language and culture at their level through music and movement, accompanied by Matt Warwick on guitar and small pipes.

Feedback:

"Just wanted to say a big thank you for yesterday. We had a fabulous time at wiggly weans and the children were delighted with their little teddies. A really fab event. Thank you all."

Playful Museums Festival

This year we hosted another successful Playful Museums Festival for children under 5. We worked with a local nursery and Primary 1 class who visited the museum for our Terrific Toys sessions, learning about toys from the past and how they have changed over time. We decided that this year's PMF would provide the opportunity to pilot this new programme which could then be rolled out to all nurseries within the borough during the final term of the school year.

Feedback:

"I would like to say that this was a delightful outing for our children. Ruth was an excellent guide and the children and staff were made very welcome and found the event most informative. Thank you once again for the invitation."

Adults with Additional Needs

This year, we continued to work with adults with learning disabilities and welcomed some new community groups to the programme. The programme has continued to develop based on the needs of the participants and so has the use of the handling collection in order to further engage the adults.

Feedback:

"We cannot fault the outreach sessions. Both staff and service users learned so much. If anything, we would love more sessions!"

We are reliant upon groups that work with adults with learning disabilities to have their own premises, which not all do. There is obviously the option to run this programme from the museum, but the only available space is our Lecture Room which can only be accessed via a stairwell. Most of the adult groups we work with have participants with physical disabilities and therefore, would be unable to attend.

TALKS, TOURS & EVENTS

The aim of the museum regarding events was to provide targeted events that allowed for a higher quality of historic education. Heritage talks and heritage skills artists talks and demos provided more information than the exhibitions alone and offered members of the public with more of a hands-on experience, with the ability to interact with and question a variety of historic specialists and talented artists and makers. However, the lack of available space in the museum has hampered the size of the events at times.

	Number	Participants	
Tours	4	71	
Outside talks by staff	20	380	
Evening Talks	14	585	*extra talks as part of 40 th celebration
Events	10	1,386	
Workshops	3	36	

Evening Heritage Talks

The implementation of our evening heritage talks has been a success. The idea was to provide interesting talks about topics or themes that highlight less explored stories from the borough. These talks offer an opportunity to bring new research and a new perspective on historic events to the public and to explore themes that we are unable to in our galleries. It also offers our community an opportunity to ask questions, share their stories and to get advice about their own research. It also offers the museum an opportunity to test the interest of the local community in different topics so we can best target our future programming. Topics have ranged from WW1, WW2, 1798 rebellion, Early Christian Heritage, sustainable gardening, and artefacts in the museums collection.

ND Museum at 40 Celebrations

In addition to an exhibition in the community gallery the museum hosted a series of talks and an event in October to mark 40 years of heritage service. In addition, there was a special 40th photo trail created to involve children. On 16th October the museum had a private event welcoming 90 guests including many supporters, collaborators and staff over the past 40 years to celebrate the museum's anniversary. Media coverage included an interview with the first manager and the current manager and a radio interview on your place and mine.

European Heritage Open Day

European Heritage Open Day tours of the castle were cancelled as it clashed with the proposed date for a large Civil Event for the Fire Brigade. However, the HDO gave two tours of Templecranny graveyard (Portaferry) on Sunday 15 September as part of both EHOD and Portaferry Heritage Festival (13-15 September).

The HO also liaised with HED and successfully procured a Living History session at Portaferry Castle as part of the Heritage Festival.

D-Day

The museum put on a programme of activities for D-Day, including joining with two other museums to bring over a special speaker, an expert in American military history from the USA to talk about D-Day and its planning. We also produced a children's education pack, including an original booklet packed with illustrations, puzzles, quizzes and information all themed around World War II. The packs also contained themed crafts and toys.

GALLERY REDEVELOPMENT

There have been some changes to our galleries to improve our facilities for our younger visitors and our family visits, and also to increase the amount of art on display in the museum.

Little Historians Gallery

As part of a review in 2023 of the gallery spaces and our programming it had been identified that the education programme needed a specific space created to accommodate both school groups and family visits. The new gallery should be more easily and efficiently set up for school visits and provide interpretation to enhance the school programme. In addition, it would be a space for families to explore history, effectively creating a mini version of the museum galleries but with interpretation specifically for children of different age groups. This installation work was carried out in the summer of 2024 with an October launch planned to coincide with our 40th anniversary.

However, design work was unfortunately delayed, and the gallery was officially launched in Spring of 2025 coinciding with our new children's book. The new space now provides a child friendly space where the museum's new cartoon mascot 'Belle' (named after the Bangor Bell on display in the Early Christian gallery) takes children on a journey through time. All of the interpretation is full of information to suit different age groups and is illustrated to show Belle's journey from the Bronze Age to the 20th century. It includes an interactive timeline with activity baskets, a period accurate dress up section, craft stations and a reading corner stocked with lots of fun children's history books. The extra seating created by the new built-in furniture and drop-down tables has made it more effective for our schools but also our storytelling sessions and other children's programming.

A new feedback box was installed to provide feedback from the public regarding the success of the new facilities in the gallery. At present the feedback has been

overwhelmingly positive and has been embraced by families who are keen to find an affordable technology-free space to enjoy hands-on educational activities.

Praeger Sculpture Gallery

When appraising our exhibition spaces, it became apparent that there was a need to have a space to display artworks in the museum’s collection. Unfortunately, as space is at a premium the only available area was the Praeger gallery. Recent improvements with the fitting of new blinds in 2023 have reduced the light levels in this area. This has enabled the display of some of our least vulnerable artworks. In January 2024 the Praeger Gallery artworks were chosen to create a display of sculpture to add to and complement the sculpture currently on display in this area.

FUNDED PROJECTS

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FUND

'Breathing New Life into the Past' Workshop to Kirkistown PS

In June, the Education and Heritage officers presented a workshop to Kirkistown PS on the effects of climate change on the local historic environment. This was made possible through funding from Historic Environment Fund as part of maintenance works at Slans and St Mary’s (Ardkeen) graveyards.

Twenty eight pupils from P5/6/7 took part in the workshop which include a practical experiment. The children very much enjoyed the event and the school provided positive feedback.

COUNCIL ASSISTANCE

Museum staff provide assistance and information to Councillors as well as other sections and departments of the Council. This included information, images, and historical context for several projects during the year.

ENQUIRIES

Collection and history-based enquiries have significantly increased in this period with approximately **420 enquiries** resolved. These requests include advice, historic information, supervised access to collection and help with research. Requests came from organisations, academic researchers, individuals, local community groups and students. All required action and some required a substantial percentage of staff time.

PARTNERSHIPS

Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat

Museum staff continued to work closely with the Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company to care for the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat. Conservation of the boat has advanced significantly. Work externally is complete and work on the engine room is almost complete. The group, who were successful in their HLF bid, received £90,000

to advance the exhibition centre, improve outreach and exhibits and to employ a part-time member of staff. The group has managed to create a new attractive temporary exhibition space and has recruited new volunteers and completed their training. They have also began work on creating programming for schools groups and improving outreach. The council is acting as a partner in this project and has offered advice and guidance to the group. This has involved advice from museum staff on schools programming, outreach, shop merchandising, exhibitions and collecting feedback/survey data. Interpretation panels were designed and paid for by the council to use in their exhibition room.

HERITAGE OUTREACH

Heritage Cluster Update

The AND Heritage Cluster met in June, September, November 2024 and March 2025. An extra meeting was held in January 2025 for members local to the North Down Coastal Path with the Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager, to discuss potential collaboration for new interpretation/trails on the North Down Coastal Path.

A variety of speakers came to the Cluster for this period were advising on funding, project management and aspects of Heritage including speakers from the Ulster-Scots Community Network, Kilcooley's Women Centre, HLF and council officers.

At each quarterly meeting, members provided a summary of activities in the intervening periods, raised issues, networked and discussed potential for new heritage projects.

Outreach, Partnership & Collaboration

Outreach

Provided historic talks and reminiscence sessions (using the Museum's handling collection) to the following groups:

Bayburn Historical Society, Redburn 55+ Club, Kirkistown PS (with the E&O Officer), the Wednesday Club at St Columbanus Parish Church (twice), Carnalea Care Home (twice), the Wednesday Club at Christ Church, Primacy, Ballyholme Men's Probus Club, Mount Alexander Care Home, and Bangor Abbey Mothers' Union.

Partnership and Collaboration

The HDO has worked with the following April 2024 - March 2025:

- Museum Volunteer, Dr Sandra Millsopp to co-produce the talk *Bangor Shop Fronts: Then and Now*.

- Boom Studios and artist Jenni Robinson to co-produce the exhibition *Boom Studios Heritage Sketchbooks*.
- Kilcooley Women's Centre to co-produce the exhibition *Quilting Queens*.
- Bangor Historical Society, Ballywalter & District Historical Society, Discover Groomsport, Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company Ltd, North Down & Ards u3a Bangor History Group, Portaferry and Strangford Trust, Portavogie Cultural & Heritage Society, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution on the exhibition *RNLI 200*.
- Upper Ards Historical Society and Portaferry & Strangford Trust to co-produce the exhibition *Portaferry Market House and the 1798 Rebellion* which was displayed at the Market House.
- Carrickmannon Primary School to produce the exhibition *Carrickmannon Bicentenary*.
- Music facilitator Karen Diamond to co-develop and co-present VE Day reminiscence sessions comprising songs, chat and show-and-tell with objects from the Museum's handling collection for care homes in the Borough.
- Holywood u3a History & Archive groups to rationalise and digitise their shared photographic collection.
- ANDBC Development Officer for Community Trails and Greenways to develop and pilot three heritage walks along the North Coastal Path.
- Portaferry Regeneration Sub-Committee to develop and deliver a town-wide heritage festival in Portaferry, September 2024, to coincide with European Heritage Open Days. Members of the sub-committee represent Portaferry Community Collective, Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, PORTICO, Upper Ards Historical Society, Portaferry and Strangford Trust and Portaferry Sailing Club.

In addition, the HDO attended internal stakeholder board meetings for the Whitespots County Park project and the Ards TT centenary (2028) and the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership joint-council officers' meetings throughout April 2024 – March 2025.

Heritage Grants

Ten Heritage Grants were awarded in 2023-24. The grant budget was **£5000** and all monies were successfully allocated.

ORGANISATION	PROJECT TITLE
Portaferry & Strangford Trust	<i>A Wee Bit of Maritime History</i> - Production of heritage information leaflets
Inspiring Yarns	<i>Know Your Worth</i> Heritage Craft Project
Ards Historical Society	Production of a publication on the Ards TT Races
Portavogie Cultural & Heritage Society	Production of <i>Heritage Booklet No. 11</i> : Interview, Record and Print Memories of a Variety of Individuals from Portavogie and Surrounding Area
St Patrick's Community Centre, Portaferry	Production of an exhibition – <i>History of Debretta' Factory, Portaferry</i>
Comber Historical Society	Redevelopment of Comber Historical Society's website www.comberhistory.com
Discover Groomsport	Creation of the <i>Discover Groomsport Digital Archive</i>
Ballywalter & District Historical Society	Production of a historical journal for 2024
Friends of Columbanus Bangor	Facilitation of the <i>Columban Way Walk</i> : Last stage of the All-Ireland Columban Way Walk from Helen's Bay to Bangor Abbey
Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company	Production of an exhibition: <i>Local History of the Coastguard Service</i>
Total for 2024-25	

Ulster Scots Talks Grant 2024-25

Nine groups availed of the grant for this year with talks took place between October 2023 and March 2024. The grant budget was £1000, and a total of £939 was spent.

Group	Talk/ Event
Auld Bangor Historical and Cultural Society	<i>Strangers on a Foreign Shore</i>
Ballywalter & District Historical Society	<i>Hamilton & Montgomery</i>
Family History in North Down and Ards	<i>Men from North Down to the Cariboo Mountains of British Columbia: Gold Mining & Pioneering on the N. American Frontier.'</i>
Upper Ards Historical Society	<i>From the Borders to Portaferry</i>
Ards Historical Society	<i>Edward Bruce of Ulster</i>
Comber Historical Society	<i>Rev. William Tennant (1673-1746)</i>
Discover Groomsport	<i>Eagle Wing and its legacy</i>
Hollywood u3a	Talk by Dyna Jost, Ulster-Scots Community Network
Cloughey Heritage	Burns Night with music by the Kirkistown Pipe Band
Total for 2024-25	£919

APPENDIX 1 ARTS SERVICE STATISTICS

Visitors/attendees to Arts Service

2022-23	38,036	
2023-24	38,329	
2024-25	42,326	

Music Events*

	No. of Events	Attendance
2022-23	13	859
2023-24	13	1015
2024-25	10	927

**Excludes festivals*

Performing Arts*

	No. of Events	Attendance
2022-23	12	1,859
2023-24	8	1,328
2024-25	8	1253

**Excludes festivals*

***Excludes schools outreach performances*

Festivals

Guitar Festival	Total Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2022	1,150	903	£6,607*	19
2023	1,635	1,135	£10,403	20
2024	1,691	1,115	£10,682	15

**Ivy Bar & Ards Arts Centre still at 60% capacity social distancing*

Creative Peninsula	Event Attendance	Craft Fayre/Market	Exhibition Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2022	1,550	Est 2,000	2,079	89	£1,023	38
2023	1,650	>4,000	5,378	182	£3,111	38
2024		>5,000	>6,000	172	£3,559	39

Aspects Festival	Total Attendance	Exhibition Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2022	919	350	886	£6,610	25
2023	1,171	350	1,133	£8,752	23
2024	1,679	350	1,329	£11,573	28

Puppet Festival	Total Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2022	1,000+	610	£1,107	2 Day Event
2023	1,400+	501	£1,866	2 Day Event
2024	1,500	511	£2,813	2 Day Event

Leid AND Lairn	Total Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2024	311	204	£707.32	12

Young Aspects	Total Attendance	Tickets Sold	Box Office	Events
2024	262	166	£884.92	10
2025	125	105	£797.39	9

Visual Arts Programme*

	No. of Exhibitions	Attendance
2022-23	19	12,005
2023-24	21	12,513
2024-25	21	13,009

*Excludes ForM sculpture exhibition

ForM Sculpture Exhibition

	Attendance
2022-23	3,000
2023-24	3,000+
2024-25	3,000+

Artists Talks

	No. Delivered	Adult Attendance
2022-23	5	271
2023-24	2	42
2024-25	3	100

Arts Education Programme*

	Creative Courses Delivered	Attendance
2022-23	66	788
2023-24	51**	619
2024-25	55	686

*excludes festival educational workshops/ForM

** return to a 10 week term so overall less individual classes offered

Youth Arts Schemes

2022-23	1-week Ards Arts Centre 1-week Donaghadee	20 in each week
2023-24	1-week Ards Arts Centre 1-week Donaghadee	20 in each week
2024-25	1-week Ards Arts Centre 1-week Donaghadee	20 in each week

Professional Development Programme

	No. Delivered	Attendance
2022-23	1	6
2023-24	7	93
2024-25	3	30

AND Arts Networking Events (Est August 2023)

	No. Delivered	Attendance
2022-23	0	0
2023-24	2	42
2024-25	1	12

Exhibition sales

Exhibition Month	Total Sales
April	NFS
May	£1,080.00
June (note is form ForM)	<i>A number of works sold. We do not have exact figures as artists manage the sales with customers directly</i>
July	£1,255.00
August	£1,470.00
September	£3,255.00
October	£280.00
November	£1,510.00
December	
January	£900.00
February	£1,170.00
March	£740.00
Total	£11,660.00

Appendix 2 Heritage Service Statistics

General Visitors to North Down Museum

2022-23	63,328	
2023-24	66,832	
2024-25	66,532	

Redevelopment & Building Changes

2022-23		Praegar gallery fitted with blinds to allow for control of light conditions.
2023-24		Extension of hanging system into community gallery. Development of 'Belle' character for children's programming
2024-25		Development and installation of new 'Little Historians' Gallery. Development of Praeger gallery into sculpture gallery for museum's art collection Installation of new CCTV system Installation of new emergency gate in courtyard

Exhibitions- Long Gallery

2022-23	8
2023-24	7
2024-25	5

Exhibitions- Community Gallery

2022-23	6
2023-24	8
2024-25	5

Exhibitions- Praeger Gallery

2022-23	4
2023-24	6
2024-25	5

Exhibitions- Café

2022-3	10
2023-24	8
2024-25	8

Exhibitions- community exhibitions at external locations

2022-23	0	
2023-24	3	Princess Victoria Disaster- Sir Samuel Kelly Centre Lace with Ards Historical Society- Newtownards Library Ards Lacrosse- Londonderry Leisure Centre
2024-25	2	RNLI & School exhibition

Exhibitions- Loans

2022-23	2	Percy French Jordan as part of Reimagine, Remake, Replay
2023-24	1	Cavan County Museum
	2	Cavan County Museum Loan of Percy French exhibition to Armagh County Museum

Events

Event			
2022-23		4 events to 842 people	
2023-24		13 events to 2,707 people	
2024-25		Children's Events Easter Trails- 348 Summer schemes-168 Ulster Scots, 2 events- 66 Kids Halloween -280 Xmas storytelling – 58 Playful museums-39	Adult Events 40 th Anniversary Celebrations – 87 Made Xmas shopping- 285 Other 1-55

Online Engagement

Event	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Social media	-	Facebook page gained 926 new followers	Facebook page gained 720 new followers. Instagram increased to 3,105 followers
Website	Each quarter averaged 7000 unique visitors and 30,000 page views	33K unique users and 154K views	42K active users and 173K views

Classes & Workshops

	Number	No. attendees
2022-23	1 (two cancelled, low numbers)	8
2023-24	1	8
2024-25	1 -Adult Xmas craft 1- day Little Historians Workshop 1-Kids gift making workshop	8 12 16

School visits

	No. schools	No. pupils/staff
2022-23	31 visits from 25 schools	1,119 pupils and 137 staff/parents attending.
2023-24	46 visits from 36 schools	1,817 pupils and staff/parents attending
2024-25	70 visits from 50 schools	2,835 pupils and staff/parents attending

Talks

	Outside talks by staff No.	No. attendees	Evening Talks	No. attendees
2022-23	14	369	-	
2023-24	10	228	-	
2024-25	20	380	14	585

Tours

Museum Tours	No. tours	No. visitors
2021-23	9	256
2023-24	14	389
2024-25*	10	251

* Includes tour of Templecranny Graveyard (45 persons) for EHOD, Sept 2024

Outreach

	No. outreach sessions	No. participants
2023-24	5	57
2024-25	19	247

Ulster Scots Grants

2022-23	£1000 awarded	£ 822
2023-24	£1000 awarded	£999.25
2024-25	£1000 awarded	£919

Heritage Grants

2022-23	£5,000 awarded	£4,579 spent.
2023-24	£5,000 awarded	£4,500 spent
2024-25	£5000 awarded	£5000 spent

APPENDIX 3

Arts and Heritage Panel Membership 2023-24

Chair Catherine Charley (Sept 2024 – Sept 2025)
Vice-Chair Cllr Alex Harbinson (Sept 2024 – Sept 2025)

Chair Cllr Pete Wray (Sept 2023 – Sept 2024)
Vice-Chair Catherine Charley (Sept 2023 – Sept 2024)

Elected Members June 2023 – June 2024 and June 2024- June 2025

Cllr Janice MacArthur (resigned April 2024)
Cllr Pete Wray
Cllr. Colin Kennedy
Cllr. Richard Smart
Cllr Alex Harbinson
Cllr Eddie Thompson (replaced Cllr MacArthur in June 2024)

Voluntary Members April 2024 – Present

Museum/Heritage	Dr Verity Peet (resigned December 2024)
Museum/Heritage	Billy Carlisle
Museum/Heritage	Stuart Alexander
Museum/Heritage	Linda Wilson
Visual Arts/Crafts	Pandora Butterfield (resigned February 2025)
Visual Arts/Crafts	Jane McCann
Visual Arts/Crafts	Anna Smyth
Literature	Catherine Charley
Performance	Eve Williams
Performance	Gregory Fox
Community Arts	Dympna Curran
Community Arts	Marcus Hunter-Neill